



## Introduction

**This document is for employers and administrators of community centres (multi-purpose facilities).** It provides an overview of recommended controls that will help reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. It can also help workers, volunteers, participants (community centre members and facility users) and other visitors to understand how to protect themselves and others from the spread of COVID-19 when at their community centre.

In all cases, guidance from local [public health authorities](#) and your [jurisdictional Occupational Health and Safety \(OHS\) regulator](#) must be followed. Stay up to date on current legal requirements as the pandemic situation evolves. Meet your legal occupational health and safety obligations by doing everything reasonably possible under the circumstances to protect the health and safety of your workers.

Refer to current [guidance documents](#) from the [Public Health Agency of Canada \(PHAC\)](#). Local municipal governments and cultural associations can also provide COVID-19 information resources for community centres.

For guidance that applies to employers and workers in all sectors, first refer to the CCOHS [COVID-19 Resources](#) documents, including [Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19](#), [COVID-19 Health and Safety Planning for Employers](#), [COVID-19 Prevention for Workers](#), and [COVID-19 FAQ](#).

Community centres vary widely in size, the demographics of community members who use them, and the spaces, services, and programs they provide to the community, such as:

- educational and recreational community program activities
- spaces for community-based organizations and special-interest clubs
- meeting and conference rooms
- lending libraries
- rental halls for [events](#) and [live performances](#)
- [daycare](#) and [youth summer camps](#)
- [food service](#) and food banks
- indoor and outdoor [sports](#) facilities
- [indoor pools](#)
- [gyms and fitness clubs](#)
- civic uses such as [elections](#), [vaccination](#) clinics, and emergency or homeless [shelters](#)

## Consider the Risks

Each workplace is unique. Employers need to perform a COVID-19 [risk assessment](#) for their specific workplace, job roles, and activities (routine tasks and in-person interactions). Involve the workplace joint health and safety committee or representative, OHS coordinator or manager, and union (if applicable) in the risk assessment process.

Assessment of a community centre should include worker spaces (offices, meeting rooms, breakrooms), shared and public spaces (rental halls, washrooms, locker and changerooms), food service (kitchens and dining rooms), group activities and education, athletic equipment, emergency and medical first-aid response, and facility maintenance.

The risk of [COVID-19 transmission](#) is increased with:

- Close proximity (less than 2 metres) and interactions with people from outside of the immediate household, including close-range conversations.
- Direct contact (e.g., shaking hands, hugging, kissing).
- Longer and more frequent in-person interactions.
- Crowded places and large gatherings, both indoors and outdoors.
- Generation of respiratory droplets and aerosols (e.g., when speaking, coughing, sneezing, singing, shouting, and during strenuous activities that increase breath rate such as exercise or heavy work).
- Poor ventilation in closed spaces (e.g., accumulation of virus particles in the air).
- Inadequate personal hygiene practices or facilities.
- Contaminated surfaces and shared objects (fomites).



- Congregate housing (e.g., dorms, bunkhouses) and transportation (e.g., buses, etc.)
- High levels of COVID-19 cases in the local community.
- Inter-regional travel, including from areas with COVID-19 Variants of Concern (VOCs).

Risk of transmission increases more when several of these risk factors occur at the same time.

Things to consider when identifying COVID-19 risk factors and appropriate controls for your workplace:

- What are the main work areas, job roles, and routine activities?
- Where and when do workers interact with other people?
- How close are the interactions? Are there tasks where persons must be close? (i.e., note when and where physical distancing is not possible)
- How often and how long are the in-person interactions?
- How crowded is the workplace?
- How long are the events and activities?
- Are people sharing private or group transportation vehicles to travel to and from the community centre?
- Do workers stay at one workstation or use several throughout the facility and grounds?
- Are participants from one geographical region, or from several?
- Are buildings ventilated naturally (by opening windows and doors) or mechanically (by ventilation systems)? Is indoor ventilation sufficient?
- Do workers and participants have easy access to personal hygiene facilities (e.g., running water, soap, and hand sanitizer)?
- How are equipment, materials, and tools used in the workplace? Are they shared between people?
- How often and by which method are surfaces and objects cleaned and disinfected? Have the selected disinfectant products been assessed for effectiveness against coronaviruses, and for potential chemical hazards to workers and participants?
- Do people have the knowledge and resources they need to protect themselves and others against COVID-19?
- Could language barriers impact the ability of people to understand and follow the transmission control measures?
- Are there personal factors that could make control measures more difficult to implement and follow (e.g., based on persons health, age, disability, developmental status, or other socio-economic and demographic circumstances)?
- Are any workers or participants at risk of more [severe disease or outcomes](#) from COVID-19?
- Are you able to assess if a person may be sick or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, and rapidly take appropriate actions?
- Are sick leave policies adequate to support worker isolation and quarantine?

