



**Vermont
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on Aging**

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**Work Smart – Stay Safe Plan – COVID-19
Vermont Association of Area Agencies on Aging**

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Section 1: Introduction

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the State of Vermont have provided extensive guidance in nearly all elements of safety and health for businesses to prepare for the return to work and normal operations during COVID-19. It should be acknowledged that the services and programs of the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) were never halted. Most of the AAA staff moved the work remotely to their own homes to carry-out a seamless delivery of service for older Vermonters from the start of COVID-19.

The services and programs of the AAAs are guided by the [Older American's Act](#). The direct guidance is received from the state of Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) through the [State Plan on Aging](#). Throughout the months of COVID-19, the Vermont Association of Area Agencies on Aging, AAAs and DAIL have stayed in regular contact to assure that the overarching needs of older Vermonters continue to be met even with challenges of social distancing and the inability to have face-to-face contact. The toll-free Helpline remained open and the Information & Assistance staff continued to respond to calls throughout the state. Meal deliveries were expanded to meet the growing need of food insecurity among older adults. Medicare counseling continued through phone calls and online training. Case management and care coordination remained active through phone and video conferencing and all other services AAAs continued to take place.

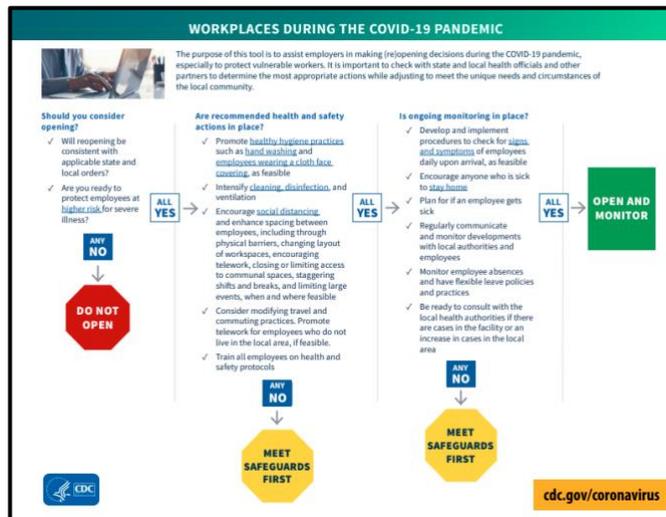
This purpose of this document is to provide guidance to the AAAs for the return to office operations and establishing a new approach to the delivery of services and programs while adhering to state and federal protocols for person-to-person contact. When considering guidance, recommendations and references in this document, AAAs must first acknowledge the health and well-being to be addressed on behalf of older Vermonters and the workforce within the Area Agencies on Aging. Any actions made by the AAAs to re-open operations, whether office based or in-person, must be done slowly, with advance thought, and address the safety and wellbeing of the communities, the staff and older adults that we serve. Wherever there is reference to numbers of people in any given space, the state orders about occupancy may change on a daily or weekly basis and it is highly advised to refer to the [New Work Safe Additions to the Be Smart, Stay Safe Order](#).

Section 2: Following the State of Vermont & The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Guidelines

All administrators of the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) will review any updates from the State of Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) regarding New Work Safe Additions to the Be Smart, Stay Safe Order as it relates to AAAs programs, service deliver and office operations. Guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) must also be reviewed.

2.1 Decision and Process to Return to the Workplace and Normalizing Office and Community-Based Operations

One of the first steps in re-convening person-to-person services and normalizing operations in Area Agencies on Aging offices is to utilize the CDC Workplace Decision Tool. The purpose of this tool is to assist leadership at the Area Agencies on Aging in making decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially to protect vulnerable workers and the older adults who we serve. It is important to check with Vermont and local health officials and other partners to determine the most appropriate actions while adjusting to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community. For the direct link to the CDC Workplace Decision Tool, click-on the chart.



