



## **EB Cohen Risk Management Reopening Tips for Property Managers**

While the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many organizations to close their doors for an extended period, several states across the country have officially begun implementing reopening measures, allowing some employers to resume operations. However, as organizations prepare to open their doors once again, there are numerous factors to consider in order to preserve the health and safety of both employees and customers.

Specifically, real estate owners face unique challenges in minimizing the risks of reopening. After all, the nature of these organizations can make it difficult to maintain social distancing measures and keep high-touch surfaces clean - both of which contribute to the spread of COVID-19.

Review the following guidance to help keep your employees and members safe as you resume operations and ensure a successful facility reopening. Keep in mind that this guidance is general - depending on the location of your facility, you may need to account for additional state and local requirements or restrictions.

### **Gyms and Fitness Centers:**

#### **Employee Health and Safety**

Before you can allow members to enter your facility, it's crucial to implement workplace adjustments and procedures to ensure the health and safety of your staff. Consider these measures:

- Utilize routine meetings and emails to communicate with staff about the steps being taken to prevent COVID-19 exposure at your facility.
- Provide an adequate supply of paper towels, soap and hand sanitizer to allow staff to maintain proper hand hygiene. Offer tissues to ensure employees follow proper cough and sneeze etiquette, as well as no-touch trash bins for tissue disposal.
- Educate employees on the common symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough and shortness of breath). Tell them to stay home from work if they have any symptoms.
- Conduct a wellness check on employees each day to ensure they are healthy and safe to enter the facility. If employees answer "yes" to either of the following questions, send them home:
  - Have you or any person you've been in close contact with (e.g., family members) been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
  - Have you experienced any cold- or flu-like symptoms in the past 72 hours?
- Provide employees with adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for their specific job tasks (e.g., personal training, cleaning the facility or checking members in). Require all employees to wear masks or face coverings at all times.
- Require employees to wash their hands after entering the facility, working with a member, touching their face covering, using the restroom and leaving the facility.



- Encourage staff to carry a towel with them at all times. Instruct them to use the towel to cover their nose and mouth if they get a sudden urge to sneeze or cough. After using the towel, require staff to wash their hands and face before returning to work.
- Train employees on proper hygiene, social distancing guidelines, and risk exposure.
- Implement proper signage throughout the facility to remind staff of proper health and safety practices.
- Establish a process for reviewing employees' workplace health and safety concerns related to COVID-19 exposure and determining mitigation methods in a timely manner.

### **Cleaning and Disinfection Practices**

Because your facility possesses a wide range of equipment and surfaces that both members and employees touch frequently, utilizing proper cleaning and disinfection measures is vital.

Although health experts have found that COVID-19 cannot be spread through sweat, it can be spread through respiratory droplets—which can easily settle on equipment and surfaces throughout your facility. Use these cleaning and disinfection best practices:

- Maintain a stocked supply of cleaning and disinfection products. Be sure to purchase products that meet Environmental Protection Agency criteria for use against COVID-19. Further, review all product labels, safety data sheets and manufacturer specifications to ensure proper storage and use.
- Designate specific staff members to be responsible for maintaining proper cleaning and disinfection practices.
- Keep in mind that if surfaces or equipment are dirty, they should be cleaned with soap and water or detergent prior to disinfection.
- Utilize a well-documented system to track how often cleaning and disinfection take place. Increase cleaning and disinfection frequency for the entire facility, paying special attention to high-risk areas.
- Consider the following changes to restrooms, showers and locker rooms:
  - Only allow these areas to be open if social distancing and proper sanitation can be enforced. If this is not possible, these areas should remain closed.
  - Allow for doors to multi-stall restrooms to be opened and closed without touching handles, if feasible. This could entail adding a foot pull or encouraging occupants to touch the door handle with a paper towel.
  - In single-occupancy restrooms, use proper signage and materials (e.g., paper towels and trash cans) to encourage occupants to not touch handles. Restrict access to single-occupancy restrooms with a key to allow staff to monitor its use and disinfect it regularly.
  - Use signage to encourage occupants to close toilet lids before flushing and wash their hands before and after using the restroom.
  - Provide paper towels for drying hands and adequate trash bins. Prohibit the use of air dryers.
- Require occupants to wear shoes in the locker room at all times. This includes wearing water shoes in shower areas.
- Install numerous hand-washing (or hand-sanitizing, if hand-washing is not possible)



