

COVID-19 Community Conversation

Edmonton Hospitality Industry

July 8, 2020
Total participants: 98

Thank you for participating in the virtual Community Conversation hosted by Alberta Health Services Medical Officer of Health Dr. Grazia Salvo. Our intention with these events is to help you understand and implement the COVID-19 workplace guidelines set by the Province of Alberta. We appreciate your commitment to supporting and protecting your staff and patrons.

Below we attempt to answer your questions and provide links to further resources that were discussed during our virtual session. You can also submit questions through alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx. It is important that you enter your questions as Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services could never provide guidance for every possible scenario or business, but we are here to help as much as we can.

Please be patient as there are many questions and we are doing our best to provide answers and guidance. This is a new experience for everyone and all are doing their very best to support Alberta's relaunch as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Please note: Every effort was made to keep this FAQ current, however for the very most current information on the situation in Alberta, please visit [COVID-19 info for Albertans](#). Alberta Stage 2 Information for [COVID-19 Alberta General Relaunch Guideline](#) can be found here.

If you have any follow up questions or comments please email: Community.Engagement@ahs.ca. We would love to hear your feedback – complete a survey [here](#).

You can also subscribe to AHS's weekly stakeholder e-newsletter by emailing Community.Engagement@ahs.ca.

Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) | 2 |
| Physical Distancing..... | 3 |
| Screening..... | 3 |
| Signage | 4 |
| Contact Tracing | 4 |
| Hospitality Specific Questions..... | 5 |
| Other Questions..... | 6 |
| Additional Resources | 8 |

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Wearing Masks: AHS' advice on preventing the spread of COVID-19, including how to wear masks, can be found [here](#). Watch this [video](#) to learn how to properly don and doff (put on and take off) a mask to keep yourself and others safe. There is also a [Guidance for Wearing of Non-Medical Face Masks](#) for the general public.

Please provide information on masks versus face shields.

The [Guidance for Restaurants, Cafes, Pubs and Bars](#) states that “wait staff and servers who cannot be protected by 2 metres of distance or a physical barrier should wear a cloth or surgical mask.” Face shields are not currently being recommended by Alberta Health.

Wearing a face shield does not mean you do not need to wear a mask, as a face shield protects the eyes from large respiratory droplets, not the mouth. Further information is available on page 26 of Alberta Health's [General Relaunch Guidance](#) document or through [Occupational Health & Safety](#).

Is Alberta/AHS considering making masks mandatory in all public areas?

At this time AHS is *recommending* that Albertans wear a mask when they cannot maintain 2 meters or 6 feet of physical distancing. Learn more [here](#).

Any decision about mandatory mask use must come from Government – federal, provincial or city council. Alberta Health Service does not have the authority to make that decision.

Hand Washing: You can learn more about the importance of washing your hands [here](#), and watch a message from Alberta Health Service's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Laura McDougall [here](#).

What is AHS position on glove use in the workplace particularly when to use them and use of hand sanitizer on gloves? Seems like there is varied practice in every business.

Gloves can create a false sense of security and are often used incorrectly. If gloves are used incorrectly the risk of contamination is the same as for an unwashed bare hand.

Whether you use gloves or not, handwashing is absolutely required. Hands must be washed and dried thoroughly:

- Before wearing gloves
- When changing to a new pair of gloves
- After removing the gloves

Mitigating Risk: How you mitigate risk is highly dependent on the type of business, how staff and customers flow in and out of the business, and move within the business. Our best advice is that you consider all the ways in which you can prevent transmission, including:

1. Physical barriers, such as the Plexiglas barriers many of us have seen introduced in grocery stores, are the best and most proven way you can help to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19.
2. [Physical distancing](#), staying 2 meters away from others, should be implemented wherever possible, using signage and other reminders. You may need to consider use of masks if physical distancing is not always possible.
3. [Hand hygiene](#) combined with the above strategies is also an important tactic for reducing risk. Ensuring your staff have access to hand sanitizer or the ability to frequently wash their hands is critical. In addition, ensuring hand sanitizer is available for your customers would be a great additional precaution.