Area Agencies on Aging must have their policies and procedures in place by developing and implementing the COVID-19 Program and Exposure Plan in order to

- Continue to protect the health and safety of our work force and by extension their families, and
- To implement the *Mandatory Health and Safety Requirements for all Business, Nonprofits & Governmental Operations* as required by the Vermont Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidelines, Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Administration (VOSHA) and The Vermont Agency for Commerce and Community Development. Using the measures provided by these agencies, our AAAs will strive to protect the health of our employees and the older adults that we serve. This program and plan will document the measures we use to comply with the provided guidelines.

2.2 Staying Up to Date on Guidelines from State and Federal Governments

On a continual basis, AAAs must review all new updates from the [State of Vermont ACCD Phased Work Smart – Stay Safe orders](#).

Wherever there is reference to numbers of people in any given space, the orders about occupancy may change on a daily or weekly basis and it is highly advised to refer to the [New Work Safe Additions to the Be Smart, Stay Safe Order](#)

As AAAs move forward to normalize offices and person-to-person services, AAA staff must understand that *how* they work is essential to resuming and maintaining business operations. Preventing outbreaks and limiting the spread of COVID-19 is the only way to avoid future program service delivery and social disruption. The success of this phased restart will depend in large part on the ability of AAAs to adhere to the public health, safety, and social distancing measures essential to limiting the spread of illness.

As indicated above, the *Mandatory Health and Safety Requirements for all Business, Nonprofits & Governmental Operations* is required of all businesses, including AAAs currently operating programs and those re-opening offices. AAAs will follow Vermont Department of Health and CDC guidelines:

- Employees shall not report to or be allowed to remain at work or job site if sick or symptomatic (fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell).
- Employees must observe strict social distancing of 6 feet while on the job. Businesses and non-profit or government entities shall ensure customers observe strict social distancing of 6 feet while on location, to the extent possible.
- Limit the occupancy of designated common areas, such as break rooms and cafeterias, so that occupants maintain strict social distancing of no less than 6 feet per individual. The AAAs shall enforce the occupancy limit and require employees to wipe down their area after use or shall ensure cleaning of the common areas at regular intervals throughout the day.
- Employees must wear face coverings over their nose and mouth when in the presence of others. Businesses and non-profit and government entities may require the clients to wear masks.
- Employees must have easy and frequent access to soap and water or hand sanitizer during duration of work, and handwashing or hand sanitization is required frequently including before entering, and leaving, job sites.
- All common spaces (when open) and equipment, including bathrooms, frequently touched surfaces and doors, tools and equipment, and vehicles must be cleaned

regularly and, when possible, prior to transfer from one person to another, in accordance with CDC guidance.

- Prior to the commencement of each work shift, pre-screening and health survey shall be required to verify each employee has no symptoms of respiratory illness (fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell). At the present time non-contact thermometers are in short supply, however AAAs shall immediately order, and use their best efforts to obtain, thermometers in order to conduct routine temperature checks.
- Signs must be posted at all entrances clearly indicating that no one may enter if they have symptoms of respiratory illness.
- When working inside, open doors and windows to promote air flow to the greatest extent possible and limit the number of people occupying a single indoor space.
- Adhere to the current state guidelines regarding the numbers of people who can occupy one vehicle when conducting work.
- No symptomatic or COVID-19 positive workers are allowed on site and any worker(s) who have contact with a worker or any other person who is diagnosed with COVID-19 are required to quarantine for 14 days.
- All operations shall designate a health officer on-site at every shift responsible for ensuring compliance with the Executive Order and the Addenda thereto 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.
- All business, non-profit and government operations must use remote work whenever possible.
- 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 training on mandatory health and safety requirements as provided by VOSHA, or another training program that meets or exceeds the VOSHA-provided standard. Employers who need translations of the training have one week from the release of the translated training to complete this requirement.
- All AAAs offices that have been closed for 7 or more days during the state of emergency must complete and keep on file a reopening offices and training plan (AAAs offices with fewer than 10 employees at any physical location are not required to create such a plan, however, they must follow all other guidelines and employees must take the VOSHA training). VOSHA and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development have provided a template at accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/business/restart. The plan must, at a minimum:

- Adopt a phased approach to reopening offices which provides sufficient opportunity to operate first in a low density and low contact environment before making the incremental changes needed to accommodate more moderate density activity while continuing to maintain health and safety.
- Update physical and administrative safety systems to accommodate COVID-19 VDH/CDC/VOSHA guidelines, health monitoring, including temperature checks, cleaning and sanitizing methods and physical distancing measures.
- Take appropriate measures to protect employees at greater risk of contact by virtue of their occupational role or setting.
- AAAs offices with fewer than 10 employees at any physical location are not required to create such a plan, however, they must follow all other health and safety guidelines above including taking VOSHA training.

