

Nebraska VR and ATP Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)
Updated August 26, 2021
Plan for Addressing COVID-19- VR and ATP Field Offices

Purpose: This plan outlines operations for Nebraska VR and ATP during the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan includes staffing flexibilities (schedule adjustment and remote work), Question and Answers, Sample Correspondence for Clients, Resources, and More. The overall intent is these operations will help ensure a continuity of providing quality services while keeping the health and safety of our clients and staff a priority.

Additionally, this plan includes processes for returning staff to the office and safety precautions.

Phase 1: **Staff Reporting to the Office and Office Open to the Public**

Phase 2: **Office Open to the Public with Restrictions**

Phase 3: **Office Open to Staff but not to the Public**

Phase 4: **Office Closed to the Public and Staff- Staff work remotely**

The Office Director/Supervisor consults with VR Director to determine the appropriate Phase. The local public health risk dials will be used in helping to determine the appropriate Phase. The Office Director/Supervisor and VR Director may make an exception for moving into a Phase at any given time based on other considerations (e.g., number of staff on the team are high risk). The Office Director/Supervisor should initiate this conversation with the VR Director as he/she is more aware of the immediate needs of staff.



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Phase 1: Staff Reporting to the Office and Offices Open to the Public

Action Taken

- Non-pharmaceutical Intervention (NPI) signage posted in all VR and ATP Offices.
- Signage posted requesting clients reschedule appointments if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- Messaging for staff to disseminate to clients with an active case. Emphasizing various methods of communicating with the VR contact(s). See Appendix A
- Staff may schedule in-person appointments. Social distancing is practiced. Staff may attend meetings in-person with partners and are encouraged to practice the guidelines outlined by the CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>
- In-state travel is permissible.
- Out of state travel is determined at the discretion of Nebraska Dept of Education Commissioner.
- Staff must communicate the expectations of this Phase with partners who share/lease VR office space.

Staffing/Leave Considerations

Adjusted work day/week scheduling allowed

- Scheduling outside of core hours must be approved by VR Director
- Core hours are 7:00 am - 6:00 pm, Monday-Friday
- Work week is Monday-Sunday
- Refer to the “Work Week Schedule Adjustment Policy” in the Program Manual

Remote Work

- When working remotely, staff must office from the location indicated on the agreement and must follow the established work schedule/hours. Any temporary change in hours and/or work location must be discussed in advance with the supervisor.
- Full time staff may work remotely for a maximum of 24 hours per week.
- Staff working less than full time may work remotely 60% of their FTE (e.g., staff works 32 hrs per week=up to 19.2 hours remote).
- Only employees who are at increased risk for severe illness due to qualified chronic health conditions may request an adjustment to onsite work requirements. A request form must be completed and medical documentation of the health condition must be submitted to substantiate the request. Contact joel.scherling@nebraska.gov for the form.
- Staff may work remotely for no more than 8 hours per day.
- If working in the office, staff may work more than 8 hours per day.
- The employee will work with his/her Office Director/Supervisor, as necessary, to update the NDE [Telework Request Form](#).
- The remote work schedule for an individual should be reviewed every sixty days to ensure appropriate supports are in place to maintain a productive work flow. Should

the individual's work performance not be maintained at a satisfactory level (as documented by the supervisor), the arrangement may need to be modified.

- The schedule outlined on the NDE Telework Request Form must be followed.
Frequent changes to the work schedule must be avoided.
- Office Director/Supervisor must ensure appropriate staffing coverage for the office/team considering remote work schedules.

Phase 2: Offices Open to the Public with Restrictions

Action Taken

- Non-pharmaceutical Intervention (NPI) Signage posted in all VR and ATP Offices.
- Signage posted requesting clients reschedule appointments if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- The Office follows CDC guidelines to limit risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>
VR staff follow safety expectations outlined by schools when delivering services to students.
- Virtual meetings should be arranged when possible. If In-person appointments/meetings are scheduled, CDC guidelines are followed.
- When meeting outside of the office with clients, partners, and businesses, VR staff follow safety expectations outlined by partners, AJCs, libraries, businesses, etc.
- When contacting a client to schedule an in-person appointment or inviting partners to an in-person meeting at the VR Office, the scheduler must provide the information outlined in Appendix E:
 - Continued option to meet with Nebraska VR virtually;
 - Safety protocols in the office; and
 - CDC guidelines for wearing masks and face coverings;
- Staff report to his/her assigned office and maintain daily work (remote work is allowed).
- Office Director/Supervisor discretion used for staff traveling to surrounding communities pursuant to local public health guidance.
- ATP loan/reuse/demo equipment program is scheduled by appointment only.
- ATP technology specialists follow guidance from Supervisor prior to performing assessments/visits.
- Staff must communicate the expectations of this Phase with partners who share/lease VR office space.

