Reopening Brant Businesses & Workplaces during the COVID-19 Pandemic

A Four Step
Public Health Planning Guide

June 10, 2020

This document provides guidance to support COVID-19 recovery planning for businesses and workplaces. Brant County Health Unit is not responsible for any misinterpretation or misuse of this guide.

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**BRANT COUNTY
HEALTH UNIT**

Overview

This public health planning guide is aimed to help Brant businesses reopen their businesses safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes four basic steps that should be taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among staff, customers, clients and the public:

Step 1: Learn and stay informed about how COVID-19 spreads
Step 2: Assess risks of COVID-19 spread in the workplace
Step 3: Modify the workplace in order to lower the risk
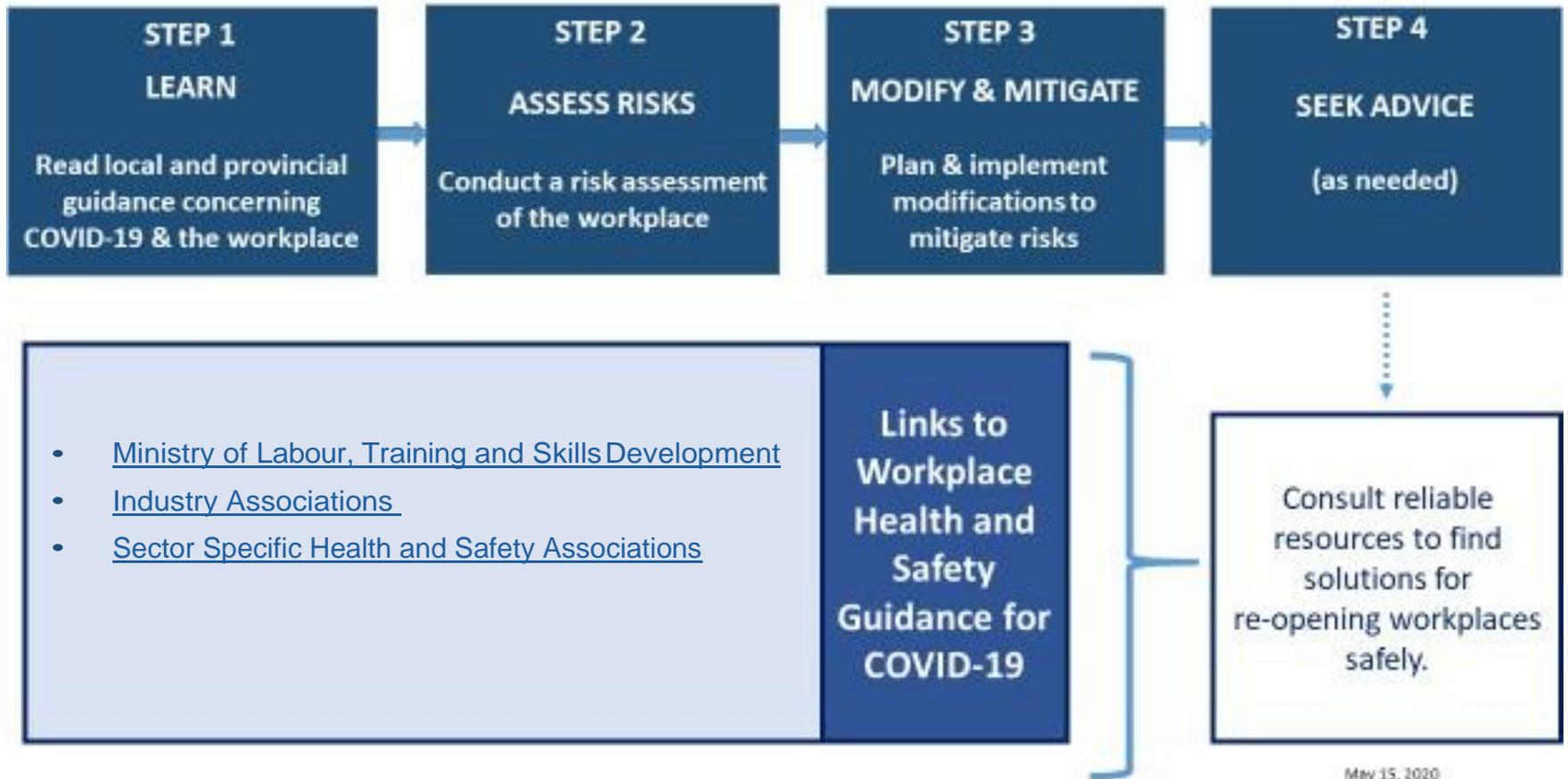**Step 4:** Seek advice, as needed.

