Operational Toolkit for Businesses Considering Reopening or Expanding Operations in COVID-19: Risk Assessment, Modification Assessment, and Mitigation Measures

Intended Use

This document, adapted from the [Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security toolkit](#), has been developed to help business owners considering reopening to determine their establishments' risk of transmission of COVID-19 and how to reduce it. The following pages guide business leaders through a 4-stage process to determine an overall risk score and potential mitigation strategies for their business. This risk score provides an overarching indicator of the level of risk of COVID-19 transmission and considers the potential modifications a business can make against these risks.

It is important to note that the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security did not design this toolkit to be a precise indicator of whether a business should reopen, nor do they have the authority to dictate whether a business should reopen. The decision on how and when to lift physical distancing and other social restrictions will be determined based on individual local, state, and federal criteria. Rather, this toolkit provides a stepwise approach that can aid businesses in making decisions by allowing them to calculate and understand:

- The level of risk they have;
- The modifications to their operations they can implement, and;
- The mitigation measures that would be useful to include in their procedures to increase the health and safety of their employees, clients, and customers.

Please follow the steps below, using the [Business Risk Worksheet](#) to complete each stage and the accompanying [Assessment Calculator](#) to calculate your overall risk score After conducting risk and modification assessments in Stages 1 and 2, you will be navigating through the Decision Tree in Stage 3 to determine your overall level of risk. After calculating your overall risk, you will then use the Risk Mitigation Tables to inform your mitigation strategies.

Stage 1 – Risk Assessment

This stage measures the risk your business will experience if it reopens or expands operations. You should perform this assessment in the context of normal operations before COVID-19 (i.e., before implementing any modifications). A business with a low risk score is in a better starting position to decrease business-related COVID-19 transmission than a business with a high-risk score. To complete this stage:

1. On the Assessment Calculator, navigate to the **Stage 1 Risk Assessment** tab.
2. Answer each question using the dropdowns. Select "No/Not Applicable" for those questions that are not relevant.
3. After answering all the questions, your risk score (low, moderate, or high) will be displayed at the bottom of the assessment on row 15. This score will be used in Step 3.

Stage 2 – Modification Assessment

This stage measures the efforts your business can make to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. A business with a high modification score is in a better starting position to decrease business-related COVID-19 transmission than a business with a low modification score. To complete this stage:

1. On the Assessment Calculator, navigate to the **Stage 2 Modification Assessment** tab.

2. Answer each question using the dropdowns. Note that "No" and "Not Applicable" are now 2 different possible answers. Due to the wide range of businesses and establishments, some questions in the modification assessment may not be relevant. In this case, your business should answer "Not Applicable." In addition, if your business has not fully implemented the modification in question, you should select "Partially/In Progress" rather than "Yes."
3. After answering all the questions, your risk score (low, moderate, or high) will be displayed at the bottom of the assessment on row 12. This score will be used in Step 3.

Stage 3 – Determination Based on Overall Score

Using the scores calculated from Stages 1 and 2, you will now determine your overall risk score and corresponding determination. The determination is based on the transmission risks associated with your normal business operations and how much you can modify operations to decrease these risks. An overall score ranges from "very low" risk of transmission to "very high" risk of transmission.

An overall score of "very high" does not necessarily mean businesses cannot reduce the risk of transmission among employees, clients, and customers; rather, scores on the higher end of the range indicate that more modifications and mitigation measures should be considered. Conversely, an overall score of "very low" does not mean that there is no risk of COVID-19 transmission associated with business operations. Instead, businesses with a score of "very low" should continue to create strategies to modify their operations and mitigate risks of transmission throughout their reopening or expansion processes. To complete this stage:
1. Using your scores calculated in Stage 1 and Stage 2, navigate through the Stage 1 and Stage 2 sections of the Decision Tree found on page seven in the Business Risk Worksheet.
2. After Stage 2, you will follow the arrow to your overall risk score and determination in the Stage 3 section of the Decision Tree. The figure on page 8 of the Business Risk Worksheet provides this information in a larger format.

Stage 4 – Mitigation Measures

Having determined your overall risk score, you will now design a business mitigation strategy to reduce your level of risk. Mitigation measures provide additional practices that you can implement in your day-to-day operations that will result in a safer environment for employees, customers, and the community. It is highly recommended that all businesses implement applicable mitigation measures, regardless of the overall score they have received.

Using the tables provided in the Risk Mitigation Tables below, mark the possible measures you can implement to reduce risk (column 2) and describe how you plan to integrate these interventions (column 3). Please note, not all measures or considerations will be applicable to your operations or business structure. There are blank spaces provided to fill in additional measures.

