

COVID-19 Guidance for Community Non-Profit Services

This is general guidance for community, non-profit and voluntary sector service organizations as they plan and offer services during the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance is appropriate for services and programs delivered to groups and individuals in non-clinical and non-residential settings. Tailored resources are available for [specialized community and workplace settings](#).

As every organization will be different, it is ultimately the responsibility of management and staff to review their own policies, procedures and site-specific circumstances, and to assess their ability to deliver programs and activities while ensuring that the appropriate health and safety measures are implemented and maintained.

For information about how to assess COVID-19 risks and to plan risk modification for your service setting, please refer to the Toronto Public Health [Four Step Risk Assessment and Risk Mitigation Guide for Community Non-Profit Services and Programs](#). Stay up to date with [provincial orders](#) under the [Reopening Ontario Act](#), as well as City of Toronto [orders and bylaws](#) and Toronto Public Health (TPH) guidance at www.toronto.ca/COVID19.

Provincial Orders ([O. Reg. 263/20](#))

Community centres and multi-purpose facilities may open for the following purposes if they comply with the conditions below:

- Permitting the use of facilities for [outdoor sports and recreational fitness activities](#) that are permitted to be open.
- Providing space for a [day camp](#) for children.
- Permitting the use of [pools, splash pads, spray pads and wading pools](#).
- Providing indoor activities and services, other than non-aquatic indoor sports and recreational fitness activities.
- Providing space for the provision of an authorized recreational and skill building program within the meaning of the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.

Conditions:

- Communal kitchens in the community centre or multi-purpose facility must be **closed**.
- Interior dining spaces in the community centre or multi-purpose facility must be **closed**.

COVID-19 Transmission

Respiratory transmission: [COVID-19](#) is an illness that is spread mainly from person-to-person through close contact from respiratory droplets of someone with COVID-19. The respiratory droplets can travel up to two metres/six feet when we cough, sneeze, talk or sing.

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Contaminated surfaces: It is possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes. This new coronavirus can survive on plastic and stainless steel surfaces for [up to 72 hours](#).

At-risk populations: The risk of severe illness from COVID-19 is greater for older adults, and people with an underlying medical condition or a weakened immune system (e.g. due to a medical condition or treatment). People living on a low income, who are under-housed or experiencing homelessness, or living in congregate settings such as retirement homes or rooming houses may also be disproportionately impacted by the virus. Organizations should consider the vulnerability of employees, volunteers, clients and visitors when planning their services and programs.

Protective Measures to Keep Everyone Safe

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Keep a two metre/six feet distance from others, when possible.
- Wash your hands often, and avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Wear a face mask or covering when you are in indoor public spaces, and when physical distancing is difficult.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Mask/face coverings for staff and clients

- Use of non-medical masks or face coverings is required by everyone in all indoor public spaces, as per a new City of Toronto [bylaw](#) and [O. Reg. 263/20](#). Some exceptions apply.
- Masks are strongly recommended in outdoor settings when physical distancing is not possible.
- Operators are required to develop a policy and protocols on the wearing of masks. More information is available [here](#).
- Alternative ways to provide service to people who cannot wear a mask should be considered. For example, providing service at the end of the day, with no other clients in the location, and keeping a two metre/six foot physical distance as much as possible.

Practice physical distancing

- [Physical distancing](#) means keeping a distance of two meters/six feet from others.
- Maintain physical distancing by limiting the number of people (including all clients, employees and volunteers) onsite at one time.
- The number of clients allowed in the space should be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres/six feet. Organized groups and social programming cannot exceed 10 people indoors or 25 people outdoors.
- Remind clients and staff to greet each other using non-physical gestures (e.g. wave or nod).
- Physical distancing must not compromise supervision or safety.

Modify the physical space

- Walk through your space(s) to identify areas needing modifications.
- Remove non-essential furniture to allow ease of movement for physical distancing.
- Space seating and activity stations at least two metres/six feet apart.
- Provide visual guides such as tape on floors or tables, posters, pylons and flags to delineate two metres/six feet.
- Limit entrances to reduce staff and clients entering the setting at any given time.
- Post [physical distancing signs](#) at all entrances, in hallways, elevators, kitchens and meeting rooms.

Install transparent barriers, where needed

- Consider installing plexiglass or other physical barriers if physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Barriers should also be wide enough to accommodate the normal movement of both people.
- [Download](#) more information about installing effective barriers.

Modify services and programming

- Do not have clients wait in a waiting room. Ask clients to call when they arrive and wait outside.
- Consider virtual activities, modified job responsibilities and telework options.
- Use telephone or video conferencing when possible for meetings.
- If multiple programs are provided onsite at the same time, stagger program activities, snack times, meals and washroom breaks to contact between participants from different programs.
- Where possible, establish cohort groups consisting of the same clients and staff rather than mixing groups.
- Assign cohort groups a designated room/space.
- Incorporate and prioritize individual activities that encourage more space between participants so that physical distancing can be maintained.
- Contact sports, games or activities are permitted due to physical distancing requirements.

