

THE NEW NORMAL TASKFORCE GUIDE

Taskforce Members

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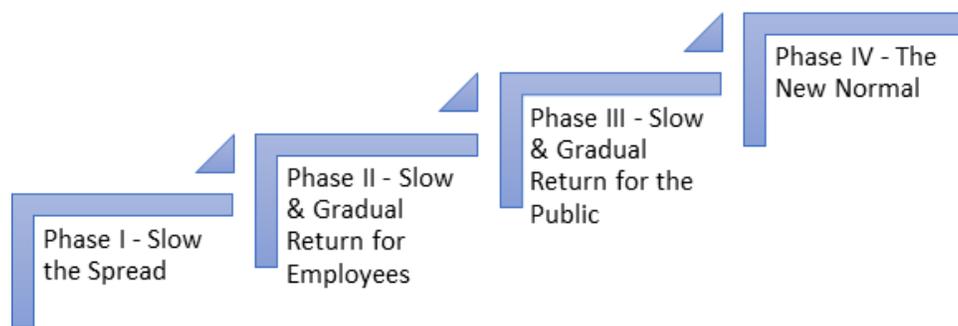
Taskforce sub-committees:

- Phase Committee:
 - Deborah Hall / Michelle Lilly / John McConnell / Erica Rizer / Bill Shreve / Eileen Minnick
- HR Policies related to health screenings:
 - Contact Tracing – Alexis Blackwell / Robbie Jones
- Supply Committee:
 - Michelle Lilly / Bill Shreve / Terri Kahouk
 - Supplies for Employees
 - Ordering of Supplies – Who and What (Extra Masks, Wipes, Thermometer)
- Communications with Employees and Outside Agencies:
 - Jennifer Harris/ KennethWayne Thompson / Capt. Ronald Farrell / Rachel Ammerman / Alexis Blackwell
- Cleaning Requirements:
 - Bill Shreve / John McConnell / John Earle / Tim Drummond
 - Regular daily maintenance by employees
 - Janitorial Cleaning upgrades
 - Exposure Cleaning
- HR Committee:
 - Teleworking Policy – Revised based upon lessons learned
 - Alexis Blackwell / Evelyn Jacobson / Erica Rizer
- Technology Consideration (IT Equipment Needs):
 - Evelyn Jacobson / Stephen VanBellan

Executive Summary

Phased Approach to the New Normal

This guide sets forth a plan for how Charles County approaches and achieves the new normal. It is crafted based upon phases that mirror the epidemic phases described in the [National Coronavirus Response: A Road Map to Reopening](#), published in March 2020. That report outlines four (4) phases and identified capacities required in each phase, as well as the triggers needed to progress from one phase to the next. Below are descriptions of the phases the Taskforce is proposing and what activities and policies have been developed to move through each phase while approaching and entering the new normal. It is important to note that if there is a resurgence in community transmission of COVID the phased approach allows for the County Administrator and/or the County Commissioners to quickly move up or down a phase as appropriate.



Phase I - Slow the Spread

This phase consists of community-level physical distancing measures to “slow the spread.” In addition to asking community members to remain at home, state and local leaders have used Phase I to increase access to diagnostic testing and increase public health and medical system capacities. These capacities are needed to safely identify and treat all COVID-19 patients and to prepare for a shift from community mitigation (what we are doing now) to case-based interventions (when we try to control the spread by focusing testing and resources on individuals with disease who may be infectious and their close contacts).

Phase II – A Safe and Gradual Return for County Employees

According to the [Public Health Principles for a Phased Reopening During COVID-19: Guidance for Governors](#) shift to Phase II could be considered when the following 4 criteria have been met:

- (1) the number of new cases has declined for at least 14 days;
- (2) rapid diagnostic testing capacity is sufficient to test, at minimum, all people with COVID-19 symptoms, as well as close contacts and those in essential roles;
- (3) the healthcare system is able to safely care for all patients, including having appropriate personal protective equipment for healthcare workers; and
- (4) there is sufficient public health capacity to conduct contact tracing for all new cases and their close contacts, as described in the [National Plan to Enable Comprehensive COVID-19 Case Finding and Contact Tracing in the US.](#)

During Phase II, County Government can begin a safe and gradual process of bringing employees back to the office setting with modifications. Rather than asking everyone to stay home, County Government can return to the office while limiting COVID transmission through a combination of physical distancing, heightened cleaning protocols, employee health screening protocols, employee travel screening, and accommodations planning for employees with secondary health conditions.