Staffing/Leave Considerations

Adjusted work day/week scheduling allowed

- Scheduling outside of core hours must be approved by VR Director
- Core hours are 7:00 am - 6:00 pm, Monday-Friday.
- Work week is Monday-Sunday
- Refer to the “Workweek Schedule Adjustment Policy” in the Program Manual.

Remote Work

- When working remotely, staff must office from the location indicated on the agreement and must follow the established work schedule/hours. Any temporary change in hours and/or work location must be discussed in advance with the supervisor.
- Full time staff may work remotely for a maximum of 24 hours per week.
- Staff working less than full time may work remotely 60% of their FTE (e.g., staff works 32 hrs per week=up to 19.2 hours remote).
- Only employees who are at increased risk for severe illness due to qualified chronic health conditions may request an adjustment to onsite work requirements. A request

form must be completed and medical documentation of the health condition must be submitted to substantiate the request. Contact joel.scherling@nebraska.gov for the form.

- Staff may work remotely for no more than 8 hours per day.
- If working in the office, staff may work more than 8 hours per day.
- The employee will work with his/her Office Director/Supervisor, as necessary, to update the NDE [Telework Request Form](#).
- The remote work schedule for an individual should be reviewed every sixty days to ensure appropriate supports are in place to maintain a productive work flow. Should the individual's work performance not be maintained at a satisfactory level (as documented by the supervisor), the arrangement may need to be modified.
- The schedule outlined on the NDE Telework must be followed. The schedule outlined on the agreement must be followed. **Frequent changes to the work schedule must be avoided.**
- Office Director/Supervisor must ensure appropriate staffing coverage for the office/team considering remote work schedules.

New: Situations in which COVID-19 cases are rising and public health data are indicating **high/substantial risk** for spread of COVID-19, any of the following safety measures may be initiated by the Office Director(s)/Supervisor. The Director of Nebraska VR must be consulted prior to the measures being implemented:

- The hybrid schedule can be adjusted so staff may work remotely up to four (4) days.
- All client meetings are by appointment only. Signage will be posted to help direct walk-in traffic.
- Masks are required in the following situations (Appendix F will be posted throughout the office):
 - When interacting with others and social distancing can't be maintained
 - When traversing common areas (e.g., hallways, elevators, breakrooms)
 - If you are unvaccinated
 - If you or a family member have a weakened immune system or are at increased risk for severe disease
 - For 14 days following exposure to someone who has COVID-19

Messaging in Appendix E will need to be modified to account for any of these additional safety measures being implemented.

Phase 3: Office open to Staff but not to the Public

Action Taken

- Non-pharmaceutical Intervention (NPI) Signage posted in all VR and ATP Offices.
- The Office follows CDC guidelines to limit risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>
- Staff may report to his/her assigned office on a routine basis (remote work is also allowed).
- Recommendations by the CDC will be followed:
 - Social distancing is practiced at all times; and
 - Staff are expected to wear a face cover. See the Q&A section beginning on page 9 for more details.
- ATP loan/reuse/demo equipment program is scheduled by appointment only.
- ATP technology specialists follow guidance from Supervisor prior to performing assessments/visits.
- Staff use technology for all meetings (video conference, Zoom, Microsoft Office, etc.)
- Supervisor/Office Director must ensure social distancing is possible with the number of staff in the office at one time.
- Staff must communicate the expectations of this Phase with partners who share/lease VR office space.
- Non-essential travel should continue to be minimized.

Staffing/Leave Considerations

Adjusted work day/week scheduling allowed

- Scheduling outside of core hours must be approved by VR Director
- Core hours are 7:00 am - 6:00 pm, Monday-Friday.
- Work week is Monday-Sunday
- Refer to the “Workweek Schedule Adjustment Policy” in the Program Manual.

