Cook County Department of Public Health has collected answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for employers from our health department, as well as local, state and federal agencies.

Stay-At-Home Order Requirements

Am I considered an essential business?

For information on whether your business is essential, please see this Essential Business and Operations FAQ from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (Dept. of Commerce). It has answers to many questions about specific types of businesses.

If you still are not sure, you can reach out to the Dept. of Commerce at 1-800-252-2923 or CEO.support@illinois.gov.

What am I required to do if I'm a retail store?

Retail stores (including stores that sell groceries and medicine, hardware stores, greenhouses, garden centers, and nurseries) designated as Essential Businesses and Operations must:

- Provide face coverings to all employees who are not able to maintain a 6-foot distance at all times
- Cap occupancy at 50 percent of store capacity, or alternatively, at the occupancy limits based on the store square footage set by the Dept. of Commerce. Please see related FAQ below.
- Where practical, set-up store aisles to be one-way to maximize spacing between customers.
- Identify one-way aisles with conspicuous signage and/or floor markings
- Communicate with customers through in-store signage, public service announcements, and ads about the social distancing requirements
- Discontinue use of reusable bags

What are the alternative occupancy limits for essential businesses?

Stores must limit customers in the store at one time to 5 customers per 1,000 square feet. This excludes employees. The customer occupancy limit is calculated by taking the total square footage of the permanent structure the business occupies and divide by 1,000. If the square footage of the facility is less than 1,000, the number of people is also less than 5 based on percentage.

What am I required to do if I'm a manufacturer?

Manufacturers that continue to operate must follow Social Distancing Requirements and take appropriate precautions, which may include:

- Providing face coverings to all employees who are not able to maintain a minimum 6-foot social distance at all times
- Staggering shifts and reducing line speeds
- Operating only essential lines, while shutting down non-essential lines

- Ensuring that all spaces where employees may gather, including locker rooms and lunchrooms, allow for social distancing
- Downsizing operations to allow for social distancing and to provide a safe workplace in response to the COVID-19 emergency.

Curbside Pick-up

How can I safely implement curbside pick-up?

- To the extent feasible and to minimize contact, curbside pick-up orders should be paid for online or over the telephone.
- Businesses and organizations are encouraged to schedule a pick-up or drop-off to ensure compliance with social distancing requirements.
- Staff within the business or facility should be limited to the minimum number of staff required to fulfill orders, and to the number that can safely practice social distancing.
- Customers should not enter the business or facility.
- Some organizations have developed a palett system, where staff place orders outside on a palette for customers to pick up. When the customer arrives, they notify the store. The employee then places the order on the palett, and the customer picks up the order once the employee has returned to the store.

Masks and Gloves

How do I or an employee properly wear masks?

- Before putting on a mask, clean hands with hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- Cover mouth and nose with mask. Make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask.
- Avoid touching the mask while using it. If you touch your mask, clean your hands with hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- Replace the mask with a new one as soon as it is damp or visibly soiled. Otherwise, masks should be changed once a week.
- To remove the mask: remove it from behind and do not touch the front of mask. Clean hands with hand sanitizer or soap and water after removing it.

Can I refuse business for someone who's not wearing a mask/face covering?

Yes. A store or business can prohibit someone from entering the building if they do not have a face covering in order to protect the health of others. However, if someone has a medical condition or disability that prevents them from safely wearing a face-covering, then store employees should provide a reasonable accommodation to help them obtain the services they need. Businesses cannot impose different face-covering requirements based on race, national origin, religion, or age. For more, including information on reasonable accommodations, see this face covering FAQ from the Dept. of Human Rights.

Do customers have to prove they have a medical condition or disability that prevents me from wearing a face covering?

No. Proof of a medical condition or disability is not required. It is enough for a customer to communicate that they have a medical condition or disability that prevents them from safely wearing a face-covering. For more, please see this face covering FAQ from the Dept. of Human Rights.

Can I ask someone to remove their mask/face-covering?

Yes. There are circumstances when a customer should temporarily remove their face-covering for the purpose of checking identification, such as if they are purchasing alcohol, cannabis, or certain medicine. If a customer is asked to remove their face-covering in order to check identification, a customer should stand behind a partition, when present, or at least six feet away from other people.

What do I do if I am unable to secure mask/face-covering?

If you are unable to secure masks, many local businesses now sell cloth face coverings. You can also make your own cloth masks following the instructions at this website. Cloth face coverings should be washed after every use. A washing machine should suffice in properly washing a face covering.

Should employees wear gloves?

