Phase II: General Business/Organization Guidelines

All businesses and organizations identified as eligible to operate under Phase I or Phase II must prepare and implement a COVID-19 Control Plan in accordance with emergency regulations to be promulgated by the Rhode Island Department of Health. These guidelines are provided to assist businesses and organizations meet the requirements in RIDOH's regulations.

To assist in writing and completing a COVID-19 Control Plan, a business or organization may obtain a checklist and a template at www.reopeningri.com. All businesses or organizations currently operating must complete the COVID-19 Control Plan template to continue operations. To ask questions about the COVID-19 Control Plan, checklist, and template, please email: covidplan@reopeningri.com.

I. Summary of Phase II operations

Under Phase II of Rhode Island's economic re-opening plan, more business and social activity will resume while significant restrictions remain in place to protect public health and safety.

Businesses and organizations must plan to adopt practices compliant with newly promulgated state rules and regulations from the Rhode Island Department of Health and the Rhode Island Department of Business Regulation, as well as recent executive orders and with any sector-specific regulations.

- Emergency rules and regulations promulgated by the Rhode Island Department of Health can be accessed online at: https://health.ri.gov/covid/
- A full list of executive orders can be found at: https://governor.ri.gov/newsroom/orders/
- Emergency rules and regulations promulgated by the Rhode Island Department of Business Regulation can be accessed online at: https://dbr.ri.gov/covid/covid19updates.php
- Sector specific guidance for re-opening under Phase I or II can be found at: https://www.reopeningri.com/

The guidelines below offer businesses and organizations eligible to operate in Phase II general guidance that must be considered the minimum to help protect their employees, customers, and residents of the state.

Businesses and organizations can determine their eligibility for re-opening under Phase II by consulting the executive orders posted here.

II. Space and occupancy limits

All organizations must follow the regulations issued by the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), Governor Raimondo's Executive Orders, and the guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding gathering sizes and social distancing.

Adhere to gathering size restrictions

- Businesses and organizations must comply with RIDOH regulations found here, and active executive orders, found here.
- These rules must be followed when holding meetings, conferences, or other social gatherings.

Apply social distancing measures

- All persons should remain at least six (6) feet apart at all times. If social distancing is not feasible, individuals must minimize time in violation of social distancing, and additional precautions should be taken. Procedures that cannot be executed with social distancing should be documented by businesses and organizations in the written COVID-19 Control Plan required under section III of this document.
- All persons must wear a cloth face covering mask in accordance with RIDOH regulations, found here, and active executive orders, found here. Further information on cloth face masks and coverings can be found in later sections of this document.
- The CDC has published the following social distancing guidance: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html

III. Business/organization processes, procedures and activities

All businesses and organizations operating under Phase I and Phase II should have established cleaning, health screening, and sick leave procedures. Businesses and organizations must do the following:

- Businesses and organizations must develop a written **COVID-19 Control Plan** outlining how their workplace will prevent the spread of COVID-19 that includes procedures that meet, at a minimum, the requirements of the RIDOH regulations posted at https://health.ri.gov/covid/ and the following elements:
  - Social distancing procedures;
  - Procedures for ensuring wearing of face coverings;
  - Procedures for decontamination of surfaces;
  - Procedures for responding to a positive case or outbreak. Each organization should have a plan to ensure that employees who are required to isolate based on a positive test for COVID-19, or are required to quarantine as a result of exposure, can stay out of the workplace until cleared to return; and
  - Procedures for minimizing access to the establishment by COVID-19 positive or symptomatic individuals.
- A template for a written COVID-19 Control Plan required under RIDOH regulation can be found at: http://www.reopeningri.com/

- Businesses and organizations must make the written plan (or the filled-out template) available to employees and should ensure employees are aware of their role in implementing relevant procedures and protocols.
- This plan **does not** need to be submitted to a state agency for approval but must be made available to the Department of Health in the event of an inspection or outbreak.
- Businesses and organizations must place posters educating employees, customers, and visitors about how to protect themselves in accordance with RIDOH regulations found here: https://health.ri.gov/covid/
    - Posters must be placed at entrances and in common areas (such as bathrooms.)
- A list of acceptable posters available for download can be found at: https://health.ri.gov/covid/for/business/

Enhanced cleaning and/or disinfecting procedures

Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting procedures appropriate to each type of setting must be implemented.