Remote Work

- When working remotely, staff must office from the location indicated on the agreement and must follow the established work schedule/hours. Any temporary change in hours and/or work location must be discussed in advance with the supervisor.
 - The schedule outlined on the agreement must be followed. **Frequent changes to the work schedule must be avoided.**
- Staff may work remotely for no more than 8 hours per day.
- Staff may work in the office no more than 8 hours per day.
- The employee will work with his/her Office Director/Supervisor, as necessary, to update the NDE [Telework Request Form](#).
- The remote work schedule for an individual should be reviewed every sixty days to ensure appropriate supports are in place to maintain a productive work flow. Should the individual’s work performance not be maintained at a satisfactory level (as documented by the supervisor), the arrangement may need to be modified.

- The schedule outlined on the NDE Work Schedule Form must be followed. The schedule outlined on the agreement must be followed. **Frequent changes to the work schedule must be avoided.**

Phase 4: Office Closed for Public and Staff

Action Taken

- Staff contact clients to cancel face-to-face appointments and make arrangements for alternate ways to communicate about employment planning and services. Appendix B
- Local VR and ATP Office is closed to the public and to all staff.
- All VR and ATP staff in the closed office must work remotely full time.
 - **Remote Work Engaged:** Office Director/Supervisor complete/update the remote work agreement for all staff. These agreements must be reviewed every sixty days (Review Phases 1, 2, and 3 for additional details).
- Office Director and VR Director develop a plan, including timelines, for re-entering the office.
- The ATP loans/demo/reuse equipment program may be suspended at the direction of the ATP Director.
- ATP loan/reuse/demo equipment program is scheduled by appointment only.
- ATP technology specialists follow guidance from Supervisor prior to performing assessments/visits.

Staffing/Leave Considerations

Adjusted work day/week scheduling allowed

- Scheduling outside of core hours must be approved by VR Director
- Core hours are 7:00 am - 6:00 pm, Monday-Friday
- Work week is Monday-Sunday
- Refer to the “Workweek Schedule Adjustment Policy” in the Program Manual.

Remote Work

- When working remotely, staff must office from the location indicated on the agreement and must follow the established work schedule/hours. Any temporary change in hours and/or work location must be discussed in advance with the supervisor.
- Staff may work remotely for no more than 8 hours per day.
- If working in the office, staff may work more than 8 hours per day.
- The employee will work with his/her Office Director/Supervisor, as necessary, to update the NDE Work Schedule Form. To submit changes to the work schedule and/or location, email nde.research@nebraska.gov (with a subject line of “Change Request to NDE Work Schedule Form”) to request a link to retake the COVID remote work survey. This will save the original work schedule as well as the new one. Please do not use the previous link, as this would erase your original record.
- The schedule outlined on the NDE Work Schedule Form must be followed. The schedule outlined on the agreement must be followed. **Frequent changes to the work schedule must be avoided.**

Technology Considerations

- Video conferencing/FaceTime/Webex/Zoom/Microsoft Office will be utilized for all meetings.

Questions & Answers

1. Can offices have masks available for individuals to wear?

Yes. Nebraska VR has worked with NDE Human Resources to order PPE which includes cloth and disposable masks for staff, clients, and committee members. Clear-panel masks will also be available. All offices will have access to this PPE prior to scheduling any in-person meetings or appointments.

2. Will employees be screened upon office entry?

No. Employees will not be screened upon office entry. Nebraska VR and ATP will rely on self-monitoring. The CDC list of symptoms for COVID-19 can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

3. Will individuals be asked to provide proof of vaccination status prior to entering the VR office?

No. Clients and staff should not be asked to provide documentation of vaccination status.

4. Who is at an increased risk for severe illness?

According to the CDC, these are the categories in which there is an increased risk for severe illness due to qualified chronic health conditions

5. What is Nebraska VR's plan for serving students and delivering pre-employment transition services during this unprecedented time?

