Outpatient Health Care Facilities

SAFE MODE: Guidelines for safer operations during the COVID-19 pandemic

As Philadelphia residents and workers restart economic and physical activities, they must do so safely—that is, in a way that prevents the COVID-19 virus from spreading from person to person. Everyone must take precautions consistently to protect not only themselves, but also their family members, friends, colleagues, and everyone else.

The precautions will vary by the activity and setting, but some general guidelines apply to all.

Safety Checklist

- **Masks**
  Block the virus from spreading from infected individuals by wearing masks and requiring others to wear them.

- **Barriers**
  Use sneeze guards or plexiglass screens to prevent respiratory droplets expelled by infected persons from reaching others.

- **Isolate**
  Keep people who might be carrying the virus safely away from others (ideally at home).

- **Distance**
  Maintain space between people to reduce the chance that one infected individual will infect others.

- **Reduce crowds**
  Decrease the number of people that an infected person could pass the virus to if other steps are not successful.

- **Handwashing**
  Reduce the spread of virus from one person to another from touching contaminated surfaces.

- **Clean**
  Remove respiratory droplets that may contain virus from surfaces that people may touch.

- **Communicate**
  Ensure staff, customers, and others taking part in permitted activities understand this Safety Checklist.

This Safety Checklist must be followed at all times. If an employee, customer, or participant develops COVID-19 infection or has a positive test, businesses and other organizations must take additional precautions to stop the virus from spreading further, as described in Guidance for Essential Businesses and Organizations During COVID-19. Required precautions include calling the Philadelphia Department of Public Health at 215-685-6741 to report positive cases.

If employees or customers want to report possible health and safety violations in the workplace related to COVID-19, please call 311.

If you have questions or concerns about the applicability of these guidelines to your business, please email business@phila.gov.

Note that guidance in this document is subject to change. Please check back for updates.

This document is intended as a plain language summary of rules for reopening in the Yellow Phase and does not replace the need to follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

See also:

1. [Order](#) of the Secretary of Health providing for building safety measures, issued April 5, 2020.
2. [Order](#) of the Secretary of Health providing for business safety measures (to keep employees and customers safe), issued April 15, 2020.
5. [Other future applicable Department of Health](#) (DOH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance.
HEALTH CARE

Outpatient Health Care Facilities

The following is intended as a plain language summary of rules for reopening in the Yellow Phase and does not replace the need to follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

See also:
CDC guidelines for Outpatient and Ambulatory Care Settings.
PA COVID-19 Information for Health Care Facilities.

Protections Needed

 Masks
- Maintain universal masking and all safety practices from Red Phase.
- Require employees and patients to mask while on site except only as necessary for the employee to eat or drink during break times. The employee should be seated at least 6 feet from others when taking off mask.

 Barriers
- Consider use of plastic barriers between staff, patients, and visitors where appropriate (for example check-in desks).

 Isolate
- Screen every employee for symptoms before every shift and prevent them from remaining on site if they have cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, muscle pain, or new loss of taste or smell.
- It is not necessary to conduct on-site temperature measurement for staff. If you measure temperatures, use a no-touch thermometer, and do not allow anyone with a temperature of 100.4 or higher to remain on-site.
- Have sick leave policies in place so that employees excluded from the workplace do not lose earnings.

- If an employee develops COVID-19 infection or has a positive test, businesses and other organizations must take additional precautions to stop the virus from spreading further, as described in Guidance for Essential Businesses and Organizations During COVID-19. Required precautions include calling PDPH at 215 685-6741 to report positive cases.

 Distance
- Adjust work assignments to ensure employees can stay 6 feet from each other throughout their shifts when possible.
- Ensure patients in waiting areas can sit at least 6 feet apart.

 Reduce crowds
- Consider changes to appointment scheduling to minimize numbers in waiting areas.

 Handwashing
- Place handwashing stations or hand sanitizer at office entry and outside bathrooms for all staff and visitors with prominent signage promoting use.
- Emphasize importance of hand hygiene between each patient encounter for all staff.

 Clean
- Wipe down high-touch surfaces with disinfectant at least once every 4 hours. See CDC guidance for details.

 Communicate
- Educate staff about symptoms and prevention of COVID-19.
- Have front desk staff hand out masks to all patients who are not already wearing them on arrival.
- Post prominent signs at entrances and in employee break rooms:
  - Asking people who are sick to call to notify staff before entering.
  - Encouraging people to cover coughs or sneezes
  - Mandating physical distancing of at least 6 feet for both patients and staff, including while queueing at check-in desk.
  - Mandating that all staff and patients wear masks.

 Other
- Encourage routine health maintenance and visits for care of chronic conditions, using telemedicine where possible.
- Consider separate “sick” and “well” waiting room areas.
- Separate office hours for sick visits and routine visits to help avoid transmission.
- Promote routine and catch-up immunizations.