Tips and Tools for Implementing COVID-19 Guidance

All businesses and organizations have a general obligation to keep a safe and healthy facility per state and federal law, and comply with COVID-19 work site-specific safety practices as outlined in Governor Jay Inslee's COVID-19 Reopening Guidance for Businesses and Workers, the Washington State Department of Health Workplace and Employer Resources & Recommendations, and Washington State Department of Labor & Industries documents.

Figuring out how to implement the State guidance within your own business or organization can be challenging. Since May of 2020, the 140-member Whatcom County COVID Employer Support Task Force has worked to simplify the basic concepts in the guidance and share tips and tools as widely as possible.

The following chart complements the required health and safety guidance by offering **implementation tips and tools.** This document will be updated as new information emerges. The most current version is available on the Whatcom County Health Department website, along with other useful materials.

To receive updates from the Health Dept. about COVID-19 or other topics, go to the subscription sign up page and select "Health – Public Health News" under the News Flash section.

Guidance	Suggestions for Implementation
Adopt a written health and safety plan	● Two helpful templates you can use: Association of Washington Businesses Safe Work Plan Template and Washington State Phase 3 Safe Start Plan Template.
Designate one COVID monitor	● It is best if there is one person who has responsibility for monitoring the implementation of guidance, updating the plan, maintaining supplies, screening employees, and communicating with employees. ● Have a single point of contact for the Health Dept. to reach your business for contact tracing of staff, volunteers, or clients/customers. Whoever is in charge of HR is usually the best person to assign to this role.
Display visible signage	● Post visible signage at all entry points and throughout the workplace for both customers and staff. Signage should state shared expectations (e.g. masks and distancing) and responsibilities (including proper hygiene & sanitization, and information for reporting concerns). See samples from WhatcomTogether.org, CDC, and Governor Inslee.
Reduce risk for people more vulnerable to severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g., individuals age 65+, and those with underlying medical conditions).	<u>Vulnerable Employees & Volunteers</u> ● Employers should take particular care to reduce vulnerable workers' risk of exposure to COVID-19 while making sure to be compliant with relevant ADA and ADEA regulations. ● Provide a confidential way for an employee to notify the employer to request alternative work. ● Support and encourage options to telework. ● Consider offering vulnerable workers duties that minimize their contact with customers and other employees (e.g., restocking shelves rather than working as a cashier), if the worker agrees. <u>Vulnerable Consumers, Clients, and others</u> ● Use videoconferencing, livestreaming, and other technologies to allow people to participate in the activities you provide, or to receive services from their home. ● Offer home delivery, home visits, or curbside pick-up to reduce exposure. Maintain >6 feet physical distance. All present should wear face coverings.

Support alternative childcare options	● Offer accommodations and be flexible with workers who have children or other dependents whose care is disrupted with closures of schools, childcare, and activity centers. Examples:
	  o Allow employees to reduce their work hours or work from home when possible.
	  o Offer on-site daycare or study rooms for a limited number of children per day.
	  o Prioritize childcare support for those workers who are not able to work from home.

