



Guidance for Senior Centers in Planning for Re-Opening (Effective 3/30/21)

For Senior Centers that serve Vermonters who are over age 65 and thus at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial to minimize the risks of spreading the coronavirus. The purpose of this document is to provide senior centers with information, guidance and recommendations designed to maintain health and safety standards requirements and physical distancing directives while providing much-needed services.

Each Senior Center employee should thoroughly review this guidance, and complete mandatory COVID-19 training provided by [VOSHA](#).

Exclude the following participants, volunteers and staff from sites:

- Anyone showing any [symptoms of COVID-19](#),
- Anyone who is [awaiting results](#) from a COVID-19 test,
- Unvaccinated individuals who are [required to quarantine](#),
- Fully vaccinated staff and volunteers with known [high-risk exposure](#) as staffing capacity allows.

Note: The Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living takes no position as to whether a service provider may mandate vaccinations, authorized pursuant to an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), as a condition of employment or participation. As with any business decision that involves risk, an employer may choose to consult with its own legal counsel before implementing such a requirement.



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Re-opening Senior Centers that have been closed for group activities

Prior to re-opening:

1. Read and learn the available updated resources:
 - a. [Executive Orders](#)
 - b. [Agency of Commerce and Community Development \(ACCD\) Recovery Resource Center](#)
 - c. [Mandatory Health & Safety Requirements](#)
 - d. [Model Pre-Screening Procedures](#)
 - e. [PPE Use Guidance](#)
 - f. [Restart Vermont FAQ](#)
 - g. [Signage](#)
 - h. Transportation Guidance from the local transit provider
2. If not already done, create a re-opening plan using [VOSHA Exposure Control Plan Template](#) as a guide.
3. If not already done, perform staff and volunteer training:
 - a. [VOSHA – Mandatory Training & Materials](#)
 - b. [CDC PPE Training](#)
 - c. [CDC Cleaning & Disinfecting Guidelines](#)
 - d. [CDC Cleaning & Disinfecting Transport Vehicles](#)
4. Develop and maintain a resource/vendor list to obtain PPE & other infection control Supplies:
 - a. Vermont Emergency Management maintains a webpage with a list of suppliers with known availability for items such as hand sanitizer and PPE; consult this frequently for updates: <https://vem.vermont.gov/ppe>
 - b. Vermont Department of Health is a resource after community resources have been explored using [PPE Resource Request Form](#). This PPE resource is intended to augment, but not replace private sourcing of materials. For technical assistance contact DAIL at melanie.feddersen@vermont.gov.
5. Designate a “health officer” on-site responsible for ensuring compliance with the Executive Order and applicable ACCD Guidance. This person shall have the authority to stop or modify activities to ensure work conforms with the mandatory health and safety requirements.
6. Educate participants:
 - a. Provide educational materials about preventing COVID-19.
 - b. Provide a copy of the most recent requirements for participation.
 - c. Ensure they are aware of what questions will be asked of each participant when they arrive.
 - d. Go over the protocol if a participant becomes symptomatic while they are at the center.
 - e. Ask them to notify the center if they have recently attended the center and a

- member of their household tests positive for COVID-19.
7. Take steps to ensure that all water systems and the health/cooling systems environment are safe to use after a prolonged center shutdown to minimize the risk of illness.
 - a. Water – Centers should follow the available [guidance from the CDC](#).
 - b. Climate Control –Centers should consult with their facility management or whoever provides routine maintenance on their heating/cooling systems for what to do in the event of prolonged closure with regard to cleaning.
 - i. For more information see CDC’s [Ventilation in Buildings](#) page.

Staff and Volunteers

Risk Factors

Certain people might be at [higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#). Senior Centers are encouraged to educate staff, volunteers and participants about the risk factors. Staff, volunteers and participants should be encouraged to speak to their healthcare provider to assess their risk and to determine if they should avoid in-person contact in which physical distancing cannot be maintained. Individuals should work with their healthcare provider to determine individual risk.

Cloth Facial Coverings

It is required that all staff and volunteers wear cloth facial coverings while providing services, and that participants wear cloth facial coverings. Family or caregivers doing drop-off and pick-up are encouraged to wear cloth facial coverings. Instructions for wearing and making cloth facial coverings can be found on the [CDC website](#).

