

Protect Your Household

The guidance below takes effect on Monday, December 21st

NOTE: This document was updated on 1-29-2021 when Executive Order 21-09 was signed, lifting early closure (i.e. "curfew") restrictions.

Rhode Island hit Pause for three weeks, ending December 20. The Pause was implemented to keep COVID-19 hospitalizations below hospital capacity limits and to reduce community transmission of COVID-19 by dialing down overall mobility and social activity. Beginning December 21, Rhode Island began slowly dialing up economic and social activity while continuing to maintain necessary social and commercial restrictions.

The guidance below outlines frequently asked questions relating to post-Pause restrictions implemented via Executive Orders 20-108 and 21-09. Unless specifically indicated via Executive Order, all Phase III regulations and guidance carry forward through this period. All Phase III guidance continues to be available on www.ReopeningRI.com. Individuals and business owners are encouraged to review community and industry-specific guidance documents online. Revised requirements and guidance relating to quarantine can be found here: <https://health.ri.gov/publications/guidance/COVID-quarantine-requirements.pdf>.

All Rhode Islanders are encouraged to continue protecting their households at all times by (1) wearing a mask, (2) getting tested often, and (3) limiting interactions with individuals outside of their households.

Social Gatherings

The social gathering size changed to household. Who does that mean I can gather with?

You should only be gathering with people you live with. Any adult who lives alone or is a single parent may gather with one other household, capped at five people. Children who reside with more than one substantial caregiver or parent may gather with each household.

Does the social gathering size – household – apply when I go to a restaurant?

Yes. Indoor restaurant dining is limited to your household. If you are seated outdoors at a restaurant, you may be joined by one additional household. Restaurants must follow existing restaurant guidance and Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH)'s Safe Activities regulation regarding physical distancing, mask wearing when not eating or drinking, and other public health protocols.

Catered Events

Are catered events allowed?

Yes. During this period, catered events must be held in accordance with restaurant rules. They may only occur in non-residential settings with the licensed caterer on site. Indoor catered events for more than fifteen (15) people are prohibited. Outdoor catered events for more than fifty (50) people are prohibited. Weddings previously scheduled to occur after December 20th that exceed these limits may seek an exception from the Department of Business Regulation, provided that appropriate physical distancing and capacity limits can be maintained at all times. Requests may be made to Department of Business Regulation at <https://dbr.ri.gov/covid/plans/plans.php>.

Funerals

Are funerals allowed?

Funerals taking place at houses of worship must adhere to the Houses of Worship capacity limits of 25%, but not more than 125 people. Indoor wakes and other group-based ceremonies and activities relating to wakes and funerals are not allowed. Final viewings may occur one household at a time under Phase III guidance. Outdoor gravesite services may occur with up to fifteen (15) individuals in attendance. Masking and physical distancing between members of different households must be maintained at all times.

Venues of Assembly (e.g. Event/Performance Venues)

Are venues of assembly such as event venues, performance venues, or movie theaters allowed to be open?

Indoor and outdoor venues of assembly, including event venues, performing arts venues, movie theaters, spectator sporting events, comedy clubs, and venues that hold conferences/conventions, may operate at 25% capacity, but not more than 125 people may be present at the event or venue. Events where singing or any other performances occur must be done in accordance with RIDOH regulations for live performances, including, but not limited to, requiring performers to be spaced at least fourteen (14) feet apart.

Should venues of assembly continue to hold virtual performances or events?

Yes. All indoor venues of assembly are encouraged to continue virtual performances and events.

Houses of Worship

Are houses of worship allowed to hold services in person?

When possible, houses of worship are strongly encouraged to provide virtual services as an alternative to in-person services. If a service must be in-person, houses of worship may hold services – in indoor and outdoor settings - up to 25% capacity, but not more than 125 people with at least 6 feet physical distancing between households. Houses of worship where the facility's space can accommodate significantly more than 125 persons within the facility's 25% capacity limit may submit a detailed COVID-19 control plan to the Department of Business Regulation (DBR) to exceed the 125 person cap. Plan approval shall be at the discretion of DBR and any approved plan must be predicated on preventing the spread of COVID-19 and adequately address physical distancing and ingress and egress.

Childcare and Education

Will childcare facilities remain open?

Yes. Childcare facilities will remain open. Facilities are not required to change their current operations, but should review the updated quarantine guidance at <https://health.ri.gov/publications/guidance/COVID-quarantine-requirements.pdf>.

