

## Vestry Corner: Safety Steps for Reopening Offices

Organizations are in different stages of planning how to allow employees and volunteers to return to their physical workplaces. While many churches are not reopening, some are considering doing so and it's possible that some churches have had employees back for several weeks now. But all have this one goal in common: to create and maintain the safest possible environment.

It's likely that your organizational leadership working on a health and safety plan for returning workers. Check that plan against local, state, and federal guidelines, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [recommendations](#), some of which include the following: mask wearing, hand sanitizing, and social distancing

### **1. Assess and adjust the office layout.**

Take a look at the positioning of desks in your organization's workspace. Determine ways in which employees and volunteers can work comfortably without coming into close contact with one another.

For example, if three people ordinarily work in a small common room, you may temporarily move one or two people to another workspace on the premises in order to give everyone at least six feet of space. If there is no physical space to spare, you might set up a work-from-home rotation or stagger shifts.

### **2. Mark six-foot spaces in high-traffic areas.**

Workers naturally gather in break rooms, kitchens, hallways, and conference rooms. Use tape, decals, or signs to show six-foot distances. It's easy for people to fall into old habits, so these visual reminders of social distancing may help everyone stay safe.

### **3. Encourage frequent handwashing and hand-sanitizer use.**

Workers and volunteers should refrain from touching one another and frequently wash their hands (for a full 20 seconds), or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content. Put a schedule in place to frequently wipe down and disinfect common use areas, such as shared printers, doorknobs, and telephones.

### **4. Promote wearing masks.**

The CDC recommends that people wear face coverings (masks) over their noses and mouths in order to contain respiratory droplets. This also helps people remember not to touch their eyes, noses, and mouths. Put up a sign or poster near the entrance to prompt employees and visitors to put on their masks. Buy a small stash of masks and keep them on hand for people who forget theirs. Remind workers that even if they are wearing masks, social distancing is still important.

### **5. Tell sick workers to stay home.**

If any or your employees or volunteers are feeling unwell, or are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath, tell them to stay at home. They may well have allergies or a cold, but it is better to be safe than sorry.

Church Insurance is committed to supporting the safety of our clients and to helping to decrease the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals and institutions around the Church.