Program Directors for Pre-Employment Transition Services have met with teams to discuss established protocols. This has allowed an opportunity for staff to ask questions and to provide input. A copy of the finalized protocols can be found here:

https://vris.nebraska.gov/wiki/pages/J0n7w0x4/Transition_Services_Planning_Agreement_Checlist.html

6. Are staff and clients expected to wear face coverings while in the office?

Nebraska VR is complying with the CDC guidelines for wearing masks and face coverings. Additional safety measures may be directed in Phase 2 (see page 5 for more details).

7. Will the Phase of each VR/ATP office be available to all staff?

Yes. An update will be provided in each newsletter on the status of office Phases.

8. What should a staff person do if there are questions or concerns about the cleaning schedule maintained at his/her office?

Staff should discuss any questions or concerns about the scheduled cleaning in the office with the Office Director or Supervisor. If necessary, the Office Director/Supervisor should contact the

State Office and next steps will be determined (e.g., negotiate increased number of cleanings per week, follow up with the contractor to confirm cleaning is happening on schedule).

9. What is the status of COVID-19 Administrative Leave?

Administrative Leave due to Covid-19 was discontinued with the pay period ending May 23, 2021.

Appendix A
Email to Clients- Active Cases

As the COVID-19 Pandemic continues, Nebraska VR continues to keep the safety of clients and our staff a priority. Although it's not entirely clear what the issues surrounding this virus will continue to bring, Nebraska VR has implemented a plan which allows the agency to continue to provide quality services.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), individuals who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should restrict activities outside the home and avoid public areas. **Please refrain from visiting the Nebraska VR office if:**

- **You are not feeling well; and/or**
- **You or someone you have come in contact with has potentially been exposed to COVID-19.**

If a meeting is cancelled due to these reasons or you do not feel comfortable visiting our office, here are some alternatives to meeting in person to continue your employment planning and services:

- Speak over the phone;
- Communicate using email/texting; and/or
- Facetime/video conferencing.

It's very important we each do our part to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus and to keep our community healthy. Thank you for your cooperation and please let me know if you have questions.

Appendix B
“Letter to Active Client- Office Closure”

There has been a potential exposure to COVID-19 in the VR Office. In order to ensure the safety of our clients and staff, the Nebraska VR office in XXXXX will be closed to the public until further notice effective immediately.

During this time, Nebraska VR is committed to providing quality services to our clients. While in-person meetings will not be possible while the office is closed to the public, there are several alternative methods we can use to continue your employment planning services:

- Speak over the phone;
- Communicate using email/texting; and/or
- Facetime/video conferencing.

We will be reaching out to work with you in determining the best way to move forward with your case during this time.

It's very important we each do our part to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus and to keep our community healthy. Thank you for your cooperation and please let me know if you have questions.

Appendix C Remote Work Planning

1. Update Contact Information

Make sure you have reviewed and updated work, personal, and emergency contact information in the Employee Work Center.

<https://insidende.education.ne.gov/critical/update-contact-information>

2. Determine technological needs for office staff.

Technology surveys have been completed and results reviewed. Since mid-March 2020, Nebraska VR has been working to ensure technology needs are met for all staff to support an uninterrupted delivery service for our clients. These efforts have included issuing laptops and cell phone/hot spots to staff.

3. Bookmark key websites including:

- InsideNDE
- DAS Administrative Services (LINK, including JD Edwards)
- Kronos Employee
- Kronos Manager
- QE2
- Coronavirus Information Page for NDE Staff

4. Prepare for Phase 4 and develop a procedure for check-ins with staff (e.g., will the team have a weekly virtual meeting? How will the Supervisor provide feedback for staff in order to keep them engaged?)

5. Reminders:

- If you need remote desktop access, DO NOT shut down desktop computers when you leave
- Each night starting today, DO take home your laptop, iPad, work cell phone, power cords, etc.

6. Access Alert Sense Mobile App Instructions

7. Review these materials:

- 5 Tips for Staying Productive and Mentally Healthy While You're Working From Home: <https://time.com/5801725/work-from-home-remote-tips/>
- In The Wake Of Coronavirus Here's How To Lead Remote Employees: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danpontefract/2020/03/01/in-the-wake-of-coronavirus-heres-how-to-lead-remote-employees/>

8. Staff must indicate on the Outlook Calendar remote and in-office work days/hours.

Appendix D
Additional Safety Precautions and Planning for Returning to the Office

PPE

Nebraska VR has coordinated an order for PPE with the Nebraska Department of Education Human Resources (NDE HR) and DAS Materiel Division. Office Directors assisted with identifying all necessary PPE. Prior to staff returning to the office, appropriate PPE must be available.