4. Stay home, and require your staff and volunteers to do the same, when you are experiencing any [symptoms](#) at all.

For physical barriers (between booths/tables), is there a minimum or recommended height for the plexi/barrier?

AHS has not indicated a specific height requirement for physical barriers between booths. Most businesses we have been engaged with are using 6-8 foot barriers.

Physical Distancing

[CMOH Order 26-2020](#) outlines physical distancing requirements in public areas.

Examples of how to support [physical distancing](#) between employees, volunteers and patrons to reduce the risk of transmission amongst workers, volunteers and patrons include:

- Maintaining a 2 metre separation between individuals (e.g., workers, volunteers, and patrons) as much as possible.
- Restricting the number of employees, volunteers and patrons in a business at any one time.
- Installing a physical barrier, such as Plexiglas, a cubicle, partition or window, to separate workers, volunteers and patrons.
- Increasing separation between desks and workstations.
- Eliminating or re-structuring non-essential gatherings (e.g. meetings, training classes) of staff, patrons and volunteers. Typically this involves moving in-person meetings to virtual media platforms like teleconference or video conference.
- Limiting the number of people in shared spaces (such as lunchrooms) or staggering break periods. Removing chairs from spaces and taping markers at 6-foot distances may be helpful in preventing crowds.
- Limiting hours of operation or setting specific hours for at-risk patrons.
- Implementing contact-free modes of patron interaction such as home-delivery of goods or curbside pickup of items.
- Placing reference markers (e.g., markings on the floor in grocery line-ups) that set out two-meter distances.

Screening

Employers should implement active daily screening of staff for symptoms of fever, sore throat, cough, runny nose or difficulty breathing. Anyone who is sick with cold-like symptoms such as cough, fever, runny nose, sore throat or shortness of breath, MUST NOT be in the workplace and should be advised to return home and complete the [AHS self-assessment tool](#) or call 811.

Employers are encouraged to examine sick-leave policies to ensure they align with public health guidance. There should be no disincentive for staff or volunteers to stay home while sick or isolating.

Changes to the Employment Standards Code will allow full and part-time employees to take 14 days of job-protected leave if they are:

- Required to isolate.
- Caring for a child or dependent adult who is required to isolate.

Employees are not required to have a medical note.

To enable quick contact with employees in the event someone in the business is diagnosed with COVID-19, employers should maintain an up-to-date contact list for all staff and volunteers, including names, addresses and phone numbers. For the purposes of tracing close contacts of the person diagnosed with COVID-19, employers should be able to indicate:

- Roles and positions of persons working in the workplace
- Who was working onsite at any given time
- Who an employee may have worked with on any given shift

Your responsibility as an employer is to ensure that you have procedures in place to rapidly respond if your employees become symptomatic while on the premises (including upon arrival). You have flexibility as to how you implement this requirement.

You can find temporary changes to employment standards, occupational health and safety, and workers' compensation rules to help Albertans manage the rapidly changing conditions caused by COVID-19 [here](#).

Signage

Business owners can find Alberta Health posters that can easily be downloaded and printed [here](#).

Additional signage and posters are available online from Alberta Health Services [here](#).

Alberta Health has also recommended that businesses fill out a short template that can be found online at the BizConnect site, and post it at their place of business, or online. You can [find that form here](#). Businesses should also follow sector-specific guidance.

Would signage be adequate for staff, as it is for customers?

AHS encourages employers to have direct, ongoing conversations with staff, to share the responsibility for creating a safe and healthy work environment. Signage is just one component of this conversation.

Contact Tracing

What is AHS' process following a confirmed case of COVID-19?

When a case of COVID-19 is confirmed by lab testing, AHS' Public Health team contacts the individual and provides them with direction to isolate. Public Health also works with the individual to determine who they have been in close contact with since 48 hours *prior to* the onset of their symptoms. AHS then directly contacts any individual considered closely exposed to confirmed cases. These individuals are asked to self-isolate and be tested for COVID-19. This is called [contact tracing](#), and is done in response to each case of COVID-19 we confirm by lab testing.

