# WISCONSIN

GUIDANCE ON PREPARING WORKPLACES FOR COVID-19

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICES INDUSTRY

(COMMERCIAL OFFICE SPACES)

Measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly impacted building owners, landlords, tenants and operating businesses. Most professional service firms, particularly those that operate in an office setting, are now considering how best to aid in social distancing efforts and whether to de-densify workspace and seating arrangements to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 spread. With the emergence of COVID-19, the open design office concept so popular in recent years is coming into question. These modern office designs may actually make it harder to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and may require significant changes for the office to reopen. The COVID-19 pandemic could accelerate the growing trend of working from home, especially now that online meeting technology makes it possible to collaborate remotely—and this could prompt companies to reduce their overall office space needs.

There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach for reopening the professional services sector and the commercial office spaces these firms occupy. The following guide highlights the current best practices in protecting the employees, customers, delivery workers and the building from the risk of COVID-19 spread. In addition, please see the "**General Guidance for All Businesses**" document for guidance that applies to all industries, and please consult the other available industry guides as relevant for your specific business type.

# Recommendations for the Professional Services Industry (Commercial Office Spaces)

## Social distancing

- Allow employees to work from home if possible.
- Limit the number of individuals in the building to those who need to be on site.
- Redesign workspaces to ensure that on-site employees are separated by at least six feet.
- Ensure that social distancing is also maintained in hallways and other common areas.
- Limit in-person meetings as much as possible.
- If you must have an in-person meeting, limit the number of attendees and meet in a room large enough to allow for at least six feet between all participants.
- Host large team/staff meetings via videoconference rather than in person.
- Use electronic signatures to meet signoff requirements and avoid close contact.
- Encourage clients/customers to connect via phone call or videoconference.

## Employee health and hygiene

- Employees who have a fever or other symptoms of COVID-19 should be instructed to stay home.
- Encourage clients/customers to connect via phone call or videoconference. Maintain an adequate supply of paper goods, soap and hand sanitizer to allow proper hand hygiene among employees.
- Provide tissues for proper cough/sneeze etiquette and no-touch disposal receptacles.

## Clean and disinfect

- Maintain an adequate supply of cleaning and disinfection products.
- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, such as doorknobs, light switches, countertops, printers, copiers and bathroom fixtures.
- Consider establishing a cleaning and disinfection team to conduct these activities on a regular schedule each day.
- Instruct your employees not to share equipment such as phones, computers keyboards, mice.
- Provide personal pens, markers and other routine work supplies for each individual.

## Face masks and cloth face coverings

- Supply face masks or cloth face coverings for all employees in the office.
- Employers should recommend use of face masks or cloth face coverings by employees when social distancing is not feasible in the work environment. Usage may be recommended for public facing activities.
- Instruct your employees in how to properly put on and remove a face mask or cloth face covering. The CDC illustrates how to properly wear a face covering and has several tutorials for how to make one.

## Engineering controls

- Increase ventilation rates.
- Increase the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system.

## Personnel movement in the facility

- In order to allow employees to move around the facility without having to touch doors or knobs, consider removing doors or keeping them open where possible, or adding automatic doors or foot pulls.
- Consider one-way circulation routes through the office.
- Instruct employees to avoid hallway conversations and interactions.

## Break rooms

- Modify break room seating to ensure that employees cannot sit within six feet of one another.
- Frequently clean and disinfect tables, chairs/benches, handles, faucets, countertops, refrigerators and microwaves.
- Consider suspending coffee service.
- Have sanitizing wipes readily available in break rooms to clean common surfaces.
- With some employees working remotely, determine if any office spaces can be repurposed for additional break room space.

## Employee training, support and communication

- Communicate with workers about actions being taken to prevent COVID-19 exposure through routine meetings, postings (including electronic postings) and the company website.
- Post signage to remind your employees of safe practices for social distancing, hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette.
- Provide refresher training for employees on proper handwashing, social distancing, employee illness reporting and any other procedural changes the company has implemented in response to COVID-19.
- Train employees in how to recognize areas or practices that pose a risk for spreading the virus and define a process to quickly review and provide mitigation strategies in these areas. Include a recognizing/reporting module in your COVID-19 response plan.
- Consider designating one or more employees to monitor changes in workplace guidance.

