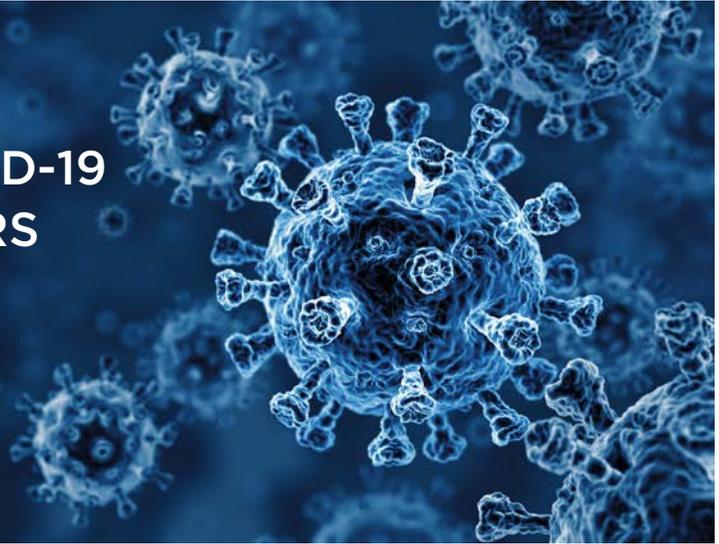




HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE DURING COVID-19 FOR LIBRARY EMPLOYERS



OVERVIEW

During the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, we all need to do our part to keep workers, students and the public safe and healthy so we can stop the spread and prepare to reopen the province, when we are ready.

Employers and workers in Ontario have certain duties and rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations. Employers should also review and follow any applicable directives and guidance coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Ministry of Health.

Learn more about:

- [workers' rights](#)
- [employers' responsibilities](#)

BEST PRACTICES TO KEEP YOUR WORKERS HEALTHY AND SAFE

The health and safety of workers is a top concern amid the global COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, all workplace parties must place an increased focus on health and safety in order to protect the health and safety of workers.

All measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 should be done in compliance with requirements under the OHSA and its regulations and the applicable public health directives issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.



In addition, below are a set of resources, tips and best practices to help employers prevent the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces.

PROTECTING YOURSELF AND CO-WORKERS-GENERAL GUIDANCE

Coronaviruses are spread primarily from person-to-person through close contact, including at work. Here are some [helpful tips](#) to help prevent the spread of germs:

- Maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more between persons, including library patrons and co-workers. (see Physical Distancing)
- Wash your hands often with soap and water when hands are visibly soiled, before and after any breaks, at the beginning and end of their shift, and before preparing food or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol content) if hand washing is not possible.
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve.
- If you use a tissue, discard immediately and wash your hands afterward.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid high-touch areas, where possible, and ensure you clean your hands after.
- Implement regular cleaning and disinfection (see Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection)
- Wash your clothes as soon as you get home.
- If you are ill, notify your supervisor immediately, complete the [self-assessment](#) and follow the instructions provided.

ESTABLISH AN EFFECTIVE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AND INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL PLAN

Establish an infectious disease preparedness and response plan. The plan should follow recommendations in [guidance notes](#) from the [Ministry of Health](#) and directives from [Public Health Ontario](#). The plan should consider and address levels of risk associated with the workplace and job tasks within libraries such as administrative and support staff. This includes how the library organization will operate during and throughout the recovery phase following the pandemic including sanitization of the workplace, equipment and resources, how workers report illness, how to ensure social distancing and how work will be scheduled.

To access the most recent Ministry of Health guidance notes please visit and scroll down to find your relevant sector information:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx

A list of activities and links to relevant resources to provide support in this area are listed below:

- Any books that have been handled by patrons in the library should be left in a dedicated quarantine area for a 24-hour period prior to recirculating. Follow library cleaning routines for visibly contaminated books or other returns.



- For DVDs or other materials with plastic covers, wipe them down with alcohol wipes if not quarantined for 72 hours.
- If physical distance and separation cannot be maintained, workers should have personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Consider providing access to alcohol-based hand sanitizer for patrons on entry to library, at self-checkout and computer workstations.
- Consider asking library patrons to use a face covering (cloth or [non-medical mask](#)) to protect those around them.
- Suspending all group activities and gatherings
- Institute measures to physically separate or impose physical distance of at least 2 metres between persons. This could be done by altering the workplace layout of the floor by moving furniture (desks, chairs, couches, etc.), using visual cues such as tape on the floor to enhance physical distancing or the use of physical partitions.
- Placing the computers so that patrons stand to use them, discouraging longer visits and removing the need to sanitize the furniture between patrons.
- Place posters or other signage in high traffic areas:
 - Asking patrons or visitors to stay home if they have symptoms (fever, cough or difficulty breathing)
 - Encouraging good respiratory hygiene, hand hygiene, and other healthy practices at the entrance to the workplace. Consider hand sanitizer stations at these locations where possible.
- Provide training to workers on COVID-19, how it spreads, risk of exposure, including those who may be at higher risk (i.e. have underlying health conditions) and procedures to follow including reporting process, proper hand washing practices and other routine infection control precautions.
- Based on risk of exposure, consider implementing a process for containing and laundering clothing worn at work. Alternatively, advise workers to practice good laundry hygiene practices with their clothing as it could potentially be a source of contamination.
- Have a system for reporting probable and confirmed cases to the local [Public Health](#) unit. Communication about who will take responsibility, ensuring proper documentation, and implementing any advice given by the Public Health unit is critical for containing the spread of COVID-19.
- Consider remote work for workers wherever and whenever possible.
- Assign staff to dedicated work areas as much as possible. Discourage them from sharing phones, desks, offices and other tools and equipment.
- Limit the exchange of papers. If documents must be exchanged, leave them on a clean surface while maintaining a two-metre distance. Avoid sharing pens and office equipment. Disinfect after each use.
- Lunch rooms and break rooms should be arranged to follow physical distancing practices. Consider staggered lunch and break times to reduce the number of workers gathering.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

As advised by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, [public health officials](#), and outlined throughout government communications, physical distancing is required to control the spread of COVID-19. Physical distancing means maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more between persons. By



maintaining physical distancing, people are less likely to be exposed to a respiratory virus like COVID-19 as the virus can be spread before symptoms appear (pre-symptomatic) and when persons may have contracted the virus but are minimal or no symptoms (asymptomatic).

