



## Interim Guidance for Cooling Centers During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

June 12, 2020

*To help prevent spread of COVID-19, procedures and supplies should be in place to encourage proper hand and respiratory hygiene, social distancing, as well as routine cleaning and disinfection of high-risk locations. This guidance is provided for any local or state public or private facility that operates as a cooling center, so that operators can incorporate these procedures into their facility protocols.*

### Background

On March 7, 2020, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo issued Executive Order 202, declaring a state of emergency in response to COVID-19. Community transmission of COVID-19 has occurred throughout New York. To minimize further spread, social distancing of at least six feet must be maintained between individuals, where possible, unless an acceptable face covering is worn.

### Stop the Spread Signage

Signs reinforcing social distancing of a minimum of 6 feet, hand-washing, and respiratory health should be posted in prominent locations around and inside the cooling center. Examples of signs that may be used are available on the Department of Health (DOH) website at <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/protect-yourself-and-your-family-coronavirus-covid-19>. Alternative languages are also available and should be posted.

### General Precautions:

- If individuals have a fever, respiratory symptoms, or otherwise displays symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they should contact their healthcare provider or local health department for recommended next steps.
- Operators should ensure that cooling centers have bathrooms that are adequately supplied with soap, water, and drying materials so that visitors and workers can wash their hands.
- Operators must provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol for use when soap and water is unavailable. The alcohol-based hand sanitizer must be placed in visible, frequently used locations, such as registration desks and facility exits, with a note that hand sanitizer is not effective on visibly soiled hands.
- Workers should not share food or beverages and should be encouraged to bring their own. Adequate space for workers should be reserved to observe social distancing while eating meals and taking breaks.

#### What steps should be taken to clean and disinfect against COVID-19?

All facilities should continue performing routine cleaning and sanitization of their facilities. Particular attention should be paid to high-risk locations, which may warrant more frequent cleaning and disinfection.

#### Employees:

Follow all steps listed in the "STOP THE SPREAD" poster. Wear a face covering if social distancing cannot be maintained.

#### If an individual with laboratory confirmed COVID-19 was symptomatic while in your facility:

Immediately contact your local health department. Clean and disinfect throughout the area.

- If the building's normal use is closed in accordance with [NY Forward Phased Reopening](#), the normal activities are not permitted during cooling center operation. For example, if a movie theater is used as a cooling center but the showing of movies is not yet permitted, then movies may not be shown.

### **Considerations Before Entering the Cooling Center**

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of reported symptoms, ranging from cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell.

- Workers and visitors must be screened before they enter the cooling center. Individuals should not be permitted to enter, and instead should be referred to their health care provider to obtain assistance, if they:
  - Knowingly have been in close or proximate contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days,
  - Tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days, or
  - Is experiencing any symptoms related to COVID-19.
- A sign-in log must be created for each facility to record the name and contact information of workers and visitors, to assist with contact tracing if necessary. Workers cannot mandate that visitors provide contact information but should encourage visitors to do so; if a visitor does not want to sign the log, they should not be turned away. Consider using disposable pens or pencils, or clean and disinfect pens and pencils between use.
- Visitors must be provided clear instructions on the mandatory use of face coverings, social distancing, hand washing, and that screening questions will be asked, prior to entering the facility which may be by poster/bulletin or electronically.

### **Required Face Coverings**

On April 12, 2020, Governor Cuomo issued Executive Order 202.16, directing essential businesses to provide employees, who are present in the workplace, with a face covering, at no-cost, that must be used when in direct contact with customers or members of the public during the course of their work. Additional information can be found at [Interim Guidance on Executive Order 202.16](#).

On April 15, 2020, Governor Cuomo issued Executive Order 202.17, directing that any individual who is over age two and able to medically tolerate a face-covering must cover their nose and mouth with a mask or cloth face-covering when in a public place and unable to maintain, or when not maintaining, social distance. On April 16, 2020, Governor Cuomo issued Executive Order 202.18, directing that everyone using public or private transportation carriers or other for-hire vehicles, who is over age two and able to medically tolerate a face covering, must wear a mask or face covering over the nose and mouth during any such trip. It also directed any operators or drivers of public or private transport to wear a face covering or mask which covers the nose and mouth while there are any passengers in such a vehicle. Additional information can be found at [Interim Guidance on Executive Orders 202.17 and 202.18](#).

Cooling centers should consider:

- Reminding visitors of the face covering requirement upon entrance.
- Providing disposable face coverings to visitors.
- Providing an isolated, separate area for a visitor who is unable to wear a mask. That area should be isolated and accommodate 6-foot social distancing, to the greatest extent possible.

- Encouraging staff and visitors to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or the corner of elbow and dispose of soiled tissues immediately after use and perform hand hygiene.

### Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene stations must be provided and maintained at the facility. Signage with hand hygiene procedures should be posted in prominent locations.

- Regular hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds should be done by everyone at the facility:
  - Before and after eating.
  - After sneezing, coughing, or nose blowing.
  - After using the restroom.
  - Before handling food.
  - After touching or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated.
  - After using shared equipment and supplies like electronic equipment such as keyboards, pens, mice, and phones.
- If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers by children should always be supervised by adults. Hand sanitizer is not effective on visibly soiled hands. Hands that are visibly soiled must be washed with soap and water.
- Hand sanitizing stations must be located near any shared equipment with signage encouraging use.
  - Consider placing hand sanitizer at the entrance and exit.
  - Lined trash receptacles should be put in place at the entrance and exit of for disposal of soiled items.

### Examples of frequently touched surfaces:

- Light switches;
- Handrails;
- Doorknobs and handles;
- Desks, tables, and chairs;
- Handles on equipment (e.g., carts);
- Shared telephones;
- Shared computers, keyboards, mice, and other electronics;
- Pens, pencils, styli, and other writing utensils;
- All kitchen and restroom surfaces.

### Physical Distancing

- Cooling centers must ensure that the number of people permitted into a center is limited to no more than 50% of the maximum occupancy for a particular area as set by the certificate of occupancy and take measures to increase space, where possible, to permit appropriate social distancing.
- Workers and visitors must maintain a distance of at least six feet, to the greatest extent possible. When a distance of less than six feet is required to perform an activity, a face covering must be worn.
- Workers should plan the flow of traffic and utilize markers to ensure that visitors are minimally six feet apart. Consider designating a separate entrance and exit.

### Preventative Actions to Reduce Exposures

- **Limiting locations near higher-risk populations:** County Offices of Emergency Management should review the assignment of cooling centers and not locate them in hospitals, nursing homes, adult care facilities, and other areas with concentrations of individuals at higher risk for COVID-19.

### Routine Cleaning

Routine cleaning and disinfection should be ongoing, at minimum daily. Time must be allocated for individuals to routinely clean and disinfect. Frequently touched surfaces must be cleaned

and disinfected more often because these areas can be spread the virus that causes COVID-19 and other germs.

Refer to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) [list of products](#) registered in New York State identified by the EPA as effective against COVID-19.

### **Considerations for Equipment**

- Clean and disinfect any shared equipment and touch screens by following manufacturer instructions after use and/or provide hand hygiene stations for use before and after touching the machine. Gloves may also be provided.
- Hand hygiene stations must be located near shared equipment.

### **More Information:**

New York State Department of Health's COVID-19 Webpage:  
<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>

New York State Department of Health's Extreme Heat Webpage:  
[www.health.ny.gov/extremeheat](http://www.health.ny.gov/extremeheat)

Centers for Disease Control and Preventing Webpage:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>