Effective September 8, 2021, 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 fully vaccinated for COVID-19 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.

**Establish policies for mask wearing.**

Establish mask wearing policy for employees and patrons that is, at a minimum, at least as protective as CDC guidelines. In areas with substantial or high transmission, CDC and VDH recommend everyone aged 2 and older wear a mask in public indoor settings. Even when levels are low or moderate, individuals who are unvaccinated and age 2 or older should wear masks in all indoor public settings and in crowded outdoor settings. There are some settings where masks are still required by law, regardless of vaccination status. See VDH’s mask page for the most current information on state and federal mask requirements, including mask requirements for K-12 schools and public transit. A business may also choose to adopt a universal mask policy that is more stringent than CDC guidance Businesses and venues should strongly consider having a universal masking policy when a large percentage of unvaccinated individuals (e.g., young children) are regularly in a facility or when local community transmission levels of COVID-19 are substantial or high. Use entry-point signage and other means to clearly communicate the mask policy, and have staff available to explain the establishment’s mask policy as questions arise. Example signage is available on the VDH business toolkit. Any individual should always be permitted to wear a mask for public health reasons, if they choose to do so.

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

In most settings, individuals should continue to stay at least 6 ft. apart from people outside their household. Businesses should have physical engineering systems in place to maintain at least 6 ft. of distancing (through signage, floor markers, etc.) throughout the establishment, but especially in any high traffic locations (such as entrances, congregation points, seating areas, check-out lines, and employee common areas). A stringent distancing policy for the entire facility may be appropriate when a large percentage of unvaccinated individuals (e.g., young children) or immunocompromised individuals are regularly in a facility, or when local transmission levels of COVID-19 are substantial or high.
Promote frequent hand washing.

Promote frequent and thorough hand washing by providing employees and patrons entering into 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: https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/videos.html. Additional requirements for employees and employers can be found in the Department of Labor and Industry’s Final Permanent Standard for Infectious Disease Prevention of the SARS-CoV-2 Virus that Causes COVID-19.

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 using an EPA-approved disinfectant to disinfect (in addition to cleaning) when local transmission levels are substantial or high, 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. Refer to VDH Guidance for Screening Testing in Non-healthcare Workplaces for additional information.

Conduct symptom screening of employees.

Employers should encourage employees (both unvaccinated and vaccinated) 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. 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’re unvaccinated and need to self-quarantine due to exposure, or if they need to care for a sick family member. Encourage all employees, even if fully vaccinated, 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. (continued next page)
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. Other information on civil rights protections for workers related to COVID-19 is available here.

**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.

**Note:** Although this document provides general guidance to reduce COVID-19 for businesses and organizations, Virginia employers are also subject to requirements provided in the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) Final Permanent Standard for Infectious Disease Prevention of the SARS-CoV-2 Virus That Causes COVID-19. See DOLI’s FAQ for additional information on the standard.