1. Regardless of vaccination status, all staff, volunteers and participants should wear a facial covering in alignment with [universal source control guidance](#).
2. Participants who have a medical reason for not wearing a facial covering must not be required to wear one.
3. In line with Vermont’s July 24, 2020 [Executive Order](#) a person who declines to wear a mask or cloth face covering because of a medical or developmental issue, or difficulty breathing, shall not be required to produce documentation, or other evidence, verifying the condition.
4. There should be no facial coverings while a participant is sleeping, eating or when they would get wet.
5. Facial coverings with ties are not recommended as they pose a risk of choking or strangulation.

6. Facial coverings may be removed during outdoor activities where participants and staff can maintain physical distancing and have ready access to put them back as needed when activity stops.
7. Clear masks or cloth masks with a clear plastic panel are [available](#) for situations where obstruction might impair care being provided, such as when lip reading is required.

Arrivals and Departures

1. The center should keep track of all people attending the center each day (date, name, phone number) in case there is need for future contact tracing. This could be done via database, spreadsheet, paper sign-in sheet, etc. Attendance records must be retained for 30 days.
2. Post at all entrances indicating that anyone with any symptoms of illness should not enter the building, regardless of vaccination status.
3. Ideally, if getting a ride, the same designated person should drop off and pick up the participant every day.
4. Consider staggering arrival and drop off times and/or plan to limit direct contact with the participant's designated persons, as much as possible.
5. Hand hygiene stations should be set up at the entrance of the Senior Center or the entrance process could be rerouted through a different entrance nearest the sink, so that participants can wash their hands before they enter, or immediately upon entry into the center. At minimum, hand sanitizer should be available at all entrances.
6. The participants' designated persons who are self-quarantining due to close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual should NOT do drop-off or pick-up.
7. If centers are transporting participants:
 1. Programs must adhere to requirements of group size.
 2. Programs should space participants out in the vehicle to the best of their ability.
 3. Vehicles should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before and after transporting participants using CDC guidelines.

Health Screening

1. Participants, staff and volunteers conduct a **Daily Health Self-Check** prior to arrival to the center each day.
 - Have they been in close contact with a person who has COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
 - See the Health Department [Close Contacts & Contact Tracing](#) page for more information on who should quarantine after close

contact.

- Do they have a temperature of 100.4 or above?
- Do they feel unwell with any [symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#)? This includes cough, fever, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, fatigue, muscle pain or body aches, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Are they waiting on the results of a COVID-19 test?
 - More detailed information here:
<https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/COVID19-Waiting-For-Test-Results-English.pdf>

2. Conduct the same **Daily Health Check** on participants, staff and volunteers upon arrival to the center each day.

Temperature check protocol: *Health screening should occur upon entrance and near sink or sanitation station.*

- ❖ Wash hands
- ❖ Wear a cloth facial covering and a single pair of disposable gloves
- ❖ Check each participant's temperature
- ❖ If performing a temperature check on multiple participants, ensure that a clean pair of gloves is used for each participant and that the thermometer has been thoroughly cleaned in between each check. *If disposable or non-contact thermometers are used and the screener did not have physical contact with a participant, gloves do not need to be changed before the next check. If non-contact thermometers are used, they must be cleaned routinely. Follow instructions provided by the manufacturer for any device used.*

Participants Attending Senior Centers

It is recommended that Senior Centers prioritize participation for people who are at lower risk, are able to wear a mask or face covering while at the center and are able to understand and follow distancing and hand hygiene protocol. Participants are encouraged to talk to their healthcare provider to assess their individual risk and to determine if they should attend the center.

1. If you are [waiting for test results](#) and are being tested because you have symptoms of COVID-19, are a close contact to someone who has COVID-19, or were recommended for testing, stay home and do not go out in public even if you do not feel sick.

2. Anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 should self-isolate until:
 - a. [If you had symptoms:](#)
 - you have had no fever for at least 24 hours without the use of medicine that reduces fever **and**
 - Other symptoms have improved, **and**
 - At least **10** days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
 - b. [If you did not have any symptoms:](#)
 - 10 days have passed since the date you had your positive test (unless otherwise instructed by your health care provider).
 - Persons with severe illness, or who are severely immunocompromised, may need to isolate for a longer period of time. Additional information is available [here](#).

