



OFFICE SETTINGS CHECKLIST

SAFE RETURN TO BUSINESS



WINDSOR-ESSEX REGIONAL
Chamber of Commerce

For more detailed recommendations and links to additional helpful resources, please review the **“Safe Return to Business: A Public Health Toolkit for the Windsor-Essex Business Community”** document from the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit. *This checklist is meant to be a guide for businesses and should not take place of any legal advice or rules put in place by any governing body or legislation.*

Stay updated on the latest federal actions, current provincial restrictions, and local orders by visiting WECHU’s **Restrictions & Guidance webpage** and visit WECHU’s **Workplace Specific Webpage** to find other Safe Return to Business Checklists providing specific guidance to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

***This document is subject to change and is current as of September 22, 2020*

COMMUNICATION TO STAFF AND CUSTOMERS

- ☐ Inform staff and customers/clients about your re-opening timeline and changes to how your business will operate. Use as many methods of communication as possible, such as subscribed email lists, direct customer phone calls for urgent matters, social media, and your website.
- ☐ Encourage staff and customers/clients to download the **COVID-19 Alert App** so that they may receive notifications if they were in close contact with someone who was tested positive for COVID-19.
- ☐ Post signage at entrances and throughout the building that clearly communicate procedures for physical distancing between staff and customers. This include posters and floor markings such as instructional tape/stickers that direct the flow of people or customers waiting for services, including any outdoor waiting areas. Examples of signage can be found in Appendix B in the **Toolkit** or the **Resources & Signage** section of the WECHU website.
- ☐ Displaying **“Stand Here”** and **“Do Not Enter...If You Are Sick”** signage can serve as important components of a broader communication strategy to minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread between employees, staff, and customers. The two signs noted above (i.e., floor sticker and window cling) are available in English in limited supply by completing the **“Business Reopening Signage Order Form.”**
- ☐ Post signage to communicate entry procedures such as **hand sanitizing, sneeze and cough etiquette**, wearing of cloth masks, and/or screening for symptoms.

- ☐ Ensure employees are aware of common **COVID-19 symptoms** and instruct them to complete a daily **COVID-19 self-assessment** before reporting to work.
- ☐ Ensure customers and staff know to stay home if they are sick.
- ☐ Provide training to employees on effective **hand hygiene practices** and if required, the **proper way to put on and remove PPE** such as masks, face shields, gowns, and gloves.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- ☐ Create policies and procedures that outline roles and responsibilities of the employer and the employee, including **cleaning and disinfection of the workplace**, how workers can report signs of illnesses, how to handle potentially high levels of employee absenteeism, staff return to work after COVID-19 illness, and how work will be scheduled.
- ☐ Create a response plan to handle an employee/staff member or customer/client who becomes ill while at work or in your business.
- ☐ Decide which staff will be returning to work and what job function they will be assigned to. Consider staggered staff return dates and times to minimize large groups arriving at once.

HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- ☐ Order an adequate supply of **approved disinfecting solution or wipes**, and an alcohol-based hand rub (hand sanitizer) with a minimum of 60% alcohol content, liquid hand soap, and paper towels. These should be easily accessible to employees.
- ☐ Print and display **posters** describing proper methods of hand washing and hand sanitizing.
- ☐ If a building has been shut down for an extended period of time, it is important to perform a general building inspection that includes:
 - ☐ Security system checks.
 - ☐ First aid supply checks.
 - ☐ Ensuring all tools and equipment are in good working order.
 - ☐ Discarding any expired or spoiled inventory.
 - ☐ Checking for evidence of pest/rodent infestation such as droppings.
 - ☐ Checking the HVAC system to ensure it is in good working order and replace filters if necessary.
 - ☐ Flushing all drinking water taps for at least 5 minutes.
 - ☐ Performing a deep cleaning and disinfection throughout the business.
- ☐ Complete any needed modifications in areas where there will be staff and/or customers, to assist with physical distancing and proper cleaning and disinfection. For example:
 - ☐ Installing Plexiglas barriers at check-outs and/or between workers who must work in close proximity to each other.