Only those individuals contacted directly by AHS are required to self-isolate. If you are not contacted directly by AHS, you do not need to self-isolate unless you have symptoms. To protect patient privacy, no patient details are provided about the patient with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Is the criteria for outbreak defined as a customer who tested positive and was in your place sometime in last 14 days before symptoms? If so, any place that is popular would have a higher likelihood of having cases if multiple cases downtown.

For public health follow up when determining who is a close contact, we start following up on people who were in contact with a confirmed case 48 hours prior to the onset of their symptoms. Yes, more popular establishments are at a higher risk of receiving patrons who have been exposed to COVID-19.

In dealing with the most recent outbreak we found it extremely frustrating getting directly conflicting answers from PHI -> 811 -> CDC. Who should we be receiving information from?

In the case of an outbreak Alberta Health Services would contact your organization by phone and speak with your manager and/or Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Lead. Any inquiries or concerns you have would be addressed by a Communicable Disease Control (CDC) nurse or a Medical Officer of Health (MOH). 811 is designed to provide individual health advice; not advice to businesses.

How cooperative and compliant guests have been? Are they demanding large groups? Are they moving freely through the room despite being asked otherwise?

At this point our Public Health Officials have found patrons to be cooperative.

Note: one participant on the call indicated that in his business, patrons were likewise compliant.

Hospitality Specific Questions

Who can we contact regarding maximum capacities in rooms?

Each business should reference their occupancy limits as per their approvals through COE safety codes/fire department. From there businesses should assess dining room capacity in alignment with physical distancing requirements.

The most updated guidance for restaurants, cafes, pubs and bars can be found [here](#). Businesses can contact Biz Connect for more detailed direction: www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx.

With the reported COVID-19 transmissions from the four downtown restaurants, where there any notable trends in the transmission pathways? For example where they primarily staff to fellow staff; customer to staff; staff to customer; or staff to family/friends?

There was no one pathway of exposure and spread identified in the downtown Edmonton cases. We therefore need to continue to be vigilant in all of our social groupings.

On the downtown outbreak it was understood that a lot of transmission happened between staff and their higher risk behaviour, is there anything that is going to be done to help educate our staff?

AHS has extensive information available for Albertans to learn how to protect themselves. Please encourage your staff to visit ahs.ca/covid.

You might also consider posting additional signage where staff members are likely to see it. Business owners can find Alberta Health posters that can easily be downloaded and printed [here](#). Additional signage and posters are available online from Alberta Health Services [here](#).

In regards to caterers who are catering small functions, what are the protocols for the food prep and service?

Information regarding food service are outlined in the [Food Regulation and Food Retail and Foodservices Code](#). Caterers are also expected to follow applicable requirements outlined in the [Guidance for Restaurants, Cafes, Pubs, and Bars](#).

For a private function, what are the guidelines for catered food service? If it's a cohort of under 15, are we able to serve a dinner buffet style? Are we able to set up food stations? Is family style an option? What about groups over 15, but still under 50? Buffets? If we have employees dishing out the food for guests?

It is not recommended that private events hold potlucks. It is recommended that they be catered by a caterer that is in possession of a Food Handling Permit issued by AHS, as they are required to adhere to applicable Regulations, Codes and Covid-19 guidance document requirements.

If the event is being held by a group of individuals/families that meet the definition of a "cohort" family style food service should be acceptable. Buffets are permitted to occur in commercial food establishments under specific requirements.

Please refer to the Government of Alberta's [Guidance for Restaurants, Cafes, Pubs, and Bars](#) for detailed advice, or email Alberta Biz Connect: <https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx>.

For patio/exterior dining, would there be a consideration of reducing the physical distancing from 6 feet? The distance does seem to vary between countries.

Currently physical distancing guidelines in Canada, Alberta and the CDC recommend 2 metres or six feet. This does not change for indoor or outdoor spaces, as per [CMOH Order 26-2020](#).