PPE which will be available includes but is not limited to: cloth and clear masks for all staff, hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, Plexiglas for the front desk(s), and disposable masks, as needed, for visitors to the VR office (e.g., clients, council members, and partners). Additionally, each office will receive one portable plexiglass barrier which can be used when meeting with a client and a face covering cannot be used.

Supplies after initial order (by NDE HR) will be made by each office in the future. Each office should identify someone on the team who will monitor the PPE.

Daily Safety Precautions

Offices should arrange for staff to perform periodic cleaning of high touch surfaces throughout the work day. High Touch surfaces include: light switches, door knobs, printers/copiers.

All employees are expected to comply with the CDC guidelines related to masks and face coverings.

When working in the office, the following practices are recommended in order to reduce risk of exposure.

- Avoid touching surfaces or materials.
- Use hand sanitizer before and after use of a copy machine or other shared office equipment. If possible, send copy jobs through your computer to avoid touching the copier itself.
- Use hand sanitizer or wipe public surfaces before and after you touch them.
- Reduce the use of porous materials used for seating.
- Leave some doors open to reduce touching by multiple people.
- Remove objects in common areas, such as shared coffee makers or coffee creamer containers.
- Refrain from sharing food unless it is individually packaged.

Click on the following links for other resources on [COVID-19](#) and how to [Prevent Getting Sick](#)

Conference Room Usage and Social Distancing

If social distancing is not possible because of size, the conference room should not be used for meetings.

Prior to meetings being held at the VR Office, the conference room should be arranged to ensure social distancing. When each meeting concludes, the tables and high touch areas must be cleaned. Conference Room Setup:

- Arrange seats to provide at least six feet of distance between attendees.
- Don't set up beverages, food and snack stations that would increase physical proximity and community touching of common surfaces.
- Set proper social distancing expectations with the attendees related to discussions, room entry and egress, restroom breaks, etc.
- Complete attendee rosters verbally and recorded by the meeting organizer instead of sign-in sheets.
- Minimize sharing resources/equipment such as pens, markers, presentation remotes, handouts, etc.
- Encourage participants to wear face coverings.

Leased Vehicles

Cleaning Leased Vehicles - After each use, staff should use disinfectant wipes to clean high touch areas including steering wheel, gear shift, door/trunk handles, and vehicle logs.

Travel

Effective May 27, 2021, In-state travel is allowable. As of June 1, 2021 domestic travel will be allowable subject to the usual out-of-state travel approvals.

Moving to Phase 2: Communication with Clients

Because your office is moving to Phase 2 and resuming in-person meetings while continuing to offer virtual meetings, the following is provided to help you communicate with clients about the path forward. You may copy the message into an email or use as talking points during a phone call. Our practice will not be to ask clients about their vaccination status but to provide them with appropriate guidance to keep themselves and others safe.

Message:

Due to changes in Directed Health Measures (DHMs) and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), we are now able to meet in person at the <<City>> Nebraska VR Service Office in addition to offering virtual appointments. We are excited to begin the return to pre-pandemic activities and want to give you information about what you can expect when you visit the VR Office.

For those who are unvaccinated, it is expected the CDC guidance will be followed while in the VR office. This includes wearing [a mask that covers your nose and mouth](#) to help protect yourself and others. If you are uncomfortable following this CDC guidance, please let us know in advance so we can schedule a virtual meeting with you.

Masks and hand sanitizer will be available when you are in the office. Keep in mind you may see individuals wearing masks regardless of their vaccination status due to their individual comfort level.

Meeting rooms will be scheduled to allow for appropriate social distancing and protocols are in place to ensure frequent cleaning, especially in high traffic areas and on high-touch places (such as door knobs, light switches, etc.).

On the day of your appointment, if you should feel sick or have been around someone who is sick, please stay home and notify the VR office. Nebraska VR will either arrange for a virtual meeting instead or find another time when you are feeling better. We also ask if you have traveled internationally, [please follow CDC guidelines available on their website](#).

