

COVID-19 Relaunch

Community Conversations for Businesses

May 26, 2020
Total participants: 498

Thank you to everyone who participated in the virtual Community Conversation hosted by Alberta Health Services' Medical Officer of Health Dr. Nick Etches and Dr. Kathryn Koliaska, Medical Officer of Health and Provincial Lead - Safe Healthy Environments. Our intention with these events is to help businesses implement the COVID-19 workplace guidelines set by the Province of Alberta.

We appreciate your commitment to ensuring we safely re-open our province's business sector, and your concern for doing the right things in the right way.

Below we attempt to answer many of the questions that we were unable to fit into our virtual session; we encourage you to visit and check back often with alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx. For general workplace guidance for business owners, [click here](#).

You can also submit questions through alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx. It is important that you enter your questions as Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services could never provide guidance for every possible scenario or business, but we are here to help as much as we can.

Please be patient as there are many questions and we are doing our best to provide answers and guidance. This is a new experience for everyone and all are doing their very best to support Alberta's relaunch as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The advice provided in this document is current as of June 1, 2020. Please check back often to the [BizConnect](#) and the [Alberta Health Services](#) websites, as information is updated frequently.

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Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Is there a good resource or "how to" videos on how to: properly wear a mask, use gloves, wash equipment, etc.? This would be valuable for training employees.

AHS' advice on preventing the spread of COVID-19, including how to wear masks, can be found [here](#). If you do choose to wear a mask, watch this [video](#) to learn how to properly don and doff (put on and take off) a mask to keep yourself and others safe. There is also a [Guidance for Wearing of Non-Medical Face Masks](#) for the general public.

You can learn more about the importance of washing your hands [here](#), and watch a message from Dr. Laura McDougall [here](#).

If social distancing can be followed, will sharing the same office be an option?

There really is no standard advice to this question. It is highly dependent on the type of business, how staff and customers flow in and out of the business, and move within the business. Our best advice is that you consider all the ways in which you can prevent transmission, including:

1. Physical barriers, such as the Plexiglas barriers many of us have seen introduced in grocery stores, are the best and most proven way you can help to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19.
2. [Physical distancing](#), staying 2 meters away from others, should be implemented wherever possible, using signage and other reminders. You may need to consider use of masks if physical distancing is not always possible.
3. [Hand hygiene](#) combined with the above strategies is also an important tactic for reducing risk. Ensuring your staff have access to hand sanitizer or the ability to frequently wash their hands is critical. In addition, ensuring hand sanitizer is available for your customers would be a great additional precaution. You can learn more about the importance of washing your hands [here](#), and watch a message from Dr. Laura McDougall [here](#).
4. Stay home, and require your staff and volunteers to do the same, when you are experiencing any [symptoms](#) at all.

In a confined space is an air purifier recommended?

Air purifiers are not sufficient to protect against the transmission of COVID-19. Please refer to BizConnect for guidance for workplaces, and sector-specific guidance. General guidance for indoor air quality (not related to COVID-19) is available from Alberta Occupational Health and Safety [here](#).

Considering a shared responsibility in containing and protecting ourselves and each other - can I request that my clients come with their own masks and glasses or face protection?

Yes, you may consider asking clients to wear masks or other PPE in your business as part of your [relaunch plan](#).

Wearing a non-medical mask, such as a homemade cloth mask, has not been proven to protect the person wearing it. However, wearing a non-medical mask may be helpful in protecting others around you. This is because face coverings are another way to cover your mouth and nose to prevent respiratory droplets from contaminating other people or surfaces. Additionally, wearing a mask may stop you from touching your nose and mouth.

If you do choose to wear a mask, watch this [video](#) to learn how to properly don and doff (put on and take off) a mask to keep yourself and others safe. There is also a Guidance for Wearing of Non-Medical Face Masks for the general public available [here](#).

What about food being available in outdoor gatherings where social distancing and hand hygiene is maintained?

COVID-19 can be transmitted by touching objects or surfaces the virus has landed on then touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Activities that carry this risk are not recommended, even with physical distancing in place. This includes sharing meals such as barbecues, picnics or drinks with friends and neighbours. Learn more and find updates [here](#).

Screening

Employers should implement active daily screening of staff, volunteers and patrons for symptoms of fever, sore throat, cough, runny nose or difficulty breathing. Anyone who is sick with cold-like symptoms such as cough, fever, runny nose, sore throat or shortness of breath, MUST NOT be in the workplace and should be advised to return home and complete the [AHS self-assessment tool](#) or call 811.

Employers are encouraged to examine sick-leave policies to ensure they align with public health guidance. There should be no disincentive for staff or volunteers to stay home while sick or isolating.