Cleaning refers to the removal of germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces. Although not designed to kill germs but instead remove them from a surface, most cleaning products can "kill" coronaviruses by removing the fatty outer layer they use to infect cells.

Disinfecting refers to using a chemical designed to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing any remaining germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

- The CDC recommends cleaning surfaces with soap and then applying disinfectant.
- RIDOH requires cleanings of business and other establishments **at least once daily**. In addition, commonly touched surfaces, such as shared workstations, elevator buttons, door handles and railings should be cleaned in accordance with CDC guidance for specific industries, found here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html
- A full list of EPA's approved disinfectants for use against SARS-CoV-2 can be found here.
    - Businesses and organizations can prepare a bleach solution by mixing 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) bleach per gallon of water or 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water.
- **WARNING**: Never mix bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.

Note that these are minimum cleaning requirements – increased cleaning standards may apply to specific industries dependent on the type of work performed. Sector specific guidance for non-critical retailers be found at https://www.reopeningri.com/; more sector-specific guidance will be available on this website over time.

Ventilation

Outdoor activities are preferred. Open windows or doors when possible to improve ventilation in indoor spaces. Increased use of HVAC is not recommended if outdoor airflow cannot be introduced.

While the ventilation provided by being outside is ideal for dispersing COVID particles and reducing transmission risk, not all activities can be held outside at all times. Furthermore, uncontrolled/ unfiltered outdoor air can contain pollutants, allergens, and other irritants and can make controlling the temperature of a building difficult and costly.

If an activity must take place indoors, proper ventilation can reduce the risk of COVID transmission. Air sealing and filtration are also key aspects of ensuring healthy indoor air quality. Consult an HVAC or building performance expert to ensure your HVAC system incorporates outdoor airflow and is optimized and working effectively and efficiently.

Assistance and incentives may be available for energy-efficient HVAC systems and system optimization for homes and businesses. Contact your electric distribution utility, local community action agency, or the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources for more information at http://www.energy.ri.gov/index.php. Rhode Island's current mechanical code describes the air changes per hour needed in different building types, and can be found at https://www.sos.ri.gov/divisions/Open-Government/State/rules-and-regulations/building-and-fire-codes. Additional guidance on COVID-19 and HVAC systems is available from ASHRAE at https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/resources.

Access screening procedures

RIDOH requires establishing, at minimum, symptom screening and COVID-19 risk procedures to screen anyone entering a business or organization's facilities. People whose responses to screening questions indicate they are sick, or who show visible signs of illness, must be denied entrance and instructed to isolate.

- The Rhode Island Department of Health has published sample screening questions for businesses and organizations. Sample screening questions can be found at:
  - https://health.ri.gov/forms/screening/COVID19_Employee_Screening_Tool.pdf
  - https://health.ri.gov/otherlanguages/spanish/forms/screening/COVID19_Employee_Screening_Tool.pdf
- At a minimum, businesses and organizations must screen employees and visitors for self-reported symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and other COVID-19 risk factors upon entering the building.
- Screenings can be conducted verbally, by app, by phone, or by another method of the employer's choosing including, if necessary, the posting of an informational poster that communicates the screening requirements.
- Deny entry to people with COVID-19 symptoms if they can't be explained by allergies or another non-infectious cause, as listed by the CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html
- In the event that an employee is identified, pursuant to screening or otherwise, as having acute respiratory illness symptoms or is positive for any other COVID-19 risk factors, or is currently directed to be in quarantine or isolation, the employer should send the employee

home and take any additional necessary and appropriate action, in accordance with applicable laws and current RIDOH guidance and regulations.

Businesses and organizations may also choose to supplement screening questions with temperature checks. CDC guidance on temperature checks can be found here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

Any business or organization that experiences a COVID-19 case must cooperate closely with RIDOH to help mitigate the public health impact of the event and guide the exposed individual to appropriate resources.

For more information on COVID-19 testing, please see RIDOH's website for how to get a COVID-19 test: https://health.ri.gov/covid/testing/ . Businesses and organizations must respect individual privacy and must not disclose the name of employees who test positive to other employees or the public.