Even with these safety measures in place, you may continue to meet with Nebraska VR virtually. Offering both in-person and virtual meetings allows us to meet the varying needs and preferences of our clients.

Please contact your [local VR office](#) if you have any questions. Thank you!

Resources

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/pdfs/choosingSaferAct.pdf>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/international-travel-during-covid19.html>

Is It a Sick Day?

To help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19, please re-schedule your appointment if you experience one or more of the following:



To re-schedule your appointment, call or email officeemail@nebraska.gov 800-xxx-xxxx or toll free at 800-xxx-xxxx



Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness.

Symptoms* can include

FEVER



COUGH



***Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.**

Seek medical advice if you develop symptoms, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.

SHORTNESS OF BREATH



For more information: www.cdc.gov/COVID19-symptoms

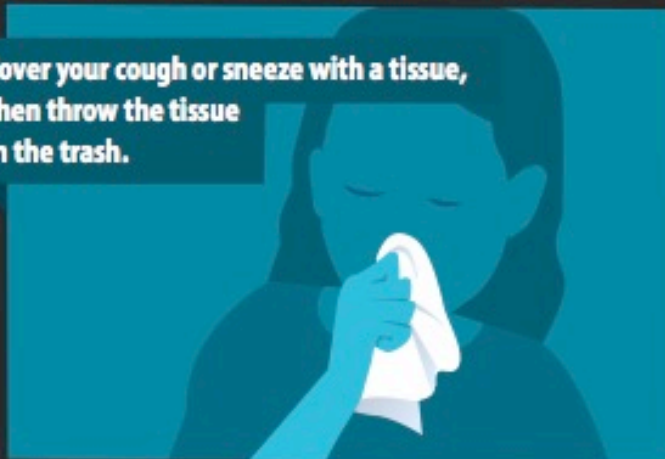
STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

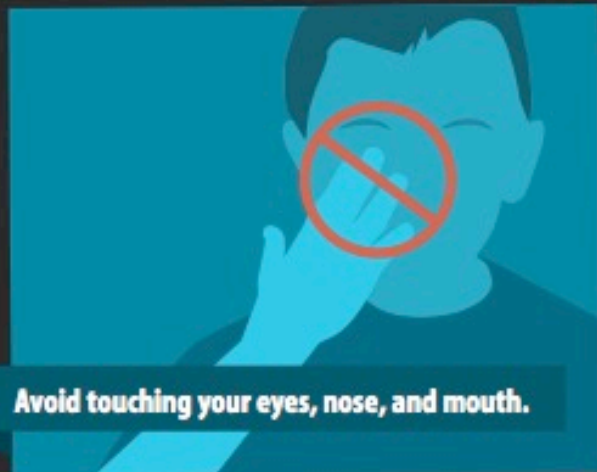
Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



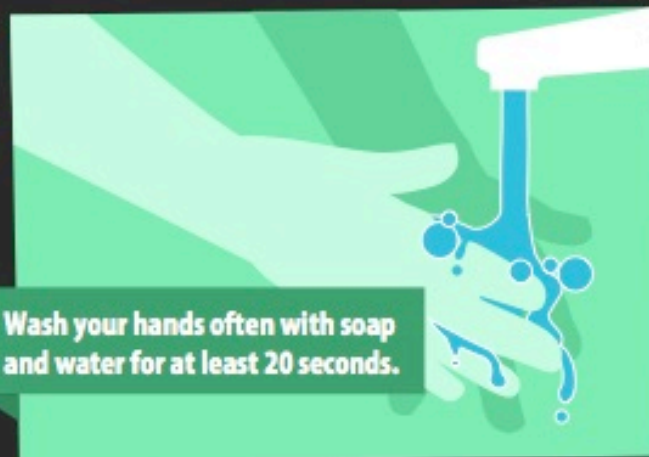
Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



For more information: www.cdc.gov/COVID19

MASKS ARE REQUIRED

to reduce the risk of being infected with the Delta variant and possibly spreading it to others



- **When interacting with others (e.g., onsite meetings) and social distancing can't be maintained at all times**
- **When traversing common areas (e.g., hallways, elevators, break rooms)**
- **If you are unvaccinated**
- **If you or a family member have a weakened immune system or are at increased risk for severe disease**
- **For 14 days following exposure to someone who has COVID-19**