Even during COVID-19, glove wearing is not needed in situations where gloves are not normally required. Employees should wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer if available. If wearing gloves, please throw them away at the end of a shift or before breaks.

Temperature Checks

Should I take the temperatures of employees?
Screening employees is an optional strategy that employers may use. There are several methods that employers can use to protect the employee conducting the temperature screening. The most protective methods incorporate social distancing (maintaining a distance of 6 feet from others), or physical barriers to eliminate or minimize the screener's exposures due to close contact with a person who has symptoms during screening. The Illinois Department of Public Health has a Symptom Monitoring Form on its website. For more details, please see the related FAQ from the CDC.

Should I take the temperatures of customers?

Temperature checks are best suited for employees and not for customers, since customers are likely in a store for short periods of time. If instituting screenings, please ensure that employees conducting screenings are properly protected and that there are protocols for when a customer has a temperature.

Other Ways to Protect Employees

When should employees wash their hands?
Employees should wash their hands in the following situations:

- When they put on or take off a mask
- Before and after the work shift
- After they arrive at home after a work shift
- Before and after work breaks
- After touching objects that have been handled by customers
- After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing
- Before, during, and after preparing food
- After using the toilet
- After touching garbage

What else can I do to protect my employees?

- At least once a day clean and disinfect surfaces frequently touched by multiple people. This includes door handles, desks, phones, light switches, and faucets,
- Consider assigning a person to rotate throughout the workplace to clean and disinfect surfaces.
- Consider scheduling handwashing breaks so employees can wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Consider scheduling a relief person to give cashiers and service desk workers an opportunity to wash their hands.
- In retail and workplaces where it's difficult to eliminate face-to-face contact, consider assigning higher risk employees work that allows them to maintain a 6-foot distance from others.

Employees with COVID-19

What if I have an employee who has a confirmed case of COVID-19?

- Encourage the employee to follow recommendations from their doctor and health department about isolation at home.
- Ask the employee about their first day of their symptoms, if they had symptoms at work, and any individuals at work they had close contact with 48 hours before symptoms developed and when they had symptoms. Close contact is defined as within 6 feet for more than 10 minutes.
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure but maintain confidentiality as required by federal law.
- Contacts of contacts have no restrictions. Facilities should not close because contacts of contacts of cases visited that location.
- If an employee had close contact with another employee, then they should stay home until 14 days after the last exposure, self-monitor for symptoms, avoid contact with high-risk individuals, and follow [this guidance](#) if symptoms develop.
- Perform cleaning and disinfection after person with COVID-19 was in the facility. Details of the type of cleaning and disinfection varies depending on the kind of workplace or business. For non-healthcare facilities (e.g., offices, daycare centers, businesses, community centers) close off the area used by the sick person, wait 24 hours or as long as possible before you clean or disinfect. Please see detailed cleaning recommendations at the CDC's [website](#).

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When can an employee return to work after they've been sick with COVID-19?

- Employers *should not* require a COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work.
- For persons recovered from COVID-19 illness, isolation at home can end and they can return to work 10 days *after illness onset* AND at least 3 days (72 hours) *after recovery*.
  - Illness onset is defined as the date symptoms begin.
  - Recovery is defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications with progressive improvement or resolution of other symptoms.

Other Resources

Where can I get financial assistance for my business?

For information on local and federal assistance for your business, please see this list of [Emergency Resources for Businesses](#) from the Dept. of Commerce. The resource is also available in [Spanish](#).

For information on the Cook County Recovery Initiative, a comprehensive initiative to provide economic relief to small businesses, non-profits, and community service organizations, please see the [Cook County Community Recovery Initiative](#) website.

Additional COVID-19 Resources for Businesses

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [General Business FAQ](#)
- Illinois Department of Public Health [Business and Organization Guidance](#)
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity [COVID-19 Resources](#)
- Cook County [Cook County Community Recovery Initiative](#)
- Illinois Department of Human Rights [FAQ for Businesses on Face Coverings](#)

Cook County COVID-19 Resources

- Call CCDPH's COVID-19 Hotline: 708-633-3319
  - Our hours are Monday through Friday, 9am-4pm
  - Voicemails can be left outside of normal business hours and on the weekend.
- Email us: ccdph.covid19@cookcountyhhs.org
- Visit CCDPH's COVID-19 Website: https://bit.ly/ccdphcovid19
- Visit the Cook County ShinyApp for the latest data
- Follow us on Facebook and Twitter
- Text ALERTCOOK (one-word) to 888-777 for text alerts
- Nominate an Everyday Hero: https://bit.ly/2KOuF1e