The information in this guide does <u>not replace</u> the current prevailing Emergency Orders or any information about public health, labour relations, employment standards or occupational health and safety published by the Government of Ontario, or by the Government of Canada. The information in this guide should be used in addition to those guidelines, orders, and restrictions.

Emergency Orders and Businesses and Workplaces:

The Province of Ontario has implemented various [Emergency Orders](#), under s.7.0.2 (4) of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. Employers may reopen their workplaces or resume services only in response to changes to or termination of the emergency orders. Any service changes that is implemented must conform to the prevailing Provincial Order and any orders or restrictions implemented by the City of Brantford and County of Brant.

Brant employers and businesses must stay up-to-date on all Emergency Orders, federal and provincial guidance related to COVID-19 and any orders or restrictions implemented by the City of Brantford and County of Brant.

REOPENING BRANT BUSINESSES & WORKPLACES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

STEP 1 LEARN	STEP 2 ASSESS RISKS	STEP 3 MODIFY & MITIGATE	STEP 4 SEEK ADVICE
Read local and provincial guidance concerning COVID-19 & the workplace	Conduct a risk assessment of the workplace	Plan & implement modifications to mitigate risks	(as needed)

- Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
- Industry Associations
- Sector Specific Health and Safety Associations

Links to Workplace Health and Safety Guidance for COVID-19

Consult reliable resources to find solutions for re-opening workplaces safely.

May 15, 2020

Step 1: LEARN

COVID-19 General Information

Knowledge about COVID-19 is rapidly evolving. As a result, guidance may change as new evidence and facts are confirmed. Staying informed about what is known about COVID-19 will help local businesses make decisions about how to safely re-open. The BCHU's [COVID-19 webpage,](#) the Government of Ontario, and the Government of Canada provide reliable and current information for businesses and the public.

Emergency Orders, Directives and By-Laws
New emergency orders and bylaws have been put in place to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Know the law and keep up to date about changes that may affect your business.

Transmission
COVID-19 spreads through direct contact with respiratory droplets of someone who is infected with the virus through their cough, or sneeze. These droplets can spread up to 2 metres, or 6 feet. It is important to note that how easily a virus spreads from person-to-person can vary. It may also be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface, or object that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes. People who are infected with COVID-19 may have mild, severe, or no symptoms. As a result, there is the possibility of asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic spread of COVID-19.

Contamination of Surfaces
The COVID-19 virus can survive for up to 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel, less than 24 hours on cardboard, and less than 4 hours on copper [WHO, 2020.](#) The virus is easily eliminated on surfaces by using common household cleaning disinfectant products, or chlorine bleach solutions.

People with Unique Needs
The risk of severe illness from COVID-19 is greater in older adults, people with a weak immune system, and individuals with a pre-existing medical conditions. This should be considered when planning to reopen businesses and workplaces.

Self-Isolation
Current public health guidelines require that anyone that has tested positive for COVID-19, has symptoms, or has had close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, or has symptoms, must self-isolate for 14 days. Employers should ensure that staff do not come to work sick and should establish employee screening and attendance measures that include ensuring staff with COVID-19 symptoms go home and self-isolate for 14 days and seek medical advice through Telehealth or their healthcare provider. Criteria for returning to work should also be established.

Treatment
At this time, there are no vaccine or treatments for COVID-19. Those with COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19 are encouraged to seek medical advice through Telehealth or their local healthcare provider.

Step 2: ASSESS RISKS

Businesses and workplaces should use the information about how COVID-19 spreads to review their operations and identify potential risks. For example, some business operations may already be very low risk such as those that involve staff working remotely. Others may be identified as higher risk and will require changes to ensure a safe environment. Everyone who may be present in the workplace should be considered in the risk assessment (e.g. staff, clients and visitors).

> An **easy-to-use tool** for COVID-19 risk assessment and mitigation is included at the end of this guide, with sample scenarios that can be adapted for different businesses.

Three factors should be considered when assessing the level of risk in a workplace:[1,2]
- Number of Contacts
- Contact Intensity (Distance & Duration)
- Potential for Risk Mitigation.

Number of Contacts is the number of people in the setting at the same time, on average (inclusive of all staff, customers and anyone else who is present). A higher number of people at the same time in an area would increase the risk of virus transmission.

Use the following thresholds for your risk assessment:
- o Lower risk = fewer than 5 people
- o Moderate risk = between 5 and 50 people
- o Higher risk = more than 50 people.

Contact Intensity is the level of contact among all the people in the setting at the same time, on average (inclusive of all staff and customers and anyone else who is present). It includes the *distance* between people and the *duration* of their contact.

