



COVID-19 Transitional Considerations for Nebraska Counties

All 93 counties should develop written plans for re-opening county courthouses and county facilities to provide standard county programs and operations when the Directed Health Measures (DHMs) issued by the state or local public health departments are lifted or modified. Plans should be revised periodically.

Overall Considerations for County Boards and Elected Officials

County boards and officials should consider the following concepts when developing reopening transition plans:

- Protect the health, safety and wellness of county employees and the public.
- Consider the number of positive test results in the county.
- Follow public health guidance and regulations from local health districts, DHMs, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Coordinate with adjacent counties within a health district and counties that have overlapping shopping or market areas.
- Set expectations about re-opening and make them clear to employees and the public.
- Identify the services that will be phased in. Clearly notify the public of those services that will be available immediately for public access. Identify services subject to longer-term limitations.
- Consider the continued use of electronic meetings for meetings not subject to the Open Meetings Act. The Executive Order allowing public meetings to be conducted virtually expires on May 31, 2020.

Assumptions for the “New Normal”

County services will be provided differently as counties and the public adjust to the “new normal”. When the DHMs are lifted or modified, it does not mean the next day is an immediate return to the “old” normal. Some operational changes may need to be made indefinitely.

- Social distancing for employees and the public will be part of the new normal. The 6-foot rule and limitations on crowd sizes, as directed by the CDC, state of Nebraska, or local

public health departments, should continue to be enforced. County boards and officials should consult with local public health departments for guidance specific to the county.

- A phased-in, methodical approach to increasing public and county interactions will be needed. Revisions to the plan should be considered periodically, especially when significant changes are made to a DHM issued by a local public health district or the state.
- County boards should consult with elected officials. Be aware of statutory deadlines and their impact on county offices and the public.
- Present a unified internal and external message. It is critical for county boards and elected officials to present the same message to the public about operations and access to county buildings.
- Document all COVID-19-related expenses, especially expenses related to a disaster declaration. Recognize the fiscal impact on the county and budget constraints. Resources may need to be shifted, shared or reprioritized to meet statutory deadlines.
- One size may not fit all. Flexibility and coordination are essential.

Operations

- Each office and department should develop a phased-in plan that is revised periodically to reflect significant changes to DHMs. The plan should include statutory obligations, timelines, work volumes that require face-to-face meetings with the public, work that may be conducted electronically, and alternative delivery methods.
 - To the extent that services are available, encourage the public to transact business over the phone or electronically to limit physical contact. To the extent that services are not available through your county's website, consider making them so. Consider alternative methods of providing services, such as drive-throughs or curbside delivery.
 - Based on existing and anticipated social distancing restrictions, analyze workflows to determine the number of face-to-face customers that can be served daily and the number of employees needed on-site. Interactions with state agencies and courts should be considered, if appropriate.
 - Public face-to-face services should be delivered by appointment or specific walk-up hours unless counter space has been modified to protect employees and the public. The public should be encouraged to maintain social distancing and wear masks when interacting with county officials and employees. Access may need to be controlled by social distance markings, queue lines, security personnel, or staff monitoring.

- Address whether remote work will/may/might continue for certain employees. Consider implementing work schedule revisions to maintain social distancing and reduce the concentration of people in a work space. These could include staggered work days or hours, remote work, staggering starting or stopping times of employees, or staggered lunch periods. Consider or review policies for furloughs and other reductions in hours.
- Office space, facilities, or common areas may need to be reconfigured to maintain social distancing. It may be necessary to temporarily move work stations or install barriers between work stations within an office.
- Limit large work-related gatherings to reduce the concentration of people to meet DHM requirements. Consider reducing the number of chairs in break rooms or limiting numbers of employee in break rooms at one time to encourage social distancing among staff.
- Consider adopting a temporary policy that requires employees to use masks or face shields, as appropriate, in common or public areas based on public health recommendations. Consider requiring employees to wear gloves when interacting with the public. Consider making masks available to the public upon entry to the county facility. Costs for personal protective equipment be eligible for reimbursement under the federal CARES Act.
- Review and amend existing policies for employees or members of the public who have tested positive and been within the courthouse or on county property. Consider cleaning processes, facility shutdowns, notifications, and operations in the event of a positive test.
- Require employees to wash or sanitize hands on a regular basis. Hand sanitizer should contain at least 60 percent alcohol. Encourage employees and the public to avoid touching their faces and to sneeze or cough into a tissue.
- Counters and individual public spaces should be wiped down following each public transaction. Employees should clean their personal workspaces, such as keyboards, phones, chairs, and desktops several times each day.

