THE HATTIESBURG WAY FORWARD

RESOURCE GUIDE FOR REOPENING YOUR BUSINESS SAFELY COVID-19



COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP



CITY OF HATTIESBURG Coronavirus (COVID-19)



A LETTER FROM THE



To our business community:

COVID-19 has brought more than its fair share of challenges and obstacles into our community. It has dealt a serious threat to both life and livelihood, and much uncertainty remains for industries, organizations and communities.

While much is still unknown, we do know a few things about the path forward:

- COVID-19 and its effects will be with us until there is a vaccine or effective treatment.
- We cannot keep our economy shutdown until that vaccine or treatment arrives.
- We must find a way to prioritize public health protecting the vulnerable and preventing overrun of our health care system while giving our private sector the space to operate creatively.

Your federal, state and local government must make decisions to try and strike a balance between prioritizing public health and giving industries the space to operate creatively. I don't claim that any of the three levels will get it right every time. But, my promise to you is that we will always lean on our medical and business community and look out our own local numbers to make sound decisions. And when we do get it wrong, we'll be open and honest with you so that we can get to a better place of making it right.

The Hattiesburg Way Forward is a guide to reopen your business safely. This document is a bold effort in providing you with good information and best practices as you navigate the uncertain waters ahead. It provides practical strategies that can reduce the risk of transmission and keep your employees and customers safe. My hope is that you find this guide useful. I encourage you to use the content within its pages to create

store-focused language - tweak it to fit your brand, your messaging and your voice. I believe its use as a strategic communications tool can also instill more confidence in your customers as they support our many small businesses in a safe way.

Many hours have been put into researching, adapting and vetting these guidelines to be Hattiesburg-focused, and I am very appreciative to the staff of the Area Development Partnership for their hard work. Chad Newell, Valencia Williamson, Todd Jackson and Chelsey Everett have once again proven how critical the ADP is to the future of Greater Hattiesburg. This is a living document, meaning that we will keep looking for ways to adapt and move forward along the way.

Our city is no stranger to devastation, disaster and tragedy – from Hurricane Katrina, two tornadoes and several floods to the devastating loss of Officers Benjamin Deen and Liquori Tate. While COVID-19 brings about a different set of challenges as a public health crisis, I am confident that our community's response in the face of adversity will mirror the sense of community, resiliency and grit to come out of this stronger than before.

I believe our best days are ahead. A post-COVID Hattiesburg will not only return to its pre-pandemic prosperity, but it will also provide us a platform to continue our trajectory as a premier economic and cultural powerhouse in the Gulf South.

All the best,

Toby Barker Mayor - City of Hattiesburg

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP

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DISCLAIMER

This guide is for informational purposes only and is not intended to be, and should not be construed to be or relied upon as legal, financial, business, medical or consulting advice. Be advised that some of the information in this guide may not be applicable to your particular business or place of work and may not include all information necessary for safe and proper operation of your business or place of work.

This guide does not attempt to address any health, safety and other workplace requirements in place prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This guide is believed to be current and accurate at the time of publication, but as public health and safety recommendations and requirements evolve you should take all steps necessary to remain abreast of all current governmental and health expert requirements and recommendations.

We strongly advise that you consult your own attorney and other advisors to evaluate your specific situation before implementing any of the recommendations set forth in this guide to confirm the legality, applicability and potential efficacy of this information to your business and to determine what, if any, additional requirements or recommendations may be applicable to your business or place of work.

The Area Development Partnership assumes no liability for any action taken or not taken in reliance upon the information contained in this guide.

References and links to third parties do not constitute an endorsement, sponsorship or warranty by the Area Development Partnership, and the Area Development Partnership hereby disclaims all express and implied warranties of any kind.

SOURCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19

<u>https://www.cdc.gov/</u> <u>coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html</u>

Mississippi Department of Health COVID-19

https://msdh.ms.gov/covid-19

City of Hattiesburg COVID-19

http://www.hattiesburgms.com/ coronavirus

Forrest General Hospital COVID-19 https://fhcovid19.com

Merit Health Wesley COVID-19

https://www.merithealthwesley.com/ <u>covid-19</u>

Hattiesburg Clinic COVID-19

https://www.hattiesburgclinic.com/ coronavirus/

SOUTHEAST MISSISSIPPI RURAL HEALTH INITIATIVE (SEMRHI)

https://www.semrhi.com/covid19/





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*Links to the ADP's COVID-19 page and industry specific guidelines are located in the back of this guide.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROTECT IPLOYEES & CUSTOMERS

As the Hattiesburg business community adjusts day-to-day operations in response to COVID-19, we must balance the need to maintain our region's economy with the protection of our community's health. The Hattiesburg Way Forward Guide provides a road-map for organizations of all types across the region to use as we re-open our workplaces, while considering the public health needs of our workforce, stakeholders, customers and community.