In order to ensure physical distancing in the workplace, employers should consider:

- Blocking off aisles or have one way aisle markings.
- Limit the number of patrons in the library at one time.
- Consider reducing hours of operation or limiting patron time in the library.
- Consider curbside check-outs of material.
- Alter the workplace layout of the floor by moving furniture (desks, chairs, couches, etc.), using visual cues such as tape on the floor to enhance physical distancing or use of physical partitions.
- Rearrangement of public sit and stand work stations to ensure physical distancing. For example, leave every other terminal empty.
- Consider if Plexiglas screening as a barrier at service counters such as circulation desk, self-checkout, information desk and resource desks.
- Maintain touchless delivery such as during curb side pickup by designating a drop and pick up zone.
- Maintain physical distancing during interlibrary book deliveries. This might include identifying a drop zone.
- Encourage touchless payment by patrons, e.g. late fees
- Limiting the total number of people at the workplace and where they are assigned to work

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

While employers always have an obligation to [maintain clean workplaces](#), that obligation is under sharper focus during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The coronaviruses can survive for several days on different surfaces and objects. Frequent cleaning and disinfection is important to prevent spread of the disease. Many common household and commercial disinfectant products will destroy the COVID-19 virus. Some disinfectants will have an eight-digit Drug Identification Number (DIN). These products are approved for use by Health Canada. Refer to the Public Health Ontario [Fact Sheet for Environmental cleaning](#) for more details.

Employers should focus on:

- Easy access to soap and water (ways to properly clean hands) or alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of washroom facilities.
- Posting signage on hygiene in English and majority languages in the workplace so everyone can understand how to do their part respecting hygiene practices.
- Sanitizing of commonly touched surfaces or areas (e.g. door handles, light switches, toilet handles, counters, keyboards, telephone, book drops, controls for equipment and conveyors, self-checkout and other work surfaces,) twice a day and when visibly soiled.



REPORTING ILLNESS

The symptoms of COVID-19 are shared with many other illnesses including the cold and flu. At this time, it is recommended that anyone who begins to feel unwell (fever, new cough or difficulty breathing) should return home and [self-isolate](#) immediately. If you are a caregiver, have a household member, or a contact of someone who has COVID-19 you should follow the guidance from public health on [self-isolation](#).

People who are self-isolating should seek clinical assessment over the phone - either by calling their primary care provider's office or Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000. If you need additional assessment, your primary care provider or Telehealth Ontario will direct you to in-person care options.

Anyone who has travelled outside of Canada must self-isolate for 14 days upon return from travel and should not go to work.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR, TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND WORKPLACE SAFETY & INSURANCE BOARD REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The OHSA requires an employer to provide a written notice within four days of being advised that a worker has an occupational illness (including COVID-19) from exposure in the workplace or if a claim has been made to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) by or on behalf of the worker with respect to an occupational illness, including an occupational infection, to the:

- Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development;
- Joint health and safety committee (or health and safety representative); and
- Trade union, if any.

For more information:

- [Occupational Illness: Requirements to Report to the Ministry of Labour](#)

Any instances of occupationally-acquired illnesses shall be reported to [WSIB](#) within 72 hours of receiving notification of said illness.

SHARE INFORMATION

It is important that all parties in a workplace understand their roles and responsibilities. Employers need to ensure health and safety policies are updated and available for all workers to see. Using resources developed for the sector, including this one and others produced by [Public Services Health and Safety Association](#) (PSHSA), the Ministry of Health, and Public Health Ontario will improve workplace understanding.



POST YOUR POLICIES

Employers may wish to post and communicate COVID-19 policies to workers. These policies should cover how the workplace will operate, including but not limited to:

- The sanitization of workplaces
- How to ensure physical distancing
- How work will be scheduled
- How workers and contractors report illnesses

RESOURCES

Stay updated with daily government updates:

- [Government of Ontario](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)

ONTARIO GOVERNMENT AND AGENCY-ISSUED RESOURCES ABOUT COVID-19

The [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) is providing consistent updates on the provincial government's response to the outbreak, including:

- status of cases in Ontario
- current affected areas
- symptoms and treatments
- how to protect yourself and self-isolate
- updated Ontario news on the virus

[Public Health Ontario](#) is providing up-to-date resources on COVID-19, including:

- links to evolving public health guidelines, position statements and situational updates
- synopsis of key articles updating on the latest findings related to the virus
- recommendations for use of personal protective equipment
- information on infection prevention and control
- testing information
- other public resources

OTHER COVID-19 RESOURCES

[Health Canada](#) outlines the actions being taken by the Government of Canada to limit spread of the virus, as well as what is happening in provinces and communities across the country. It also maintains a live update of the number of cases by province.



The [World Health Organization](http://www.who.int) is updating the latest guidance and information related to the global outbreak and spread beyond Canadian borders.

- It also provides the most up-to-date information on:
 - current research and development around the virus
 - a COVID-19 situation “dashboard”
 - emergency preparedness measures
 - live media updates on the spread of the virus

This resource does not replace the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHS)* and its regulations, and should not be used as or considered legal advice. Health and safety inspectors apply the law based on the facts in the workplace.