Changes to the Employment Standards Code will allow full and part-time employees to take 14 days of job-protected leave if they are:

- Required to isolate.
- Caring for a child or dependent adult who is required to isolate.

Employees are not required to have a medical note.

To enable quick contact with employees in the event someone in the business is diagnosed with COVID-19, employers should maintain an up-to-date contact list for all staff and volunteers, including names, addresses and phone numbers. For the purposes of tracing close contacts of the person diagnosed with COVID-19, employers should be able to indicate:

- Roles and positions of persons working in the workplace.
- Who was working onsite at any given time.
- Who an employee may have worked with on any given shift.

If a workplace has patrons within 2 metres of employees, then lists of patrons by time and date should also be kept.

In regards to "active" health screening for employees - does this refer to some type of written declaration? We're concerned that this could cause issues with FOIP.

Your responsibility as an employer is to ensure that you have procedures in place to rapidly respond if your employees become symptomatic while on the premises (including upon arrival). You have flexibility as to how you implement this requirement.

You can find temporary changes to employment standards, occupational health and safety, and workers' compensation rules to help Albertans manage the rapidly changing conditions caused by COVID-19 [here](#).

Our community is run by all volunteers. Do volunteers need to be screened daily? Who is responsible for screening volunteers for COVID-19?

Yes, volunteers need to be screened in the same way that employees who regularly come to your business are screened.

We are a pro bono law firm and therefore required by the rules of Privilege and Confidentiality by the Alberta Law Society to keep all client names and information private from ALL others (unless opposing counsel). Do you have any other recommendations for us to assist with contact tracing while not breaking the rules of our profession?

If you are contacted by public health and asked for information on close contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case, it will be necessary under the *Public Health Act* to provide the requested information. If the information is protected by solicitor-client privilege, AHS will work with you to find the best way to balance confidentiality and public safety. The Law Society of Alberta Practice Advisors may also be contacted. However, the best way to avoid this situation is to consider how to avoid close contact with any of your clients in the course of your work (e.g. virtual meetings using videoconferencing technology).

Signage

Business owners can find posters that can easily be downloaded and printed [here](#). Additional signage and posters are available online from Alberta Health Services [here](#).

Alberta Health has also recommended that businesses fill out a short template that can be found online at the BizConnect site, and post it at their place of business, or online. You can [find that form here](#). Businesses should also follow sector-specific guidance.

Would signage be adequate for staff, as it is for customers?

AHS encourages employers to have direct, ongoing conversations with staff, to share the responsibility for creating a safe and healthy work environment. Signage is just one component of this conversation.

Physical Distancing

According to content provided on alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx (May 14, 2020), Order 07-2020 prohibits gatherings of more than 15 people in one indoor location, however this does not prohibit businesses from having more than 15 workers in a workplace.

As of May 18, the Government of Alberta's [Guidance for Outdoor Recreation](#) allows for outdoor gatherings of no more than 50 people, as long as individuals maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres from others, unless they are from the same household.

Examples of how to support physical distancing between employees, volunteers and patrons to reduce the risk of transmission amongst workers, volunteers and patrons include:

- Maintaining a 2 metre separation between individuals (e.g., workers, volunteers, and patrons) as much as possible.
- Restricting the number of employees, volunteers and patrons in a business at any one time.
- Installing a physical barrier, such as Plexiglas, a cubicle, partition or window, to separate workers, volunteers and patrons.
- Increasing separation between desks and workstations.

- Eliminating or re-structuring non-essential gatherings (e.g. meetings, training classes) of staff, patrons and volunteers. Typically this involves moving in-person meetings to virtual media platforms like teleconference or video conference.
- Limiting the number of people in shared spaces (such as lunchrooms) or staggering break periods. Removing chairs from spaces and taping markers at 6-foot distances may be helpful in preventing crowds.
- Limiting hours of operation or setting specific hours for at-risk patrons.
- Implementing contact-free modes of patron interaction such as home-delivery of goods or curbside pickup of items.
- Placing reference markers (e.g., markings on the floor in grocery line-ups) that set out two-meter distances.

Is group size different for seniors either indoors or outdoors? Could a senior's group of up to 30 people safely meet at a distance in a neighbourhood park?

According to content provided on alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx (May 14, 2020), Order 07-2020 prohibits gatherings of more than 15 people in one indoor location. As of May 18, the Government of Alberta's [Guidance for Outdoor Recreation](#) allows for outdoor gatherings of no more than 50 people, as long as individuals maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres from others, unless they are from the same household.

Please note these are maximum group sizes, and seniors are overall at higher risk of complications of COVID-19. The safety of any gatherings are dependent on the activity, the measures put in place, and the ability of all attendees to follow all safety measures.