Additional information on when someone is considered recovered from COVID-19 can be found here: <https://apps.health.vermont.gov/COVID/faq/#4601>.

3. If symptoms begin while at the Senior Center, regardless of vaccination status, it is recommended that the participant be sent home as soon as possible. They should be encouraged to contact their health care provider. Keep sick participants separate from well participants and limit staff contact as much as reasonably possible, while ensuring the safety and supervision of the participant until they leave.
 - Staff and volunteers should wash their hands, neck, and anywhere touched by a participant's secretions.
 - Contaminated clothes should be placed in a plastic bag or washed in a washing machine.
4. Items and furniture touched by a person who was sent home, must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
5. Participants who arrive from out-of-state must follow Vermont quarantine guidance prior to attendance unless they are fully vaccinated. The guidance can be found at <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/restart/cross-state-travel>

Close Contact and COVID Cases in Programs

If a staff person, volunteer, participant, or family has been identified as a [close contact](#) to someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19, they may need to [quarantine](#).

- For more information visit the Health Department [Close Contacts & Contact Tracing](#) page.

Please refer to the Health Department's website for what it means to be in [close contact](#) and for instructions for [isolation, quarantine, and self-observation](#).

For questions or clarification about close contact consult with the Health Department by calling 802-863-7240.

[Contact tracing](#) is a strategy used to determine the source of an infection and how it is spreading. Finding people who are close contacts to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, and therefore at higher risk of becoming infected themselves, can help prevent further spread of the virus. A contact tracing team from the Vermont Department of Health calls anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19. They ask the patient questions about their activities within a certain timeframe – to help identify anyone they have had close contact. (Close contact means being closer than 6 feet apart for 15 minutes or longer over a 24-hour period while the person was infectious.) Those contacts might include family members, co-workers or health care providers.

When there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a Senior Center; you will be able to consult with the contact tracing team at the Vermont Department of Health. To reach this team directly, you may call **802-863-7240**.

Staff and volunteers should be encouraged to keep a daily list of other people they are in close contact with. As the state reopens, Vermonters should consider keeping a contact journal. If you do get sick, this will make it easier to get in touch with those people, and so they can take proper precautions to prevent further spreading of the coronavirus.

If COVID-19 is confirmed in a participant or staff member:

1. Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after cleaning and disinfecting; wait 24 hours or as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfecting to allow droplets to settle.
2. [Clean and disinfect](#) all areas used by the participant or staff member who is sick, such as offices, bathrooms, and common areas.
3. Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the areas. If more than 7 days have passed since the participant or staff member who is sick visited or used the center, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.
 - a. Continue routine cleaning and disinfection.

4. Communicate with staff and participants and caregivers with general information about the situation. It is critical to maintain confidentiality.

Close contacts of persons being tested for COVID-19 due to symptoms should not attend programming at the senior center until the status of the staff member or participant with whom they had contact is determined to be negative.

If the test results are:

- **Positive** See [What do I do if I test positive for COVID-19?](#)
- **Negative** (participant or staff member does not have COVID-19), then complete [self-observation](#).

Consider how you can stay connected to the family or staff member during this time.

Important: Decisions about extending closure should be made in consultation with the Vermont Department of Health. You may reach VDH by calling 802-863-7240.

Physical (Social) Distancing Strategies

Physical distancing is still the best way to prevent the spread of the virus; although, it is recognized that this is often challenging.

1. Senior Centers may operate with up to 1 person per 100 square feet in program space, including participants, volunteers and staff.
2. People must maintain 6 feet distancing as much as possible.
3. No more than 6 people can be seated at the same table when eating, all guests should be seated.
4. Plan activities that do not require close physical contact between multiple participants.
5. Limit sensory activities and wash hands immediately after any use.
6. Encourage additional outside time and activities as is possible and open windows frequently when air conditioning is not being used.
7. Adjust the system that circulates air through the center to allow for more fresh air to enter the program space.