A. Additional Health and Safety Considerations

- Use of shared workspaces, desks, offices, etc. is discouraged to the maximum extent practicable.
- Face-to-face staff meetings should be limited, and physical distancing must be observed.
- Consider staggered work shifts, break times, etc. and expanding hours to reduce number of individuals working together and reduce contact with members of the public.
- To the extent possible, provide access to hand washing and/or hand sanitizer for vendors, and customers.
- Limit staff travel between multiple sites.
- Ensure a safe process to receive supplies and deliveries.
- Consider accommodations for employees at higher risk from COVID-19 infection (as currently defined by the CDC) to work remotely or have a job tasks that minimize public interaction.

B. Business Customer & General Public Mask Use

Customers, clients, and the public in general, are encouraged to wear face coverings any time they are interacting with others from outside their household. AAAs may require customers to wear facial coverings over nose and mouth.

C. Cross State Travel

[See updated order for New Work Safe Additions to the Be Smart, Stay Safe Order](#)

D. Phased Restart

- Operations deemed “essential” may continue to operate under pre-existing guidance with the addition of the mandatory health and safety requirements above.
- To safely normalize offices operations and those impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak and not defined as essential, Governor Scott has directed the Agency of Commerce and Community Development - in consultation with the Department of Health and the Department of Public Safety – to authorize, subject to mandatory health and safety requirements listed above and additional sector specific guidance below, the following as it relates to the work of the AAAs:

E. **Close Contact Business Stage 2 (Effective 6/1)** *If the circumstance does not meet criteria, additional guidance will be forthcoming.* For additional information visit <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/business/restart> Note: the language in this is interpreted and changed from original content as it relates to AAAs.

- AAA services that require home or community visits where there will be limited close personal contact may resume in-person operations subject to the mandatory health and safety requirements listed above, approved by agency leadership, and:
- Operations are limited to 25% (twenty-five percent) of approved fire safety occupancy; or 1 customer/client per 200 square feet and, no classes of more than 25 people shall occur in any single, distinct indoor space. Refer to current [New Work Safe Additions to the Be Smart, Stay Safe Order](#) as this percentage and number of people may change at any given day or week.
- Employees should separate customers/clients to maintain physical distancing of 6 feet for any activity that will occur for more than a few moments (e.g. reception areas).
- To the greatest extent possible, operations shall be by appointment only with specified time periods for each customer. No walk-In appointments are allowed.
- Operations may serve only Vermont residents or others who have completed the prescribed quarantine.
- Waiting/reception areas, and other common areas shall be restricted to occupancy limits noted above.
- Personal instructional services/lessons (such as Wellness programs, SHIP/Medicare classes) may occur within the maximum occupancy limits mentioned above at a commercial location or residence. (Masks and physical distancing are encouraged to the extent possible.)
- AAAs operations must maintain a log of visitors and their contact information for 30 days in the event contact tracing is required by the Department of Health.

2.3 Protecting the Safety and Health of AAAs Workers through Training

As detailed in Governor Phil Scott's order, ADDENDUM 11 TO EXECUTIVE ORDER 01-20 [Work Smart & Stay Safe -- Restart VT: Phase II] the Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Agency (VOSHA) has developed training and other materials to inform Vermonters on appropriate safety measures necessary to return to work amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Training and other materials were developed in conjunction with the Vermont Department of Health and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

All employees, including those already working (except healthcare workers, first responders, and others already trained in infection control, personal protective/universal precautions) must complete training by May 4, 2020. VOSHA has provided a PowerPoint to assist with this endeavor.

