

# Accommodation Problems / Solutions for Reopening with COVID-19

Version 2.0

*Many of these reopening practices/guidelines are taken from OSHA, CDC, and the Georgia Department of Health*

As we adjust to a world with Covid-19, states are beginning to reopen. People are returning to a workplace with new safety practices. Unfortunately, some of these practices will pose barriers to people with various disabilities.

This document outlines potential accommodation problems resulting from reopening safety practices, and lists ideas for accommodation solutions. It is being developed with the help of crowd sourcing, and is part of the Work ACCESS project's efforts to develop an online tool for conducting workplace accommodation assessments. Additional input is welcome. Please email us about accommodations that we might have missed.

## Conduct daily in-person or virtual health checks (temperature/symptom screening)

Potential Problems	Solutions
Employee has difficulty recognizing symptoms and responding to symptom screen questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use a questionnaire format (e.g., electronic, large print, Braille) that the employee can access. Electronic formats need to be compatible with the employee's assistive technology.</li><li>• Work with the employee to develop questions with words and a format (e.g., text, images) that he or she understands.</li><li>• Design the questions to have Yes/No or multiple choice answers rather than written text answers.</li><li>• Allow the employee to fill out the questionnaire at home, when he or she may not feel as rushed to complete it.</li></ul>
Employee has difficulty reading thermometer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use a talking thermometer.</li></ul>

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## Train employees on new policies and procedures

Potential Problems	Solutions
Employee has difficulty understanding presentations or print materials on new policies and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make presentations accessible.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Employees with low vision or blindness may need large, high contrast text and verbal description of graphics.</li> <li>○ Employees who are deaf or hard of hearing may need captioning or sign language interpreters.</li> <li>○ If providing training online, use a meeting platform that is compatible with the employee’s assistive technology.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide materials in formats that are accessible for the employee (e.g., electronic documents, large print, Braille).</li> <li>• Illustrate new procedures through images or video for employees who are not strong written text users.</li> <li>• Provide copies of presentations that can be reviewed following the training session.</li> </ul>
Employee forgets to follow new procedures or follows them incorrectly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide reminders to follow the procedure and on how to do it (e.g., length of time to wash hands).               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use a format (e.g., text, images) that is accessible to and is understood by the employee.</li> <li>○ For example, display a poster with directions for handwashing near sinks.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Limit the number of people in the workplace at the same time (e.g., stagger work schedules, limit visitors, move interactions with customers outside)**

Potential Problems	Solutions
Different work schedules prevent employee from getting help from coworkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If an employee relies on particular coworkers for assistance, schedule them together or ask another coworker to provide that assistance.</li> </ul>
Job coaches or personal care assistants are not able to access the business or employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the employee to determine what services can be provided remotely and where exceptions to a visitor policy may be needed.</li> </ul>
Different work schedules limit public transportation options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the employee to plan his or her work schedule.</li> </ul>
Efforts to serve customers outside (e.g., curbside pickup, restaurant tables, lines for service) block accessible parking and/or travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid using accessible parking spaces for other purposes, and move tables and lines as needed to make sure that an accessible route into the workplace is maintained.</li> </ul>

**Set up employee workspaces at least 6 feet away from each other**

Potential Problems	Solutions
Employee forgets to follow physical distancing procedures or follows them incorrectly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training / reminders. Use a format (e.g., text, images) that is accessible to and is understood by the employee.</li> </ul>
Employee with cognitive or vision issues has difficulty knowing how much room to leave between workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the spacing in concrete terms that the person is familiar with (e.g., every other seat, length of a cart, space if both people had arms stretched out)</li> <li>• Mark physical boundaries needed for safe spacing (e.g., tape on floor, upright post)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Make sure that physical barriers do not reduce the 36 inch clear space needed for a wheelchair accessible travel route.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add physical barriers (e.g., panels) between workstations that are next to each other. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Make sure that physical barriers do not reduce the 36 inch clear space needed for a wheelchair accessible travel route.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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### Use video conferencing instead of physical meetings

Potential Problems	Solutions
Video conferencing platforms are not accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See our documents on accommodations for telework.</li> </ul>

### Wear a face mask, protective gloves, or protective gowns

Potential Problems	Solutions
Employee cannot wear a mask due to medical reasons, claustrophobia, hypersensitivity to touch, inability to remove mask without assistance, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow the employee to telework. Employees who have respiratory conditions should work from home if possible.</li> <li>• Experiment to see if there is a mask design/material that would be tolerable, such as wearing a loose scarf.</li> <li>• Explore whether a face shield would provide sufficient protection for the specific situation and level of physical distancing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Be cautious: in most situations, face shields alone do not provide sufficient protection. If used without a mask, the shield should wrap around the sides of the wearer’s face and extend to below the chin. <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• If possible, allow the employee to work in a separate area where mask use may not be needed for the entire day.</li> </ul>

