

Protect Your Household, Your Business and Our Progress

Updated Guidance (4-9-2021)

Rhode Island continues to make progress on easing restrictions while balancing public health and economic needs. The guidance and requirements below outline frequently asked questions relating to restrictions effective April 9, 2021 as implemented via [Executive Order 21-34](#). Individuals and business owners are encouraged to review community and industry- specific guidance in this document. Additional public health guidance relating to quarantine, isolation, and travel can be found through the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) website at www.covid.ri.gov.

All Rhode Islanders are encouraged to continue protecting their households, staff and customers at all times by:

- (1) [Wearing a mask](#) at all times possible
- (2) Maintaining a physical distance of at least 6 feet from those not in their household
- (3) Cleaning frequently touched or shared objects and washing hands frequently
- (4) Limiting interactions with individuals outside of their household
- (5) Getting tested often
- (6) Getting vaccinated once eligible
- (7) Working from home when possible
- (8) Limiting non-essential travel out of state especially to hot spot states (states that have > 5% positivity rate)

Social Gatherings

The social gathering size is currently 15 people indoors and 50 people outdoors. Who does that mean I can gather with?

You may gather with up to 15 people inside and up to 50 people outside. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, RIDOH strongly recommends that you limit your interactions with people who are outside of your household.

Warning: The most common way COVID-19 is spread is in a social setting between non-masked friends/family.

It is highly recommended that you limit your time spent with people not in your household.

Catered Events

Are catered events allowed?

Yes, catered events are allowed if seated capacity limits are adhered to, restaurant rules are followed, a licensed caterer is present on site, and a point of contact is designated by responsible parties (see further below). Indoor and outdoor catered events are permitted to take place, provided that indoor events do not exceed 75% of the venue's seated capacity. Capacity limits are as follows:

- **Beginning March 19:** 100 people indoors and 200 people outdoors.
 - **Beginning May 15:** 150 people indoors and 250 outdoors.
 - **Beginning June 5:** 200 people indoors and 300 people outdoors.
- **Note that event vendors and staff are not included in the capacity limits.*

Catered events above the social gathering limit (15 indoors or 50 outdoors) must also require pre-event testing, as verified by the point of contact designated by the event's responsible parties (see further below).

Does the updated guidance allow for a licensed caterer to drop off prepared food at a residential location and leave the premises?

No. All catered events must have the licensed caterer on site at all times.

What is pre-event testing and how do I ensure compliance at my catered event?

All attendees and staff who may interact with attendees at catered events that exceed the social gathering limit (15 indoors or 50 outdoors), including weddings, must test negative for COVID-19 (by PCR or rapid testing) from a sample collected within the 48 hours leading up to the event. They must also provide proof of a negative test to a point of contact designated by the event's responsible parties (see below). RIDOH recommends that employees and attendees test negative as close to the event date and time as possible.

Who are the event's responsible parties and how do I ensure compliance at my catered event?

Responsible parties of an event include event hosts, organizers, venue operators, and vendors, who must be familiar with and follow COVID-19 executive orders, regulations, and guidance. They must also ensure that the venue has a completed [COVID-19 Control Plan](#) and/or [COVID-19 Event Template](#) on file to share with the Department of Business Regulation upon request.

Responsible parties of an event must designate a point of contact for RIDOH's case investigation and contact tracing efforts. They must also keep a list of contact information for every event vendor, employee, and attendee and make that list readily available for at least 30 days after the event for contact tracing purposes.

The point of contact designated by the event's responsible parties must further verify that all event vendors, employees, and attendees have tested negative for COVID-19 from a sample collected within the 48 hours leading up to the event. If any vendor, employee, or attendee has tested positive, they may not attend or work the event and must follow the isolation requirement under [Executive Order 21-26](#).

Is dancing allowed?

Open dance floors are not permitted. However, with mitigation measures, including wearing a mask and pod dancing, dancing may be permitted at catered events.

Note that **beginning June 5, 2021**, open dance floors will be permitted for **outdoor** catered events, provided that masks are worn at all times by people dancing. It is strongly recommended that event organizers increase spacing between individuals and discourage excessive crowding on dance floors. Note that indoor catered events will still be restricted to pod dancing (additional details below).

What does pod dancing mean?

