

ACRPC Novel Corona Virus (COVID 19) Policy

Overview

All organizations need to consider how best to decrease the spread of acute respiratory illness and lower the impact of COVID-19 in their workplace in the event of an outbreak in the US. The health, well-being and safety of our employees and community is a top priority for ACRPC, which will continue to monitor coronavirus (COVID-19) developments and public health recommendations. The Vermont Department of Health website has the most current information for Vermonters and is updated frequently: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/infectious-disease/2019-novel-coronavirus>

ACRPC has identified the following objectives for this policy:

- (a) **reducing transmission among Staff, Visitors, and Commission members**
- (b) **protecting people who are at higher risk for adverse health complications,**
- (c) **maintaining RPC operations, and**
- (d) **minimizing adverse effects on other entities.**

To achieve these objectives, the Executive Director is recommending the following policies and practices:

ACRPC Office Facility (14 Seminary St, Middlebury)

ACRPC will provide and maintain **hand sanitizer dispensers** by the entrance and outside bathrooms, and **hand-washing sinks and soap dispensers** in the bathroom and conference room-kitchen. ACRPC will post **informational posters** reminding staff and visitors to wash their hands frequently and meet other best practices as recommended by the CDC and Vermont Department of Health.

ACRPC will create a list of **cleaning supplies** (sanitizer, handwipes, disinfecting sprays, tissues, etc.). These materials will be purchased and maintained as possible. ACRPC will provide tissues and disposal receptacles for use by employees and visitors.

All persons at the ACRPC office should practice “**Social Distancing**”, or increasing the physical distance between people, to reduce potential spread. The goal should be for there to be at least 6 feet of distance between people at all times. This is not a simple or easy strategy and would typically require considerable flexibility. These measures may include spaced seating at meetings, limiting interactions, and not entering the offices of staff. Visitors entering the office building will be asked to wait in the lobby until a staff member comes to meet them.

In addition to the recommendations for the facility noted above, specific recommendations for ACRPC’s staff, visitors and commissioners are found in the following sections.

ACRPC Staff

Employees should follow the following strategies recommended by the CDC, as updated: (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html>):

- **Sick employees (Fever, Persistent Cough, Difficulty Breathing) should stay home**
- **Employees with symptoms emerging during work hours should separate themselves from others and leave the office as soon as possible**
- **Practice respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene**
- **Perform routine environmental cleaning**
- **Take precautionary steps before traveling**
- **Additional measures (notifications of exposure)**

(Full description of each strategy located in Annex 1 following and updated on CDC website)

ACRPC will make it easier for staff to stay home when they're sick or caring for a sick family member by offering flexible leave and telework policies.

Local Meeting attendance

RPC Staff often attend meetings in towns around Addison County, and trainings in larger metropolitan areas. In consultation with town officials, these meetings should be postponed or cancelled if necessary, as per recommendations of the Vermont Department of Health.

Staff should attend statewide meetings or conferences only after discussing with Executive Director, endeavor to attend other meetings remotely if possible, and follow all recommendations of the Vermont Department of Health.

Staff Illness

If a Staff member comes down sick with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (including subjective or measured fever, cough, or difficulty breathing) while at work, the staff member should separate themselves and call their health care provider right away. Blue Cross Blue Shield will cover COVID-19 testing performed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Vermont Department of Health (VDH), or a laboratory approved by CDC or VDH, with no co-payment, coinsurance, or deductible requirements (in effect until May 5, 2020).

Sick employees should cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and clean any surfaces they touch in public office areas. The staff member will be asked to stay home and work remotely if possible.

Family illness or childcare cancellation

If dependent family members come down with symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or if childcare for dependent family members is dismissed or cancelled due to an outbreak, employees should stay home to care for children or other family members. If children are sick or show symptoms, they should not be brought to the office.

Office Closure

The ACRPC office will be closed if the State of Vermont Department of Health recommends that workplaces be closed. In the case of recommended office closure, staff will coordinate a schedule to provide a single person available at the 14 Seminary Street office for as much time during normal (9am-5pm) hours as possible. Other staff will work remotely as much as feasible and charge time as they normally would.

Staff will review methods for accessing computers and files remotely, including log-in to remote desktop, Dropbox, etc. Staff will provide log-in and password for individual computers in case the person at the office needs to access and send or print files.

ACRPC Visitors

The ACRPC office at 14 Seminary Street, Middlebury, VT is often visited by community members, some of whom have scheduled meetings or appointments, and others who do not.

Meeting announcements, invitations, and reminders should include precautions, including frequent and thorough hand-washing, and ask that those with potential COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, or difficulty breathing) not attend in-person. Visitors will be asked to wipe down any spaces or equipment used with disinfectant.

Visitors with symptoms (fever, cough, or difficulty breathing) will be asked not to enter the building and to call the office phone to discuss their options.

Informational posters reminding staff and visitors to wash their hands frequently and meet other best practices as recommended by the CDC and Vermont Department of Health will be posted at the front doors and in each bathroom.

RPC staff will work with organizations meeting at the 14 Seminary Street office to provide a Call-in or video-meeting option if possible. The ACRPC office will be closed to outside meetings if the State of Vermont Department of Health recommends that workplaces be closed.

ACRPC Commission

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission meets as a full commission each month, along with periodic subcommittee meetings.

The ACRPC office will be closed if the State of Vermont Department of Health recommends that workplaces be closed and Full Commission and Subcommittee meetings will not be held. Otherwise, Full Commission meetings will continue to be held, and subcommittee meetings will be held at the discretion of the Committee Chair and Committee Staff.

In the event ACRPC cancels meetings, an email will be sent to the full commission and subcommittees and a notice will be posted digitally on the ACRPC website and physically posted on the front door of the 14 Seminary Street office.

RPC staff will work with the Commission and Subcommittees to provide a Call-in or video-meeting option if possible.

Annex 1. CDC Recommended strategies for employers to use

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html>

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:

- Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.
- Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
- Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.
- **Separate sick employees:**
 - CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Sick employees should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available).
- **Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees:**
 - Place posters that encourage [staying home when sick](#), [cough and sneeze etiquette](#), and [hand hygiene](#) at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
 - Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
 - Instruct employees to clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
 - Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.
 - Visit the [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) and [clean hands webpage](#) for more information.
- **Perform routine environmental cleaning:**
 - Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.

- No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.
- **Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps:**
 - Check the [CDC's Traveler's Health Notices](#) for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from China, and information for aircrew, can be found at on the [CDC website](#).
 - Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of [acute respiratory illness](#) before starting travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
 - Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and should promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
 - If outside the United States, sick employees should follow your company's policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to assist them with finding an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, and resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.
- **Additional Measures in Response to Currently Occurring Sporadic Importations of the COVID-19:**
 - Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](#) of their potential exposure.
 - If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](#) of their potential exposure.