- ☐ Replacing fabric/plush furniture with hard surfaces that can be easily cleaned and disinfected.
- ☐ Providing additional garbage bins for safe disposal of used PPE, tissues, and paper towels.
- ☐ Choose your information sources wisely. Check the [WECHU website](#) regularly for updates and helpful resources and bookmark official municipal, provincial and federal government websites.
- ☐ If required, order [supplies](#) including disposable masks for customers and disposable or reusable masks for staff. Medical masks should not be used as these are being conserved for health care workers. Print and display posters describing [proper usage](#).

OTHER REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Face Covering Requirements

- ☐ It is strongly recommended that all individuals wear a face covering in all indoor spaces, public spaces and in outdoor spaces where physical distancing may be a challenge. However, the following office settings are exempt from the [Section 22 class order](#) issued by Windsor-Essex County's Medical Officer of Health under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, mandating the use of face coverings in commercial establishments:
 - ☐ Offices that are not open to members of the public (e.g., private or administrative offices)
 - ☐ Professional offices where clients receive purchased services (e.g., lawyer/accountant offices) that are not open to members of the public
 - ☐ Offices of regulated health professionals (check with your regulatory body for specific guidance)
- ☐ **Please note:** Local municipalities may have enacted by-laws with stricter requirements for all indoor settings, in addition to the Section 22 class order mandating the use of face coverings in commercial establishments. **Refer to [WECHU's 'Face Masks and Coverings' webpage](#) or your local municipality's webpage for more information about the requirements for your facility.**

Operational Considerations

- ☐ Consider adopting an appointment only policy to limit the number of people within the office space at any given time.
- ☐ Consider implementing staggered shifts, or remote work arrangements (e.g., work from home), if possible.
- ☐ Consider adjusting hours of operations to accommodate vulnerable populations (e.g., older adults, those with chronic health conditions) at dedicated times.
- ☐ Use contactless and/or virtual communication methods when possible. If in-person meetings can't be avoided, choose safe spaces (indoor or outdoor) where physical distancing can be ensured or have all meeting attendees [wear masks if physical distancing cannot be maintained](#).

- ☐ Restrict the number of employees in shared spaces, such as kitchens, break rooms, and offices to maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres between each person.
- ☐ Ensure that employees are trained to regularly clean and disinfect their workstations and equipment such as computer/laptop accessories and work phone. If sharing workspaces is unavoidable due to shift work, ensure that cleaning is required between shifts and that signage is posted indicating that the workstation has been cleaned/sanitized.
- ☐ Sanitize the workplace thoroughly and often, with an emphasis on objects in high-traffic areas, frequently touched objects, and surfaces in common areas, such as door handles, entryways, touch pads/buttons, kitchen surfaces and appliances, and other shared office equipment such as staplers and printers.
- ☐ Washrooms available for staff and the public should be regularly cleaned and the surfaces/objects disinfected. Ensure that the washrooms are stocked with paper towels and that the soap containers are regularly refilled.
- ☐ Provide ample waste disposal options in both public and staff-only areas. Line waste containers with plastic bags for safer garbage disposal.
- ☐ If the reception/waiting area is small and physical distancing is difficult to maintain, recommend that clients/customers wait in their vehicles or outside until their scheduled appointment time. Advise them to call when they arrive and inform them when it is safe to enter the office.
- ☐ If your workplace typically handles cash, consider adopting a cashless no touch method of payment (e.g., visa or debit).
- ☐ Food and beverages should not be shared between individuals. Communal sharing of food, such as candy dishes, snacks, and potlucks are not permitted at this time.
- ☐ If water fountains in your facilities are not touchless, consider shutting them down and encouraging attendees to bring their own water bottle or provide single-use water bottles. Limit drinking directly from the water fountain and instead encourage the filling of water bottles. Ensure that the water fountain is cleaned and sanitized regularly throughout the day.

RESOURCES

Government of Ontario

[Guidance for professional meeting and event facilities during COVID-19](#)

Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA)

[Health and Safety Guidance During COVID-19 For Employers of Office Settings](#)

Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA)

[COVID-19: Precautions When Working As A Municipal Office/Inside Worker](#)

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS)

[Guidance on Health and Safety for Office Sector during COVID-19](#)

[Guidance on Health and Safety for Office Administration and Secretarial Staff during COVID-19](#)