## Control Measures

Once the risks of COVID-19 spread have been identified and evaluated, the employer must implement the COVID-19 control measures that are necessary in a layered approach, including public health measures ([community](#) and [personal](#) [prehttps://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks.html#preventive practices](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks.html#preventive-practices)). The occupational health and safety [hierarchy of controls](#) (i.e., elimination, substitution, engineering, administrative, and personal protective equipment) can be used as a tool to evaluate how effective a control will be, from most to least effective. No single control measure is completely effective, so it is important to layer several at the same time.

Note that the entire facility or just specific services (e.g., large events) may require temporary closure due to jurisdictional lockdown measures or as determined by the risk assessment.

A workplace [COVID-19 safety plan](#) documents the risk assessment and control measures you have put in place to protect workers and participants from COVID-19. The plan supports existing business continuity processes such as [risk assessment](#), [hazard control](#), change management, and [emergency response](#). A written plan may be legally required by the jurisdiction in which you operate. It may need to be posted, and available upon request from an



inspector. Reach out to regional authorities for details on what must be included in the plan.

When implementing COVID-19 control measures, assess the potential impacts to existing infrastructure, activities, and worker or participant safety. Make sure you do not create new workplace hazards. Update existing policies and procedures as needed to incorporate COVID-19 transmission control measures. Communicate the risks and controls to workers and participants. Continue to evaluate how effective the controls are and make changes if needed.

## Communication and Training

Communication and training are essential to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Workers have the 'Right to Know' about potential workplace hazards, including COVID-19 transmission risks and how to protect themselves and others. Participants need instructions to understand what is required of them when at camp. For detailed recommendations on how and what to communicate about COVID-19, refer to CCOHS "COVID-19 Communication and Training"

## Vaccination

Refer to the Government of Canada "[Vaccines for COVID-19](#)", "[The facts about COVID-19 vaccines](#)", and the CCOHS "[COVID-19 Vaccines](#)" for detailed information about vaccination.

- Encourage workers to get the vaccine once available in your jurisdiction.
- Provide scheduling and financial support for workers to attend local vaccination clinic appointments if these occur during work hours.
- Some people may not be able to receive the vaccine, due to age or medical reasons.
- Continue to follow the recommended COVID-19 precautions for your jurisdiction, even if fully vaccinated.

## Screening, Contact Tracing, and Response Plan

Refer to the Government of Canada "[COVID-19 testing, screening and contact tracing](#)" and the CCOHS "[Active Screening for COVID-19](#)", for detailed information on how to perform screening, and what questions to ask.

- Screen all people before they enter the building, including workers, volunteers, program participants, facility users and other clients, visitors, inspectors, or contractors.
- If restricting use of the community centre to local residents, verify participants address during the screening and/or registration process.
- Create your own list of questions or use a generic [checklist](#) form.
- Screen for the [symptoms of COVID-19](#) and potential exposure incidents.
- If readily available and feasible, consider implementing routine [rapid testing](#) of all consenting workers and participants as an additional active screening measure.
- Inform people about the national [COVID Alert App](#).

If there is an outbreak, the community centre employer or administrator may be asked to provide contact tracing information to the local public health authority. During screening, record the name, contact information, date, and time each person was present at the community centre. Refer to the CCOHS "[COVID-19: Contact Tracing](#)" for how to further prepare for and support contact tracing efforts.

Refer to the CCOHS "[Responding to Suspected or Confirmed Cases](#)" and the infographic "[Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)" for what to do if a worker or other person is identified as having symptoms, or has potentially been exposed to COVID-19.

- Act accordingly to findings, even if symptoms are mild.
- Call 911 if symptoms are life-threatening.
- If a person does not pass the screening process, do not allow them into the building or to participate in any activities (indoors or outdoors).
- Adopt flexible leave policies that enable workers to stay home if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or if they have had a potential exposure:
  - Communicate that sick workers should not come to work



- Designate a process for workers to immediately notify their supervisor
- Provide support to workers who are off
- Do not penalize workers who must take leave to isolate or quarantine
- Give advances on future sick leave
- Provide information on government [economic support resources](#)
- If the case is work-related involving a worker, additional notifications may be required, contact your jurisdictional [OHS regulator](#) and [worker compensation board](#) for guidance.

