



STATE OF WASHINGTON
Office of the Governor

MEMORANDUM

TO: Local Government Officials
FROM: Governor Jay Inslee
DATE: June 19, 2020
SUBJECT: Safe Start Reopening Guide

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Inslee".

As we continue to make progress in our fight against COVID-19, I want to update you on our latest thinking regarding the safe return to work for government employees. Last week, the state of Washington published a [Safe Start Reopening Guide](#) for state agencies. This guide was developed with input from the Department of Labor & Industries, the Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Office of Financial Management. It describes how agencies will prioritize services, prepare facilities, screen employees and visitors, and use face coverings and other personal protective equipment and supplies. We also have included guidance on how agencies can best communicate with and train employees through this transition.

Local governments play a critical role in stopping the spread of COVID-19 in your communities. I encourage you to use this guidance as a resource when developing your own Safe Start plans, as well as consider the following guiding principles:

- Make sure employee and customer safety comes first.
- Use the best public health and safety practices.
- Provide timely and equitable public service.

As we work to implement a consistent statewide approach to reopening the economy, we will continue to use data and science to inform our decisions and will update the Safe Start guide as necessary.

All local government entities have a general obligation to provide employees a safe and healthy work site in accordance with state and federal law and safety and health rules. This includes addressing hazards associated with COVID-19. Please refer to the [Department of Labor & Industries' COVID-19 Workplace Safety and Health Requirements](#) and [Safe Start Guidance for all Employers](#) for more information. In addition, the [COVID-19 Reopening Guidance for Businesses and Workers](#) and the [Washington State Department of Health](#) website contain industry-specific requirements and recommendations, which may apply to certain local government programs or services. I encourage you to reach out to state agencies for assistance to help your own employees return to work in a safe and responsible way.



Further, our experience with COVID-19 has revealed the ongoing reality of injustice and systemic racism in our communities and world. The past few weeks have shown us how deeply that pain persists in our communities, and how much work we have left to do as public officials. As we work to implement a “safe start” plan for government operations, we must pay attention to our work culture and address issues of discrimination and provide space for everyone to do their best work. Those expectations are embedded in the approach the state will take to reopen worksites, and I encourage local governments to consider these factors as well.

We all have shared responsibility as we take these steps, for our behavior, its impact on others, the systems we create, and the services we provide. Public service employees make a difference in people’s lives every day. Most of our essential services never stopped when COVID-19 hit because we stayed committed to the needs of the people we serve.

Thank you for your cooperation and partnership as we continue in a thoughtful and strategic way that keeps the public safe and healthy, so that we can continue doing our work on behalf of the people of Washington.