Triggers for Business Closures or Additional Modifications

If widespread transmission in the community recurs, businesses and individuals may be advised by local or state authorities to revert to strict community physical distancing measures such as stay-at-home orders and business closures. In that case, businesses should abide by that guidance and have a plan in place to respond appropriately.

Risk Mitigation Tables

Physical Distancing Measures: Person-to-Person

Mitigation	Possible measures/considerations (check all that could be applied to your business or add your own)	How will you integrate these interventions? Design your mitigation strategy
Limit the number of interactions between employees, customers, clients.	☐ Move part or all your business online. ☐ Enable employees to work from home, where possible. ☐ Establish virtual service options. ☐ Restrict number of customers/clients allowed into the facilities. ☐ Alternate employee shifts so that the same group of people are exposed only to each other. ☐ Establish rotations between work from home and onsite shifts. ☐ Provide longer shifts to reduce the number of employee changes. ☐ Change operating hours. ☐ Provide services through online or phone reservations to control number of in-person interactions at one time. ☐ Change arrival and processing procedures for visitors, contractors, clients, and customers to reduce the number of external personnel allowed in the facility at one time. ☐ _____ ☐ _____	
Limit close-contact interactions between employees, customers, clients, etc.	☐ Conduct meetings virtually. ☐ Limit meeting attendance and time frames. ☐ Utilize outdoor spaces to conduct business operations. ☐ Place shields or other physical barriers between employees, clients, customers, etc.to assist in maintaining a 6-foot distance between people. ☐ Utilize masks in close-contact settings. ☐ Utilize floor markings to ensure distance between employees, customers, clients. ☐ Ensure directional flow (1-way flow) in enclosed spaces. ☐ Conduct services from more than 6 feet away. ☐ _____ ☐ _____	

Physical Distancing Measures: Person-to-Shared Objects

Mitigation	Possible measures/considerations (check all that could be applied to your business or add your own)	How will you integrate these interventions? Design your mitigation strategy
Reduce number of objects moving between employees and customers.	☐ Switch transactions to online-only. ☐ Accept card transactions only (tap and go, cashless). ☐ Limit the number of employees who handle transfer of objects (food, goods, products) to customers. ☐ Alter procedures (eg, drive-through and pickup bay options, items packed by customers in store). ☐ _____ ☐ _____	

Limited Gatherings and Travel Measures

Mitigation	Possible measures/considerations (check all that could be applied to your business or add your own)	How will you integrate these interventions? Design your mitigation strategy
Reduce opportunities for disease transmission from travel.	☐ Reduce business functions that require domestic travel outside of your community or region. ☐ If domestic travel is necessary, discourage mass transit use (eg, use car rentals). ☐ Reduce business functions that require international travel. ☐ Limit the number of employees who must travel internationally or domestically. ☐ For employees who must travel, ensure that personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves, masks, etc.) is made available to them. ☐ _____ ☐ _____	
Limit mass gatherings related to business operations.	☐ Explore ways to reduce the size of necessary gatherings. ☐ Implement physical distancing of participants at necessary gatherings. ☐ Convert gathering to virtual format. ☐ Review seating arrangements to account for physical distancing. ☐ Review service timetables to enable distribution of traveling customers. ☐ Provide barriers. ☐ _____ ☐ _____	

Sanitation and Hygiene Measures

Mitigation	Possible measures/considerations (check all that could be applied to your business or add your own)	How will you integrate these interventions? Design your mitigation strategy
Procure, store, and maintain necessary cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, and other critical supplies.	☐ Identify priority cleaning supplies to disinfect surfaces, shared equipment, and facilities. ☐ Request an increase in supplies from manufacturers. ☐ Obtain increased shipments of hand sanitizer, rubs/gels, tissues, and other paper products. ☐ Procure masks and other necessary personal protective equipment for employees. ☐ Provide handwashing and hand sanitizer stations throughout the facility for employees, clients, customers, etc. ☐ Procure signage and other notices related to hygiene procedures. ☐ Identify alternative supply chains. ☐ Communicate hygiene and infection control requirements internally and externally ☐ _____ ☐ _____	
Develop a detailed cleaning schedule.	☐ Develop and implement a sanitation plan with increased cleaning schedules to ensure surfaces, shared equipment, and rooms are cleaned more frequently.	