## Physical Distancing

When implementing physical distancing measures, the goal is to keep the **greatest distance possible** between people (**at least 2 metres in all directions**), while keeping all interactions as **few** and **brief** as possible. There are many ways to implement and support physical distancing measures:

- Change where the work is done (elimination and substitution)
- Modify buildings, furniture, and equipment (engineering)
- Update or create new workplace policies and procedures (administrative)
- Consider using a cohort system
- Adjust worker scheduled and assignments
- Change how goods and services are provided to participants
- Change participant activities and programs

For detailed recommendations on each of these physical distancing methods, refer to CCOHS “COVID-19 and Physical Distancing”

Note: If the community centre is a designated civic emergency shelter, plan for how workers, participants, and community members will maintain physical distance while evacuating or sheltering-in-place in the event of an emergency. Normal community centre activities may need to be suspended in the event of a civic emergency.

## Physical Barriers

Refer to the CCOHS document “[COVID-19 Tip Sheet: Physical Barriers](#)” for detailed information on use and installation (dimensions, materials) of physical barriers.

- Install appropriately sized and positioned physical barriers at face-to-face interaction areas or between workstations and equipment that cannot be moved.
- Guide pedestrian traffic and queues using lane barriers, each lane spaced to be sure that individuals are at least 2 metres apart in all directions.
- For outdoor work and activities, setup widely spaced areas and seating if safe to do so. Use brightly coloured and weather resistant materials to mark the areas (e.g., pegs, pylons, field marking powder, rope, flagging tape). Take care to not create tripping hazards.

## Ventilation

Refer to the Government of Canada “[COVID-19: Guidance on indoor ventilation during the pandemic](#)” and the CCOHS “[COVID-19 Tip Sheet: Ventilation](#)” for detailed information on ventilation.

- Poor ventilation has been linked to COVID-19 outbreaks by allowing the accumulation and transmission of infectious respiratory particles in indoor spaces.
- Continually ventilating indoor spaces will dilute and exchange the potentially contaminated air.
- Note that portable or ceiling fans and single unit air conditioners circulate the air without exchanging it or improving ventilation.
- Consult with a licenced heating ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) expert before making any changes to



ventilation systems, or blocking airflow through indoor spaces (e.g., before installing physical barriers or subdividing rooms).

- Air-out rooms between uses.
- Make sure that air circulation or cooling fans are not directing air flow from person to person (e.g., aim the air stream away from people).
- Other ways can be used to help keep rooms cool, such as shutting off heat generating equipment when not in use, closing window blinds to create shade, or allowing fewer people into closed spaces at one time.
- If group transportation must be used, make sure the vehicle cabin ventilation is at the maximum flow and fresh air intake settings (no re-circulation), and windows are opened (weather permitting).

## Hygiene Measures

COVID-19 can be transmitted when contaminated hands or objects touch the mucous membranes of the face (eyes, nose, and mouth).

Promote good personal hygiene habits:

- Encourage [proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette](#).
- Post [hand hygiene](#) infographics in washrooms.
- Some participants may need additional supervision and help with hygiene and etiquette, such as younger children, the elderly, or those with special needs.
- Install enough handwashing stations and hand sanitizer dispensers to ensure easy access for all persons.
- If plumbing is not available (e.g., outdoors), rent a portable hand-wash station, or use a spouted water container and catch basin, with water, soap, and paper towels.
- Consider supplying a basic hygiene kit to each worker and participant (if age appropriate), containing such items as extra masks, individual hand-sanitizer container, tissues, and disinfectant wipes.
- Discourage yelling, singing, and chanting, which can cause infectious respiratory droplets and aerosols to travel for long distances.
- Require workers wear freshly cleaned uniforms or clothes for each shift.
- If providing [laundry](#) service (e.g., workers uniforms, linens, athletic towels, etc.) follow the recommended precautions for handling soiled laundry.

Minimize contact with shared items and surfaces:

- Install automatic touch-free systems and objects where possible (e.g., card-tap sensors, motion-activated, timed, foot-activated, etc.) to reduce the number of high-touch surfaces.
- Do not allow people to share personal protective equipment (PPE), uniforms, face masks, cellphones, towels, or personal hygiene supplies.
- Keep each person's belongings separate. If they do not have lockers or desks, provide sealed bins or bags to store their personal items, footwear, and clothing. Remove communal coat storage areas.
- Do not share musical instruments such as woodwinds and brass (i.e., any instrument that is played by blowing air into it), the reeds and mouthpieces, or microphones. Other musical instruments may be used if they are made of durable materials that can tolerate cleaning and disinfection, such as metal, plastic, or solid/sealed hardwood.
- Provide each person or cohort with their own tools, equipment, and supplies if feasible.
- If items need to be shared, clean and disinfect between users, and perform hand hygiene.
- Consider creating individual activity stations that provide everything needed for the activity (e.g. craft or bingo supplies) that can be assigned to a single participant.

