

RECOVERY & PHASE 01

**A GUIDE FOR REOPENING
YOUR LAW PRACTICE**

VERSION 1



LAFAYETTE BAR
ASSOCIATION & FOUNDATION

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WELCOME to the **NEW NORMAL**

How do we go about the practice of law now? First, we have to understand that we are a professional business comprised of attorneys, staff, clients and their families. All the guidelines are consistent and basic. They apply to us. We are fortunate to have more control than many in the general public. This is not going to be over any time soon and some lesson learned are going to become a new standard for doing business.

There are numerous credible guidelines many of which are cited throughout this document . They have been compiled and reviewed by our LBA Task Force over the past month to guide us as we re-open our offices. One of the most comprehensive is being circulated by the National Association of Bar Executives. The LBA will continue to provide information as it becomes relevant during this reopening phase as well as entering what has been deemed the “new normal.”

When determining best practices and developing protocols for your office, there are five essential elements to consider: Communication, Disinfecting, Workplace Hygiene, Social Distancing and Personal Protection Equipment.

COMMUNICATION

Effectively communicate new policies and practices to employees and clients.

DISINFECTING

Develop strategies to minimize the spread of the virus in the workplace.

WORKPLACE HYGIENE

Encourage personal hygiene practices within the workplace.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Continue the practice of six feet apart among people and workspaces.

PPE

Implement policies to protect individuals and minimize the spread of the virus.

COMMUNICATION

Signage is the best way to communicate the steps you are taking to provide a safe environment. Key placement locations include the access doors to the building, the reception area, the kitchen and copier bulletin boards.

Keep it simple and specific. Your signage should clearly communicate protocols in place to promote worker safety and emphasize infection prevention measures. Signs can also be printed or digital and posted inside the building as well as on your website or social media.

LOBBIES

- Signs placed upon arrival reminding staff and clients about new protocols
- Floor markings to direct foot traffic (e.g. arrows or lines distinguishing six feet)

ELEVATORS

- Instructional signage including passenger limits and safe distances

CONFERENCE ROOMS

- Calculate maximum capacity after taking into consideration social distancing measures. Clearly communicate this inside and outside of the meeting area.

KITCHENS

- Remind employees to take precaution in common areas such as the kitchen (e.g. wash hands before preparing food, disinfect surfaces, stay six feet apart)

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Display signage near light switches or doors with heavy foot traffic with reminders for lights to remain on and doors open to minimize the amount of contact on these surfaces.
- Lafayette Consolidated Government has created “Safe Shop” guidelines:

“Effective April 17, 2020, the Mayor-President of Lafayette Parish enacted a “Safe Shop” policy for businesses that are not deemed essential OR prohibited under the Governor’s existing orders. Essential and prohibited business have existing guidelines they must adhere to.”

DISINFECTING

WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

Disinfecting means killing pathogens around the office, particularly viral pathogens. Stock the office with tools to properly disinfect surfaces including aerosol disinfectant, disinfecting wipes and sanitizers.

AREAS TO CONSIDER

- Communal kitchens
- Restrooms
- Conference Rooms
- Lobbies / Waiting Areas
- Break Rooms
- Shipping / Receiving
- Mail Rooms

ESTABLISHING A ROUTINE

So that all surfaces are disinfected regularly, establish an efficient routine to thoroughly disinfect the office.

- First, have a routine for disinfecting the office. Designate particular times throughout the day when disinfecting is to take place and do so in the same order.
- Walk through your office to identify contact points. Start at the front door and visit each work station and gathering area. Reception, kitchen, copier, rest rooms and conference rooms are high contact areas.
- Require staff to disinfect their own areas and offices

PREVENTION

You can better control how safe and sterile your office may be by decreasing the number of surfaces that are being used or touched.

- Eliminate communal treats in the kitchen.
- Use pump coffee dispensers to avoid having multiple people touching the coffee pot.
- Require used coffee cups be deposited directly to the dishwasher or use disposable biodegradable cups.
- Keep light switches on and doors open when able.

WORKPLACE HYGIENE

Encourage your staff and clients to practice good personal hygiene when in the office. Good personal hygiene habits will help to minimize the spread of the virus.

RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Turn away from others when coughing or sneezing

HAND HYGIENE

- Promote frequent hand washing
- Hand sanitizer stations should be plentiful. They should be located at doorways, inside conference rooms and at individual work stations so they are readily available throughout the office. Use refillable pumps rather than squeeze bottles. Include waste baskets to dispose of wipes.
- Establish a protocol for sanitizing. For instance, commence and conclude conference room meetings with everyone sanitizing their hands.

OTHER HOUSEKEEPING

- Encourage employees to maintain a clean work area by regularly sanitizing and disinfecting throughout the day.
- Discourage the use of borrowing office supplies or equipment.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Spacing is both physical and temporal. There are several steps you can take to maintain social distancing guidelines within your office. Use the 6 Foot Rule to assess the physical capacity.

PHYSICAL

- Rearrange the physical office space to provide the most distance between work stations and office flow.
- Consider office flow to minimize incidental contact in hallways. Grocers and retailers are making many isles one-way.
- Utilize empty offices or underutilized work stations to isolate as much as practical.
- Limit the number of chairs to the established capacity for the room.
- Restrict access to your office by requiring appointments instead of non-scheduled visits.
- Restrict flow in the office so that third parties are limited to the reception, conference room and restroom areas instead of individual offices.
- Calculate the maximum capacity of each room by dividing the net usable area by the square of the locally acceptable social distance (e.g., for a 6' social distance: a 200 SF room divided by 36 SF would have a recalculated maximum capacity of 5 people).

TEMPORAL

- Temporal spacing includes flexible work hours to reduce the number of occupants at a given time or a given day.
- Continue working remotely when possible.
- Coordinate schedules particularly when third-parties such as clients or visiting attorneys will be involved.
- Become proficient with the various online meeting platforms such as Zoom Microsoft Teams, Google Meet and Facebook Meeting Rooms. Group meetings, depositions and court hearings utilizing these various platforms will be the norm. Put a camera on your desktop and equip your conference room as well.

PPE

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) may help your staff and clients feel safer as it protects them from health risks while in the office. You may consider providing PPE for your staff and requiring them to wear it along with clients before entering.

MASKS

The Lafayette Shop Safe policy requires as a condition of opening that “Employees must wear masks.” If you are in a dedicated office or a work station that is sufficiently distanced, are masks still required? The most important point is to establish your firm policy based upon your particular needs and circumstances. Masks should be utilized when persons are unable to adequately distance themselves; particularly when unknown third parties such as new clients, visiting attorneys or witnesses are in the office.

There are two sources of mask readily available. Call the Lafayette Consolidated Government at 311 to obtain two free washable cloth masks for each employee. You may also check the One Acadiana website for their disposable mask sale.

GLOVES

Gloves are somewhat controversial. They are mainly designed to protect the user unless they are replaced between each contact. The receptionist is the most likely to benefit from the use of gloves. Emphasize hand washing instead.



MITIGATING workforce ANXIETY

While workplace design, policies and safety protocols are critical pieces of the puzzle, they do not touch on perhaps the most important aspect of return to work—the readiness of the workforce physically, emotionally and psychologically.

Developing a plan to mitigate employee fears and concerns should be a top priority. People are worried about their personal health and the health of those they care about. They have anxieties about their jobs, the future of their organizations and even the future of their industries.

To help employees through what will be a turbulent, stressful and unpredictable return to work, organizations should focus on the personal experiences of their employees from a work and life perspective. It's critical to understand how the pandemic has impacted their personal connection to the culture of the organization. It's also important to understand if employees feel their organizations are caring for them, as well as understand how to improve and advance that care during the return to the physical workplace.

Ensuring employees understand what the workplace will be like upon return is critical. Some employees may expect nothing to change, while others will assume everything will be different. Preparing employees and reminding them that these changes are designed to help keep them safe will ease anxiety.