County Buildings and Offices

- All county facilities, including those listed below, should be assigned a priority as services in the county are re-opened to the public in a limited capacity:
 - Courthouse/Administration Buildings/Annexes
 - Courts and Probation
 - Law Enforcement Centers/Jails/Detention Centers
 - Highway Departments/Shops
 - Other county owned facilities such as fairgrounds

- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces, such as workstations, countertops, handrails, doorknobs, public keyboards, touchscreens and telephones, restrooms, breakrooms, fuel pump handles, work tools, and vehicle interiors pursuant to CDC guidelines. Encourage employees to clean surfaces before and after use. Recommendations may vary for law enforcement, emergency responders, custodial staff and others.
 - Develop plans for documenting cleaning of public spaces in consultation with your county attorney. For common areas and offices, consider recording the date, time, and signature or initials of the personnel performing the cleaning. For personal workspaces, consider documenting when phones, keyboards, and other equipment used by more than one employee is cleaned. Discourage sharing of tools and equipment, if feasible.
- Follow cleaning product manufacturer’s instructions regarding concentration, application method, and contact time. Use EPA-approved disinfectants as appropriate. Employees should wear gloves for cleaning, if appropriate.
- Provide hand sanitizer for the public entering county facilities and offices, as well as individual offices, counters, desks, shop areas and other locations. Provide no-touch receptacles for disposal of tissues and other single-use personal items. Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, the importance of hand hygiene, and coughing and sneezing etiquette at the entrance to the courthouse and other strategic locations.

Employee Assessment

County officials and department heads should be available for conversations with employees about their concerns. Some employees may be at higher risk for severe illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions.

- County officials and employees who feel sick should stay home. Individuals who came into contact with a positive case or someone who shows symptoms must isolate for 14 days and contact and follow the advice of a physician.
- To maintain the health and safety of the workplace, all county officials and/or department heads should require all employees to answer the following questions prior to the commencement of each work shift or day. If an employee answers yes to any question they should not be allowed to work that day and should be encouraged to seek appropriate medical guidance.
 - Have you been exposed to someone in your household or been within close contact (within 6 feet) of an individual with a confirmed COVID-19 case in the last 14 days?
 - Today or within the last 24 hours, have you had a measured temperature greater than 100.4°F?
 - Today or within the last 24 hours, have you had a new or worsening cough?

- Today or within the last 24 hours, have you had a shortness of breath or difficulty breathing? New or worsening body aches? Sore throat? Diminished capacity to taste or smell?
- Today or within the last 48 hours, have you traveled out of the state? Country?
- If an employee becomes sick or is identified with any of the above symptoms, they should be separated from other employees, members of the public and visitors and sent home immediately.
- Close off areas visited by the ill persons. Open outside doors and windows and use ventilating fans to increase air circulation in the area. Wait 24 hours or as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection.
- All areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, and shared electronic equipment (tablets, touch screens, keyboards and remote controls) used by the ill person should be disinfected.
- The EEOC allows temperatures of employees and members of the public to be checked but it is not clear whether this is a temporary or permanent measure. If temperatures are checked consider the following: Who checks it? What type of thermometer is used? Does it allow for 6-foot social distancing? What is the reliability of the thermometer? Is protective equipment provided for the person taking temperatures? Is the temperature policy applied uniformly to avoid discrimination claims? Documents related to temperatures should be kept confidential in a separate medical file and treated as protected health information. Internal access to health screening information should be very limited.
- Strongly discourage non-essential employee travel outside the county, state, or country.

Links

Nebraska Resources

[Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services – COVID-19](#)

[Nebraska Local Public Health Department Directory](#)

[Office of Governor Pete Rickett](#)

[Nebraska Association of County Officials](#)

[National Association of Counties](#)

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

[Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)

[Cleaning & Disinfecting Decision Tool](#)

[Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)

[Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities](#)

[Resources for First Responders and Law Enforcement](#)

[Resources for Correctional and Detention Facilities](#)

U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
[Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
[List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)