- Employees should wear PPE at all times.
- Customers should wear face coverings while in public in compliance with current executive orders until expiration of that order.
- Practice sensible social distancing, maintaining at least six (6) feet between co-workers.
- All persons in a place of business should maintain a social distance of at least six (6) feet between each other.
- Sales registers should be at least six (6) feet apart.
- Consider downsizing operations or limiting store capacity.
- When possible, open all doors to reduce the need for direct contact.
- Businesses with higher traffic could mark spaces six (6) feet apart at the sales registers and outside the entrance to the business.
- Employees who appear to have symptoms upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from others and sent home.
- A sign should be posted on business entrances and exits to inform customers of current CDC and local guidelines. Individuals with fever, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell or any sign of sickness should not enter.
- Employees should avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth Do NOT shake hands.
- Employees will be required to take reasonable steps to comply with guidelines on sanitation from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the Mississippi Department of Health.



- Provide a place to wash hands or utilize alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- All employees should be trained on most recent local, state and health guidelines and executive orders on sanitation, hygiene and disinfecting practices.
- Sanitize any high-traffic areas, such as doorknobs, counters, etc.
- Customers should be asked to use hand sanitizer upon entering the store.
- Hand sanitizer should be placed at all points of entrance and exit into the business.
- Limit cash handling.
 - Encourage customers to use credit/debit cards, tap to pay, Venmo, PayPal or another form of contactless payment.
 - Allow customers to scan their own credit/debit cards when appropriate.
 - Sanitize point of sale equipment after each use, including pens.
 - Provide hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes at payment locations.



KEEPING THE WORKPLACE SAFE





















LIMIT CASH HANDLING/ USE ONLINE TRANSACTIONS



SCREEN STAFF BEFORE EACH SHIFT











COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR TEAM

Communication during this time is incredibly important. Remain available to and transparent with your employees. Have 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. Your team's health is of the utmost importance, so loop employees in on your COVID-19 strategy for reopening.



Provide education and training materials in an easy to understand format and in appropriate language and literacy level for all employees, like fact sheets and posters.



Develop other flexible policies for scheduling and telework (if feasible) and create leave policies to allow employees to stay home to care for sick family members or care for children if schools and childcare close.



Actively encourage sick employees to stay home. Develop policies that encourage sick employees to stay at home without fear of reprisal, and ensure employees are aware of these policies.



Educate workers performing cleaning, laundry, and trash pick-up to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19. Develop policies for work protection and provide training to all cleaning staff on site prior to providing cleaning tasks.



Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about their plans. Discuss the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies.

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Plan to implement practices to minimize face-to-face contact between employees if social distancing is recommended by your state or local health department. Actively encourage flexible work arrangements such as teleworking or staggered shifts.



The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about and your community stronger. Encourage employees to take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting. Make sure employees are aware of mental health services your company provides. Encourage mindfulness, meditation and other healthy activities for your team. If an employee asks for help regarding their mental health, ask them to reach out to a healthcare provider and/or call the Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990.

MONITORING AND

One of the difficulties about COVID-19 is the long incubation period, which is the period from initial infection until the onset of symptoms. One can be harboring the virus inside his or her body and not know it; all the while, it is possible to spread the virus to others. *(CDC Protecting Yourself and Others)*

Should self-distancing fail to prevent the spread of the virus, it is also important that employees be monitored/observed/screened for the display of symptoms. This can include several aspects:

- Self-screening
- Observation of symptoms by co-workers
- Monitoring of symptoms (including fever) by employer

SELF-SCREENING AT HOME

One of the most vital aspects of detection involves self-screening. In order to adequately communicate these procedures to employees, the employer should issue a self-screening checklist to all employees for voluntary, home self-screening prior to returning to work. *(CDC Guidance for Business Plan and Response)* The screening should consist of the following questions:

- 1. Do you have a temperature of 100.4 fahrenheit or greater?
- 2. Do you have a cough?
- 3. Are you experiencing shortness of breath?
- 4. Are you having difficulty breathing?
- 5. Are you experiencing unusual fatigue?