Procedures to respond to cases of illness in the workplace

In the event an employee becomes ill during the workday, he or she should be sent home immediately. Once a sick employee and those with possible exposure have left the impacted area(s), the area(s) must be closed off for heightened cleaning and disinfection in accordance with CDC protocols and guidelines. This would include, but not be limited to, a deep cleaning of all touchpoints throughout the impacted area and disinfecting all surfaces, including glass.

Having COVID-19 sick leave policies is strongly encouraged and will be critical for the successful implementation of this requirement.

If an employee tests positive, the organization or business must immediately contact RIDOH at 401-222-8022, or 211 after hours, so they can assist in contact tracing and provide further instruction.

- To assist in contact tracing efforts, businesses and organizations should collect and retain the following information about all employees, visitors, and other entrants that interact with others present on site for a period of 15-minutes or more: Full name
- Phone number
- Date and time(s) on site

Face masks and other personal protective equipment

Under Executive Order 20-30 all employees and visitors are required to wear face coverings.

- Employers must provide appropriate face coverings to their employees. Either a cloth mask or surgical face mask is acceptable. Respirators such as N95 masks should be reserved for designated healthcare workers.
- Employees that require more extensive facial coverings due to industry specific safety regulations, laws or guidelines should continue to comply with the PPE requirements outlined within their respective industry-specific laws, regulations, and guidelines (i.e. medical professionals, professionals who use respiratory equipment, and professionals who handle hazardous waste.)

- Face coverings are required unless an employee and/or visitor can easily, continuously, and measurably maintain at least six (6) feet of distance from other employees and/or visitors for the duration of his or her work and/or time in a building.
- Nothing in Executive Order 20-30 shall require a store or other place of business to refuse entry to a customer not wearing a face covering.
- Such protective face coverings are not required for certain individuals, per CDC guidance, or for:
  - Anyone for whom use of such face covering would be damaging to his or her health; or
  - Anyone who is developmentally unable to use such face covering, including young children who may not be able to effectively wear a face mask; or
  - When a face covering would inhibit an activity of daily living (e.g. eating); or
  - When a face covering would itself negatively impact the safety of an individual or lead to an increased risk of harm to others (e.g. near open flames); or
  - Face coverings are not required in settings where people can easily and continuously maintain at least 6 feet of distance from other people.
- Further guidance on the use of face coverings can be found here: https://commerceri.com/masks/
- For further guidance on accommodations for those with disabilities, please contact the Governor's Commission on Disabilities using the contact us page at http://www.gcd.ri.gov/

Access to cleaning materials and hand hygiene

Businesses and organizations must provide employees with cleaning/disinfecting wipes and/or cleaning materials so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down (for example, for their workstation or a cash register.)

- Disinfecting products approved by EPA are preferred.
- Any cleaning product permitted by OSHA is acceptable.

Businesses and organizations must also ensure that any individual who enters the premises has ready access to a handwashing station with soap and running water and/or hand sanitizer **at all times.**

- Businesses and organizations must provide employees with time to wash hands often if sanitizer is not provided.
- Employees should wash their hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds.
- Employees must always wash hands immediately after removing gloves and conducting cleaning procedures.

- If soap and water are unavailable and hands are not visibly dirty, a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used.
- If hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.

Guidelines related to travel

All non-essential business travel is strongly discouraged. All business travelers must comply with the executive orders issued by Governor Raimondo. A full list of all executive orders can be found online at: https://governor.ri.gov/newsroom/orders/

Clear communications plan

Businesses and organizations are encouraged to develop a communications plan to explain the aspects of its Phase II operations to staff, visitors, community members, and other target audiences (e.g. businesses) as appropriate. Furthermore, businesses and organizations should:

- Determine appropriate materials and channels for communicating information. Examples include:
  - Developing and disseminating a one-pager on its Phase II operations.
  - Posting information and FAQs to its website.
  - Sharing information on social media.
  - Developing and sharing screening tools and signage for public buildings and businesses.
  - It is also strongly recommended that businesses and organizations consider developing materials accessible to the deaf, hard-of-hearing, and the visually impaired.
- Translate information in the languages most prevalent in the business' community.
- Continue to emphasize the importance and necessity of employees staying home if they are sick.