Phase III - Safe and Gradual Opening to the Public

Phase III looks ahead to a time when County Government Buildings can be re-opened to the public in a safe and gradual opening. This phase will require building and infrastructure modifications including installation of barriers to maintain space and protection of County Employees from the public (glass bankers windows), physical markers to designate 6 ft space distances, thermal monitors at building entrances to detect fevers of persons (public) entering facilities.

Phase IV – the New Normal

During this phase we will identify policy priorities for increasing preparedness for the next public health threat.

Introduction

Mission of the Taskforce

The taskforce has been charged with developing guidelines for departments and partner agencies to utilize while transitioning to the new normal. In concert with [Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery](#) this guide will offer a phased approach that is flexible and scalable.

We recognize that each department and partner agency is different and that there will be some variations in how we reopen for employees and the public. With this in mind, the guide will link to policies and protocols that have been developed by sub-committees of the taskforce.

Some guiding principles of the taskforce include:

- Our new normal will not and should not look like our old normal;
- The County should maximize use of the teleworking policy into the future;
- Consider lessons learned, what can we do better and what has worked well;
- Social distancing will continue for some time to come;
- Reusable cloth masks or disposable masks must be used in indoor public places when persons cannot maintain 6 ft of distance between each person;
- It may be necessary to use thermal imaging at entrances to detect fevers;
- Technology can be used to maximize effectiveness;
- Upgrading cleaning and sanitizing standards
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is essential for those cleaning and decontaminating our facilities; and
- We should consider long term stockpiling of PPE for more than just first responders.

This document is not a calendar but a guidance document that will establish a phased safe and gradual return to the buildings for employees and for the public. Unfortunately, the virus dictates the speed with which the County can move. Once widespread community transmission begins to decline, this guide will detail how to transition out of strict physical distancing and into a phased reopening for employees and the public. Eventually, this guide will bring Charles County into the new normal.

Goal

Safely guide County Government and our operational partners through the phases of re-opening and into the New Normal.

Objectives

1. Provide a flexible but comprehensive guide (toolkit) for County supervisors to maximize a safe, smooth, efficient and productive transition through each of the phase steps to reach the New Norm. Minimize the effects resulting from the transitioned changes.
2. Maintain timely, accurate and uniform communications between County Government and employees, and partners within the County, and with the tri-County and National Capital Region and the state of Maryland.
3. Maintain situational awareness of COVID-19 cases in collaboration with the health department, hospital, physicians, and other health care providers, so as to have the facts to make sound decisions on transitions between phases.
4. Prepare for long term maintenance for each of the phases, including logistics, planning, operations, and finances.
5. Maximize the proficiency and productivity of the County to continually serve the needs of the residents and visitors of Charles County in each the phase steps.
6. Determine the trigger points that provide guidance for County departments for transitioning up and down the steps towards the New Norm.

Scope

This guide has been developed to support County Departments and our partners while navigating the four phases from Phase I “Stop the Spread” to Phase IV “The New Normal.” Using this phased approach will offer consistent guidance for decision makers to ensure a safe workplace for employees to re-enter during Phase II. This will also facilitate welcoming the public back to County facilities at a later date during Phase III, and then moving forward to the New Normal.

Concept of Operations

Phase I – Slow the Spread

This is the current phase where County Government buildings are closed to the public and staffing is mission critical essential only. All others are teleworking if work is available, otherwise staff are on administrative leave. Policies that have been developed for this phase are intended to deal with emergency situations to include all of the [Emergency Services Special Orders](#).

Phase II – Safe and Gradual Return for Employees.

Use the [Phase II Checklist](#) to get prepared for employees returning to the office.

Returning employees to the workplace during and after the COVID-19 pandemic won't be as simple as announcing a reopening or return-to-the-workplace date and carrying on business as usual. Not only will workplaces be altered initially, some changes may be long term, even beyond the imagined "finish line" of a widely available vaccine or treatment.

County Government can begin a safe and gradual process of bringing employees back to the office with modifications to limit COVID transmission. This will be accomplished through a combination of physical distancing, heightened cleaning protocols, employee screening policies, and accommodations planning for employees with secondary health conditions

The details of a return to work plan may look different for each Department or Division, but there are key issues and policies that all will need to understand prior to bringing staff on board for Phase II.

Taskforce sub-committees have worked to develop guidance that covers most aspects needed to safely bring employees back to the workspace in a safe manner. Please review the below information with links to specific guiding policies.

Workplace safety

Implement employee health & travel screening procedures:

- [Human Resources COVID-19 Health & Travel Screening Procedures](#) which includes all of the following guidance:
 - Descriptions for different types of screening stations and how to set up an employee screening station,
 - Basic screening forms for health & travel for all employees entering the workplace,
 - How County contact tracers perform second level health screenings and make notifications to the appropriate persons.
 - How do symptomatic employees return to work after they are well again.

