Effective 07/11/2022, the following public health recommendations apply to general business (non-healthcare) settings in Virginia. For more detailed guidance and requirements for specific settings (such as schools, sports, camps, pools, etc), please see the VDH Website for Schools, Workplaces, and Communities and also CDC guidance.

**Encourage vaccination.**

Encourage all employees and patrons to get up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines by going to Vaccinate.Virginia.gov or calling 1-877-VAX-IN-VA. Where feasible, consider paid time off or other incentives to allow employees to attend vaccination appointments.

**Consider policies for mask wearing.**

Businesses and organizations may wish to consider a mask wearing policy for employees and patrons that aligns with CDC guidelines. In areas with high COVID-19 community levels, CDC recommends everyone aged 2 years and older wear a mask in public indoor settings. See VDH’s mask page for the most current information. If you choose to have a mask policy, use entry-point signage and other means to clearly communicate the policy, and have staff available to explain the establishment’s policy as questions arise. Any individual should always be permitted to wear a mask for public health reasons if they choose to do so.

**Consider policies and practices for physical distance.**

Consider implementing physical engineering systems when the COVID-19 community level is at a high level. Also consider other factors, such as whether the business venue largely serves people who are at increased risk for severe disease. Examples of engineering systems could include floor markers or signage for 6 feet distancing, especially in high traffic locations, check out lines, or seating areas.

**Promote frequent hand washing.**

Promote frequent and thorough hand washing by providing employees and patrons entering the space with a place to wash their hands. If soap and running water are not immediately available, provide hand sanitizers for customers and staff throughout the place of business, particularly at entry and exit points. Further hand hygiene guidance can be found on the CDC website. A CDC training video is available here.

**Practice routine cleaning (and disinfect if needed).**

Follow CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting the facility or space. Surfaces frequently touched by multiple people, such as door handles, desks, phones, light switches, and faucets, should be cleaned at least once per day.

Consider cleaning more often or using an EPA-approved disinfectant to disinfect (in addition to cleaning) in high traffic areas, when indoor ventilation is poor, when people are not regularly washing hands, or if the space is used by people at increased risk of severe COVID-19. In those situations, disinfecting wipes could be used at least once per day. If patrons wish to wipe down surfaces more often, wipes should be made available to them. If there has been a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 in the facility within the last 24 hours, high-touch areas should be disinfected, in addition to cleaning the space. Ensure cleaning staff are trained on proper use of cleaning and disinfecting products available in the facility. VDH and CDC do not recommend foggers for disinfection of COVID-19, since there is insufficient evidence to support their use in businesses, their potential benefits do not outweigh potential harms, and conventional cleaning and disinfection methods are safer and proven effective.
Consider screening testing of employees.

Workplace testing programs can help identify employees with COVID-19 infection and can help prevent transmission in the workplace, limit severe disease, and help lessen the strain on the health care system. CDC advises that at medium and high COVID-19 community levels, workplaces consider screening testing or other testing strategies for people who are exposed to COVID-19 in workplaces. Refer to COVID-19 Screening Testing in Non Health Care Workplaces: Potential Implementation Models and CDC Guidance for SARS-CoV-2 Testing in Non-Healthcare Workplaces for additional information. Please note that the CDC guidance still refers to now retired levels of community transmission, but other information regarding test types, frequency of testing, and other considerations are provided.

Encourage employees to self-monitor.

Employees should be instructed to self-monitor for any COVID-19 signs or symptoms before reporting to work. A list of COVID-19 symptoms and a self-checker tool are provided here. This VDH Algorithm can help employers determine if an employee needs to stay at home or be sent home due to symptoms or exposures. The VDH Isolation and Quarantine calculator can help employers determine how many days to remain home following a positive COVID-19 diagnosis or exposure. For employers with established occupational health programs, employers can consider measuring temperature and assessing symptoms of employees prior to starting work/before each shift.

Develop or adopt flexible sick leave policies to ensure that sick employees do not report to work if they have symptoms, if they have a positive COVID-19 test, if they need to self-quarantine due to exposure, or if they need to care for a sick family member. Encourage all employees, even if up to date on vaccines, to get tested if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

Some employees are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Employers should take particular care to reduce their risk of exposure while making sure to be compliant with relevant Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) regulations. Consider offering vulnerable employees duties that minimize their contact with customers and other employees, if agreed to by the employee. Protect employees at higher risk for severe illness by supporting and encouraging options to telework. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission enforces several workplace anti-discrimination laws and provides information about COVID-19.

Incorporate ventilation as a mitigation strategy.

Proper ventilation practices and interventions can greatly reduce the airborne concentrations of COVID-19 inside a building. See VDH Ventilation Best Practices and CDC guidance for more information on using ventilation as a strategy to help reduce COVID-19 transmission in buildings.

For more information please see the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry’s Guidance for Employers to Mitigate the Risk of COVID-19 to Workers.