If we create what we believe to be a responsible plan with regards to holding a baseball practice that includes throwing a baseball but NOT sharing other types of equipment, who would we submit that plan to for approval?

Outdoor recreation businesses should follow the [outdoor recreation guidance](#) available on Alberta BizConnect, and the newly posted [guidance on organized outdoor sport](#).

Groups must be limited to 50 people or fewer. Individuals should maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres from others, unless they are from the same household. Groups should also physically distance from other groups. After activities, individuals should maintain physical distancing when returning to vehicles or homes. Subject to closures by the operator, outdoor recreation activities are permitted in parks, trails and open spaces (e.g. soccer fields and ball diamonds). Municipalities may choose to open fields, playgrounds and courts for public use, but league play is not permitted.

Activities in public spaces should not include the sharing of common equipment, unless the individuals are from the same household. Clean and disinfect equipment prior to and after use.

You are not required to have approval of your plan, but if you have specific questions, you may submit them via the [BizConnect portal](#).

We run a sports facility and are looking at the possibility of having outdoor court space being utilized in a small number capacity under the new 50 person limit in an outdoor space. To follow the guideline and maintain proper social distancing we are looking at limiting bookings to individuals and/or people from the same household. Under the current guidelines would this be allowed?

In accordance with CMOH Order 18-2020 and Order 19-2020, pools, arenas, community centres, indoor children's play centres, indoor gyms, indoor fitness centres, and recreation centres that offer or provide access to recreation activities must remain closed at this time.

Organized sport events (other than outdoor practice activities that can follow stage one public health guidance), games and competitions/leagues are also prohibited from occurring in stage one, as they present a much higher risk of transmission of COVID-19 (increased contact between participants, higher number of individuals present).

If you are needing clarity as to if your business is currently eligible to operate or when your business will be allowed to operate, you can submit your question via the [BizConnect portal](#).

As an outdoor recreation provider, do we need to get our reopening plans approved by AHS? We have been told by our provincial association that we would need to have our local health authority review our plans. Can we be matched with a health inspector to review our plans or is this unnecessary as long as we follow AHS and BizConnect sector specific guidelines?

Your reopening plans do not need to be approved by AHS. Please follow all applicable requirements and guidelines on [BizConnect](#). AHS health inspectors are available for consultation upon request.

Wave Two

Does Alberta have a contingency plan if we see a spike in cases following the opening of the economy, like we saw in Ontario?

Alberta Health Services continues to do a high volume of testing and tracking of hospital admissions to monitor the spread of COVID-19 to guide future decision making. Decisions about opening the economy are made by the Government of Alberta using the best data available.

Any indication as to the likeliness of a second wave and future shutdowns? What is the likelihood of second wave? I understand it could be in the fall - is this correct?

We don't yet know, which is why Alberta Health Services continues to prioritize testing of all symptomatic Albertans and using contact tracing to monitor the spread of COVID-19. We hope to see Alberta continue its downward trend, and are grateful for the commitment of all Albertans to following public health guidelines.

According to 811, the antibody testing program will be rolled out at the end of May; what will that look like?

We don't have additional information at this time but please check the AHS and Alberta Health websites for more information as it becomes available.

Other

What about allergies? It's allergy season, and there are lots of sneezing and runny noses out there.

Do not assume that your symptoms are allergies. Symptoms for COVID-19 are similar to those for influenza or other respiratory illnesses. Anyone who has the following symptoms are legally required to [self-isolate](#), and should be tested for COVID-19:

- Fever
- A new cough or a chronic cough that is worsening
- New or worsening shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Runny nose

Additional Symptoms of COVID-19 can include:

- Stuffy nose
- Painful swallowing
- Headache
- Chills
- Muscle or joint aches
- Feeling unwell in general, or new fatigue or severe exhaustion
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or unexplained loss of appetite)
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Conjunctivitis, commonly known as pink eye

Complete the [COVID-19 Self-Assessment](#) for more information.

Can you please offer any advice on the safe use of public transportation to get to and from work?

Please contact your local municipality to determine the steps they are taking to prevent COVID-19 transmission with respect to public transport and follow public health advice, including:

- Practice hand hygiene before and after using public transportation.
- Stay home when you are ill.
- Practice physical distancing.
- Wear a non-medical mask where 2 meter separation isn't possible or feasible (such as when using public transportation).

Is it an acceptable practice for businesses to refuse cash payments at this time?

You may consider refusing cash payments as part of your [relaunch plan](#). Regardless of your decision, hand hygiene is critical. Staff and customers should have access to hand sanitizer when they do handle cash transactions. Additional information for retail businesses is available [here](#).

Do you have any suggestions for maximum occupancy on an elevator versus waiting in a crowd for one?

