ProService HAWAII

Ready, Set, Reopen!

Best practice resource for **Health Care Providers**

Reopening requires planning to not only survive but thrive.
For health care providers, we've distilled the key steps for a safe reopening.
Here are three steps to take:

01 Put safety first
02 Ready your employees
03 Adapt your services

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01. Put Safety First

Health care providers must create a safe working environment that gives employees confidence to return to work, and patients confidence to visit. Properly disinfecting your entire office and designing patient-care areas that work is critical. Here's what we suggest you do:

Pre-clean. Plus establish your ongoing cleaning plan

- Review OSHA and CDC guidelines for **detailed guidance** and disinfecting how-to's.
  - Use cleaners and water to pre-clean surfaces before disinfecting.
  - Use EPA-registered, hospital-grade disinfectants effective against SARS-CoV-2.
  - Ensure cleaning staff use proper PPE when cleaning and disinfecting.
  - Clean and disinfect room surfaces promptly after performing aerosol-generating procedures.
  - Ensure that management of any laundry, food service utensils and medical waste are performed in accordance with routine procedures.
- **Order cleaning, disinfectant, and PPE supplies.** Maintain at least a 30-day inventory.
- **Thoroughly clean and disinfect** your office *before* you reopen.
- Check your **HVAC, fire, and life safety systems** to make sure they are working properly.
- Create an **ongoing cleaning schedule for all areas** (e.g. hourly, daily, or weekly). If you have a cleaning service, work with them to confirm your cleaning schedule.
- **Identify and clean high-touch surfaces** such as counters, door handles, chair arms, restroom keys.
- **Add hand sanitizer stations**, preferably touchless, at entrances/exits/common areas/waiting areas.
- Follow **OSHA/HIOSH guidelines** for proper labeling, use and storage of chemicals.
- Have an enhanced cleaning plan ready should a **positive COVID-19 case** be reported.

Create appropriate PPE & physical distancing rules

- **Require health care providers to wear appropriate PPE** like masks and face shields when engaged in direct patient care. If you are treating a patient with confirmed/possible infection, have the patient wear a facemask while being treated. When cleaning and disinfecting, make sure to wear disposable gloves. Read the CDC's Infection Control Guidance for Healthcare Professionals for more guidance on PPE use for your health care facility.
- Staff in clerical roles (not direct patient care) may wear cloth face covering instead of PPE.
- Require employees and clients to **wear a mask** before entering.
- **Discard disposable gowns** or **launder cloth gowns** after each use.
- **Post signage** to communicate key distancing rules and reminders in areas where employees may gather like reception areas, elevators, lunch rooms, copy rooms, restrooms, and conference rooms.
- Designate **one location for deliveries** or **ask vendors to deliver outside of patient hours**. Require vendors to wear face masks, disinfect all items, and only allow them to enter only when escorted by an employee.

Determine handling of shared materials & limit access to common areas

- **Determine standards** for using shared areas like patient rooms or employee break rooms.
- **Remove shared items in waiting rooms** like magazines or toys, or clean them regularly.
- Consider **low-touch or no-touch options** e.g. switches, doors, drawers, faucets, soap dispensers.
- **Limit sharing equipment** or consider providing individual office equipment, like headsets for each front desk employee. If sharing is necessary, **post clear directions** on how to clean shared-use equipment.

Reorganize your floor plan and traffic flow

- **Reconfigure seating,** to ensure 6 feet between chairs and add **floor markers** in waiting areas.
- **Designate specific entrances and exits** to control traffic and reduce contact.
- **Install safeguards** to prevent transmission of airborne particles that may carry the virus e.g. sneeze guards at reception desks or get creative with economical barriers like clear, thick plastic.
- **Establish paths** (e.g. one-way, clockwise) to minimize proximity for patients and employees. If you have separate waiting areas for patients with and without COVID-19 symptoms, plan the path to get patients to the appropriate areas while minimizing contact.