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# CHECKLIST GUIDE FOR REOPENING

## Your Professional Service Business

**After reading through the available guidance for your business sector at wedc.org/reopen-guidelines use this checklist to ensure that you have taken the necessary steps to open your business safely, protecting the health of your employees and customers. In addition to reviewing this checklist, be sure to consult your local health department, as some communities may have additional local regulations in place.**

## ☑ Policy Checklist

- ☐ Create a policy for identification and isolation of sick people, including employee self-monitoring, required reporting of illness, sick leave policies and isolating individuals that become ill at work.
- ☐ Assess leave policies for quarantined/isolated workers and those caring for sick family members.
- ☐ Update employee policies. Allow/encourage remote work when possible. Recommend that employees wear face masks or cloth face coverings when social distancing is not feasible.
- ☐ Create a travel and external meetings policy. Implement flexible meeting and travel options. Encourage virtual meetings or phone calls in lieu of in-person meetings. If an in-person meeting must occur, limit attendees and meet in a room large enough to allow for at least six feet between any two participants.
- ☐ Connect employees to employee or community assistance resources such as the Wisconsin COVID-19 hotline (211) or COVID-19 Resilient Wisconsin dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19.
- ☐ Create a client service policy. To the extent possible, clients should wear face coverings when re-ceiving services. Recommend clients bring their own face mask or covering, and also provide them for clients who don't bring their own. Considerations should be made for clients who are unable or unwilling to wear a mask or cloth face cover. Refuse service to any client who arrives with symptoms.
- ☐ Create a response plan in the event that an employee has COVID-19 symptoms or is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19. This should include criteria for impacted employees to return to work and guidance for identifying, communicating with and accommodating potentially exposed workers.

## ☑ Communications Plan Checklist

- ☐ Establish an employee communications schedule and develop a training plan for employees with modules on social distancing, hygiene and sanitation best practices, what to do if they feel sick, proper use of PPE and cloth face coverings, and how to educate guests about the new policies and practices.
- ☐ Update website and social media with new policies and procedures. Inform clients of meeting policies or other service changes.
- ☐ Communicate with vendors/suppliers for contactless dropoff or to arrange deliveries during non-client hours.
- ☐ Develop a marketing plan for clients that addresses business signage, social media communications, new business policies and client instructions (stay home if you are sick, limit items you touch, closure of common areas, hygiene including handwashing, social distancing reminder).

## ☑ Facility Plan Checklist

- ☐ Post signage about policy changes for customers and employees.
- ☐ Provide tissues and no-touch trash receptacles.
- ☐ Set up sanitizer or handwashing stations in convenient locations around the business. Provide disinfectant wipes near equipment requiring touch (e.g., copiers, paper cutters).

- ❑ Increase distance between occupied workspaces to at least six feet.
- ❑ Consider adding clear plastic barrier protection at the reception desk.
- ❑ Implement touchless payment systems/options.
- ❑ Close common areas (kitchens, break rooms) or sanitize after each use. If open, modify seating so that employees cannot sit within six feet of one another.
- ❑ Minimize the need of employees to share equipment/tools (pens, markers, scissors, walkie-talkies, etc.) by purchasing additional sets as needed. If employees must share, providing a means to sanitize shared items.

## ☑ Operations Plan Checklist

- ❑ Before you reopen, sanitize. Consult a professional on HVAC and water systems, possibly increasing air flow. Ensure that fans are not blowing air directly from one person toward another.
- ❑ Assign one or more staff members (ideally one per shift) to take the lead on cleaning and disinfecting. Review cleaning/disinfecting/sanitizing product labels to determine glove and other PPE requirements. Provide chemical hazard training to employees.
- ❑ Purchase face masks or cloth face coverings for guests and PPE for staff.
- ❑ Purchase cleaning supplies appropriate to sanitize the type of surfaces and products found in your facility.
- ❑ Consider suspending coffee and other vending services.
- ❑ Maintain adequate records of individuals attending in-person meetings on-site, including names, telephone numbers and visit dates, to assist if contact tracing becomes necessary. Also maintain accurate remote work records of staff.

## ☑ Cleaning Schedule

### Between Customers/Frequently

- ❑ Common areas (door handles, copiers, elevator buttons)
- ❑ Restrooms

### Daily

- ❑ Clean HVAC intakes
- ❑ Counters, tables, workstations