- Emergency Services implemented Infection Control Guidelines as outlined in [DES Special Order 2020-04](#).
- Consider doing basic health screening for outside contractors coming into the buildings with the same screening procedures prior to entry into the workplace.
- [Human Resources Mask and Hygiene guidance](#).
- The County has developed exposure-response plans:
 - Emergency Services implemented the Evaluating, Monitoring and Testing Procedures for First Responders and Critical Infrastructure Employees as outlined in [DES Special Order 2020-03](#)
 - Based upon the [Health & Travel Screening Procedures](#), if an employee has been screened and identified as possibly being COVID infected, the supervisor will call a County contact tracer to complete a COVID-19 Symptomatic Employee Risk & Travel Screening Form over the phone. Upon completion the contact tracer will send an email to the COVID Notifications Team email group.
 - [Contact Tracing Plan](#) for exposures.
- Detailing upgraded [cleaning procedures](#) and procuring ongoing supplies.
 - Employees should be responsible to use disinfecting wipes to wipe down their work area upon entering the building and before leaving for the day. Disinfecting wipes are available at the Health Screening Stations.
 - Request supplies by using the [DPW Inventory Supplies Request Form](#).
 - [Policy for DPW cleaning](#).
 - [Policy to address cleaning post exposure based upon contact tracing](#).
 - A vendor source listing is available [here](#) for our partners to source supplies for their operations.
 - DPW is considering building modifications for no touch bathroom use for hand washing and entrance/exits to the bathrooms.
 - DPW is also looking at ways to upgrade HVAC in a cost effective manner that will lower the spread of disease through air duct systems. This could be UV lighting sanitation or upgraded HEPA filters.
 - DES will be stockpiling response PPE in addition to DPW ordering and stockpiling supplies.
 - The [Charles County Safety Manual](#) addresses respiratory protection requirements for workers per the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements in Chapter 10.
- Each Department/Division needs to analyze their workspaces and establish physical distancing measures within the workplace:
 - [CDC Guidelines for Businesses and Employers](#).
 - Staggered shifts and lunch/rest breaks in compliance with the Personnel Procedures Manual.
 - Rotating weeks/days in the office in combination with working remotely.

- Moving workstations to increase separation distance to a minimum of 6 feet. If you need assistance from Building & Trades to modify workstations submit a work request. Consult the [American Industrial Hygiene Association Reopening Guidance for a General Office Settings](#).
- Implementing one-way traffic patterns throughout workplace (if possible).
- If you have employees that identify as being in [high-risk categories](#) whom have requested special accommodations for the return to work:
 - Consider allowing them to work from home or remain on leave until they feel comfortable to return.
 - Determine increased measures to protect them when working onsite, including isolated workstations, additional PPE as requested, fewer days in the office, etc.
 - If the person is requesting a special accommodation then consider [ADA Guidelines for Reasonable Accommodations](#). If you have further questions about ADA, contact Safety for more information.

Returning employees at a gradual pace

This section will focus on creating an organized and controlled approach for bringing employees back to the workspace. All employees returning on the same day at the same time could be overwhelming and possibly unsafe. Executive leadership teams in coordination with their Senior Management.

Things to consider include:

- Phasing-in employees returning to work:
 - Utilize volunteers for return to work.
 - Remember that some employees may not be able to return at first due to children not having school or childcare available.
 - Others may not have adult day care services available yet.
 - Determine schedule changes to provide the greatest protection to workers including compressed and flexible work schedules.
- Be familiar with the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\) & the Emergency Paid Sick Leave](#)
 - Employees who are fearful of returning to work.
 - Employees who have family obligations that interfere with the ability to return to work.
 - Employees who remain under quarantine due to exposure to COVID-19
- Remote work. Continue to promote and maximize the [Telework Policy](#). Using it not only as a short-term emergency tool to survive the next year but also as a permanent work/life balance and cost-saving measure should be considered.
 - Actions to consider include:
 - Continuing to allow remote work where possible to keep employees safe.

- Staggering weeks in office and at home among team members, or part-time remote work on alternate weekdays.
- Responding to employee requests to continue to work from home, including long-term arrangements.
- Review the [New Normal Technology Needs Considerations](#) to continue to support virtual workers.
- Consider the long-term cost savings or impact of offering permanent remote work.
- Directors should continue to emphasize remote meetings through Microsoft Teams & Conference Calls.

