



# CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
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Dear Executives and Business Owners,

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a new coronavirus. To date, there have been no cases of infection from this virus (COVID-19) identified in Philadelphia, but this is a rapidly evolving situation, and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) is taking steps to prepare. We are recommending that businesses and nonprofit organizations take the steps below now so that they are prepared if community transmission of this virus were to occur. These steps can help slow spread of the virus and protect vulnerable populations, while still maintaining the continuity of your critical operations.

## **Develop or review a Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan.**

- Consider the essential resources needed to keep your organization operating.
- Consider the effects on your organization's operations if absenteeism were 25-40%.
- Identify and cross-train employees to perform essential roles in the case of severe staffing shortages.
  - Consider which employees would most likely be absent if schools close.
  - Identify alternate staff to fill essential positions.
- Plan how to communicate and coordinate with employees, customers/clients, and suppliers during emergencies.
- Consider trigger points to:
  - Reduce operations to core activities with a diminished workforce
  - Temporarily reduce services
  - Shorten hours of operation
- Consider on-site housing arrangements for employees performing critical roles, if this were to become necessary.

## **Encourage employees to stay home when sick.**

- Develop flexible policies for employees who need to stay home when they or their family members are sick, particularly:
  - Policies regarding unscheduled absences
  - Policies regarding use of sick time
  - Return to work policies
  - Compensation
- Suspend policies requiring physicians' notes for extended sick leave.
- Educate employees about the availability of leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).
- Consider mandatory sick leave for employees with fever or respiratory symptoms.
- Consider reassigning employees who are at an increased risk for severe complications associated with COVID-19 away from direct contact with customers and clients.

**Educate employees on the outbreak and preparedness.**

- Provide employees with links to COVID-19 information from the [Philadelphia Department of Public Health](http://www.phila.gov/health) (www.phila.gov/health) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/) (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/).
- Provide information to employees regarding the organization's continuity plan.
- Circulate information on respiratory etiquette and environmental cleaning procedures.
- Encourage employees to create personal emergency preparedness plans.
  - Include alternative childcare arrangements, where applicable.

**Ensure the availability of essential technology and supplies.**

- Work with IT to support continued communications (e.g., email, remote access, conference calls, webinars, etc.).
- Identify supply needs for 2-5-week periods.
- Stockpile infection control supplies, including handwashing products (soap, towels, hand sanitizers), tissues, and materials to produce educational materials on infection control (paper, printer ink, toner).

**Be prepared to take steps to reduce employee interaction if recommended.**

- Be prepared to encourage employees to work from home, if possible.
- Be prepared to cancel large meetings.

**Limit non-essential travel.**

- Consider limiting or canceling trips.
- Avoid affected areas with active COVID-19 transmission.

**Provide hygiene products.**

- Place tissues and hand sanitizer in common areas of the workplace.
- Ensure that soap and paper towels are stocked in restrooms at all times.

**Discourage handshakes.**

- Discourage the use of handshakes as a greeting between employees and customers.

**Establish infection control measures in regard to environmental cleanliness.**

- All office space and common facilities (e.g., bathrooms, conference rooms, workstations) should be cleaned regularly and surface areas disinfected daily.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit our website at [www.phila.gov/health](http://www.phila.gov/health).

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Farley, MD, MPH  
Commissioner, Philadelphia Department of Public Health