- stations throughout your facility. Specifically, make sure you have these stations located at the entrance and exit of the facility and the locker rooms. Implement signage encouraging employees and members to use these stations frequently.
- Be sure to provide numerous wipe stations throughout your facility for members to disinfect equipment after use. Implement signage to encourage members to do so. In the event that members forget or neglect to wipe equipment after use, designate employees who are responsible for identifying and disinfecting this equipment before another member uses it.
- Prevent staff from sharing any workplace tools or equipment, such as phones, keyboards and cash registers. If employees must share any tools or equipment, establish proper cleaning and disinfecting procedures before and after each use.
- Ensure proper air ventilation throughout the facility. Be sure to clean HVAC systems regularly.
- Have employees place their towels and work clothing in a sealed plastic bag after each use, as if the materials are contaminated. Have these materials laundered by washing and drying on the highest temperature setting possible for the fabric. Ensure staff wear masks or face coverings when handling dirty laundry. If your facility does not provide laundry services, provide employees with instructions for safely washing and drying their materials at home.
- Use disposable rather than reusable items when possible. Ensure adequate trash bins and bolster trash removal practices to accommodate extra waste.

### **Member Health and Safety**

There are several factors that you must consider in order to promote proper health and safety standards for your members. First, it's important to reduce equipment, activity and transmission risks. Follow these tips:

- Consider conducting a wellness check on members, similar to that of your employees, to ensure they are healthy and safe to enter the facility. If members answer "yes" to either of the following questions, do not let them enter the facility:
  - Have you or any person you've been in close contact with (e.g., family members) been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
  - Have you experienced any cold- or flu-like symptoms in the past 72 hours?
- Limit the number of members in the facility at any given time. Only allow members who are actually exercising (as opposed to just socializing) inside the facility. In addition, consider offering special hours for vulnerable members only (e.g., older adults).
- Consider implementing an online sign-up system for members to reserve set-duration workout periods and limit their time in the facility.
- Utilize contactless payment, check-in and check-out procedures. Discourage the use of cash, credit cards and reward cards. If contactless procedures are not feasible, place a barrier or partition between members and staff.
- Use floor markings and signage to enforce social distancing guidelines and remove any unnecessary touchpoints (especially those that cannot be cleaned or disinfected).
- Try to space exercise equipment at least 6 feet apart, with even greater distancing for



- high-exertion cardio machines. If this is not possible, consider having members use every other machine.
- Implement physical barriers, if possible, to further separate equipment.
- Prohibit the use of water fountains. Encourage members to bring their own water.
- Close or restrict areas and activities where physical contact could occur or social distancing isn't feasible. This includes basketball courts, swimming pools, saunas, hot tubs and group exercise classes.
- Utilize an isolated area for delivery companies to drop off materials quickly and minimize their time in the facility

Apart from these practices, it's also crucial to communicate with members via your website, email, social media and facility signage about the steps your organization is taking to protect them and the steps that they need to take on their part. Include the following information for members in your communications:

- If you are sick or have any COVID-19 symptoms, stay home. If anyone in your household is sick, stay home as well.
- Continue to use online workout services if possible.
- Maintain social distancing guidelines within the facility at all times. Plan your workout ahead of time to avoid lingering or socializing.
- Limit the items you touch in the facility to only those you intend to use or purchase. Wipe down facility equipment before and after you use it, using a fresh wipe each time.
- Wear a mask or face covering at all times within the facility.
- Avoid using lifting gloves or any other personal items that are difficult to clean while in the facility.
- Wash or sanitize your hands before and after leaving the facility.
- If you get the urge to sneeze or cough, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue. Wash your face and hands before touching any equipment or returning to your activity.
- Keep in mind that the facility has the right to refuse service to anyone that has COVID-19 symptoms or fails to follow facility guidelines.