Will schools still be holding in-person classes?

Students in pre-school through eighth grade should continue in-person learning. Districts have been given the flexibility to implement limited opening plans for high schools. The updated unified calendar, recently published by the Rhode Island Department of Education, provides superintendents with additional flexibility to implement their distance learning plans if they determine it is necessary to do so just before or after the winter break. All schools should still be offering in-person learning options for multi-lingual learners and differently-abled students. Parents and guardians should consult their student's school district website and other communications for further detail. Following the holiday break, schools should begin returning students in-person by January 7, 2021. All students should return to in-person learning no later than January 15, 2021.

I'm a college student. How does this guidance affect me?

Nearly all college students will be taking classes remotely. Most out-of-state college students returned home prior to Thanksgiving and are not expected to return to Rhode Island until after the New Year. Only in the limited circumstances that a class cannot be completed remotely should a student expect to have any in-person classes before or during the winter break. The State is working with the Institutes of Higher Education to implement plans for safe return. More details are forthcoming.

Healthcare and Nursing Homes

Will primary care, specialty providers, and other health care businesses remain open?

Yes. Health care providers will remain open.

Nursing homes and hospitals are currently limiting visitation. Will those limitations continue?

RIDOH has issued standards relating to the implementation of designated caregiver visitor programming; however, broad visitation continues to be restricted under certain conditions. Please consult the facility's website or call for more information on specific limitations and visitor programs.

Restaurants

Are restaurants allowed to continue in-person dining options?

Outdoor dining is allowed and encouraged. Indoor dining is allowed at up to 50% of the restaurant's seating capacity. Indoor seating at restaurants is limited to one household.

Outdoors, restaurants may seat up to two households together, not to exceed a total of eight (8) people, provided that all members of the party wear masks when not eating or drinking and follow other public health protocols.

How are restaurants expected to ensure party size is equal to a household?

When taking a reservation or receiving a non-reserved party at the restaurant, the restaurant must ask whether the party to be seated consists of a single household, in accordance with the social gathering size. A restaurant must also post the one household rule prominently at its entrance and at its host/hostess desk or reception area. Restaurants are not to seat parties indoors unless they state they are from a single household.

Are bars allowed to be open? Is alcohol service allowed?

The bar area and any bar seating must be closed to customers at all times in every establishment. The bar area must be roped off or otherwise physically separated from the rest of the space in the establishment. Additionally, if the bar area is being used to prepare food or beverages for tables within the establishment, tables may not be placed within six (6) feet of any section of the physical bar/counter where personnel are working. Alcohol may still be served to patrons who are seated at tables (not in the bar area).

Gyms and Fitness Centers

Can gyms and fitness centers resume operations? What about group classes?

Indoors and outdoors, gyms and fitness centers may resume operations at one (1) person per 150 square feet. Customers/members must be separated by fourteen (14) feet indoors and six (6) feet outdoors.

Indoor and outdoor group classes are permitted, provided appropriate spacing and that no person may come in physical contact with another person. One-on-one or personal training is permitted. Fitness activities that require physical contact between or with participants are not permitted.

Notwithstanding the above, gyms and fitness centers must comply with all other requirements in RIDOH's Safe Activities regulation and follow applicable Phase III guidance. Under certain conditions, plexiglass or equivalent barriers may be used to reduce spacing between individuals, with DBR approval.

Masks must be worn at all times by all individuals in a gym or fitness center. Please note that fitness facilities are responsible for reminding customers/members of mask-wearing rules.

Requests for clarifications on the above may be made here: <https://dbr.ri.gov/covid/plans/plans.php>.

Sporting Facilities and School Sports

Are indoor sporting facilities allowed to resume operations?

Indoor sporting facilities are allowed to resume operations at one (1) person per 150 square feet

May indoor swimming pools, karate studios, roller skating rinks, climbing gyms, gymnastics studios, tennis

and racquet clubs resume operations?

Yes. These facilities may resume operations at one (1) person per 150 square feet.

May sports resume?

Beginning January 20, 2021, games and competitions were allowed to resume for moderate and lower risk sports. Practices (not competitions) were allowed to resume for higher risk sports provided close and sustained contact is avoided. Additional information can be found here: <https://reopeningri.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/20210120-Sports-FAQs-Updated-Final.pdf>. A list of sports sorted by risk level can be found here: <https://reopeningri.com/parks-recreation>.

