

## **COVID-19 Considerations for House Member Offices**

*In accordance with the Texas Department of State Health Services and in an effort to combat the spread of COVID-19 in the Texas Capitol, House Members and staff are strongly encouraged to observe the following health and safety protocols in their Capitol offices. As always, the implementation of COVID-19 health and safety standards are left entirely to the discretion of each House Member, and each office may adopt any additional protocols the office considers necessary to protect the health and safety of the office's staff and guests.*

### **GENERAL HEALTH & SAFETY PROTOCOLS**

- Conduct temperature checks at the beginning of each workday.
- Sanitize hands upon entering the office.
- Maintain at least 6 feet of separation between the Member and each staff person or guest and consider reconfiguring the office to facilitate social distancing. If 6 feet of separation is not possible:
  - Consider staggering staff schedules during the workday and work week.
  - When possible, encourage staff to work remotely.
- Consider having all staff and guests wear cloth face coverings while in the office.
- If a meal is provided for the office, arrange for the food to be individually packaged for each person.
- When possible, discourage outside deliveries to the office. Request electronic copies of handouts and advocacy material.
  - Offices should consider establishing a contactless delivery process for receiving packages. An area could be designated inside the main office door for individuals to pick up and drop off items. If the designated area is inside the main office door, a 6-foot perimeter should be established around the area.
- When using elevators, try to limit capacity to *four individuals at a time, with each person* located in a different corner of the elevator. *Face coverings* should be worn in elevators.
  - Use stairways when possible.
  - Individuals subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act may ride the elevator alone or be accompanied by the individual's caregiver.

### **GUESTS, MEETINGS & LIMITS ON GROUP SIZE**

*Each House Member has the discretion to determine procedures for access to the office by Members, staff, and the public and for conducting meetings in the office.*

- Consider conducting virtual meetings to help manage office capacity and observe social distancing.
- Consider scheduling meetings outside of the office.

- If 10 or more individuals will be present for a meeting, consider holding the meeting outdoors while also following proper social distancing guidelines and complying with outdoor protocols.
- Consider assigning a staff person to manage the access to the office for meetings by:
  - Only receiving scheduled appointments (no drop-ins).
  - Having a guest text someone in the office on arrival and wait in the hallway until the designated meeting time.
  - Allowing enough time between meetings for cleaning and disinfecting areas and items that guests came into contact with before the next group of guests enters the office.
  - Limiting the number of individuals in the meeting to 10 or less (unless the office size and configuration requires the group to be smaller). Such groups should consist of members of the same household or individuals who traveled together.
- If practical, modify entry and exit procedures to ensure individuals coming in and out of the office are able to maintain 6 feet of separation from office staff and individuals outside their group.
- Conduct temperature checks on guests upon entry.
- Ask staff and guests to wear cloth face coverings during the meeting. Members have the option to require all staff and guests to wear face coverings while in their office.
- Make hand sanitizer readily available to guests and ask them to sanitize their hands at the entrance to the office.

### **OFFICE CLEANING PROTOCOLS**

*Train all staff on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.*

- Consider designating a staff member to be responsible for ensuring health protocols are implemented and followed.
- Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap, or similar disinfectant readily available.
- Clean and sanitize the office regularly - disinfecting all frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, tables, and chairs.
- Establish a daily schedule for disinfection and cleaning.
- Consider placing visible signage in the office to remind everyone of best hygiene practices.

## **COVID-19 TESTING**

*The following testing resources are available to all Members and their staff.*

- Each Member has the option to routinely test or require testing of all staff and guests in the Member's office.
- Offices may request to have a box of COVID-19 tests delivered to their office by the Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM). Should an office choose to participate:
  - The participating office must identify a staff member to serve as the Test Coordinator for the office. This individual will serve as the designated liaison between the Member's office and TDEM and oversee testing protocols in the office. Offices may also identify 1-2 Test Administrators to assist the Testing Coordinator with administering COVID-19 tests to the Member, staff, and guests.
  - Test Coordinators and Administrators will create an account on the Preparing Texas web site: <https://www.preparingtexas.org>.
    - After creating an account on the Preparing Texas web site, Test Coordinators and Test Administrators will log in and take the Binax-100 training course.
    - Upon completion of the training course, individuals will receive an email from txrapidtest.org which will provide login access to the testing application at [app.txrapidtest.org](http://app.txrapidtest.org). (Be sure to check your spam/junk email folder)
    - BinaxNOW Ag tests will be delivered to the Test Coordinator upon completion of the training and test. Please email the provided email ([capitoltesting@tdem.texas.gov](mailto:capitoltesting@tdem.texas.gov)) to make the request for the box of tests.
- As an alternative to in-office testing, members of the public may also be tested prior to entering the building. An outdoor public testing site will be located on the North Plaza of the Capitol and begin operating on January 4, 2021, the day of the Capitol's reopening.

## **HEALTH SCREENING PROTOCOLS FOR STAFF & GUESTS**

*Screen all employees and guests upon entry to the office. Prohibit entry of individuals:*

- Who are known to have had close contact with a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19; or
- Have any of the following new or worsening symptoms of possible COVID-19 infection:
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Chills
  - Repeated shaking with chills
  - Muscle pain
  - Headache
  - Sore throat
  - Loss of taste or smell
  - Diarrhea
  - Feeling feverish or a measured temperature of 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit or higher
- Do not allow an employee with known close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 to return to work until the end of a 14-day self-quarantine period following the last date of exposure.
- Do not allow an employee with any new or worsening symptoms from the list above to return to work until the employee is confirmed negative for COVID-19.

- An employee diagnosed with COVID-19 may NOT return to work until all three of the following criteria are met:
  1. at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared or a positive test is received;
  2. fever has been resolved without the use of fever-reducing drugs, AND the individual has improvement in symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
  3. at least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery.
  
- If an employee does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19 but is experiencing any of the above symptoms, the employee is assumed to be positive for COVID-19 and should alert the employee's office and any other individuals the employee has been in contact with as soon as possible. The employee may not return to work until the employee has met the same three-step criteria listed above for individuals diagnosed with COVID-19.
  
- An employee who has symptoms of COVID-19 and wants to return to work without meeting the three-step criteria above must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the employee to return to work, based on an alternative diagnosis.