Use the following thresholds for your risk assessment:
- o Lower risk = contact that is *brief* (a few seconds or minutes) and *distant* (at least 2 metres/6 feet apart), like walking by a person in a mall.
- o Higher risk = prolonged close contact (more than 15 minutes; closer than 2 metres/6 feet), like sitting together in a theatre.
- o Moderate risk falls *between* these two extremes, such as a short meeting, seated several feet apart.

Potential for Risk Mitigation is the degree to which activities can be modified to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure. Workplaces that can eliminate or reduce exposure by working remotely or by implement barriers, have a higher risk mitigation potential than those relying on personal protective equipment such as masks. See Page 7, "*Public Health Hierarchy of Controls*" for a summary of options.

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[1] Rivers et al. Public Health Principles for a Phase Reopening During COVID-19: Guidelines for Governors. Johns Hopkins Bloomburg School of Public Health Center for Health Security. April 17, 2020;

[2] Public Health Agency of Canada. Risk Informed Decision-making Guidelines for Workplaces and Businesses during the COVID-19 Pandemic. April 2020.

Step 3: MODIFY THE WORKPLACE; MITIGATE RISK

Based on assessment of risks in the workplace, the next step is to develop a COVID-19 risk mitigation plan. If there are multiple workplace settings, you may need to develop multiple risk mitigation plans.

Every business that re-opens during the COVID-19 pandemic will need a plan to help prevent and reduce virus spread. Businesses understand their operations best and are the most suited to develop their own risk mitigation plan, using guidance from reliable public health and occupational health and safety resources.

The risk mitigation measures that a business implements will range from using signage to promote good hand hygiene, to changing how services are provided, to modifying the physical work space.
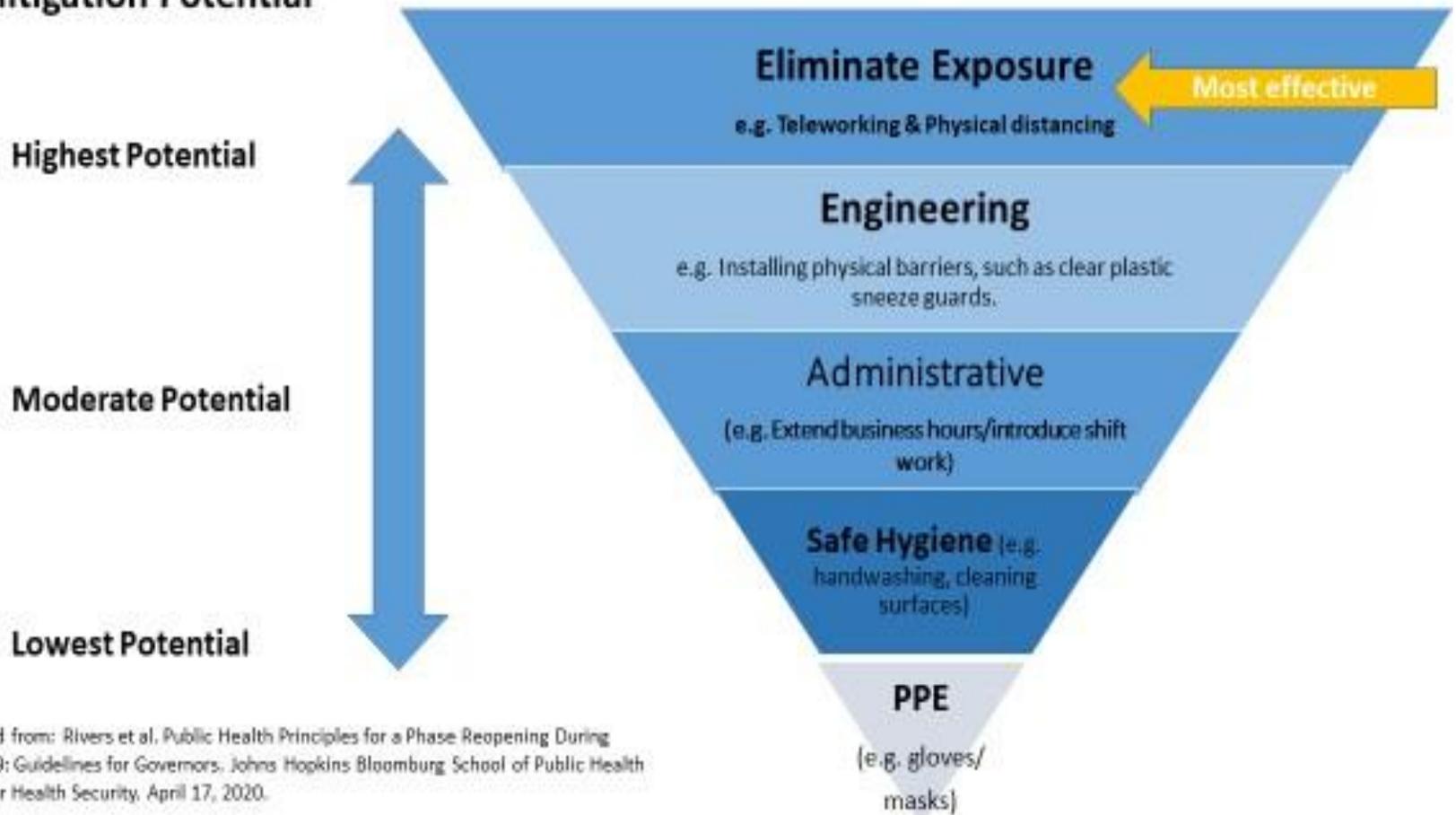
Your plans may involve transferring all or part of the business to teleworking, creating floor markings to ensure physical distancing in lineups, installing physical barriers such as sneeze guards at service counters and cashier stations or increasing the distance between workstations.