Pod dancing may be permitted so long as attendees dance only with individuals seated at their same table. Tables may include a maximum of 8 people indoors and 10 people outdoors (in accordance with restaurant rules). It is encouraged that the number of households seated at a table be kept to a minimum (e.g., max of 3 households per table.) Dancing should be done in designated and clearly marked zones that are assigned to them and spaced at least six feet apart from any other dancing zones, and any tables. Attendees must wear face coverings while in their assigned dancing zone and cannot enter, use, or otherwise visit other dancing zones.

Funerals and End of Life Ceremonies

Are funerals allowed?

Indoor wakes and other group-based ceremonies and activities relating to wakes and funerals are allowed with a maximum of 50% capacity. Capacities are not permitted to exceed more than 250 people indoors and 500 people outdoors. Members of different households must stay six feet apart at all times and masks must be worn by everyone in attendance.

Venues of Assembly

Are venues of assembly allowed to be open?

Yes. Indoor and outdoor venues of assembly may operate at 50% capacity, but no more than 250 people may be present at the venue if the event is held indoors and no more than 500 people may be present at the venue if the event is held outdoors. Six foot spacing must be maintained between parties/households at all times. Events where singing or any other performances occur must be done in accordance with RIDOH regulations for live performances.

What settings are considered to be venues of assembly?

Venues of assembly can be categorized under three groups:

1. Indoor- all areas are contained, and entrances can be limited (spectator sporting events, comedy clubs, movie theaters, convention centers, performance venues, etc.)
2. Ticketed Outdoor- all areas are contained, and entrances can be limited (Some outdoor events where entrance is ticketed- concerts, fairs, music festivals, spectator sporting events, etc.)
3. Additional Outdoor (Parades, fireworks display, road races, walk-a-thons, etc.)

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

What if I have a future event planned that surpasses the current capacity caps that are listed for venues of assembly?

Current Venues of Assembly capacity limits are as follows:

- **Beginning March 19:** 50% capacity up to 250 people indoors and 500 people outdoors.

Venues of Assembly capacity limits are planned to increase as follows:

- **Beginning May 15:** 50% capacity up to 500 people indoors and 1,000 people outdoors.
- **Beginning June 4:** 50% capacity up to 500 people indoors and 2,000 people outdoors. If you wish to have an

outdoor event on or after May 1 with more than 500 attendees, please submit a plan 30 days prior to their event date to the Department of Business Regulation at dbr.ri.gov/covid/plans/plans.php.

**Note that events occurring between May 1 and May 15 above the 250 people indoors and 500 people outdoors limit may apply to have up to 500 people indoors or 1,000 people outdoors with DBR approval.*

***Also note that capacity limits must facilitate six foot spacing between parties/households at all times.*

With the exception of academic graduations (i.e., K-12 and higher education), **all events over 500 people must receive DBR approval** in addition to applicable municipal approvals and other such requirements as may be specified by DBR and/or the applicable municipality. Requests can be submitted to DBR [here](https://dbr.ri.gov/covid/plans/plans.php) and must be submitted at least 30 days in advance of the event (except for events scheduled between May 1 and May 14, in which case they must be submitted at least 14 days in advance of the event).

We know some organizations may wish to have events larger than 500 people indoors and 2,000 people outdoors after June 4. We are not yet ready to offer approvals for such events. However, we do want to start taking an inventory of such requests. Event planners wishing to have events after June 4 with more 500 people indoors and 2,000 people outdoors are encouraged to submit their plan to DBR. Our team will be keeping track of these events and, based on health data including percent vaccinated and our daily positivity rate, we may be able to expand event capacity in the coming weeks.

Once again, event approval requests can be submitted to the Department of Business regulation electronically by visiting <https://dbr.ri.gov/covid/plans/plans.php>.

DBR's approval of such an event does not relieve the organization from municipal approval.

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 75% capacity, with at least six feet physical distancing between households.

Child Care and Education

[Will child care facilities remain open?](#)

Yes. Child care facilities will remain open. Facilities are not required to change their current operations, but should review the updated quarantine guidance at 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 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 offer 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.

[I'm a college student. How does this guidance affect me?](#)

The State has worked with the Institutes of Higher Education to implement plans for safe return. Please consult your institutions website for further information.

[Are summer camps permitted to open?](#)

Yes, summer camps are permitted to open

Healthcare and Nursing Homes

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

Yes. Healthcare 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, but 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 and Bars

Are restaurants allowed to continue in-person dining options?