Businesses and organizations are required to post posters describing the businesses rules for wearing of cloth face coverings, social distancing of 6 feet apart between parties, and specifying, at the entrance of facilities in a location visible to employees, customers and visitors, that sick individuals should stay home. Posters encouraging healthy handwashing habits, in addition to the above posters, are recommended in common areas and near handwashing facilities.

A list of informational posters for businesses and organizations can be downloaded at: https://health.ri.gov/covid/for/business/

IV. Human resources

Guidance to minimize spread of COVID-19 among employees

Businesses and organizations must have a minimum of one representative (such as a business manager, business owner, or HR representative) appointed to work with RIDOH on testing employees, contact tracing, case investigation, isolation and quarantine, and any other follow-up related to outbreak containment.

Additional precautions for vulnerable populations may be required. Businesses and organizations are required to comply with the Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act, which has been recently revised to address its application to COVID-19 and can be found here: https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/pandemic-preparedness-workplace-and-americans-disabilities-act

Furthermore, businesses and organizations are encouraged to maintain consistent work crews and mitigate the number of other employees that each employee is exposed to in the workplace to the furthest extent feasible. Suggested workforce management practices for businesses and organizations to minimize the spread of COVID-19 among employees include:

- Organizing work crews into "teams" or "pods" that do not interact to mitigate the risk of transmission.
- Staggering shifts or flexing work schedules to allow for fewer employees in any given workspace at any one time.
- Closing communal spaces where possible (break rooms, conference rooms, etc.)

Training plans in order to meet the safety guidelines proposed in the previous sections

Each organization is strongly encouraged to develop a training plan to ensure that employees are able to meet the safety guidelines in accordance with OSHA requirements and those requirements described throughout this guidance document. Businesses and organizations may include their COVID-19 related training plans in their COVID-19 Control Plan.

Additional resources can be found at: https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/pandemic-preparedness-workplace-and-americans-disabilities-act

V. Supplies

Supplies needed for Phase II

Supplies required for all organizations during Phase II include:

- Face masks (cloth or surgical face masks are acceptable.)
- EPA approved disinfectant solutions or other general cleaning supplies (spray bottles, bleach, surface cleaners, etc.)
- Materials for handwashing stations (soap and running water) and/or hand sanitizer bottles at workstations.

Suggested, but not required, supplies include:

- Disinfectant wipe stations near communal objects.
- Thermal cameras or no-touch temperature measuring stations.
- Signage on capacity limits (on the exterior of the building.)
- Individually distributed cleaning supplies for employees to encourage cleaning of personal workspaces (desks, cubicles, workstations, check-out areas, cash registers, etc.) This is in addition to the required general cleaning supplies that must be made readily available to employees.
- Plastic, plexi-glass, or other physical barriers where appropriate and feasible.

RIDOH recommends glove use **only** in settings that already require glove use (e.g. healthcare settings, food preparation).

VI. Certification and enforcement

Certification guidelines for reopening

- The Rhode Island Department of Health will promulgate regulations that correspond with this guidance. Those can be accessed online here when promulgated.
- A full list of all executive orders can be found online at: https://governor.ri.gov/newsroom/orders/

VII. Other considerations

Below is a list of additional resources for businesses and organizations on COVID-19 related guidance and planning:

- Ensure your HVAC system is operating effectively and consider increasing the supply of outdoor air through your HVAC system.
    - Guidance on COVID-19 and HVAC systems is available from ASHRAE
- The Rhode Island Manufacturers Association (RIMA) has published a COVID-19 Response Pledge that can be found here: Guidelines for Plant Safety for Manufacturers.
- The CDC publishes regular guidance on cleaning and disinfecting community facilities.
- The EPA has published a list of responses to frequent COVID-19 related questions
- Regular updates on COVID-19 and safety precautions are published on the Rhode Island Department of Health's website at https://health.ri.gov/covid/
- More detail on the State of Rhode Island's reopening plan can be found at: https://www.reopeningri.com/
- For further guidance on accommodating for those with disabilities, please visit the Governor's Commission on Disabilities' website at http://www.gcd.ri.gov/
- Further detail on OSHA guidance and workplace safety rules and regulations can be found at: https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/