Are there any exceptions when it comes to sports?

Yes. Professional and collegiate interscholastic athletic programs will be permitted to conduct competitive sports, including indoor activities during this time. College and professional indoor sporting facilities and teams are highly regulated under NCAA rules and league rules (Big East, Ivy League, etc.) or associated professional rules. For example, college athletes are being tested for COVID-19 three times per week, and every day in some instances.

What are athletes and coaches encouraged to do?

Athletes are encouraged to exercise, train, and develop skills at home, alone, or with their household members. Coaches are encouraged to connect with the team virtually to encourage athletes to exercise and train, review game strategy, etc.

Retail Stores

Will retail stores remain open?

Customers may still shop at retail stores, though local and online shopping is encouraged. Retail stores of less than 30,000 square feet must limit the number of customers within the store at any time to no more than one (1) customer per 100 square feet of store area. Stores larger than 30,000 square feet must limit the number of total occupants of the store at any time, including employees, to one (1) occupant per 150 square feet, and, additionally, must manage their capacity limits by monitoring the store entrances.

All retail stores are required to have the number of people that can be in their establishment posted at the entrance, and to maintain their Seasonal COVID-19 Control Plan and other requirements established in [Executive Order 20-98](#).

Will common areas in multi-tenant retailers, like a mall, be open?

Malls and other multi-tenant retailers can remain open; however, common areas, like seating areas, must be closed or roped off. Restaurants with their own seating areas are permitted to be open and follow restaurant rules. For malls and other multi-tenant retailers, both the overall structure and the individual stores within it must comply with the capacity limits. Mall/multi-tenant facility management must work actively and continuously to ensure such compliance.

Museums and Historical Sites

Will museums and historical sites be open?

Museums and historical sites may remain open, with the number of patrons limited to no more than 1 per 100 square feet. Non-recreation/entertainment operations (e.g. restaurants) within museum and historical sites may remain open under applicable requirements in RIDOH's Safe Activities regulations and industry-specific guidance. Facilities must ensure that customers maintain physical distancing, wear masks at all times, and follow other public health protocols. No indoor group-based tours, classes, lectures or presentations are allowed.

Recreation and Entertainment

May recreation and entertainment facilities resume operations?

Yes. Indoor recreation and entertainment facilities and operations may operate at 1 person per 150 square feet and must ensure that any individuals engaging in physical exertion or performances remain fourteen (14) apart from members outside their household (e.g., individuals trampolining or singing karaoke).

This includes, but is not limited to, bowling centers, casinos, arcades, karaoke, and pool/billiards. For further clarifications or determinations, please consult the Department of Business Regulation.

Recreation and entertainment facilities with outdoor operations (including drive-in operations) may remain open so long as the social gathering size, physical distancing, and other public health protocols can be maintained; outdoor operations that require interactions between different households are prohibited.

Requests for clarifications may be made here: <https://dbr.ri.gov/covid/plans/plans.php>.

Offices and Other Businesses

I work in an office. Are offices closed?

Employees who have the ability to work remotely are required to do so. If your job requires you to perform duties on site daily or periodically, you may do so.

If your office does not have access to remote work technology, it may be eligible for a Remote Work grant through the Commerce Corporation. Find out more here: <https://commerceri.com/tech-support-covid-19-1/>

I operate another type of service or repair type business (e.g. pet services, cleaning service, etc.). What are the rules regarding my business?

Other types of public-facing businesses may remain open but must follow applicable requirements in RIDOH's Safe Activities regulations and applicable Phase III guidance. Where employees may do their jobs as effectively remotely, they must do so. Please review the latest general and industry-specific guidance available at www.ReopeningRI.com.

Manufacturing and Construction

Are manufacturing and construction impacted?

Manufacturing and construction may continue to operate in adherence with RIDOH's Safe Activities regulations and guidance.

Personal Services

Are personal services (e.g. cosmetology, barber) businesses impacted?

Personal service businesses may continue to operate in adherence to RIDOH's Safe Activities regulations and guidance.

Classification of Businesses and Organizations

How can I obtain a clarification regarding what classification or category my business or organization falls under and what rules apply?

For questions and determinations regarding what classification/category your business/organization is in, please contact the Department of Business Regulation here: <https://dbr.ri.gov/covid/plans/plans.php> or call 401-889-5550.