Recommended practices for consideration include:

- Re-engagement of employees: Responses to working remotely during turbulent times are varied and unique. Understanding employees' attitudes and perspectives inform the creation of strategies that enable their success.
- Early communication: As plans are forming, keep the workforce informed as soon as appropriate. We have provided more detailed suggestions on communications on the following page.
- Virtual work support: Team norms must evolve to be inclusive of those in and outside of the office as a new normal. All employees now need to be adept at utilizing virtual collaboration tools. Likewise, managers must perfect the art of leading distributed teams.
- Proactive virtual training: Whether spaces are modified, or new protocols established, employees will need to learn new patterns of behavior. Developing an understanding of the new normal for the workplace may be addressed through virtual training. Organizations should not underestimate the value of creating training content for topics that typically are communicated through email or static messaging alone.
- Reinforced training post Day One: Provide ongoing methods of additional training to reinforce messaging and changes in the work environment. Repetition will help employees acknowledge and retain important messages and information. Consider signage that communicates key messages in high traffic areas such as main entrances, restroom facilities and so forth.
- Connection to a vision: As changes in protocol and policies are unveiled, and ways to connect those messages back to the corporate vision. Understanding the "why" is a great way to reinforce the "what."

"Recovery Readiness A How-ToGuide for Reopening Your Workplace" by Cushman & Wakefield

SAFE SHOP POLICY (LEDA)

The following has been provided by Lafayette Economic Development Authority:

Effective April 17, 2020, the Mayor-President of Lafayette Parish enacted a “Safe Shop” policy for businesses that are not deemed essential OR prohibited under the Governor’s existing orders. Essential and prohibited business have existing guidelines they must adhere to. Safe Shop businesses are authorized to be open and to operate subject to the following conditions:

- All employees must wear masks
- Employees may not work if they have a fever or symptoms
- Customers must maintain a minimum of 6 feet of separation when shopping or standing in line
- Maximum of 25% occupancy, as determined by code and the Certificate of Occupancy issued by the Fire Marshal
- No congregating or groups loitering in or near businesses

Customers who have fever or symptoms should be barred from the business. These rules are consistent with the Governor’s existing emergency orders and represent a manageable risk profile, consistent with social distancing guidelines.

This guidance may be withdrawn if there is a spike in either hospital admissions or reported cases of COVID.

Violations come with a \$500 fine and/or up to 6 months in the parish jail. Violating businesses may also have their power shut off. Businesses that do not have a way to count customers and determine six feet between shoppers are encouraged to not open until they are able to do so.

The Hanes Corporation donated reusable, washable masks to Lafayette Parish which are being distributed by Lafayette Consolidated Government (LCG) and LEDA. These masks will be provided to Lafayette Parish businesses for use by their employees. The masks will allow businesses to follow the Safe Shop Policy. LCG and LEDA have partnered with the Mayors of each municipality to distribute these masks to local businesses.

Lafayette Economic Development Authority





MOVING TO PHASE 1 (LEDA)

The following has been provided by Lafayette Economic Development Authority:

On May 11, Governor Edwards announced Louisiana will move into Phase 1 reopening on May 15. The official order will be released on May 14. An overview can be found in this news release.

New types of businesses that may open beginning on May 15, with 25 percent occupancy limits, sanitation guidelines and spacing for physical distancing include:

- Gyms and fitness centers
- Barber shops and hair and nail salons
- Casinos and Video Poker
- Theaters
- Racetracks (not open to spectators)
- Museums, zoos, aquariums (no tactile exhibits)
- Bars and breweries with LDH food permits

The following businesses remain closed: massage establishments and spas, tattoo parlors, carnivals, amusement parks, water parks, trampoline parks, arcades, fairs, bars and breweries without LDH food permits, pool halls, contact sports, children's play centers, playgrounds, theme parks, adult entertainment venues, and other similar businesses.

Lafayette Economic Development Authority

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Lafayette Economic Development Authority
<https://lafayette.org/site476.php>

Lafayette Consolidated Government
<http://www.lafayettela.gov>

Lafayette Bar Association
<https://www.lafayettebar.org>

U.S. Chamber of Commerce
<https://www.uschamber.com/article/state-by-state-business-reopening-guidance>

Open Safely
<https://opensafely.la.gov/>

OneAcadiana
<https://www.oneacadiana.org/>

WORKS CITED

Cushman & Wakefield (2020). Recovery Readiness A How-To Guide for Reopening Your Workplace.

Lafayette Economic Development Authority (2007, 2019). Safe Shop Guidelines for Lafayette Parish. Retrieved May 13, 2020, from <https://lafayette.org/site476.php>

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