2.4 Using a Health Screening Tool

AAAs will need to create a health screening tool using the Vermont's pre-screening procedures and pre-screening health survey as a model. The Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) has provided a Long-Term Care and congregate sites screening guidelines that may be useful to adopt for AAAs office spaces.

2.5 Signage to Inform the Public and Staff of AAAs

Prior to opening for office operation, each AAA should place signage in visible locations for visitors and staff. A selection of signage is available at the State of Vermont ACCD site and the CDC site dedicated to communications for print resources, and for social media tools.

Section 3: Delivering AAAs Programs and Services

AAAs must always follow the guidelines from the state of Vermont and CDC and stay up to date. The V4A cannot be held responsible for any decisions, protocols and procedures made by each AAA.

AAAs will prepare and update written guidelines pertaining to their local agencies following state orders and state and local statistics of COVID-19 during any given time to make available to their staff and public. Each AAA follows the guidelines for the program service delivery based on the requirements of the Older Americans Act through DAIL, but agencies have different names for the same required delivery of service. This document is meant as a guide for all similar services. Operations are limited to 25% (twenty-five percent) of approved fire safety occupancy; or 1 customer per 200 square

feet and, no occupancy of more than 25 people shall occur in any single, distinct indoor space. Refer to current [New Work Safe Additions to the Be Smart, Stay Safe Order](#) as this percentage and number of people may change at any given day or week.

Regarding programs and services that AAAs contract for, AAAs may consider amending agreements with contractors such as meal providers or senior centers as necessary to incorporate COVID-19 related guidance and to ensure the health, wellbeing and safety of consumers.

3.1 Office-Based Work Functions: Human Resources, Information Technology, Nutrition Program Support, Volunteer Program Support, Finance, Administration, Information & Assistance, Development/Public Relations:

Office based, non-personal facing operations may phase in methodically, once state orders are followed, plans are developed, and the staff are adequately trained. This includes the continuation of remote work where feasible. Office functions may only occur if there is adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and all procedures for maintaining office procedures are in place.

3.2 Person to Person Activities: Information & Assistance, Care and Service Coordination/Case Management, Options Counseling, State Health Insurance Program (SHIP), Wellness Programs, Friendly Visitor /Senior Companion/Volunteer Programs, Dementia Friendly Programs:

These programs and services may only resume if there is adequate supply of PPE. These have been in short supply due to ongoing shortages throughout all health care sectors. Until which time the supply chain issues are remedied and/or a COVID-19 vaccine is developed, it is not recommended to resume face to face visits on a regular basis.

Protocols should be written to modify personal contact for individuals with urgent or emergent needs. Outdoor meetings should be considered first where and when possible and if appropriate PPE is available. These visits should only be carried out when the need for a face to face visit is critical and has been reviewed by the agency administration.

3.3 Case Management/Care and Service Coordination Home/Community Visits:

Staff visits to a person's home or within the community may be done only with agency leadership approval. AAAs should identify criteria for when home and community visits will be allowed. All guidelines from the state must be followed regarding the use of PPE and physical distancing. AAA must establish a documentation system similar to the

Long-Term Care and congregate sites screening guidelines for both the staff and the person/family members being visited and filed with AAA administration.

3.4 Wellness programs (e.g. Tai Chi, Bone Builders) may occur using online/video/remote teaching tools and work towards phasing in in-person programs if all current state and CDC guidelines are met and with AAA's leadership approval. Distancing protocols, face coverings, cleaning and sanitization protocols must be in place. Class sizes are limited to 25% (twenty-five percent) of approved fire safety occupancy; or 1 customer per 200 square feet and, no classes of more than 25 people shall occur in any single, distinct indoor space. Refer to current [New Work Safe Additions to the Be Smart, Stay Safe Order](#) as this percentage and number of people may change at any given day or week.

3.5 State Health Insurance Program (SHIP): Community Medicare education, outreach and training programs may continue using online/video/remote teaching tools and work towards phasing in in-person programs if all current state and CDC guidelines are met and with AAA's leadership approval. Distancing protocols, face coverings, cleaning and sanitization protocols must be in place. Class sizes are limited to 25% (twenty-five percent) of approved fire safety occupancy; or 1 customer per 200 square feet and, no classes of more than 25 people shall occur in any single, distinct indoor space. Refer to current [New Work Safe Additions to the Be Smart, Stay Safe Order](#) as this percentage and number of people may change at any given day or week.