If the answer to any of these questions is "Yes," employees are requested to stay at home until ALL THREE of the following are true:

- You have been fever free for at least 72 hours (3 full days) without taking medication such as acetaminophen or aspirin to reduce fever
- Other symptoms such as cough or shortness of breath are gone
- It has been at least seven days since your symptoms first appeared, or you have been tested for COVID-19 and had two negative tests in a row, at least 24 hours apart

PREPARING YOUR

Before reopening, you must sanitize your business to limit the spread of germs to your employees and customers. Keep this process limited to as few people as possible.



Disinfect your business before anyone returns to work. Sanitize and disinfect all areas, giving special attention to tools, workstations and equipment, restrooms, food service areas, common surface areas, phones, computers and other electronics.



Replace HVAC air filters or clean/disinfect existing filters. Increase ventilation by opening windows or adjusting air conditioning.



Put tight controls in place on who enters and exits the site during the cleaning shutdown. Limit the number of workers during this time.

YOUR BUSINESS SHOULD BE 100% DISINFECTED PRIOR TO ANYONE RETURNING TO WORK (OTHER THAN THOSE ASSISTING WITH THE DISINFECTION PROCESS).

DEEP CLEANING

COVID-19 "deep-cleaning" is triggered when an active employee is identified as being COVID-19 positive by testing. Sites may opt to have a deep cleaning performed for presumed cases, at their discretion.

Identify an approved external company that should carry out the deep cleaning activity; this company must have the minimum requirements of:

- Trained personnel to execute the process of cleaning, disinfection, and disposal of hazardous waste
- Proper equipment and PPE to perform task
- All necessary procedures and local authorizations or permits to perform disinfection services and manage any waste generated
- Use of approved COVID-19 disinfectant chemicals to perform this activity

(CDC Cleaning & Disinfecting Your Facility)

CLEANING & DISINFECTING AFTER OPENING



CLEAN

Clean surfaces using soap and water. Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. High touch surfaces include: Tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.

DISINFECT

Use of EPA-registered household disinfectant is recommended. Follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product. Many products recommend:

- Keeping surface wet for a period of time (see product label).
- Precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use.



SOFT SURFACES

For soft surfaces such as carpeted floors, rugs, upholstery and drapes:

- Clean the surface using soap and water or with cleaners appropriate for use on these surfaces.
- Launder items (if possible) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
- Disinfect with an EPA-registered household disinfectant if laundry isn't possible.



ELECTRONICS

For electronics, such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATMs:

- Consider putting a wipeable cover on electronics.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and disinfecting.
 - If no guidance is available, use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Dry surface thoroughly.

LAUNDRY

For clothing, towels, linens and other items:



- Launder items according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
- Wear disposable gloves when handling dirty laundry from a person who is sick.
- Dirty laundry from a person who is sick can be washed with other people's items.
- Do not shake dirty laundry.
- Clean and disinfect clothes hampers according to guidance above for surfaces.
- Remove gloves and wash hands right away.

HOW LONG COVID LIVES ON SURFACES



FOOD

Coronavirus doesn't seem to spread through exposure to food. Still, it's a good idea to wash fruits and vegetables under running water before you eat them. Scrub them with a brush or your hands to remove any germs that might be on their surface. Wash your hands after you visit the supermarket. If you have a weakened immune system, you may consider buying frozen or canned produce.

WATER

Coronavirus hasn't been found in drinking water. If it does get into the water supply, your local water treatment plant filters and disinfects the water, which should kill any germs.

TO REDUCE YOUR CHANCE OF CATCHING OR SPREADING CORONAVIRUS, CLEAN AND DISINFECT ALL SURFACES AND OBJECTS IN YOUR HOME AND OFFICE EVERY DAY.

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PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Personal protective equipment is protective clothing, helmets, goggles, or other garments or equipment designed to protect the wearer's body from injury or infection. The hazards addressed by protective equipment include physical, electrical, heat, chemicals, biohazards and airborne particulate matter. Businesses should keep a minimum quantity of 15-day supply of PPE. PPE can include masks, face shields and gloves.

WHO SHOULD WEAR MASKS?

Medical and isolation team members Health screeners (i.e. a supervisor who takes employees' temperature) Disinfection team members All employees and customers of all businesses All retail customers and customers covered by excecutive order

WHO SHOULD WEAR FACE SHIELDS?