Limit the number of people in a closed space

- **Reduce office occupancy** based on county and state capacity rules. Establish an occupancy monitoring protocol to maintain appropriate capacity.
- **Limit the number of scheduled patients** to the maximum number who can safely receive care at the same time given your office space/patient room setup, and the time needed to clean and disinfect areas in between patients.
- **Stagger appointments** and consider creative ways of having people wait outside the office, or in their car, and you can call/text them when they should come in.

Set Pre-Appointment Screening and In-Office Registration Procedures

- Conduct **pre-appointment screening before every patient's visit.**
  - During the screening, check if the patient has been tested for COVID-19, experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, exposed to anyone who has tested positive/has symptoms of COVID-19, or traveled in the last 14 days. Review the [CDC's Phone Advice Line Tool](#) to help you develop screening questions and guide the patient to the right level of care.
  - Build the screening process into your pre-appointment confirmation (phone or web). Share safety protocols with your patient and let them know what to expect when they arrive at your office.
  - Use text or pre-recorded voice messaging to remind patients about reporting their symptoms.
- Remind patients or guardians to **limit the number of companions** to essential people only.
- **Place a staff member near all entrances** (preferably outdoors if feasible), or in the waiting room area to ensure patients are screened for symptoms and fever before entering the office.
- [Post notices outdoors](#) letting patients and visitors know to call your office *before* entering. This is so that you can screen them properly ahead of time.
- [Post notices indoors](#) asking visitors to use a mask and cover their mouth when coughing.
- Let patients with COVID-19 symptoms know [how they can manage symptoms at home.](#)
- Implement procedures to **quickly triage and separate** sick patients.
- Create **separate waiting areas** for patients with and without symptoms**.** Plan your traffic flow so that you can send patients to the appropriate waiting area while minimizing contact as much as possible.
- **Provide tissues and alcohol-based (60% minimum) wipes/sanitizers** in waiting rooms and reception areas to help patients practice good respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.
- **Stagger appointments** and consider having people wait outside the office to limit # of people in your office.
- Limit providing care to **one patient at a time** whenever possible.
- Set up equipment so **only clean/sterile supplies and instruments are easily accessible** for patient care. All other supplies should be in a covered storage, away from possible contamination.
- **Avoid aerosol-generating procedures if possible**. If it is necessary to perform aerosol-generating procedures, as in a dental office, take every precaution to minimize droplet spatter and aerosols by using four-handed dentistry, high-evacuation suction and dental dams.

For more info, visit [proservice.com/coronavirus](#).

02. Ready your employees

The return to work will introduce new norms and uncertainties for your team. Keep the communication lines open and provide training for your team to ensure a safe and smooth reopening.

▷ ## Energize and build trust with your people
- Reconnect employees to your **culture and brand values**.
- **Address employee concerns** with compassion and confidence.
- **Confirm schedules, salaries, benefits and HR policies** and highlight/explain changes.
- **Proactively seek feedback** from employees and include them to brainstorm solutions.
- **Revisit HR and safety policies,** focusing on the most vulnerable groups, such as temporary workers, people with disabilities, single parents or those who lack adequate health benefits.
- Find creative ways to **support employee well-being** during this crisis.

▷ ## Clearly communicate and train staff on your "new normal"
- Communicate **clearly, early, often, and with compassion**.
- **Find alternatives to in-person meetings**, like communication boards, text or video.
- Employees should **regularly monitor themselves** for fever and/or other COVID-19 symptoms. Make it clear that they should **not come to work if they have symptoms** or are ill.
- Before every shift, employees should be **screened for fever (T≥100.0°F)** and other COVID-19 symptoms. **Create a daily log** of information for all employees entering the workplace. If an employee develops fever/symptoms at work, have them keep their mask on, inform their supervisor and leave work immediately. If COVID-19 is suspected, the employee should be prioritized for testing. In addition, all surfaces and objects that the employee touched should be disinfected.
- **Create a COVID-19 Job Hazard Analysis (JHA)** clearly identifying tasks, hazards, and hazard abatements for any task requiring employees to wear PPE and provide appropriate training. This JHA will be additional to other JHAs you may already have (i.e. blood borne pathogen).
- Communicate **expectations for mask/PPE use/disposal.** Provide training and have your staff practice proper donning, using and doffing PPE to employees prior to caring for a patient.
- **Provide task-specific education** and training on how to prevent transmission of infectious agents.
- **Review expectations** for routine cleaning and sanitizing of high-touch areas.
- Create easy ways for employees to **maintain social distancing**. Point out easy markers like a 6-foot examination table or place wall signs 6 feet apart as a visual reminder for employees.
- Discuss **who/how to handle patients** who don't want to wear masks or follow safety guidelines.
- Educate employees on your plan for handling **suspected/confirmed cases** of COVID-19 and what steps they should take if they experience symptoms or feel sick.
- If you have health care personnel with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, follow the guidance from the CDC on **how to determine if/when they can return to work**.