Outdoor dining is allowed and encouraged at up to 100% of the restaurant's seating capacity. Outdoor table seating should be limited to no more than ten (10) people. Indoor dining is allowed at up to 75% of the restaurant's regular seating capacity. A maximum of eight (8) people per table is permitted for indoor dining. All members of the party must wear masks when not actively eating or drinking. Establishments must follow other public health protocols including table spacing. Tables must be separated by at least six feet. Customers are encouraged to minimize the number of non-household members they dine with. It is recommended that covered entities maintain records documenting the date, time, location and procedures for the cleaning activities.

Is self-seating in restaurants and food courts permitted?

Yes, self-seating in the restaurant and food court setting is permitted. Responsible entities must continue to separate parties by at least 6 feet, prevent congregating/mingling and standing consumption, and clean tables and chairs between uses.

Bar areas are now able to be open, what does this mean?

The bar area and any bar seating may now open to customers for seated service until 11 p.m. At bar areas, establishments may seat up to a maximum of four people in a party. Service to parties seated at bar areas must be limited to 90 minutes. Bar areas must follow all other restaurant regulations and guidance. Standing service (i.e., service to standing customers) is not allowed. Congregating or mingling of customers is prohibited.

Establishments must allow at least six feet of spacing between parties unless parties are separated by plexiglass or another similar divider and there is at least three feet of spacing between parties.

From 11 p.m. until closing, the bar area must be roped off or otherwise physically separated from the rest of the space in the establishment, except if customers have been seated and ordered food by 11:00 p.m., then the bar area may remain open until midnight. Alcohol may still be served to patrons who are seated at tables (not in the bar area).

If there are functioning bar work areas (e.g., drink making stations) and bar seating is used, plexiglass or a similar barrier must separate bar work areas from customer seating. Additional information about options for seated bar service can be found in the [Phase III Guidelines for Restaurants](#).

Are restaurants required to close early?

No. The State lifted its early closure restrictions on January 29, 2021, but bar areas within restaurants must be closed by 11 p.m. However, bar areas may remain open until midnight provided that customers have been seated and ordered food by 11 p.m.

Gyms and Fitness Centers

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

Indoors, gyms and fitness centers may resume operations at one person per 50 square feet. Outdoor gym and fitness activities may continue with no capacity restrictions. Customers/members must be separated by six feet and masked indoors and outdoors. Indoor and outdoor group classes are permitted, provided appropriate spacing. One-on-one or personal training is permitted. Partners must wear masks throughout the contact and activity.

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, such as for small studios, plexiglass or equivalent barriers, increased ventilation, and/or on-site testing may be used to reduce spacing between people or reduce the one person per 50 square feet capacity limit, with DBR approval.

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

It is recommended that covered entities maintain records documenting the date, time, location and procedures for the cleaning activities.

Requests for DBR approval or for clarifications on the above may be made at dbr.ri.gov/covid/plans/plans.php.

Are close contact partner activities, such as martial arts, dancing, boxing, and Jiu-Jitsu, permitted to resume?

Yes, close contact partner activities may resume. In settings where close contact is a fundamental part of the activity (e.g., ballroom dancing, boxing, jiu-jitsu), it is recommended that gyms or fitness centers set up consistent pairs of partners, when possible. In any case, training partners may not change during a single day. Fitness centers must monitor patrons for COVID-19 symptoms and encourage hand washing before and after the activities.

Are pool and other aquatic venues permitted to open?

Yes, indoor pool and aquatic venues are permitted to open. Masks must be worn at all times outside the pool itself. Six-foot distancing must be maintained at all times in and out of the water except in the case where swimmers briefly swim past each other while inside the pool.

Are showers allowed to be used in a gym or aquatic setting?

Yes, both communal and individual shower are permitted to be used. Both communal and single person showers must be routinely cleaned.

Sporting Facilities and School Sports

Are masks still required for athletes while practicing or competing?

Yes, with the exception of swimming and water sports.

Are indoor sporting facilities allowed to resume operations?

Indoor sporting facilities are allowed to operate at one person per 50 square feet.

May indoor swimming pools, karate studios, roller skating rinks, climbing gyms, gymnastics studios, and tennis and racquet clubs resume operations?

Yes. These facilities may operate at one person per 50 square feet.

May sports resume?

Games and competitions are allowed for moderate and lower risk sports.

