



Vermont
Bar Association

REOPENING YOUR PRACTICE

Effective May 18, 2020, the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) permitted professional service offices, including law firms, to reopen with up to ten persons per location, provided that all mandatory health and safety requirements are met. Below is the guidance for professional service offices, and below the guidance are the mandatory health and safety requirements as of May 18, 2020. It's important to check the ACCD guidelines regularly, linked [HERE](#).

Some of the provisions in the guidance and in the health and safety requirements require specific forms, signs or plans. Those provisions are in bold below. We are offering templates for the forms, signs and plans for your use, to adapt to your particular office space and employee circumstances. Please feel free to modify them as needed, in accordance with any emergency orders and additional ACCD directives.

1. [Visitor's Log](#): The professional services guidance requires each office to maintain a log of visitors and their contact information for thirty days in the event tracing is required by the Vermont Department of Health. A sample Visitor's Log is attached, as a template for your use.

2. [Pre-Screening Health Survey](#): The health and safety requirements require a pre-screening health survey prior to each work shift. A sample Pre-screening Health Survey is also attached, as a template for your use.

3. [Entrance Signs](#): The health and safety requirements also require signs posted at all entrances indicating that no one may enter if they have symptoms of respiratory illness. A sample Entrance Sign is also attached, as a template for your use.

4. **Health Officer Designation**: The health and safety requirements require that each office designate a health officer on-site at every shift to be responsible for ensuring compliance with the applicable guidelines. Information about the health officer is included in the attached Pre-Screening Health Survey.

5. **VOSHA Training**: The health and safety requirements require all employees to complete and document VOSHA training. VOSHA training may be accessed [HERE](#); a certificate to document the training can be printed at the end of the training.

6. **Reopening Plans**: Lastly, all businesses with ten or more employees that have been closed for 7 or more days during the state of emergency must complete and keep on file a reopening and training plan. A [Reopening Plan](#) template is linked for your use.

GUIDANCE FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES OFFICES (excerpt)

1.2 Low or no contact professional services

- Services operating with a single worker or small office environments (such as appraisers, realtors, municipal clerks, attorneys, property managers, pet care operators, and others) may operate if they can comply with the mandatory health and safety requirements listed above, with no more than 10 persons (service provider and client) present at one time.
- Remote work is required whenever possible.
- **Operators must maintain a log of customers and their contact information for 30 days in the event contact tracing is required by the Health Department.**

MANDATORY HEALTH & SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL BUSINESS, NON-PROFIT & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

All businesses must follow Vermont Department of Health and CDC guidelines:

- Employees shall not report to, or be allowed to remain at, work or job site if sick or symptomatic (fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell).
- Employees must observe strict social distancing of 6 feet while on the job. Businesses and non-profit or government entities shall ensure customers observe strict social distancing of 6 feet while on location, to the extent possible.
- Limit the occupancy of designated common areas, such as break rooms and cafeterias, so that occupants maintain strict social distancing of no

less than 6 feet per individual. The employer shall enforce the occupancy limit and require employees to wipe down their area after use or shall ensure cleaning of the common areas at regular intervals throughout the day.

- Employees must wear face coverings over their nose and mouth when in the presence of others. In the case of retail cashiers, a translucent shield or “sneeze guard” is acceptable in lieu of a mask. Businesses and non-profit and government entities may require customers or clients to wear masks.
- Employees must have easy and frequent access to soap and water or hand sanitizer during duration of work, and handwashing or hand sanitization is required frequently including before entering, and leaving, job sites.
- All common spaces (when open) and equipment, including bathrooms, frequently touched surfaces and doors, tools and equipment, and vehicles must be cleaned regularly *and*, when possible, prior to transfer from one person to another, in accordance with [CDC guidance](#).
- **Prior to the commencement of each work shift, pre-screening and health survey shall be required to verify each employee has no symptoms of respiratory illness (fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell).** At the present time non-contact thermometers are in short supply, however employers shall immediately order, and use their best efforts to obtain, thermometers in order to conduct routine temperature checks.
- **Signs must be posted at all entrances clearly indicating that no one may enter if they have symptoms of respiratory illness.**

- When working inside, open doors and windows to promote air flow to the greatest extent possible and limit the number of people occupying a single indoor space.
- No more than 2 people shall occupy one vehicle when conducting work.
- No symptomatic or COVID-19 positive workers are allowed on site and any worker(s) who have contact with a worker or any other person who is diagnosed with COVID-19 are required to quarantine for 14 days.
- **All operations shall designate a health officer on-site at every shift responsible for ensuring compliance with the Executive Order and the Addenda thereto and applicable ACCD Guidance.** This person shall have the authority to stop or modify activities to ensure work conforms with the mandatory health and safety requirements.
- All business, non-profit and government operations must use remote work whenever possible.
- **All employees, including those already working (except healthcare workers, first responders, and others already trained in infection control, personal protection/universal precautions), must complete, and employers must document, a training on mandatory health and safety requirements as provided by VOSHA, or another training program that meets or exceeds the VOSHA-provided standard.** Employers who need translations of the training have one week from the release of the translated training to complete this requirement.
- **All businesses that have been closed for 7 or more days during the state of emergency must complete and keep on file a reopening and training plan (businesses with fewer than 10 employees at any physical location are not required to create such a plan, however, they must follow all other guidelines and employees must take the VOSHA training).** VOSHA and the Agency of Commerce and Community

Development have provided a template at <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/business/restart>. The plan must, at a minimum:

- Adopt a phased approach to reopening which provides sufficient opportunity to operate first in a low density and low contact environment before making the incremental changes needed to accommodate more moderate density activity while continuing to maintain health and safety.
- Update physical and administrative safety systems to accommodate COVID-19 VDH/CDC/VOSHA guidelines, health monitoring, including temperature checks, cleaning and sanitizing methods and physical distancing measures.
- Take appropriate measures to protect employees at greater risk of contact by virtue of their occupational role or setting.
- Businesses with fewer than 10 employees at any physical location are not required to create such a plan, however, they must follow all other health and safety guidelines above including taking VOSHA training

ADDITIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS FOR ALL BUSINESS, NON-PROFIT AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

- Use of shared workspaces, desks, offices, etc. is discouraged to the maximum extent practicable.
- Face-to-face staff meetings should be limited, and physical distancing must be observed.
- Consider staggered work shifts, break times, etc. and expanding hours to reduce number of individuals working together and reduce contact with members of the public.

- To the extent possible, provide access to hand washing and/or hand sanitizer for vendors, and customers.
- Limit staff travel between multiple sites.

Ensure a safe process to receive supplies and deliveries.

Consider accommodations for employees at higher risk from COVID-19 infection (as currently defined by the CDC) to work remotely or have a job tasks that minimize public interaction.

Prepared by the [VBA Covid-19 Committee](#)