Face shields are commonly used in healthcare and manufacturing. They can provide extra protection for those who must work within three feet of another person due to their job requirements. They are not necessary unless you work in healthcare/manufacturing, but they can help.

WHO SHOULD WEAR GLOVES?

Employees in isolation Those performing disinfection of common surfaces Employees handling trash Employees handling food

Note: Gloves put employees at higher risk of exposure and are not recommended for general protective use for the following reasons:

- The COVID-19 virus does not harm your hands, so gloves provide no protection. Touching your face with contaminated hands, whether gloved or not, poses a significant risk of infection.
- Gloves often create a false sense of security for the individuals wearing them; people are more likely to touch contaminated surfaces because they feel they are protected from the virus because of the gloves when in reality, they are not.
- When wearing gloves, people are less inclined to wash their hands; this is counterproductive and puts others at higher risk. People should wash their hands because it is the number-one defense against any virus.
- Proper removal of gloves takes training; if contaminated gloves are not removed properly, employees are exposed to greater risk.

ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES



MASKS

All employees and customers of all businesses should wear masks in accordance with current executive orders until otherwise directed (exclusion for customers eating in restaurant, dental patients "in-the-chair", etc.).

CONTACTLESS RETAIL



To the maximum extent possible, every effort should be made for all sales transactions to take place via debit/credit cards and preferably via contact-less or contact-light systems. Special emphasis should be placed on trying to eliminate points of frequent contact such as the pens used to sign credit card receipts. In businesses where cash payments are routine (electric utilities, gas utilities, water service offices, etc.), efforts should be made to convert these operations to contactless payment systems as soon as feasible.



CHECKOUT LINE SOCIAL DISTANCING

Checkout lines should have tape or other marking to indicate six (6) foot spaces between paying customers.

REDUCED CAPACITY

5077 In general, businesses should restrict themselves to operating at no more than 50% capacity to improve social distancing. Every other chair at hair or nail salons, every other treadmill at gyms, six (6) feet between families and every other pew vacant at churches, etc. Exceptions will be made for businesses which socially isolate by design such as dental facilities as long as minimum separation distances are maintained in common areas/waiting rooms.



CONSISTENT SANITIZATION AND CLEANING

All businesses should have hand sanitizer available when entering and exiting an establishment and post sanitization procedures with employee signatures and times noting when the last cleaning took place similar to the bathroom cleaning log found in many restaurants and convenience stores. For any scenario where people are forced to utilize equipment or stations that require "repeated touches," the business should have an additional bottle of hand sanitizer available at that location.

UNDER THE FAMILIES FIRST CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE ACT

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) requires certain employers to provide their employees with up to a total of 12 weeks of temporary emergency paid sick leave and emergency family and medical leave benefits for specified reasons related to COVID-19. These employer paid benefits are 100% reimbursable by the federal government and are in effect from April 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

Covered Employees

- Private sector employers with *fewer than 500 employees* (includes both F/T and P/T) and certain public sector employers
- Small businesses with *fewer than 50* employees may qualify for exemption from specific requirements under certain conditions (see section "Exemption" below)

EMERGENCY PAID SICK LEAVE (EPSLA)

Which employees are eligible?

How much can employees receive?

APLOYERS GUIDE TO

- All employees (F/T and P/T)
- Up to two weeks (80 hours, or a part-time employee's two-week equivalent) of emergency paid sick leave is available to any employee (no minimum service requirement) if the employee is unable to work, or unable to telework, because the employee:
 - 1. Is subject to Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19
 - 2. Has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine related to COVID-19
 - 3. Is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and is seeking medical diagnosis
 - 4. Is caring for an individual subject to #1 or #2
 - 5. Is caring for his/her child (under age 18) whose school or place of care is closed, or child-care provider is unavailable due to COVID-19 related reasons
 - 6. Is experiencing any other substantially-similar condition specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor and Treasury

Reason for emergency paid sick leave	Wage employer pays employee	Maximum per day	Total two week maximum
Reasons 1, 2 , or 3	Higher of regular rate or minimum wage	\$511	\$5,110
Reasons 4, 5, or 6	Higher of 2/3 regular rate or 2/3 minimum wage	\$200	\$2,000

EMERGENCY FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE EXPANSION (EFMLEA) Which employees are eligible?