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I. PEOPLE: Ensure Physical distancing	
Support working from home and alternate schedules	● Encourage employees to work from home when possible. ● Consider rotating or staggering shifts to limit the number of employees in the workplace at the same time (e.g., offer a partial workforce or alternate day of week operating model, consider two shifts: 6 am – 12 pm and 1 pm – 7 pm with time between shifts to clean and air out workplace).
Support working from home and alternate schedules (continued)	● Support job shares that allow for reduced hours. ● Create isolated work cells/teams where possible. ● Consider providing employer-sponsored buses/transit options to reduce the use of crowded public transportation and promote and enable individual commutes (e.g., subsidized parking). ● Eliminate unnecessary travel – Provide employees opportunities to telework, use video conferencing rather than in-person meetings whenever possible. ● When travel is required, have employees go separately rather than carpool. ● If an employee is having difficulty performing duties from home, conference with them regularly, troubleshoot any challenges, and integrate some on-site work into schedule.
Minimze or reduce person to person and group contact.	● Cancel meetings and events if at least 6 feet of distance between people cannot be maintained. ● Avoid sitting face-to-face. ● Implement reduced maximum capacity limits. ● Limit shared workspaces and office supplies/resources. ● Limit cafeteria capacity and services by reducing seating and self-service options. ● Close or limit the number of people in communal spaces such as break rooms, if possible, or stagger break times and clean and disinfect the area in between uses. ● Schedule appointments rather than allow drop-in clients. ● Have clients wait in cars, or outside with >6-foot spacing, until they are called in, ● Limit the number of visitors allowed to accompany a client/customer to maintain appropriate social distancing.
Manage traffic flow to reduce congestion	● Re-organize floor layouts to permit physical distancing, such as one-way store/facility aisles, and use distance markings at places of congregation. ● Have people wait outside if needed to maintain maximum capacity limits inside the business. Have a staff person monitor the door.
Reduce the number of surfaces people touch	● Avoid non-essential person-to-person contact (e.g., handshakes). ● Reduce the number of items people may touch (e.g., remove magazines from waiting areas, individual menus, hymnals in church). Instead, give handouts people can take with them; use a projector and screen; display information on signs, whiteboard, or chalkboard; or use a QR Code. ● Move to touchless sign-in/sign-out device or provide hand sanitizer next to any devices people must touch. ● Have customers call in orders and pay by phone before picking up items. ● Ask customers and employees to exchange payments by placing them on a tray or counter rather than by hand.
II. PLACES: Protective Equipment	
Provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at no cost to employees	● See Labor & Industries resources for specific PPE requirements for your type of industry. ● Provide workers/volunteers with masks. Everyone in Whatcom County is directed to wear a face-covering while at any indoor or outdoor public space where you may be within 6 feet of someone who does not live with you. ● Some PPE, such as cloth face coverings, is available for free through Whatcom Unified Command, Chambers of Commerce, and professional associations. ● AWB PPE Connect connects PPE manufacturers with businesses that need supplies. ● Purchase thermometers, face masks, gloves, sanitizers, and other PPE before you think you need them to avoid supply disruptions.

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Require employees, volunteers, and customers/clients to wear cloth face covering (mask)	● See Health Dept. information about Masks and Face Coverings. ● Masks are required. If someone will not wear a mask for whatever reason, a business should refuse to allow them to enter, however, businesses must provide accommodations, such as curbside service, to people who indicate they cannot wear a face covering. ● Require employees to wear a cloth facial covering, or whatever is the most appropriate level of protective face covering for the job, unless they are working alone. ● Have disposable masks available to give people. ● A cloth face covering is not a substitute for 6-foot physical distancing. ● A face shield is not a substitute for a cloth face covering, but can be worn in addition to a face covering. ● Post signage and provide a mirror for clients to ensure they put a mask on properly.
Increase ventilation to dissipate airborne virus	● Work outside as much as possible. ● Expand outdoor seating areas, allowing >6 ft. between seats. ● When inside, increase the percentage of outdoor air that is circulating – keep windows and doors open as much as possible. ● Increase air filtration.
II. PLACES: Hygiene & Cleaning	
Wash hands frequently	● Encourage frequent handwashing. ● If it is not feasible for people to wash their hands in a sink onsite, provide hand sanitizer in easily accessible locations, especially at entrances/exits and other high-traffic areas. ● In outdoor settings, simple portable handwashing stations can be set up (e.g., a large water dispenser, soap, and paper towels). Hot water is not required.
Clean and sanitize frequently	● Train staff on proper cleaning procedures and the use of disinfectants. Use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2 and that are appropriate for the surface. ● Perform routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces (e.g., door handles, workstations, cash registers) and shared employee restrooms at least daily and shared objects (e.g., keyboards, pens, tables, countertops) between use. ● Perform nightly deep cleaning, following appropriate guidance. ● Designate a hygiene leader for each shift and facility who is responsible for protocol audits. ● In any common space, provide supplies so that users can sanitize before and after their use, with clear instructions for how to do so. ● Consider how customers can be involved in reducing the need for staff to clean and sanitize (e.g., use their own pen, wear a disposable plastic glove for self-serve items in store or restaurant, spray and wipe exercise equipment after use). ● Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use them until after cleaning and disinfection. Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting, or as long as possible.
III. PLACES: Communication	
Provide health and safety training for all who work in the organization	● All employees, independent contractors, and volunteers must be trained on workplace policies and health & safety practices. This can be accomplished by weekly safety meetings. ● Ensure education about COVID-19 is provided in the language employees understand best. ● Provide education to workers and volunteers on symptom detection, high-risk situations for COVID-19, prevention measures, and leave benefits/policies. ● Provide on-going training about health guidelines as they change. ● Provide content for vulnerable workers to help navigate their return to work (e.g., offer informative resource documents, explain government benefits). ● Provide technical support for remote workers and virtual meetings. ● Create networks for employees to connect/share remote working best practices. ● Offer vouchers for online education tools.