	☐ Identify who will be responsible for the increased cleaning schedule (e.g., contractors, current employees). ☐ Ensure that those in charge of cleaning are provided with appropriate personal protective equipment. ☐ Provide ample time for cleaning and disinfecting of stores and facilities. ☐ Ensure cleaning undergoes quality assurance checks. ☐ _____ ☐ _____	
Educate and train employees on hygiene and sanitation practices.	☐ Train employees on infection prevention and control procedures and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene procedures). ☐ Create or modify training modules to include implemented public health and social measures (e.g., infection control practices, physical distancing, etc.) ☐ Display signage and posters on handwashing and hygiene etiquette. ☐ Identify means to distribute information on best practices in the workplace. ☐ _____ ☐ _____	
Ensure objects moving between employees and customers are clean.	☐ Provide means by which individuals can sanitize objects or surfaces when interacting with them. ☐ Self-serve cleaning wipes and sanitizer ☐ Dedicated cleaner for handles, trolleys, baskets, and other high-touch surfaces ☐ Provide protective coverings for high-touch surfaces for easier cleaning (e.g., touchscreens, keypads). ☐ Provide equipment to limit direct contact with high-touch surfaces (e.g., gloves, single-use tools). ☐ _____ ☐ _____	

Company Policy Measures

Mitigation	Possible measures/considerations (check all that could be applied to your business or add your own)	How will you integrate these interventions? Design your mitigation strategy
Encourage employees to work from home.	☐ Create or adapt work-from-home policies. ☐ Create and adapt paid sick-leave policies to suit recommended 14-day quarantine/isolation policies. ☐ Encourage employees to work from home if sick. ☐ Create plans on appropriate ways to guide your ill employees to seek medical care and testing or to contact the local health department. ☐ Maintain up-to-date resources with important contact information (e.g., staff medical officer, health department, health clinics, etc.). ☐ Establish 2-way communication with employees working remotely or out sick. ☐ Establish appropriate ways to communicate possible workplace exposures to employees. ☐ _____ ☐ _____	
Prepare the business for reducing activities or employee in-person	☐ Create plans in the event of resurgence of cases or additional public health measures that restrict operations. ☐ Determine essential functions.	

Mitigation	Possible measures/considerations (check all that could be applied to your business or add your own)	
hours, in the event of renewal of shelter-in-place restrictions or a surge of community cases.	☐ Determine essential workers. ☐ Create alternating schedules for employees to minimize contact. ☐ Prepare stock, vital supplies for partial or total business closure. ☐ Perishable items ☐ Items that must be distributed within a certain timeframe ☐ _____ ☐ _____	

Risk Communication Measures

Mitigation	Possible measures/considerations (check all that could be applied to your business or add your own)	How will you integrate these interventions? Design your mitigation strategy
Provide information for your employees on changes to work expectations and safety practices.	☐ Describe new day-to-day expectations (e.g., wearing a mask, washing hands, etc.). ☐ Adapt existing systems to inform employees of changes (e.g., email newsletter, weekly meetings, etc.). ☐ Create new systems to inform employees of changes (e.g., email newsletter, weekly meetings, etc.). ☐ Identify the best spokesperson to deliver these messages. ☐ Determine how frequently these messages should be sent. ☐ _____ ☐ _____	
Develop and implement an outlet to receive and respond to customer and employee concerns.	☐ Adapt existing systems to receive feedback. ☐ Create new systems to receive feedback. ☐ When appropriate, find ways to anonymize feedback systems. ☐ Identify team leaders to collate comments and concerns. ☐ _____ ☐ _____	
Develop a communication strategy for customers that explains the actions your business is taking to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 and explain what role they have in ensuring that these procedures work.	☐ Describe roles and expectations of customers in the business. ☐ Mask wearing ☐ Maintain physical distancing. ☐ Minimize contact with shared surfaces. ☐ Develop systems to communicate these changes in expectations for customers. ☐ Modify existing systems to communicate these changes in expectations for customers. ☐ Create signage to post around your business communicating expectations for customers. ☐ Develop a strategy for how to work with customers who are unaware of your business's changes. ☐ Account for customers with disabilities that may prevent their access, understanding, or ability to comply with new practices. ☐ Create signage in multiple languages. ☐ Improve access to vulnerable populations. ☐ _____ ☐ _____	
Build a regular communication plan to ensure that employees and customers receive new and important information in a timely and efficient way.	☐ Identify the quickest and easiest means of communication to deliver urgent messages (e.g., text, email, etc.). ☐ Convert existing employee communication systems. ☐ Develop new methods (e.g., communication apps, business interface alerts, etc.). ☐ Build in flexibility in your communications systems for targeted messaging.	

	☐ Create/modify department-specific systems. ☐ Create/modify location-specific systems (for businesses with multiple locations). ☐ Incorporate opportunities to receive questions or feedback on delivered communications. ☐ Incorporate cybersecurity into messaging systems. ☐ _____ ☐ _____	
Develop a strategy to communicate safety practices to community members and other stakeholders.	☐ Identify communication channels to communicate safety practices (e.g., social media, press release, etc.). ☐ Identify which aspects of your safety practices are most critical to share with the community. ☐ Determine best practices for regular information sharing with stakeholders and investors. ☐ _____ ☐ _____	