



REOPENING TOOLKIT FOR MICHIGAN LAW OFFICES

Version 1, issued May 28, 2020

The State Bar of Michigan developed this toolkit as a resource to help law firms transition back to in-office operations in accordance with reopening orders. The health and safety of your staff and clients remain paramount, and you should continue to consult federal requirements and guidelines, including the [Centers for Disease Control](#) and the [Department of Labor; state requirements and guidelines](#), and specific safeguards to protect workers, such as those contained in [Executive Order 2020-97](#); and your local government requirements. The checklists incorporate some, but not all, requirements of EO 2020-97, indicated in **bold**.

The checklists contained in this toolkit do not constitute legal advice. They are practical guidance to help attorneys create plans and protocols to help ensure the health and safety of all those who enter their building. Each law office is unique, and it is incumbent on practitioners to apply relevant law and guidance to their individual practices, client bases, and general needs. We hope that these checklists will help prepare your practice for reopening. We will update this toolkit as new information becomes available.



PRE-OPENING CHECKLIST

Prepare Essential Protocols

- Develop your COVID-19 preparedness and response plan, consistent with the guidance developed by the Occupational Health and Safety Administration. The plan must be readily available to employees and clients within 2 weeks of resuming in-person activities.**
- Designate the employee(s) responsible for implementing, monitoring, and reporting on the control strategies of the preparedness and response plan.**
- Prepare for and conduct COVID-19 training required by EO 2020-97.**

1

Prepare Your People

- Consult with all employees, contractors, and partners to determine individually if it is possible and safe for each of them to return to work.
 - Consider how to address situations likely to arise, such as:
 - Employees with children at home because there is no school or daycare available.
 - Employees who do not feel comfortable coming back to the office.
 - Employees with family members or close friends who are diagnosed with COVID-19.
 - Employees who are caregivers or have family members who are immunocompromised.
 - Employees who are showing signs of infection but those signs could also be a common cold or allergies.
- If possible, develop a staggered work schedule plan and staggered lunch break plan to facilitate maximum physical distancing. Consideration of staggered work schedules should also take into account the law office's ability to maintain social distancing while implement daily screening protocols discussed below in Virus Detection Measures and Tracking Protocols.
- Recognize the anxiety and childcare difficulties that may come with returning to work and help identify resources for employees who need them.

2

Prepare Your Workplace

- Do an initial thorough cleaning of your office, using the CDC guidelines
- Schedule building inspections, HVAC, and mechanical checks. Optimize airflow settings according to CDC guidelines.
- Consider making improvements to the office to reduce the spread of germs, such as installing anti-viral screens, hands-free sinks, hands-free soap and towel dispensers, and motion-activated doors and lighting.
- Consider sealing off or otherwise closing common spaces such as break rooms.
- Consider disabling certain common use items, which could include:
 - **Turning off water fountains.**
 - Disabling common use coffeemakers and refrigerators.
 - Propping open or removing non-essential doors and removing door handles.

- ❑ Secure a sufficient supply of hand sanitizers for entrances, exits, conference rooms, and bathrooms. Mount hands-free sanitizer dispensers if possible.
- ❑ If possible, acquire face masks for all employees, contractors, and partners who do not already have them, and for clients who arrive without them.

3

Adopt Daily Protocols for Cleaning Work Areas and Common Areas

- ❑ **Develop a cleaning plan based on protocols.** This should include **instituting cleaning...protocols when employees are sent home with symptoms.** This could include:
 - Designate employees whose job it is to clean common-use high-touch surfaces frequently, or provide signage that users are responsible for cleaning after each use with a household cleaning spray or wipe conveniently available.
 - Cleaning and disinfecting all conference room tables used by different users throughout the day after each use. Develop a system for identifying that a conference table has been disinfected, e.g. piece of paper with a large red X on one side indicating “not disinfected,” and a large green circle on the other side indicating “disinfected.”
- ❑ Decide how to implement and maintain the protocols, and who is responsible for enforcement and cleaning.

4

Adopt Workspace Protocols

- ❑ Create a social distancing workplace blueprint and protocols and make necessary changes to spacing and chair and furniture placement to ensure at least 6’ physical distancing. If necessary and possible, to facilitate physical distancing in tight quarters, plan a one-way traffic pattern and the method of communicating it (e.g., tape or stickers on the floor).
- ❑ **Prohibit social gatherings and meetings that do not allow for social distancing or that create unnecessary movement through the office.** This could include:
 - Making all pre-Covid-19 staff gathering spaces, including all break rooms, off-limits.
 - Repurposing large spaces (such as conference rooms) to eliminate shared workspaces and create distance between tight workspaces.
 - Taking advantage of videoconference technology to carry out meetings within the office, even when people are in the same building. Limit meetings to as few people as needed.
 - Conducting depositions remotely whenever possible. Your client and you could be in one office (within physical distancing requirements in a larger conference room) but opposing counsel and court reporter could be remote, or even in a separate conference room in the same building, if possible.
 - Limiting bathroom use to a single person at any one time.
- ❑ Create special protocols for entryways and reception areas. This should include **assigning dedicated entry point(s) for all employees to reduce congestion at the main entrance.** This could also include:
 - Establishing clear expectations and policies for reception areas, entrances, and exits.
 - Limiting the number of exits and entrances to the building and monitor these entryways to help ensure staff and visitors are able to comply with 6’ physical distancing requirements.
 - Establishing clear expectations and policies for reception areas, entrances, and exits.
 - Decommissioning reception spaces that do not allow for physical distancing. Instead, reroute intake to conference rooms with individual use laptops and sufficient space for compliance with physical distancing.
 - Unless a reception area is sufficiently spacious to offer 6’ physical distancing for more than one visitor, arranging intake so that no more than 1 person is in the intake office at any time.
 - Taking into account and cross-referencing daily screening protocols that may take place near entry points and reception areas, which are discussed below in Virus Detection Measures and Tracking Protocols section.