3.6 Customer/Client Access and Visits to the AAAs offices may be phased in and would require proper screening protocols, face coverings, and distancing measures. Consideration to scheduled visits should be explored and limiting the number of peoples on site to 5 at any given time is recommended. Transition to online registrations, and meal/restaurant ticket distribution should be transformed to web based/online capability as soon as feasible.

3.7 Congregate and Community Meal Programs: Congregate and community meal programs should be considered high risk for the population of people who we serve. These meal activities should follow the guidelines from <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/business/restart> [8.2 Social Gatherings and Congregate Settings of Up to 25 People \(Effective 6/1\)](#)

Gatherings and congregate settings in any one indoor space of up to 25 people may occur subject to the mandatory health and safety guidance above (including physical distancing), and:

Inside gatherings are limited to 25% (twenty-five percent) of approved fire safety occupancy; or 1 customer per 200 square feet.

Continued efforts with “Drive Through” meal pick up models and partnerships with area Senior Centers is recommended.

Refer to current [New Work Safe Additions to the Be Smart, Stay Safe Order](#) as this percentage and number of people may change at any given day or week.

3.8 Meals on Wheels (MOW) Volunteer Deliveries: MOW delivery systems should phase in to include the ability of the volunteer to engage the person from a 6-foot distance, if the volunteer is wearing appropriate cloth face coverings. Meal recipients should be encouraged to wear cloth face coverings if they wish to engage the volunteer at the door. Other alternatives include continuing the ‘call, drop and observe’ protocols that have been employed by our MOW volunteers during this event. Good hand hygiene before and after meal deliveries is recommended.

Section 4: Personal Protective Equipment Guidance and Protocols

Consistent and robust PPE guidance and protocols must be followed among AAAs. Given the overall supply chain issues that will likely continue, it is strongly recommended that PPE guidance be consistent and prioritized among all AAAs that have person facing activities. Access to and management of PPE supply chain is integral to home visit/person facing engagement and subsequent re-openings throughout the home and community-based service system. Development of appropriate PPE standards must be thoughtful given the shortages and creating a standard approach between these agencies will reduce variation and confusion for both screening and personal protection guidance for in home or person facing visits, should these be deemed necessary.

4.1 Personal Protective Equipment, Safety and Hygiene

The list below provides recommended approaches for AAAs to adopt for the use of specific PPE and protocols for safety and hygiene under various circumstances for service delivery.

- [State of Vermont Department of Health: COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) Guidance - v. 1.4](#)
- [FDA’s Guidance on Food Safety and COVID-19](#)
- [Governor Scott’s Executive Orders](#)
- [ACCD Stay Home/Stay Safe Directives](#)
- [CDC’s Guidance on How to Protect Yourself and Others](#)
- [CDC’s Guidance on Implementing Home Care for People Not Requiring Hospitalization for COVID-19](#)

Section 5: Supporting the Older Vermonter

Providing support to older Vermonters and their families during this pandemic is especially sensitive given that older adults are deemed as one of the vulnerable populations to be affected. AAAs staff may need to enhance their counseling to ensure that older adults are aware of their options and to recommend that individuals plan for emergencies and complete advance directives while respecting the rights and dignity of the older Vermonters.

Here are suggested relevant references for supporting older Vermonters during this time that could be included in AAA programs and services to ensure person-centered approaches:

- A. Supporting Older Adults in Emergency Planning Now – Develop a Care Plan Care Plan Form - CDC
- B. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Checklist: Older Persons – CDC
- C. Respecting the Rights and Dignity of Older Persons – United Nations
- D. Policy Brief: The Impact Of Covid-19 On Older Persons – United Nations
- E. Reframing the Response to COVID-19: Applying Reframed Language to Counteract Ageism (YouTube presentation) – Gerontological Society of America

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