Games and competitions are allowed for higher risk sports that are played outdoors. Higher risk sports that are played indoors may continue to practice provided they avoid close, sustained contact and remain within their own

teams. Athletes are encouraged to focus on non-contact practices and individual skills and drills. Additional information can be found at reopeningri.com/parks-recreation.

A list of sports sorted by risk level can be found at https://reopeningri.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Sports-Risk-Slide_2021.pdf.

Teams, sport organizations, and athletes should focus on individual conditioning and practice and drills that avoid sustained, close contact.

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. 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.

Is interstate athletic competition allowed?

Interstate sporting activities are allowed with sports teams and groups from states that are not on RIDOH's list of states that have a high community spread rate (found at covid.ri.gov/travel). Sports teams or groups that play outside of Rhode Island are subject to applicable laws (including executive orders) and regulations in that jurisdiction. Likewise, when any individual, sports team, or group plays in Rhode Island, they are subject to Rhode Island laws (including executive orders and regulations) related to testing, quarantining, and other measures to prevent risks associated with COVID-19.

Note that this excludes interstate hockey competition. The multi-state suspension, in coordination with other northeastern and mid-Atlantic states, of interstate youth hockey competitions for public and private schools and youth hockey leagues remains in place. These teams may continue to practice in accordance with RIDOH guidance.

Tournaments with teams from out of state are not allowed. That means no formal contests that consist of multiple competitions or a series of games between multiple persons or teams, that might include multiple stages, played in a condensed period of time, such as over the course of a single day or multiple days in a row. A series of games, such as a "jamboree," "weekend series," "showcase," or tournament style play (one team playing multiple games vs. multiple opponents in a single day or over the course of a weekend), is deemed to be a tournament even in the absence of an overall prize, scores, eliminations, brackets, or otherwise.

Are spectators allowed at athletic events?

Outdoor sporting facilities are allowed to resume operations, provided they meet all other COVID-19 safety protocols, including mask wearing, screening, and physical distancing. Indoor sporting facilities must maintain an overall capacity limit of one person per 50 square feet for practices and training but should follow capacity restrictions for venues of assembly during spectator sporting events such as competitions.

For youth sports involving athletes under the age of 18, spectators are limited to two parents or guardians and the athlete's minor siblings. Sporting venues may impose additional conditions or restrictions based upon the sporting venue's ability to comply with applicable executive orders, regulations and guidance.

Retail Stores

Will retail stores remain open?

Customers may shop at retail stores. Retail stores of no more than 30,000 square feet must limit the number of customers within the store (indoors) at any time to no more than one (1) customer per 50 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, excluding employees, to one (1) occupant per 100 square feet and must manage their capacity limits by monitoring the store entrances. Capacity limits do not apply to outdoor retail areas, such as garden centers and farmer's markets as long as six-foot spacing can be maintained. It is recommended that covered entities maintain records documenting the

date, time, location and procedures for the cleaning activities.

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 21-29](#).

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

Malls and other multi-tenant retailers can remain open, but 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 and multi-tenant facility management must work actively and continuously to ensure such compliance.

What about outdoor retail, like farmer's markets and agricultural retail?

Outdoor retail, including farmer's markets and other agricultural retail, may reopen without capacity restrictions. Customer and vendors must continue to stay six feet apart from others and wear masks at all times.

Recreation, Entertainment, Museums, and Historical Sites

May recreation, entertainment, museums, and historical facilities resume operations?

Yes. Indoor recreation, entertainment, museums, and historical facilities and operations may operate at one (1) person per 50 square feet and must ensure that individuals remain six feet apart from members outside their party

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 they can maintain social gathering size, physical distancing, and other public health protocols. Outdoor operations that require interactions between different households are prohibited. Requests for clarifications may be made at dbr.ri.gov/covid/plans/plans.php. It is recommended that covered entities maintain records documenting the date, time, location and procedures for the cleaning activities.

Offices and Other Businesses

I work in an office. Are offices closed?

Offices are allowed to have up to 50% of workers on-site in person at a time. Employees who have the ability to work remotely are strongly encouraged to do so.

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 at one person per 50 square feet, in compliance with [RIDOH's Safe Activities regulations](#) and guidance. It is recommended that covered entities maintain records documenting the date, time, location and procedures for the cleaning activities.

Classification of Businesses and Organizations

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

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