- Develop protocols for limiting visits to the office to essential visitors.** This could include:
 - Limiting entry to essential visitors: clients and others essential to the consultation or service only.
 - Encouraging employees to bring their own lunches. Food deliveries bring more traffic and added risk.
 - Designating one location for any deliveries to the office and disinfect items in one central location. Assign delivery management and sterilization as a task to specific trained employees only.
- Develop protocols to reduce the spread of germs. **Employers should be prepared to provide non-medical grade masks and require face coverings in shared spaces, including during in-person meetings and in restrooms and hallways and providing non-medical grade masks.** The protocols could also include:
 - Designating a person whose job it is upon opening the building to turn on common area lights and prop open all doors that can be left open. Keep lights on and doors open as much as possible throughout the day.
 - Providing disinfecting supplies and require employees wipe down their workstations at least twice daily.
 - Providing hand sanitizers and other protective equipment as needed to ensure the safety of attorneys, staff, and clients.

5

Adopt Common Use Protocols

- Eliminate or **reduce as much as possible shared use of equipment (e.g., pens, remote devices, computers, copiers, staplers, phones).**
- Disinfect any shared equipment after each use. Develop a system for identifying that a piece of shared equipment has been disinfected. The system can be as simple as a sticky note. If the identifier is not present, the equipment must be disinfected by the new user.
- Disinfect high touch surfaces such as door handles,** light switches, toilet levers, faucets, refrigerator handles, water coolers, coffee machines, ice machines, drawers, cabinets, remote controls, chairs (especially the top and arms), and collaboration tools such as conference phones, whiteboard markers and erasers as often as needed throughout the day with conveniently provided cleaning agents or wipes.

6

Adopt Work Activity Protocols

- Accomplish the exchange of information, including reception and intake, electronically, and preferably in advance of a visit, whenever possible. If any exchange of paperwork is needed, handlers should use hand sanitizer or wash hands immediately after handling the exchanged paperwork.
- Reduce printing.
- Limit copy machine room use to one person at a time.

7

Adopt Signage Protocols

- Install signs* at entry explaining building access rules and other applicable protocols, including virus detection measures. For example: “For your safety and ours, you must wear a mask or face covering to enter this office and keep it on as directed during your visit. You are also required to use the provided hand sanitizer immediately upon entering and as directed throughout the building.”
- Provide visual indicators of appropriate spacing for employees outside the building in case of congestion.**
- Prepare signs in all languages that are likely to be used in the building.
- Post signs about the importance of personal hygiene.**
- Provide “No handshake” signs in the entry and reception areas.

8

Virus Detection Measures and Tracking Protocols

- Establish a response plan for dealing with a confirmed infection in the workplace, including protocols for sending employees home and for temporary closures of all or part of the worksite to allow for deep cleaning.** This response plan should be based on guidance provided by state and local governments. The Governor's Office has an [FAQ](#) that provides guidance on how employers should respond if an employee tests positive for COVID-19. Local health departments may have additional guidance.
- Prepare for and conduct a daily entry self-screening protocol for all employees or contractors entering the workplace.**
- Develop a questionnaire covering symptoms and suspected or confirmed exposure to people with possible COVID-19.** Local governments may have developed questionnaires that can be used as samples. For example, the [Ingham County Health Departments](#) have provided a workplace screening questionnaire and checklist for employers.
- Take steps to reduce entry congestion and to ensure the effectiveness of screening (e.g., by staggering start times, adopting a rotational schedule in only half of employees are in the office at a particular time).**
- Maintain a log of all people who enter the building, their contact information, and their contacts within the building. If possible, have an employee enter the information electronically. Do not rely on a common writing implement for people to sign the log.
- Institute cleaning and communication protocols when employees are sent home with symptoms.**
- Notify your employees if you learn that anyone who has visited the building has been confirmed as infected by COVID-19.**
- Require any person entering or within the building who experiences or evidences any flu-like symptom to leave the premises immediately.

9

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

- Tell clients what you have done to make the office a safe environment, and what the conditions of visits to your office will be.
- Disseminate all protocols to all staff, contractors, and employees who may be in the building at any time.
- Emphasize the importance of staying home from work in the event of any illness symptoms, and support employees in following the policy.
- Prepare and display signage throughout the workplace to aid and reinforce compliance with physical distancing and other Covid-19 protocols.

Sources:

- American Bar Association
- Canadian Bar Association
- Center for Disease Control
- Indiana State Bar Association
- Michigan Association for Justice
- Michigan State Court Administrative Office
- Michigan Supreme Court
- National Association of Bar Executives
- International Institute of Legal Chief Executives

Printable Posters:

The following posters have been developed by the State Bar of Michigan to help you implement the recommendations provided in the checklist and to prepare your work spaces. You may add your logo to personalize the posters for your office.

- Maintain 6 feet Distance
- Arrows for Hall Traffic
- Seating Spacing
- Mask and Sanitation Requirements
- Wave/No Shake
- Delivery Location
- Elevator Protocol
- Keep Door Open
- Room Closed
- Clean/Please Clean Room Notice

SBM

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