Why do outbreaks for restaurants and bars include customers, while other business (example grocery stores) only include staff?

Outbreaks are not limited to only staff. Our public health teams review all COVID positive cases to identify COVID transmission in social, living, healthcare and workplace settings. Public Health may declare an outbreak when there are transmission patterns identified that require further investigation and action.

Other Questions

Can you clarify about the "instrumental music" decisions? AHS is making that decision? And why have those perimeters been set for businesses but not for community or non-profit events? Regarding music, is there a direct contact for that area/group?

Alberta Health is responsible for all decisions related to the phased reopening of Alberta, including musical performances. Learn more [here](#).

You can find additional information about singing on the Alberta Government's list of [High-risk activities](#).

What is the new learning on asymptomatic cases and when they are communicable? Are people communicable when virus is in incubation?

We do not yet have enough information to respond to new research. For contact tracing purposes, Public Health considers cases communicable 48 hours prior to symptoms onset, or 48 hours prior to a positive test if a patient is asymptomatic.

If someone becomes ill they must self-isolate. Please refer to the Alberta [isolation requirements](#) for specific details. Your employees may call 811 or use the self-assessment tool on [ahs.ca](#) to get further information and/or find out if they are eligible for testing.

What are your thoughts on the emerging evidence of airborne transmission of COVID-19?

We do not yet have enough information to respond to this new research. An early [Response to Media Reports about COVID-19 Virus Being Airborne](#) to this question was developed on March 23.

Alberta Health Services' COVID-19 Scientific Advisory Group continues to closely monitoring cases and the rapidly evolving research here in Alberta, and around the world.

Is there going to be new messaging from AHS regarding personal conduct? It was initially "stay home" and now things are different without clarity. Can we expect more of the same standards going forward?

AHS has extensive information available for Albertans to learn how to protect themselves. Please visit [ahs.ca/covid](#).

What is the current estimated timeline for phase 3 and what restrictions do we anticipate will be in place for venues like nightclubs/dance floors/entertainment space at that time?

What are the protocols or perimeters for us to get to do we can proceed to phase 3? BC is moving to that area safely.

AHS is not aware of the timeline for Stage 3 of the relaunch; the Government of Alberta will determine the timing. Please watch the GOA website for details and announcements.

Is it the Government/AHS's position that restaurants be policing cohort groups?

No, it is not practical or an expectation of AHS for restaurants/bars to police cohort groups.

What can be done if someone is symptomatic and will not leave a business after being asked?

COVID-19 public health orders are enforceable by law. Albertans and Alberta businesses must follow the orders issued by Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, under the [Public Health Act](#).

Please call your local Alberta law enforcement agency to report breaches of CMOH/MOH [isolation or self-isolation](#) requirements. *DO NOT CALL 9-1-1.*

Additional Resources

AHS: www.ahs.ca/covid19

AHS Environmental Public Health: <https://ephisahs.albertahealthservices.ca/create-case/>

Alberta Health: www.alberta.ca/covid

Public Health Orders: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-orders-and-legislation.aspx>

Alberta Biz Connect: <https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx>

Health Canada: www.canada.ca/en/health-canada

World Health Organization: www.who.int/health-topics

Alberta Statistics: <https://www.alberta.ca/stats/covid-19-alberta-statistics.htm>

Global Data:

<https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>

COVID-19 Symptoms: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16997.aspx#sign>

Hand Hygiene: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page14955.aspx>

Wearing Masks: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16997.aspx#prev>

Physical Distancing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17Nl5j1pF1s&feature=emb_logo

Additional Resources to Minimize the Risk of Transmission: <https://www.alberta.ca/infection-prevention-and-control.aspx>

Guidance on cleaning: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-environmental-cleaning-public-facilities.pdf>

Health Canada approved hard-surface disinfectants: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>

AHS Signage & Posters: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17000.aspx>

Alberta Government Signage & Posters: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-information-posters.aspx>

Contact Tracing: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17109.aspx>