▷ ## Prepare & post signage!
- **Use floor markings** and **physical barriers** to separate or direct traffic in all areas, including waiting, seating, and restroom areas.
- **At reception areas**, post signs to remind people to disinfect hands and practice good hygiene.
- **In break rooms,** post signs reminding staff to maintain safety and social distancing guidelines.
- **In restrooms and kitchen**, post signs reminding staff to wash hands properly and often.

03. Adapt Your Services

Whether your health care facility is brand new or generations old, reopening in the "new normal" presents an opportunity to rethink how you operate. Here are some things to solve for as you adjust your priorities and strategy for reopening.

Reimagine new ways of providing care

- Consider introducing **telehealth / telemedicine services** to provide care remotely through video or phone.
- **Revisit all areas of your client experience**—from appointment setting, waiting in the reception area and receiving care — and find ways to make the experience better. For example, if waiting in the reception area is challenging, consider asking patients to wait in their cars and texting them when it's their turn to enter the office.
- Turn distancing rules and regulations into creative **brand moments and opportunities** e.g. give away branded pens to patients, use fun floor signs.

Protect your business

- Before reopening, **contact your medical malpractice insurance carrier t**o discuss your current coverage and any additional coverage you may need due to heightened risks caused by the pandemic.
- **Review your confidentiality, privacy, and data security protocols** to make sure you are complying with HIPAA requirements, especially when it comes to keeping employee screening records or sharing information related to employees who may test positive.

Meet your patients where they are

- **Reach out to your patients proactively** to let them know your reopening plans.
- **Re-engage patients and potential clients** across all channels, e.g. standard mail, email, text, social media.
- **Reassure your patients** of your commitment to safety and share what they can expect at their next visit.
- **Spread the word**, ask patients to help you increase awareness by providing a great online review.
- Consider offering **special hours** or meetings by appointment for high-risk individuals.

Leverage technology when possible

- **Keep building your online presence** through a website or social to complement your brick-and-mortar.
- **Share your expertise** online via social media, web, or earned media coverage.
- Sign up for an **app** to help with location info, appointments, or reminders for patients.
- **Allow remote work** when possible and **use alternative forms of communication** like video or text to minimize in-person training and meetings.

A Note from ProService Hawaii:

The workplace has changed, it will not be business as usual. Our "new normal" will look very different from what we've known it to be. Recovery will require new business models and revenue streams, new staff relations, new relationships with our business partners, suppliers, landlords and clients. It will take a long time to arrive at our "new normal." Anticipating and preparing for this new business environment will take innovation, patience, and a whole lot of grit. **You've got this.**

Sources:

- [Information for Healthcare Professionals about Coronavirus,](#) Center for Disease Control

- [Guidance for Dental Settings,](#) Center for Disease Control

- [A Physician Practice Guide to Reopening,](#) American Medical Association

- [Interim Guidance for Minimizing COVID-19 Transmission](#), American Dental Association

- [Businesses and Workplace Guidance,](#) Center for Disease Control

- [Cleaning and Disinfecting,](#) Center for Disease Control

- [List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2,](#) Environmental Protection Agency

- [Employer's Guide to Coronavirus](#), ProService Hawaii