Any employee who has been on payroll for at least 30 days prior to requesting leave is eligible for up to a total of 12 weeks, 2 weeks unpaid and 10 weeks paid, (480 hours, or a part-time employee's 12 week equivalent) expanded emergency family and medical leave. Paid emergency family/medical leave is available only if an employee is unable to work, or telework, because employee is caring for his/her child (under age 18) whose school or place of care is closed, or child-care provider is unavailable due to COVID-19 related reasons. The first two weeks may be taken as emergency paid sick leave (reason 5 above), or the employee may substitute any accrued vacation, personal, medical or sick leave under the employer's leave policy.



How much can employees receive?

	Wage employer pays employee	Maximum per day	Total maximum
First two weeks	Unpaid unless EPSL or accured leave is applied	Dependent on leave type selected	Dependent on leave type selected
Next 10 weeks	Higher of 2/3 regular rate or 2/3 minimum wage	\$200	\$10,000



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EXEMPTIONS

What if I have fewer than 50 employees...Am I exempt?

Per Department of Labor guidelines, a small business may qualify for exemption if leave being requested is due to a school closure or because the child's regular caregiver is unavailable due to Coronavirus and if this leave would jeopardize the viability of the small business as a going concern.

This exemption is available if an authorized officer of the business certifies that at least one of the following is true:

- Providing leave would result in expenses and financial obligations exceeding revenues and cause the business to cease operating
- The absence of the employees would entail a substantial risk to the operation of the business because of their specialized skills, knowledge of the business, or responsibilities.
- You cannot find other workers to perform the work of the employee, and that work is required for the business to operate at a minimal capacity.

What if I am in the health care business..Am I exempt?

Businesses whose employees are healthcare providers or emergency responders may elect to exclude such employees from paid sick leave and paid FMLA leave.

The definition is fairly broad. Visit <u>www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-questions</u> for specific definitions of those terms.

Do I have to provide paid sick or paid FMLA leave if my business is closed?

No. If you close due to a lack of business or because of a Federal, State, or local directive, you do not have to provide paid leave. In this case your employees would likely be eligible for unemployment compensation. This is the case whether you lay off or furlough.

REIMBURSEMENT

How will my business be reimbursed for this leave?

Eligible employers are entitled to receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for reimbursement of all paid emergency sick leave and expanded family and medical leave, plus related health insurance expenses and the employer's share of Medicare tax on the leave, for the period of April 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020. The refundable credit is applied against certain employment taxes on wages paid to all employees. Employers can substantiate eligibility for sick leave or family leave credits by receiving a written request from the employee that includes: employee name; date or dates for which leave is requested; a statement of the COVID-19 related reason for requested leave and written support for such reason; and a statement that they are unable to work, or telework, for such reason. Employers may develop a substantiation form similar to the example HERE. For additional information on this and other available tax credits, please visit: <u>https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/new-employer-tax-credits.</u>



REQUIRED EMPLOYER NOTICE

Each covered employer must post notice of FFCRA requirements and employee entitlements in a conspicuous place on its premises. Click **HERE** for more information.

ENFORCEMENT

The U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division (WHD) has the authority to investigate and enforce compliance with the FFCRA. Refer to the **DOL's Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Questions and Answers**, for additional information.

This has been prepared as basic information only and not to be considered as legal or tax advice. Please consult with your legal or tax professional related to your specific business situation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

AREA DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP COVID-19

CLICK HERE

CHILD CARE FACILITIES

CLICK HERE

CHURCHES

CLICK HERE

CLOSE CONTACT SERVICES (BARBER SHOPS & HAIR SALONS)

CLICK HERE

CLOSE CONTACT SERVICES (WAXING, TATTOO FACILITIES & MASSAGE)

CLOSE CONTACT SERVICES (NAIL SALONS)

CLICK HERE

CLOSE CONTACT SERVICES (TANNING SALONS)

CLICK HERE

EXERCISE FACILITIES

CLICK HERE

FINANCIAL SERVICES

CLICK HERE

FOOD SERVICE

CLICK HERE

HOTELS

CLICK HERE

LOGISTICS/TRANSPORTATION

CLICK HERE

MANUFACTURING

CLICK HERE

MEDICAL SERVICES (GENERAL)

CLICK HERE

OFFICE/PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

CLICK HERE

RETAIL (GENERAL)

CLICK HERE

WHO IS CONSIDERED VULNERABLE? CLICK HERE

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