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Offer wellness opportunities	● Recognize the increased emotional stress that most people are experiencing due to the pandemic and its impacts on daily life and provide resources and referrals for support. ● Sponsor well-being challenges geared to staying physically and mentally healthy. ● Access reduced cost and/or free counseling and/or telemedicine consultations. ● Provide benefit extensions for household members. ● Provide information about digital support groups to decrease isolation and share ideas.
Educate clients, customers, participants	● Provide information about health and safety measures before services so clients/ customers/participants understand what to expect and what will be expected of them (e.g., when a client makes an appointment/reservation, send information and instructions about safety practices). ● Provide clear health and safety information onsite to increase consumers' knowledge about safety measures and confidence in returning to your business/facility.
IV. PROCESS: Screening	
Screen employees for symptoms	● Ask workers/volunteers to self-certify that they have experienced no COVID-19 symptoms since the last day they physically visited the workplace. Using an online survey that workers/volunteers can complete before coming to work, or upon arrival, can help streamline the process, and make it easier for the designated COVID monitor. ● Encourage workers/volunteers to check their temperature at home before coming to work. ● Any worker with a temperature of 100.4°F or higher is considered to have a fever and must stay home or be sent home. ● Ask workers/volunteers to stay home and seek medical guidance if they are experiencing any known COVID-19 symptoms. ● A workplace may choose to conduct routine temperature checks & screenings onsite when employees/volunteers arrive. Encourage a single point of entry for ease of screenings or set up a kiosk if a single point of entry is not practical. Mark off a minimum of 6-foot distances for the screening queue.
Isolate Sick Employees	● See Health Dept. FAQ "What To Do If You Have Employees Who Are Ill with Symptoms or Confirmed COVID-19." ● Have sick employees stay home or go home immediately. If they must stay at the workplace to wait for assistance, place them in a private room away from others and ask them to wear a mask.
Contact the Health Dept. if a worker tests positive	● Employers must notify the Health Dept. within 24 hours if an employee tests positive, or the employer suspects COVID-19 is spreading in the workplace, or if the employer is aware of 2 or more employees who develop confirmed or suspected COVID-19 within a 14-day period.
IV. PROCESS: Contact tracing and disinfection of contaminated areas	
Maintain a log of employees, volunteers, and customers	● Maintain a log recording the contact information (name, phone number, date, and time) of all workers and volunteers at the worksite each day, in case the information is needed for contact tracing. Businesses (e.g., restaurants, gyms, healthcare offices) can ask customers to provide contact information as well, though it is not required. ● If the Health Dept. needs to do contact tracing, the names of employees and others who may have been exposed to the virus will not be made public.
Have a plan if an employee gets sick	● **The Health Dept. should be contacted immediately if an employee develops symptoms. Call 360-778-6100 or 360-715-2588 (after hours).** ● If an employee has COVID-19, keep it confidential (this is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act). You can respond generally to any questions saying that the person is out for a while, without revealing the reason why. ● Inform close contacts of the sick employee that they may have been close to someone with COVID-19. They may need to be tested and/or be quarantined. Follow Health Dept. directives. ● Provide leave options for people having to self-isolate/self-quarantine for COVID-19.