Modify the use of equipment

- Offer activities that only use items that can be easily cleaned and disinfected or are single use and disposed of at the end of the day/program (e.g. craft supplies).
- Minimize the sharing and frequency of touching objects, equipment, surfaces and personal items.
- Provide individualized, labelled bins for participant's supplies and items (e.g. craft supplies).
- Keep participants personal belongings to minimum. Personal items such as water bottles or coffee mugs should be labelled and stored separately.

Support and promote healthy commuting

- Provision of bussing or other transportation is not recommended at this time.
- If transportation is provided, limit the number of passengers to facilitate physical distancing as much as possible. Also refer to COVID-19 guidance related to [taxis and ride sharing](#).
- Provide guidance to staff, volunteers and clients who commute via public transit or ride/share/taxi:
 - Wear a mask and open the windows, if possible.
 - Use elbow/arm to push buttons/open doors.
 - Sit in the back when using taxi and ride share.
 - Avoid travel during peak hours, if possible.
 - Avoid touching your face.
 - Do not use transit if you are sick or self-isolating.

Workplace Health and Safety

Employers must have written measures and procedures for staff safety, including for infection prevention and control. Review the [Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) to plan and implement protocols to keep staff and customers safe, including:

- **Staff attendance and operations**
- **Health screening for staff and customers:**
 - [Actively screen](#) staff and volunteers before each shift, and clients prior to entering. Questions can be answered on paper, online or by asking people directly.
 - Where possible, clients attending for an appointment should be screened by phone prior to arrival.
 - Offer to reschedule appointments for clients when they are sick.
- **Mask/face coverings for staff and customers**
- **Cleaning and disinfection**
 - Remind clients and staff not to share items, including food, dishes, articles of clothing, ear buds, phones or other electronic devices, personal items such as combs or make-up, cigarettes, vapes, supplies, etc.
 - Label and use separate baskets or bags for clean and dirty laundry items. Laundry baskets or reusable bags must be sanitized between uses.
 - Dirty laundry must be placed in a lined laundry bin for washing with hot water and detergent using a washing machine. Dryers should be used as the heat further kills any viruses.
- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**
 - Ensure that staff and clients have the ability to practice hand hygiene often, and when needed:
 - Incorporate hand hygiene into breaks between activities and before and after snacks/ meals.
 - Supervise/assist clients with hand hygiene if necessary.
- **Managing COVID-19 in the workplace**

Track attendance

- It is strongly recommended that daily attendance records are maintained for all clients, volunteers and employees, visitors, deliveries/contractors for 30 days to support public health contact tracing efforts (e.g. name, date, time, and contact information).
- Some people may have concerns about having personal information tracked. It is important to communicate to everyone that that attendance tracking is voluntary, and that information is being collected to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Monitor attendance records for patterns or trends (e.g. clients/staff in the same group absent at the same time or over the course of a few days).
- Consider following up with clients and staff to determine the reason for any unplanned absences.
- Contact TPH if there is an increase in absenteeism associated with symptoms of COVID-19.
- If a client or staff have COVID-19 and were contagious onsite, TPH will investigate and notify those who may have been exposed.
- Encourage staff and clients to download the [COVID Alert app](#) so they can be notified directly if they have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.

Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems

- Increase the introduction and circulation of outdoor air by maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or by opening windows and doors, where possible. Avoid recirculating air.
- Ensure the HVAC system(s) are properly maintained.
- Where provided, use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system.
- Increase air-exchanges if possible.
- Keep areas near HVAC inlets and outlets clear.
 - Seating should be arranged away from areas with high airflow (i.e. not in front of air vents).
- Facilities without HVAC systems should increase ventilation by opening windows and doors. However, do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk to staff and customers.
- Rooms where ceiling fans are used should have an upward airflow rotation.
- If portable fans are used, limit the blowing of air across people and surfaces by positioning them to provide an upward movement of air.
- There is no evidence for the use of portable air purifiers to prevent the spread of COVID-19. If used, follow the manufacturer's directions (and possibly the advice of a service professional) to decide where best to place the device. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on maintenance.
- For more information, review the [COVID-19: Transmission, Aerosols and Ventilation](#) fact sheet.

Increase public health awareness

- Communicate to clients, volunteers and employees about the changes you have made to protect them against COVID-19 by updating information on your website, voice mail, etc.
- [Download](#) printable posters and display in high visibility areas in your setting to promote messages about how to stay safe during COVID-19.

Other Resources

- [Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)
- [Guidance for Employers on Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)
- [Food Banks and Donation Centres](#)
- [Homelessness Services and Congregate Living Settings](#)
- [Child Care Services](#)
- [Day Camps and Children's Programs](#)
- [Personal Support Services](#)
- [Long-Term Care Homes and Services](#)
- [Restaurants and Food Premises](#)

More information

For more information, visit our website at www.toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.

References

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