### **Community and Facility Pools**

Associations should follow state and federal orders when considering whether they can and should open the community pool. Many of the above recommendations also apply to community pools, so be sure to take note of all policy guidelines.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say there's is no evidence that the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 can spread through the water in pools, hot tubs, spas, or water play areas. Proper operation and maintenance (including disinfecting with chlorine and bromine) of these facilities should inactivate the coronavirus in the water.
- For the 2020 swim season, experts also recommend implementing a no guest policy, as well as eliminating pool parties, games, swim lessons, swim meets, and water aerobics.
- Many states and municipalities also recommend guests continue to wear face coverings when not swimming and when unable to maintain a six-foot distance.
- If your facility does not employ a lifeguard, now is the time to consider implementing a



- lifeguard service. Depending on your association, lifeguards can play some role in making sure residents practice social distancing.
- Any policies that may exclude claims related to viruses should be reviewed by the board and community manager. Does an association have to open their pool if a stay-at-home order is eased? Some state orders will explicitly lift the closing of pools. However, this is ultimately a board decision once the ban is lifted. It is important for boards to weigh the public health and safety risks of residents when opening pools.
- Where possible, eliminate use of low ventilated spaces and rooms that prevent social distancing, such as locker rooms and small dryland rooms. It is also recommended to remove or limit casual seating in non-locker room areas so as to discourage gathering
- Post information throughout the pool and surrounding areas to frequently remind swimmers and visitors to take steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These messages should include information about:
  - Staying home if you are sick or do not feel well.
  - Using social distancing and maintaining at least six feet or more between individuals in all areas of the pool and deck whenever possible.
  - No gathering in groups of different households
- Clean and disinfect public areas and restrooms every two hours using EPA-registered disinfectants, particularly on high-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, doorknobs and light switches.
- Make sure supplies for handwashing, including soap and materials for drying hands are fully stocked every time the bathroom is cleaned.
- If towels are provided, they are to be stored in covered, sanitized containers that are clearly delineated clean versus soiled. Appropriate temperatures are to be used when washing and drying towels to ensure sanitation (hot water for washing, ensure they are completely dried). Employees handling towels must wear gloves and face covering.
- Restroom and shower facilities should limit the number of users at any one time based on the facility size current social distancing guidelines. These facilities should be cleaned/sanitized per CDC recommended protocol along with established restroom cleaning schedules
- Install physical barriers (for example, lane lines in the water or chairs and tables on the deck) and visual cues (for example, tape on the decks, floors, or sidewalks) and signs to ensure that staff, patrons, and swimmers stay at least six feet apart from those they don't live with, both in and out of the water
- Develop and implement a reduced maximum capacity to allow 6-feet of distance between users. The formula for capacity should consider the available deck area as well as the pool surface area, as often one is greater than the other. If water surface area is smaller than deck area, an additional limit of swimmers/pool occupants should be implemented to ensure proper social distancing.

Lastly, be sure to review your facility's operations and make any additional adjustments necessary to help limit the spread of COVID-19 and keep your staff and members safe. Follow these measures:



- Keep any areas that are unable to follow social distancing or proper sanitation guidelines closed.
- Maintain adequate records of all members— including names, contact information and visit dates—to be able to assist if contact tracing is needed. Do the same for employee records and work schedules.
- Ensure that all of your operations and reopening plans are compliant with federal, state and local guidelines, as well as industry best practices. Consider designating one or multiple employees to be responsible for ensuring compliance.

By following these precautions, your organization can reap the benefits of providing amenities to your community once again, while also keeping employees and members as healthy and safe as possible. For additional reopening resources and the latest COVID19 developments, contact us today.

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