

Protecting Employees and the Public

The plan for reopening Ohio businesses is still pending approval by both Governor DeWine and Director Acton. The reopening of businesses will likely be a slow, phased in process. While we await guidance from the State of Ohio, the following planning steps are a reasonable approach Noble County business may want to consider. Starting to think through the implementation of these types of precautions may help your business be ready to respond when the Governor presents the plan for Ohio.

In planning for the gradual reopening of the state, three elements are important to consider:

- 1) Preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus within a work environment is tantamount to preventing spread within the community.
- 2) Prevention measures will be the joint responsibility of the business owners or management, in conjunction with employees, and customers (clients).
- 3) Aggressive case investigation and quarantine following the identification of a clinically diagnosed case of COVID-19 will be mandatory to prevent a community outbreak. Cases traced to a business environment will likely result in the quarantine of most, if not all, individuals connected with that environment. A business should develop a plan to address a possible closure due to quarantined staff and/or the need to sanitize the facility.

In order to ensure a safe return to operation, businesses should consider both the behaviors of staff and customers, the environment, and the business practices of the company.

Staff and Customer Actions

1. When social distancing requirement (six feet of separation) cannot be met, staff may be required to wear a mask. Customers may be similarly encouraged or required for some interactions.
2. Hand sanitizer, wipes, or other opportunities to routinely clean hands must be available to employees and customers.
3. Vulnerable or at-risk individuals should be provided an opportunity to be separated or to have appointments at times that decreases interaction with the general public.

Questions the business should ask

- A. Have you developed a 'mask' policy for employees and customers?
- B. Have you developed a policy to address at-risk customers and employees that provides social distancing or other protections?
- C. Are hand wipes, hand washing opportunities easily accessible?

Environmental Considerations

1. Enhanced hygiene practices should be considered. Routine cleaning should be developed that disinfects high contact surfaces routinely through a shift and not just daily.
 - a. It may be necessary to clean after each client in long contact professions (hair salons, medical, etc.)
 - b. Cleaning solutions and practices need to adhere to manufacture recommendations using a cleaning product labeled as killing coronaviruses and listed on the EPA website.

Protecting Employees and the Public

2. Partitions or other physical barriers between customers and staff or between staff who work in close contact with one another should be considered where appropriate to reduce spread.
3. Tissues and hand sanitizer should be readily available when possible.

Questions the business should ask

- A. Do you have a plan for routinely cleaning high contact surfaces during a work shift?
- B. Do you have a supply of appropriate cleaning solutions? Are staff familiar with its proper use?
- C. Do you have hand sanitizer or wipes and tissues conveniently located for customers and staff?
- D. Have you reviewed workspaces so that each workstation is more than 6 feet apart? Have you considered partitions to reduce direct exposure of staff or customers?

Business Practices

1. Employees that can work from home should continue to do so as appropriate.
2. To the degree possible, business should be conducted by phone or online. When in-person service is needed, appointments and other strategies to decrease foot traffic and congregating within a space should be used.
3. Staggered lunches, breaks, or work shifts should be considered to reduce the number of employees within a space.
4. Employees that are ill should be sent home immediately.
 - a. Customers who are ill should similarly be sent home.
5. Informational posters and communications with employees and customers should reinforce hygiene practices necessary to reduce spread of COVID-19.
6. Policies that address leave for illness and possible isolation and leave needed for possible quarantine should be developed. When possible, this should extend to leave needed to care for or follow quarantine orders due to an ill household contact.

Questions the business should ask

- A. Do you have sick leave policies that require employees to be home if ill?
- B. Do you have policies that address customers who may be symptomatic (ill) during an appointment?
- C. Have you considered/ made available work-from-home options for as many staff as possible?
- D. Have you developed a plan for staggered breaks? Work shifts?

Businesses can work toward reopening in advance of the Governor's and Director's specific direction by considering the questions above and drafting a simple one-page summary of what is ready and identifying those items that still need attention. Businesses are encouraged to use this time to build their capacity to protect their employees and customers.

The Governor has also indicated as he begins a phased-in approach to opening various sectors of business, employees and customers will be the driving voice questioning the business's compliance with the final guidance. This perspective will likely result in a heightened vigilance from employees and customers. Each business's ability to comply with the requirements will be in the public eye.

As a reminder, the final decisions regarding reopening non-essential businesses rests with Governor DeWine and Director Acton. These recommendations are only an interim guide for planning.