Healthy Hand Hygiene Behavior

1. All participants, staff, and volunteers should engage in hand hygiene at the following times:
 - Arrival to the center
 - After breaks
 - Before and after preparing food or drinks

- Before and after eating or handling food, or helping participants eat
 - Before and after administering medication or medical ointment
 - Before putting on mask
 - After taking mask off
 - After assisting with personal care
 - After using the toilet or helping a participant use the bathroom
 - After coming in contact with bodily fluid
 - After handling animals or cleaning up animal waste
 - After going outdoors
 - After sensory activities
 - After handling garbage
 - After cleaning
2. As much as possible, have plenty of hand lotion to support healthy skin.
 3. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If hands are not visibly dirty, alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol can be used if soap and water are not readily available. Follow these 5 steps for hand washing or hand sanitizing every time.
 - a. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap with paper towel and apply soap.
 - b. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
 - c. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
 - d. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
 - e. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.
 4. Assist participants with handwashing who cannot wash hands alone.
 5. After assisting participants with handwashing, staff should also wash their hands.
 6. Place posters describing handwashing steps near sinks. [Developmentally appropriate posters](#) in multiple languages are available from CDC.

Cleaning & Disinfecting

Senior Centers should engage in frequent thorough cleaning each day. **At a minimum, common spaces, such as kitchen and frequently touched surfaces and doors should be cleaned and disinfected at the beginning, middle and end of each day.**

For more detailed information on cleaning see the CDC page [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#).

1. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as:
 - All surfaces especially where participants eat
 - Bathrooms
 - Frequently used equipment including electronic devices

- Door handles and handrails
- Items that participants touch
- 2. Specifically, regarding shared bathrooms:
 - Whenever possible, assign a bathroom to each group of 25 people.
 - If there are fewer bathrooms than the number of groups, assign which groups will use the same bathroom. For example, bathroom A is assigned to groups 1, 2 and 3; and bathroom B is assigned to groups 4 and 5.
 - Bathroom sink areas including faucets, countertops and paper towel dispensers need to be cleaned after each group has finished.
- 3. Objects that cannot be cleaned and sanitized should not be used.
- 4. Avoid sharing books.
- 5. Art supplies and other paper-based materials such as mail or envelopes, are not considered high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures.

The following products may be used for disinfecting:

- 5. Diluted household [bleach solutions](#)
- 6. Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol
- 7. Most common EPA-registered household disinfectants
- 8. See [List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)

Food Preparation and Meal Service

- 1. Wherever possible, food preparation should not be done by the same staff who provide personal care.
- 2. Sinks used for food preparation should not be used for any other purposes.
- 3. Staff should ensure participants wash their hands before eating.
- 4. Staff must wash their hands before preparing food and after helping participants eat. In situations where no soap and water are available, hand sanitizer may be used in place of washing hands before assisting the next participant with eating.
 - More information on when and how to use hand sanitizer can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-hand-sanitizer.html>
- 5. For group dining, participants may remove their mask while eating but should put their mask back on once they are done eating.
- 6. No more than 6 people can be seated at the same table.
 - For more information visit the ACCD's [UPDATE ON NEW WORK SAFE ADDITIONS TO THE BE SMART, STAY SAFE ORDER](#)

Transportation

Vermont public transit providers and Senior Centers that provide transportation for participants, must follow [guidance](#) on the ACCD website and current distancing standards. Follow [CDC Cleaning & Disinfecting Transport Vehicles](#) guidance. Additional resources can be found on the National Aging and Disabilities Transportation Center (NADTC) [COVID-19 Resource page](#).

Each Vermont public transit provider maintains a COVID transportation plan that must comply with federal and state infection control guidance.

NOTE: Dedicated transportation is available for people who are suspected COVID-19 positive. Senior Centers may refer to the [AHS Transportation for Individuals with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 Guide](#) if a person at the center develops symptoms and needs to be transported to a testing or recovery site.

Health Resource

If your center has questions or is looking for guidance **Call: 802-863-7240** to be directed to the appropriate team to assist you.