Communications. Establishing a clear communication plan will allow employees and customers to understand how the organization plans to reopen or reestablish business processes. The New Normal for Re-Opening the [New Normal Communications Plan](#) addresses the following:

- Employees may have fears of returning to business as usual; preparing for and communicating how safety is a top priority will allay fears and reduce anxiety.
- How staying home if sick and physical distancing policies are being used to protect workers and customers.
- Detail what training on new workplace safety and disinfection protocols have been implemented.
- Have exposure-response communications ready to go to any affected employees and customers.
- IT has setup an email group titled the COVID Notifications Group which will be responsible for notification to the Contact Tracing Group should it be necessary to mitigate any exposures in the office.
- Have media communications ready to release on topics such as return-to-work timetables, safety protections in place, and how else the County is supporting workers and customers. Prepare to respond to the media for workplace exposures.

Mental Health Considerations

- [DES Peer Support Contacts Safety message.](#)
- Assistance for County Employees : [Pinnacle Center Employee Assistance Program](#)
- CareFirst behavioral health: 800.245.7013 (For employees covered by the County's health insurance)

COVID Testing Considerations

At this time, Charles County Government is not considering testing employees as part of a return to work strategy. When it comes to testing, that is a medical consideration between each employee and their primary care physician. As part of the Health & Travel Screening Procedures, if an employee presents with symptoms (fever) or answers yes to any screening questions they are screened additionally with COVID-19 Symptomatic Employee Risk & Travel

Screening Form, which recommends employees consult their physician if there is a medium or high risk of infection.

Phase III – Safe and Gradual Return for the Public

This phase will require building and infrastructure modifications to protect employees and the public. The protection measures that began in Phase II will continue through into Phase III until the threat of COVID transmission has abated.

Workplace Safety

A number of safety considerations should be made in order to allow the public to enter into County facilities again including the following:

- Direct customer traffic through the workplace.
 - The County has numerous facilities that the public enters. The managers for each facility should consider carefully directing the public through the facilities to help maintain social distancing. At the CCG building it is essential that the public enters through the main door for security and wellness check reasons.
 - Consider adding thermo scanners to assess the public entering for body temperature less than 100.4 degrees. For assistance with this please email Emergency Services logistics DESLogistics@charlescountymd.gov
 - If you do not have a thermoscanner, continue to utilize infrared thermometers for the public.
 - Consider adding a doorbell that automatically sounds when someone enters the area. This is to make employees aware that someone has entered their work space.
 - Consider making narrow hallways one way.
 - Consider taping off hallways to direct foot traffic and help maintain social distancing.
 - Add floor stickers to mark safe and proper distances. If you need floor stickers for social distancing, please submit a work request with Building & Trades for assistance.
- Add barriers between employees and the public (clear plexiglass called wellness screens)
 - During Phase II, Director's & Chiefs were asked to analyze workspaces to ensure social distancing could occur for employees to return to the workplace. Upon submitting a work request, Buildings & Trades will assist with placing wellness screens in locations that the public normally interfaces with employees.
 - The ability for County Government to welcome the public back will depend upon the speed in which we can accomplish placing barriers to protect our employees and the public.
- Limiting the number of customers in any area at one time.

- Make certain services by appointment only.
- Schedule walk in hours to limit the times in which the public is allowed inside the building.
- Work with security to establish a safe number of the public that can be allowed inside the facility at any one time.
- Ensure that there is adequate space for visitors to wait and social distance should the max number of persons inside the facility has been reached.
- Display educational posters for communication to the public about safety measures for COVID. Below are links to printable posters for public communications. Consider using these posters to communicate with the public entering your facility. All CDC COVID posters can be found on the [CDC Communications Resources website](#). The below list of posters are all examples that can be used, but are not required. Spanish versions are included for all listed posters below.
 - [Help Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19](#) (social distancing & face coverings, english), [spanish version](#)
 - [Stay Home when you are Sick!](#), [spanish version](#)
 - [Stop the Spread of Germs](#), [spanish version](#)
 - [Wash your Hands](#), [spanish version](#)
 - [Stay Healthy Wash Your Hands](#), [spanish version](#)
 - [Keep Calm and Wash Your Hands](#), [spanish version](#)
 - [Please Wear a Cloth Face Covering](#), [spanish version](#).
- Continue to maximize the use of video or telephone conferencing instead of in person meetings,
- Continue to promote ways for the public to access county services online such as paying bills and applying for permits,
- Providing contactless drop boxes for by check payments or paper permit applications,
- Package pickup and delivery of products should be accomplished through contactless means.
- Face coverings are required for the public when entering a County facility.
- The CDC also recommends improving building ventilation systems. See the [CDC recommendations for HVAC systems](#).

Phase IV – The New Normal

Plan for the next public health emergency