Modifications made in the workplace should be guided by current provincial orders, relevant City of Brantford or County of Brant guidance and the "Hierarchy of Controls" (Page 7) that ranks

different methods of controlling the spread of COVID-19. These include, from highest to lowest impact:

1. **Eliminate the exposure** – physical distancing is the most effective method of mitigating the risks of spreading COVID-19. Examples of measures that promote physical distancing include providing online services and virtual meetings, cancelling group events, closing/limiting use of shared spaces, and ensuring people remain at least 2 metres, or 6 feet apart.

2. **Engineering controls** – are structural modifications to the workspace, or equipment that minimize contact among people. This may include the use of additional rooms, configuring partitions as a barrier shield, and removing or rearranging furniture.

3. **Administrative controls** – are modifications to business processes and behaviours that reduce the number of contacts or contact intensity (distance or duration) among people. Examples include working in shifts, using curbside pick-up, and using verbal or visual cues instead of close contact.

4. **Safe work and hygiene practices** - are on-the-job activities that reduce the potential for exposure. This can be done by providing training in hand hygiene and reminding staff and customers to stay home if they are ill.

5. **Personal protective equipment** - includes items such as face masks and gloves. This equipment can reduce a worker's exposure to virus, but must be used properly to be effective and should not replace other prevention strategies.

Occupational Health and Safety "Hierarchy of Controls": Risk Mitigation Potential[3]

Highest Potential

Moderate Potential

Lowest Potential

Eliminate Exposure
e.g. Teleworking & Physical distancing

Most effective

Engineering
e.g. Installing physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards.

Administrative
(e.g. Extend business hours/introduce shift work)

Safe Hygiene (e.g. handwashing, cleaning surfaces)

PPE
(e.g. gloves/ masks)

[3] Adapted from: Rivers et al. Public Health Principles for a Phase Reopening During COVID-19: Guidelines for Governors. Johns Hopkins Bloomburg School of Public Health Center for Health Security. April 17, 2020.

Step 4: SEEK ADVICE, AS NEEDED

There are many supports available to help you to plan your business reopening. For example, you may require information related to staff training and management, crisis communication, transferring your business online, or how to manage an exposure or suspected exposure.

A list of reliable resources is provided below. Check back frequently to these websites, as information is regularly updated.

Brant

- Brant County Health Unit webpage
- County of Brant webpage
- City of Brantford webpage

Public Health Ontario

- Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings
- How to Hand Wash
- Putting on Full Personal Protective Equipment
- Taking off Full Personal Protective Equipment

Government of Ontario

- Ministry of Health COVID-19 Guidance: Essential Workplaces
- Province of Ontario Guidance to Prevent COVID-19 in the Workplace
- A Framework for Reopening our Province
- Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development: List of COVID-19 Guidance for Sectors: Construction, Retail, Food Processing, Restaurant and Food Services, Manufacturing, Agriculture, Vehicle Sales and Service, Film and TV, Personal Services, Animal Services, and more.