Additional Strategies

PREPARE

1. **Stay informed about the local COVID-19 situation.** Know where to turn for reliable, up-to-date information. Monitor the [CDC COVID-19 website](#) and the [Vermont Department of Health website](#) for the latest information.
2. **Update an emergency contact list.** Update emergency contact lists for families, staff and key resources and ensure the lists are accessible in key locations in your program. For example, know how to reach your local or state health department in an emergency.
3. **Develop a communications plan.** A key component to being prepared is developing a communication plan that outlines how you plan to reach different audiences (e.g. families, staff, community) including ensuring all communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate as well as accessible for individuals with disabilities.
4. **Protecting the Safety and Health of Workers (Coronavirus Disease 2019).** All employees, including those already working (except healthcare workers, first responders, and others already trained in infection control, personal protection/universal precautions), must complete, and employers must document, a mandatory training on health and safety requirements as provided by VOSHA.
5. Establish and continue communication with local and State authorities to

determine current data on spread of COVID-19 in your community.

6. Consider designating a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Employees should know who this person is and how to contact them.
7. Create a communication system for staff and families for self-reporting of symptoms and notification of exposures and closures.
8. Assist staff in knowing when and where they can be vaccinated.
 - α. The Vermont Department of Health [COVID-19 Vaccine](#) page has the most up-to-date information on the vaccine and where to get it.

COMMUNICATE

1. **Post signs at all entrances** clearly indicating that no one may enter if they have any symptoms of illness, regardless of vaccination status.
2. **Reinforce your communication system**, so that all staff, volunteers and participants know how to best contact the director and/or program administrator about COVID-19 information and questions specific to the program.
3. **Communicate about COVID-19 with your staff**. Share information about what is currently known about COVID-19 and your program's emergency response plans.
4. **Communicate your expectations for modeling** respiratory etiquette, physical distancing, wearing cloth facial coverings, refraining from touching their face, staying home when sick, and supporting employees who need to take care of sick family members. **All common areas, such as break rooms and cafeterias, excluding restrooms, are closed.**
5. **Staff meeting/trainings should be online** and not in person.
6. **Communicate about COVID-19 with volunteers, participants and families**. Provide updates about changes to your policies or operations. Use all communication channels available to you such as electronic communications, website or social media pages. *It is critical to maintain confidentiality for staff and participants.* Make sure to plan for linguistic needs, including providing interpreters and translating materials as needed.
7. **Intentionally and persistently combat stigma**. Misinformation about coronavirus and COVID-19 can create fear and hostility that hurts people and makes it harder to keep everyone healthy. We are stronger as a community when we stand together against discrimination. Take advantage of these [resources](#) to prevent, interrupt, and respond to stigma.

Testing Resources

1. Testing will be available for Vermonters who wish to be tested for the coronavirus, even if they don't have any symptoms. The Vermont Department of Health's [website](#) has up to date pop up sites and registration links for this type of testing.

2. Please consult your primary care physicians for testing options if you are sick. If you do not have a primary care provider, please contact 2-1-1 to be connected to a primary care provider.
3. Coronavirus testing is not required for reopening and is offered on a voluntary basis.
4. Testing cannot be used as a requirement for working in a Senior Center Program.
5. A negative test represents one moment in time and does not change any of the health standards regarding infection prevention.
6. If you test positive for coronavirus, the Vermont Department of Health will contact you, keep in close touch, determine the close contacts, and assist with decisions about classroom closure.

Vaccine Information

1. The [About COVID-19 Vaccines in Vermont](#) page provides the most up to date information on vaccines including eligibility.

Vaccinated Individuals

- Guidance and information is frequently changing and being updated. See the [Vaccine](#) section of the Health Department's FAQ page for the most up-to-date information.
- Participants and staff are fully vaccinated when it has been two weeks since their final dose.
- Fully vaccinated individuals should still be screened for symptoms and should not enter the Adult Day Center if they have any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Even after vaccination everyone should continue to follow all the [current guidance](#) to protect themselves and others. This includes wearing a [mask](#), [staying at least 6 feet away from others](#), avoiding crowds, following facility guidance on visitation and [infection control](#), and [clean hands often](#).

Resources

1. General questions about COVID-19? **Dial 2-1-1**
2. [Vermont Department of Health \(VDH\) COVID-19 site](#)
3. [VDH Alerts & Advisories](#) (HAN)
4. [VDH Healthcare Worker Return to Work Criteria HAN 4/3/20](#)
5. [Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living COVID-19 site](#)
6. [COVID Support VT](#)