When out in public, practicing physical distancing can help you reduce your risk by minimizing contact with others in the community. In relation to elevator etiquette:

- Avoid overcrowding.
- Take the stairs or wait for the next elevator.
- Wear a face mask.

- Cover your cough.
- Avoid touching your face after pushing the button.
- Limit the number in an elevator car to 2-3 people.
- Wash hands with soap or sanitize your hands after using the elevator.

You can download a sign to post near your elevator [here](#).

Are church groups allowed to have more than 15 people? If our church holds 200 can we have 100 people?

With appropriate controls in place, places of worship may host services and faith-based activities of no more than 50 people, or 1/3 of building capacity, whichever is less.

Please see [Guidance for Places of Worship](#).

Can you provide more information on the plan that we need to post within 14 days of starting operations?

Development and posting of a plan is recommended. You can find a [detailed template](#) on BizConnect.

[Alberta Health Questions](#)

The following questions are being referred to alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx. We encourage those with outstanding questions such as those below to reach out directly for a response. While you wait for additional guidance or direction, please download the template: [Relaunch considerations for businesses](#) and begin to build your own relaunch plan based on the information you do know.

Sector Specific

How can a business that is very unique (activity/attraction), and doesn't fall under current guidelines already given by AHS or the province, find out if they are able to open, who can they talk too?

Can we return our dancers to rehearsal in studio? The group is smaller than 15, and our facility isn't open to the public. Are our studios restricted as gyms are? Or is it a different consideration because our staff are always the same 15 people who will be screened daily.

What about future events/gatherings...when will there be additional information rolled out for caterers? They aren't the same as a restaurant, and they don't work like a food truck. Many halls will need to know how to work with these types of vendors, and I know there are questions from potential renters about this

Wanted to ask specifically where a cancer support organization fits in the relaunch plan. We are thinking that we are Phase 4 (of the 3 Phases) given the vulnerability of those we serve (cancer patients). I would sincerely value direction on this.

Any thoughts about live theatre seating?

When can we open senior activity club?

Any suggestions about how a childcare room can keep the social distancing?

Is there a chance that outdoor pools or spray parks may be allowed to open with reduced capacities before indoor facilities?

We are an outdoor recreation business. How concerned should we be about slipstream? Can you provide any guidance with regards to appropriate distancing? Are we required to maintain a distance greater than 2m?

We operate a business with multiple types of experiences within it – retail, restaurant, etc. Is it acceptable by AHS to open some portions of our business permitted in Stage 1 and keep the others closed that are not permitted to be open yet?

We have housekeeping program for seniors and do you know when we can start this program, we have lots of phone calls from seniors

What about foot doctors in a 50+ activity centre - seniors need toe nails clipped and we normally have a foot doctor come in to do this.

Are there going to be more guidelines on day camps coming?

What is the space requirement indoors for day camps? We have a large building with multiple rooms. Is the 10 person max, per space (with physical walls)?

Community Associations

When can the community organization facility open to public and members?

[Our] Club is considering hosting outdoor events this summer (weddings, meetings). Mass gatherings guidelines allow for 50 people at outdoor events while following physical distancing guidelines. Our question is: with up to 50 people at an outdoor event, would we be able to provide access to our building for up to a maximum of 15 people or more at a time (caterers, kitchen, washroom users, and event storage). Our normal max capacity inside the building is 113 people.

As a community center we offer programs such as children's summer camps with numbers under 15. Community centers are not yet approved to open, however day camps are. Can we open for these programs?

Do you have specific guidelines for small community associations? Can we host small groups indoors with no shared food or drinks providing there is room for physical distancing?

Are you going to discuss specific issues related to community associations that rent out their halls? We are not the usual business and so far there is no new information to guide us.

Do hall renters have to provide contact info for all their guests? What do we need to ask for?

General Questions

When can Grandparents hug their grandchildren?

Is there any chance that the physical distancing is going to be reduced this summer? Children that have not seen their friends for months, are going to be very hard to keep apart, and entertain in a day camp setting if you cannot share supplies or play games with that much distance

What type of notice can employees expect if a second wave makes us shut down again?

Can you offer an indication of the notice businesses can expect to receive in the event that a shutdown is mandated due to a second wave of infection?

Given Calgary is still under SOLE until mid-August, can we reasonably presume phase 3 businesses won't be re-opening until September at the earliest?

Will there be future suggestions around sports events and the requirements of hockey teams and arena facilities? What can we expect requirements to be?

Resources

Public Health Orders: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-orders-and-legislation.aspx>

AHS Environmental Public Health: <https://ephisahs.albertahealthservices.ca/create-case/>

AHS: www.ahs.ca/covid19

Alberta Health: www.alberta.ca/covid

Health Canada: www.canada.ca/en/health-canada

World Health Organization: www.who.int/health-topics