Industry Associations

- Infrastructure Health and Safety Association
- Workplace Safety and Prevention Services
- Post Pandemic Playbook
  - COVID-19 Safety Tips and Posters
  - List of Industry Association Supports: COVID-19

Other Canadian Provinces

- [Guidance for business owners re-opening or continuing operations](#)
- [BC Go-Forward Management Strategy](#)

Government of Canada

- [Risk-informed decision-making guidelines for workplaces and businesses during the COVID-19](#)
- [Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): For businesses and employees](#)
- [Advice for essential retailers during COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety COVID-19 Tip Sheets](#)

References

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World Health Organization (2020). *What does it mean to self-isolate?* Retrieved from: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses

Simple Tool for Public Health Risk Assessment and Risk Mitigation Planning

The sample scenarios below may help to inform your own workplace risk assessment and risk mitigation planning. Use the blank sheets to complete your own assessment and plan. The risk mitigation options described here are examples only. Review the resources on Pages 8-9 for further information.

Work Setting/ Service	Contact (H/M/L)			Risk Mitigation Potential (H/M/L)	Feasible Risk Mitigation Options	Resources Required	Information/ Training Required	Communicating to Staff and Customers	Prepare for Exposure or Outbreak
	#	Distance	Duration						
Office Elevator Cubicles, Staff Kitchenette Shared Washroom Meeting Rooms Shared Printer Station	H	H	H	H	• Symptoms checklist posted on front door. • Practice physical distancing in elevators. • Integrate teleworking. • Staggering start times, breaks and lunch times to reduce crowding. • Avoid sharing communal office equipment/supplies (e.g., printers). • Encourage employees/clients to take public transit at non-peak times to limit contact with others. • Update emergency contact information. • Spatial separation of workstations.	• Print and post symptoms checklist. • Print and post 'physical distancing in elevatbrs' guidance. • Home laptops. • Digital Network Access and Security. • Communicate to staff re: scheduling/ timesheets.	• Best practices for managing teleworkers (Ask: Economic Development and Culture Division)	• Email/newsletters to staff. • Regular updates to key clients as appropriate, via phone, email, social media, or website. • Website updates. • Review resources for effective crisis communication.	• Send home staff or customers who are ill. • Be prepared for sudden staffing level changes due to 14 day self-isolation requirements for anyone who develops symptoms.

Service Area					Controls	Materials	Training	Communications	Policy
Service Counter Service wickets Lobby, Line-Ups Back office shared spac Public washroom Staff Kitchenette Meeting rooms	H	H	M	M	• Symptoms checklist posted on front door. • Barriers, such as clear Plexiglas screens, between staff and customers who must interact within 2 metres, or 6 feet. • Closed bar seating. • Staff and customers should wear a non-medical mask or face covering if 2 metres, or 6 feet physical distancing cannot be maintained. • Provide hand sanitizer stations at entrance and exit of facility. • Enhance environmental cleaning, with a special attention to frequently touched surfaces and objects (e.g., phones, elevator buttons, computers, desks, lunch tables, washrooms, cash registers, seats, counters).	• Print and post symptoms checklist. • Purchase and install barriers. • Purchase and install hand sanitizer/ stations. • Purchase and increase the use of cleaning products, disinfectants • Purchase masks.	• Train staff on proper use of masks. • Specifications for plexiglass barriers. (Ask: Occupational Health and Safety/ Ministry of Labour)	• Website updates. • Signage printed materials onsite. • Onsite greeters.	• Send home staff or customers who are ill. • Be prepared for sudden staffing level changes due to 14 day self-isolation requirements for anyone who develops symptoms.
Dine-in Restaurant Host station, Tables, Bar, Customer Washroom, Kitchen	M	M	M	M	• Symptoms checklist posted on front door. • Send home anyone who is ill. • Reduce and separate seating to accommodate 2 metres, or 6 feet between tables. • Staff use masks. • Install hand sanitizer stations. • Enhanced cleaning, removal of unnecessary high touch objects (e.g. menus, table condiments). • Physical distancing markers in kitchen. • Use reservation system to make contact tracing easier in case of an outbreak.	• Print and post symptoms checklist. • Hand sanitizer • Increase use of cleaning products, disinfectants. • Purchase masks. • Technology to manage delivery service.	• Guidelines for Communications. • Train staff on proper use of masks. • Review requirements for food preparation facilities (Ask BCHU)	• Website updates. • Signage printed materials onsite. • Hosts have clear script for arriving customers. • Clear messaging on telephone reservation line, website.	• Send home staff or customers who are ill. • Be prepared for sudden staffing level changes due to 14 day self-isolation requirements for anyone who develops symptoms.

Work Setting/ Service	Contact (H/M/L)			Risk Mitigation Potential (H/M/L)	Feasible Risk Mitigation Options	Resources Required	Information/ Training Required	Communicating to Staff and Customers	Prepare for Exposure or Outbreak
	#	Distance	Dura-tion						