

## COVID-19 Return to Work

4/27/2020

On April 16, 2020, President Donald Trump announced new federal guidelines entitled “Opening Up America Again” that governors can use to re-open their states amid the coronavirus pandemic. In light of these guidelines, a number of state and local officials have begun to lift business closure restrictions.

“Opening Up America Again” lays out three phases that slowly return life to a "new normal" and continues to use some of the most fundamental aspects of social distancing. "We are not opening all at once, but one careful step at a time."

The comprehensive guidelines focus on the individual State’s responsibilities of quick and efficient testing with contact tracing, sufficient healthcare capacity, and individualized planning. The purposes of the phases are to mitigate risk of resurgence and protect the most vulnerable.

Throughout each phase, there are guidelines that remain constant. Good hygiene and remaining in social isolation when you are sick remain the most effective methods of protecting an individual and the community. Employers are encouraged to adhere to industry best practices concerning personal protective equipment, social distancing, temperature checks, testing, contact tracing, sanitation, and travel.

The proposed phased approach is outlined as follows:

- Phase 1: All vulnerable individuals continue to stay at home. Physical distancing must be practiced in public places and non-essential travel must be minimized. If schools are closed, they should stay closed. Visiting senior living centers is still not allowed. Employers should continue to encourage telework and return to work in phases.
- Phase 2: Non-essential travel may resume. People should avoid public gatherings of 50 or more, unless physical distancing is possible. Visits to senior centers would still be prohibited, but schools and day care centers could reopen.
- Phase 3: This would be the country's "new normal." Physical distancing in public places is still recommended, but vulnerable individuals can resume public activities. Visits to senior centers can resume. Employers should resume unrestricted staffing of worksites.

There is no set timeline for moving through each of the three phases. State and local officials are being encouraged to adhere to “gating criteria” to move through the phases. These criteria include a downward trajectory of COVID-19 cases and an increase in healthcare capacity.

When Americans do leave their homes, federal guidance now urges everyone to wear face coverings in public to curb the spread of COVID-19. To preserve the supply of medical masks, these face coverings can be non-medical masks, T-shirts or bandanas and they can be used while out at everyday shopping spots such as the grocery store, pharmacy or gas station.

### **PRIME's Services Related to Safe Return to Work Plans:**

1. Pre-access questionnaires
2. Pre-access temperature screening
3. Fit for Duty Telemedicine
4. COVID-19 tests, antibody (quick-screen) or lab confirm (nasal swab), at either PRIME clinics or onsite
5. Online real-time data management
6. Employer COVID-19 policy and procedure guidance
7. Other employer-specific action plans

The CDC has also offered the following employer return to work guidelines:

1. **Test-based strategy:** Exclude from work until
  - Resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
  - Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), **and**
  - Negative results of a molecular test from at least two consecutive nasal-like swab specimens collected  $\geq 24$  hours apart (total of two negative specimen).
2. **Non-test-based strategy:** Exclude from work until
  - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed *since recovery* defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **and**,
  - At least 7 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*
3. Workers with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 who have not had any symptoms should be excluded from work until 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test.

After returning to work, workers should:

- Wear a facemask or cloth mask for source control (avoid the worker from spreading the infection) at all times while in the work facility until all symptoms are completely resolved or until 14 days after illness onset, whichever is longer.
- Self-monitor for symptoms, and seek re-evaluation from worker's own medical provider if respiratory symptoms recur or worsen.