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<p>Masks get in the way of lip reading</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have coworkers use a face mask with a clear plastic center panel. This solution might work best for short communications since the masks are more difficult to breathe through and they tend to fog up.</li> <li>• Explore other communication methods (e.g., texting, real-time captioning app, gestures or sign language).</li> <li>• Explore whether a face shield would provide sufficient protection for the specific situation and level of physical distancing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Be cautious: in most situations, face shields alone do not provide sufficient protection. If used without a mask, the shield should wrap around the sides of the wearer’s face and extend to below the chin.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html</a></p>
<p>Masks muffle speech, which is problematic for employee with soft speech or who is hard of hearing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amplify the person’s speech.</li> <li>• Explore other communication methods (e.g., texting, real-time captioning app, gestures or sign language).</li> </ul>
<p>Employee has difficulty reading facial expressions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have coworkers use a face mask with a clear plastic center panel. This solution might work best for short communications since the masks are more difficult to breathe through and they tend to fog up.</li> </ul>
<p>The employee’s glasses fog up, adding to other vision problems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masks with nose wires, or similar designs that fit closer to the face under the eyes, are reported to result in less fogging of glasses.</li> </ul>
<p>The employee’s face shield, used to protect the eyes, distorts vision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore whether goggles would provide sufficient protection.</li> </ul>

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Employee has difficulty putting on or taking off the mask, gloves, or gown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss preferred options for assistance with the employee. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Note that the CDC advises against mask wearing for people who are unable to remove it without assistance. <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Employee with motor disabilities has difficulty moving around when wearing protective gown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ??</li> </ul>

### Promote proper respiratory etiquette (covering sneezes and coughs)

Potential Problems	Solutions
Employee forgets proper etiquette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training / reminders. Use a format (e.g., text, images) that is accessible to and is understood by the employee.</li> </ul>
Employee with motor disabilities has trouble covering his or her mouth/nose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The wearing of a face mask may reduce the need to cover a sneeze.</li> </ul>

### Promote frequent hand washing

Potential Problems	Solutions
Employee forgets to follow new hand washing procedures or follows them incorrectly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training / reminders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use a format (e.g., text, images) that is accessible to and is understood by the employee.</li> <li>○ For example, display a poster with directions on how to wash hands (e.g., length of time) near sinks.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Employee contaminates hands again from using a manual wheelchair after hand washing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wear protective gloves when propelling the wheelchair.</li> </ul>

<p>Employee with mobility or reach/dexterity problems has difficulty washing hands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult the ADA accessibility guidelines for making bathroom sinks accessible. This might include making sure that there is sufficient space to move near the sink, sufficient knee clearance, and easy-to-operate faucet controls.</li> <li>• When some stalls or sinks are closed for cleaning or physical distancing, make sure an accessible option is always available.</li> <li>• Use a smaller, portable soap dispenser that can be positioned as desired by the user (instead of or in addition to a wall-mounted dispenser).</li> <li>• Use motion-activated soap dispensers rather than pump soap dispensers.</li> </ul>
<p>Restroom paper towel bins block travel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place paper towel bins far enough from the door to provide a clear travel path. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide a 36"-wide clear travel path.</li> <li>○ Provide a clear area at the door, typically 5 feet square, extending 2 feet on the hinge side of the door.</li> <li>○ Check the ADA guidelines for the required space for the specific door-approach situation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Employee with mobility or reach/dexterity problems has difficulty using hand sanitizer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a smaller, portable hand sanitizer dispenser that can be positioned as desired by the user (instead of or in addition to a wall-mounted dispenser).</li> <li>• Use motion-activated hand sanitizer dispensers rather than pump hand sanitizers.</li> <li>• Position hand sanitizer stations below a maximum reach height of 48 inches and next to a clear floor space (48 inches long, 30 inches wide).</li> <li>• Use hand sanitizer wipes instead of liquid sanitizer.</li> </ul>

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### Perform routine environmental cleaning (cleaning doorknobs, handles, etc.)

Potential Problems	Solutions
Surfaces that employees (or customers) come in contact with need to be disinfected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remember to include automatic door buttons, stair and ramp handrails, and Braille signs on the list of surfaces that need regular Covid-19-related disinfection.</li></ul>
Employee has chemical sensitivity to the cleaning products used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use safer, less toxic products.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Use soap and water, hydrogen peroxide, or isopropyl alcohol.</li><li>○ Avoid ammonium, chlorine bleach, or phenol (e.g., Lysol).</li><li>○ Avoid cleaning products with added fragrances when possible.</li></ul></li></ul>
Cleaning is a new job task that the employee has difficulty completing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Additional accommodations may be needed for cleaning tasks.</li><li>• The cleaning tasks may need to be reassigned to a different employee.</li></ul>

### Cross-train employees in case large numbers of employees are absent due to sickness

Potential Problems	Solutions
Employee needs to cover work of absent coworkers and therefore needs accommodations for tasks he or she doesn't normally do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assign employees to tasks that are similar to their current work and which might involve the use of the same accommodations.</li></ul>