



**Frequently Asked Questions
Senior Centers Planning for Reopening
Updated July 15, 2020**

All Senior Centers planning to reopen should follow the most updated [Executive Orders](#) along with the [Senior Center Re-Opening Plan Guidance](#).

1) Do individual senior centers need to submit their self-assessments and reopening plans to be approved by the State?

No, the State has approved the Senior Center Re-Opening Plan Guidance and does not need to approve individual centers' self-assessments or plans. Centers should assess their readiness, develop their plans and, following [Executive Order Addendum 12](#), keep a copy at the center as documentation for both employees and VOSHA if requested.

If centers have questions about their plans, they may reach out to the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL).

2) Are masks to be worn at all times even with social distancing? If no, what are exceptions?

Mask wearing is an effective method for reducing spread of the virus. Masks should be worn at all times when inside the center. When outside, masks should be worn if people are less than 6 feet apart.

Indoor exceptions include mealtimes, talking on the phone, or when participants or staff are in an enclosed space without others (office, individual bathroom, etc.). In these cases, masks may be removed if people are able to stay at least 6 feet apart within the space. Masks should be put back on to walk around in the center.

Masks can be removed for physical activities when deep breathing or breathing hard occurs (for example, yoga, cardio exercise, etc.) if those activities are held outside. In these cases, masks may be removed if people are able to stay at least 6 feet apart, face the same direction, and stay in one general spot during the activity.



Because participants should wear face masks inside, centers are discouraged from offering group programming inside that involves deep breathing or hard breathing out of concern for participants being able to breath safely.

3) Can activities like a watercolor class (which will maintain the 6-foot rule) be allowed if they are together in a room for 3 hours? (with ventilation – open windows and door).

Yes, as long as all health and safety guidelines are being followed.

4) Would a boating trip for 20 on a large trawler be allowed? For 15? Is Kayaking allowed – keeping the 6ft rule?

Yes, as long as all health and safety guidelines are being followed, including physical distancing on the boat. See page 7 of the reopening guidance.

5) Is it accurate to assume that Mahjong and Bridge are not allowed for the foreseeable future?

Centers are discouraged from offering close contact due to the challenges with physical distancing. Games like Bridge could be offered outside, but participants must wear masks if less than 6 feet apart.

Also, participants should wash their hands before and after playing; and all high touch surfaces should be cleaned after each game, following the instructions on pages 8-9 of the senior center guidance.

6) Questions re: Testing scenarios:

- a. What is the protocol re positive tests?
- b. Who is notified about someone who reports having a positive test?
- c. Who is notified re contract tracing information?
- d. If someone has temperature and is *not* admitted to the Center – and tests positive later, would the tester need to quarantine?
- e. Would the Center need to close for 2 weeks?
- f. Would anyone who is present at the time the person had their temp taken need to quarantine?
- g. If someone has *no* fever - attends a course/event – and tests positive *less than 2 weeks* after their last visit, does everyone need to be tested and also quarantine for 2 weeks?
- h. Someone attends but tests positive *more than 2 weeks* from leaving Center – what is recommended?



Please see pages 6-7 for guidance on testing and center protocol. If you are aware of a staff, volunteer or participant testing positive, contact the Department of Health for more guidance at 802-863-7240.

7) Do all Center volunteers need to take the VOSHA training? If so, does that need to be documented? Where to send?

Yes, all people working at the center, whether paid staff or volunteers, should take the VOSHA training. This should be documented as part of your reopening plan and kept at the center but does not need to be sent to the State.

8) Can there be more than one designated Health Officer in the event of illness (not COVID)?

Per Addendum 12, it is required that there be one health officer on-site for every shift. You may designate one primary health officer and a secondary or back up health officer for the site as long as one designated health officer is on site whenever the site is open. Please document this in your center's plan.

9) Can personal vehicles be used for carpooling (driver+2 riders) if they are sanitized?