Discourage food and drink sharing:

- If providing food service, provide individually wrapped food servings, utensils, and condiments. Do not serve food and beverages buffet-style from communal containers. Do not share lunchroom eating utensils, plates, and glassware.



- People could bring their own bagged lunches and snacks.
- Vending machines with touchless payment can deliver pre-packaged, grab-and-go food and beverage options.
- Shut off water fountains or replace them with water bottle refill stations. Each person should have their own labelled water bottle. If there has been a prolonged facility shutdown, make sure that all water systems are safe to use when reopening (e.g., flush out stagnant water, and perform potable water quality testing if required).

## Cleaning and Disinfecting

Refer to the Government of Canada website "[Cleaning and disinfecting public spaces during COVID-19](#)" and the CCOHS documents "[Cleaning and Disinfecting](#)" and "[Standard Operating Procedure: Disinfection of Touch Points](#)" for detailed information on cleaning and disinfecting.

- Make sure that all disinfectants used are effective against coronaviruses. Refer to the Health Canada guidance for [hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers](#). Verify that selected products have a drug identification number (DIN) from Health Canada.
- Routinely clean and disinfect work and community use areas and frequently touched surfaces.
- Clean and disinfect shared objects between each user (e.g., telephones and office devices, tools, sports and playground equipment, and items used during group activities).
- Clean and disinfect group transportation vehicles between users (keys, steering wheel, gear shift, controls, vents, belts, seats, interior and exterior door handles, etc.).
- Remind people to also clean and disinfect personal devices such as cellphones.
- Consider creating dirty/clean or colour-coded signs to clearly indicate equipment or room status.
- Make sure public washrooms are cleaned more frequently, have running water, and are stocked with soap, paper towels and a plastic lined no-touch waste container.
- Showers (e.g., small enclosed spaces with high moisture and heat levels) may need to remain closed if they cannot be sufficiently aired-out and cleaned and disinfected between users. If showers are used, clean and disinfect them between each use. Allow time for droplets and aerosols to settle, and to air-out the shower stall before entering.
- Porta-potties and portable sink units (e.g., at sports fields) should be cleaned frequently, and also be stocked with soap, disinfectant spray, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer for visitors to use.

## Non-Medical Masks

Refer to the Government of Canada "[Non-medical masks](#)", and the CCOHS "[Get the Facts on Masks](#)" for detailed information on how to properly wear and care for masks.

- Follow the mask wearing requirements of your local public health agency and jurisdiction.
- Masks may need to be worn at all times, except during specific activities (e.g., eating, drinking, exercising, swimming, or showering) if exempted by the local public health authority.
- Make sure that wearing a mask does not create new hazards such as from entanglement (moving equipment) or open flames (lighters, stoves, bonfires).
- Implement or update the workplace [heat-stress program](#), as mask wearing may increase physiological stress during high-exertion tasks.
- There is great variation in the quality of masks available from retail sources. Consider providing appropriate single-use medical (surgical) masks or re-useable fabric non-medical masks to workers and participants.
- If not being able to see a speaker's face and mouth clearly will cause accessibility difficulties for a person, consider using a [clear mask](#).
- Workers may also wish to use eye protection (such as safety glasses, goggles, or a [face shield](#)) in addition to a mask, when in close physical contact with others.

Note: While non-medical masks are useful in reducing the spread of COVID-19, they are not considered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as they do not meet regulated testing and certification standards. Refer to the Government of Canada "[Personal protective equipment \(COVID-19\): Overview](#)" and "COVID-19 and Personal



Protective Equipment” for more detailed information about PPE.

**If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact your local hospital, call 911 immediately, or contact a [Crisis Centre in your area](#).**



It is important that mental health resources and support are provided to all workers, including access to an employee assistance program, if available.

For further information on COVID-19, refer to the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

Note that this guidance is just some of the adjustments organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization’s specific needs.

**Disclaimer:** As public and occupational health and safety information is changing rapidly, local public health authorities should be consulted for specific, regional guidance. This information is not intended to replace medical advice or legislated health and safety obligations. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly from any use or reliance upon the information.