In response to COVID-19, Washington courts have had to create strategies to mitigate the risk of exposure to the virus within you courthouse and to ensure the continuation of courthouse operations so that courts safely remain open to the public and maintain a safe workplace for staff, court administrators. The following items are consideration when creating or updating a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and communicating with your local health department.

***Note that this checklist contains considerations for planning purpose and does not constitute formal guidance***. For all COVID-19 related operational planning tasks, the Task Force strongly recommends consulting the latest guidelines from Washington State Department of Health and the United States Center for Disease Control. Contact links for these resources are in the reference section of this checklist.

**Implement Court Facility Entry Screening**

* Screen all court staff and visitors when they enter the courthouse.
* Implement social distancing measures, including barriers or walls if needed.
* Consult with public health resources on the proper use of Personal Protective Equipment
* Give screening information in languages employees and visitors can understand.
* Create a screening flow to prevent people from crowding when they enter the building.
* Use verbal or printout screening tools: [CDC Screening Questionnaire](https://www.cdc.gov/screening/index.html)
* If a staff or visitor has one of the symptoms associated with COVID-19, been in contact with someone known to have COVID-19 or is experiencing symptoms, tested positive for COVID -19 in the past 10 days, or within the past 14 days were told by a medical or public health professional to self-monitor, self -isolate, or self-quarantine because of concerns about the COVID-19 infection, the following questions could be asked to your local public health agency:
* Should we prevent potentially exposed persons from entering the courthouse?
* How do we separate potentially exposed or infected persons from other people and assure they can get a ride home or to a medical facility if needed?
* Besides instructing staff who were potentially exposed to call their healthcare provider for further instruction, are there other steps to take?
* Is it recommended staff get tested for COVID-19 no later than 48 hours after exposure?
* Should staff quarantine at home (or at another location) for 14 days after last exposure?

**Develop an Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response Plan**

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) gives guidance on how to create a plan and what needs to be considered in creating and maintaining a plan. [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf).

* **The plan should consider the following steps and/or actions:**
* Implementation of telecommuting in all aspects of the court’s work.
* Schedule changes to reduce interactions between staff and the public (e.g., Employees going to “pods,” where they alternate work weeks). This helps limit the risk of exposure.
* Working closely with the court’s stakeholders such as public defenders, private attorneys, and prosecutors to reduce in-person interactions (e.g., courtroom changes, telephonic appearances, and using electronic documents).
* Implement Basic Infection Prevention Measures, such as:
* Frequent handing washing.
* Encourage staff to stay home if they are sick.
* Encourage respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes.
* Providing hand sanitizer, tissues and trash cans.
* Maintain regular cleaning and disinfecting schedule in the building.
* **Develop policies and procedures to mitigate the impact of exposure to COVID-19 in the courthouse if a staff member test positive for COVID-19.**
* Contact local public health department to learn about the contact tracing process.
* Designate a single point of contact for information for gathering information and notification in accordance with direction from your local public health agency. The court’s human resources or administrator should coordinate with defender associations, prosecutor’s office, and other organizations whose staff comes in regular contact with the court.
* Immediately deep clean affected areas of the courthouse.
* Create a template notification of the potential exposure to the following audiences: (1) close contact, (2) may have been exposed, and (3) general notification to all staff.

* If a staff member has tested positive for COVID-19, this information must be kept confidential. Consult with your HR department on what information can and cannot be communicated or shared about the employee in the notification.
* Report city and county level tracking to the appropriate city and county department.

**Staff replacement and other expenses during the COVID-19 pandemic**

* Explore more active employee cross-training and virtual training for key staff roles.
* If possible, participate in the city and/or county’s talent deployment department to offer and request temporary help.
* Update the court’s pro-tem judge list to ensure there are available pro-tem judges to cover the calendars.
* If funding is necessary to cover the cost of staffing temporary employees, hiring pro-tem judges, and other COVID-19 related expenses , including cleaning supplies, PPE, thermometers, protective shields, consider applying for the CARES Act funding reimbursement available through the AOC. [Inside Courts - AOC CARES Funding](https://inside.courts.wa.gov/index.cfm?fa=controller.showPage&folder=courtResources&file=courtManagement)
* Collection of data on court staff and visitors that have tested positive for COVID-19.

Court administrators should refer to the guidance from authorities at the state and local departments of health on what information you can collect from court staff and visitors that test positive for COVID- 19. Employment laws such as The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act do not interfere with employers following advice from the CDC and other public health authorities on appropriate steps to take relating to workplace safety. Please also consult your HR department on collection data and reporting.

**References and Other Resources**

Washington Department of Health: [COVID-19 Guidance for Washington Courts](https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/CourtGuidanceCOVID-19.pdf)

Washington Labor and Industries:

* [Coronavirus Prevention: General Requirements and Prevention Ideas for Workplaces](https://www.lni.wa.gov/forms-publications/F414-164-000.pdf)
* [Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources](https://www.lni.wa.gov/agency/outreach/novel-coronavirus-outbreak-covid-19-resources)

OSHA [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf)

FEMA <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/20200806/planning-considerations-organizations-reconstituting-operations-during-covid>

CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>