Individuals may choose to provide rides for others at their discretion. It is recommended that they follow the health and safety guidance for providing transportation as much as possible. See page 10 of the guidance.

10) Does the mandatory VOSHA/CDC training with verification apply to volunteer leaders?

Yes, see #7 above.

11) What responsibility do we have for monitoring external groups that meet outside at the Community Center after our regular hours?

If the Community Center allows external group to meet outside after regular hours, the Community Center is responsible for providing written guidance to the external group with an attestation that they will follow the guidance while on the premises. When possible, signage should be used as reminders.

12) In reference to item #13 in the Self-Assessment document can we add info that addresses centers that have 12 passenger vans? They could hold 3-4 passengers while still maintaining mandatory social distance?



Yes, as long as the physical distancing requirements and other health/safety requirements can be met regarding transporting participants, a 12 passenger van could hold 3-4 passengers at a time.

13) If we have an off-site group (kayak club) do they need to do temperature checks? They plan to do masks and social distancing during launching.

If an off-site event is organized by the center, all participants should do a health screening prior to participating in the event. See page 4 of the guidance.

14) We will be starting outdoor exercise classes in our 24'X28' open sided shelter. If a participant has a problem wearing a mask, can they locate on the lawn outside the shelter and participate without a mask?

See #2.

15) What is the measured correct distance between consumers (6 ft, 10 ft or 200 sq. ft)?

Physical distancing requires being at least 6 feet apart.

16) Does each nutrition program need to keep a copy of a consumers screening? Or just a daily roster for contact tracing?

A daily roster must be kept in case it is needed for contact tracing.

17) Our Area Agency on Aging (AAA) has collected at least one VOSHA certificate from every site and yesterday required that all employees have a certificate. Is it necessary for the AAA to have everyone's certificate or is it ok to have one person's at the AAA level and the rest of the certificates are held at the site, if needed?

It is not necessary for the AAA to have a copy of all VOSHA certificates for every senior center or meal site. It is the site's responsibility to ensure that staff and volunteers have taken the training and that this is documented on site.

18) Is there any information when the congregate meal sites would be available. I am thinking when we open instead of hot food offering bagged lunches which is safer than handling food. We had bagged lunches on Friday's last summer and they loved them for the hot weather.



It is allowable to offer congregate meals again, but the guidelines for doing so are very important to follow. See page 9 of the Senior Center Guidance, which includes the link to the congregate meal program guidelines here:

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/COVID-19-Congregate-Dining-Guidance.pdf>.

Given the challenges and risks, many programs may modify their meals significantly or continue to offer to-go/take-out meals instead of sit-down meals.

19) Are instructors allowed to come in and teach classes?

Yes, instructors, whether contracted service providers or volunteers, must follow the same health and safety guidelines as all staff and volunteers, including taking the VOSHA online training and doing the health screening before coming in to teach. See page 2-4 of the senior center guidance.

20) Is it OK to use an inside space for the seniors? We do not have room for a tent outside and will use a space that will be designated only for the groups usage and they will only use that entrance.

Yes, using indoor space is allowable. Wearing masks and physical distancing is very important inside. See page 7-8 of the senior center guidance for more on physical distancing.

21) How strict are the regulations for drop off and pick off if seniors are using SSTA (paratransit)? Does the state want the same driver dropping off and picking up? We use SSTA for a lot of the seniors.

SSTA will be following the health and safety guidelines for all transit providers, and SSTA will be screening their staff and volunteers, so it is fine to continue to use them to bring participants to the center. The recommendation to have the same person drop off and pick up is related more to individuals transporting people in their personal cars and seeking to limit exposures in that way.

22) Would there be funds available through the state to buy supplies to help facilitate the opening of facilities? I know day camps and children's programs received funds for purchases related to reopening.

It is allowable for the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) to use the federal CARES Act funds they have received to support expenses related to senior centers reopening. Please connect with your local AAA to request support for reopening costs.

23) Do staff need to wear their mask at all times while on the phone?



Staff may take off their masks as needed to talk on the phone, eat, drink, etc. if they are able to maintain physical distancing from others.

24)What are requirements around playing bocce where several people are touching the ball?

Participants (or a designated staff member) should wipe down the balls that they have touched during play after each game per the cleaning guidelines on page 9 of the senior center guidelines.

25)There was some talk earlier on about the State making recommendations about phasing in programs and priorities for earliest phases. Has this happened? For example, foot clinics, types of classes?

The State is allowing reopening and the centers are asked to assess their readiness to be able to meet the health and safety requirements while offering their programs and services. Because each center's offerings may look very different, what they are able to do under the new guidelines may look very different. As long as health and safety guidelines can be met, then programs and activities can be provided.

26)For tracing who comes to building - in the case of vendor deliveries (for food, supplies, etc.), do we need the name of the person or is the business name sufficient? Correct to assume they all need temp screening etc. as well?

When possible, have delivery persons practice contactless deliveries. Contactless deliveries are made at a doorstep, and then the delivery person should move back to a distance greater than 6 feet away while verifying receipt of the delivery with the recipient (if required), and try to do everything electronically whenever possible (e.g., in an app or over a phone). This eliminates the need for close contact between delivery person and delivery recipient. Contactless deliveries do not require contact information to be collected or health screenings.

Any delivery person that must enter the facility must wear a facial mask, maintain a minimum of six feet from all staff and participants, and should avoid contact with high-touch surfaces. For any delivery person that is entering the facility, and will be in the same space as participants, both the name of the person and their contact information would be needed on file. Such vendors would need a health screening and temperature check prior to accessing the building.



27) Also related to staff -- we have an office with two customer service / admin desks more than six feet apart, and both have sneeze shields installed already. If those two people are in the office at the same time in the future (August), must they ALWAYS wear their masks, are there exceptions?

Mask wearing is an effective method for reducing spread of the virus. Masks should be worn at all times when inside the center. There are exceptions, for example see #23 above.

28) If hiking and staying 6 feet apart, do you need to wear a mask?

No. See #2 above.

29) Does having Plexiglass dividers solve the six foot rule?

Even with dividers or sneeze shields, it is still recommended that staff wear masks indoors and try to stay 6 feet apart whenever possible.

30) The DAIL Guidance for Senior Center in Planning for Re-Opening says, "It is required that all staff and volunteers wear cloth facial coverings while providing services, and that participants wear cloth face coverings." I just want to clarify that this means that all participants must wear masks when they are in the facility. What about those who for example have had a stroke and do not have the ability to put on or remove masks?

The general guidance is to wear masks at all times at the center. There are exceptions. If someone cannot wear a mask, it would be important for them to understand the risks of going out and pay extra attention to physical distancing and how long they are in spaces with others. See page 5 of the senior center guidance which also recommends they consult with their healthcare provider.

31) We have an AC system in our building that reuses the same air. It does not bring in any fresh air. Is this a problem? Should we consider shutting it off?

It is recommended to maximize air flow and ventilation in any indoor space. When possible, windows should be open to increase air circulation. Regular maintenance providers for the cooling/heating system for your facility should be consulted about the system and COVID-related air circulation concerns. Information on this topic can be found on the CDC website here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/office-buildings.html>.



32) With a plexiglass shield on the table and playing outside, would it be alright for cribbage or card players to remove their face masks? At times they may not be 6' apart but they will always have the shield. And what if they are inside with the shield, would masks need to stay on if they are more like 4' apart, with the plexi shield?

Shields are not as effective in preventing the spread of the virus without the use of masks. Together with masks they become more effective. Masks should be worn outside if less than 6 feet apart and at all times inside with the exceptions listed above. Also, participants should wash their hands before and after playing; and all high touch surfaces should be cleaned after each game, following the instructions on pages 8-9 of the senior center guidance.