



Reposturing Plan

Balancing the safety of our employees and the safety of the public we serve
while delivering good public service, with empathy.

August 20, 2020
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

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Introduction

Our goal is to take reasonable measures to protect the public and our employees from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, while ensuring we can complete our critical public service mission. Many of our customers meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) increased risk criteria. Throughout the pandemic, the Social Security Administration (SSA) has remained open for business through our online services, telephone services, and in-office appointments for certain limited, critical services. This guide provides a repositioning framework as we transition through phases to normal operations.

With nearly 1,500 offices across the nation, our plan is likely to evolve geographically. As the circumstances informing movement from one phase to another change, agency leadership will consider reverting to a previous phase, should gating criteria indicators erode and state and local decisions change in the communities where our offices are located.

Telework¹, while not the preferred service channel for all customers or workloads, has allowed us to maintain most services while reducing the spread of COVID-19 and protecting the public and our staff. We may need to maximize telework for an extended time depending on state and local decisions and environments. Thus, part of our COVID-19 response will be to improve our telework posture, including exploring technology and/or business process solutions while taking steps to further ensure management oversight and employee accountability.

This phased approach is based on the three gates in the [Guidelines for Opening Up America Again](#), guidance provided by the [CDC, M-20-23 Aligning Federal Agency Operations with the National Guidelines for Opening Up America Again](#), [Occupational Health and Safety Administration's \(OSHA\) Guidance on Returning to Work](#), and data driven information about COVID-19 status in local jurisdictions. When an area meets the criteria in each of the three gates, phased implementation will begin. Prior to the phased implementation in a local area, critical workloads may require a limited number of additional employees in local offices to maintain essential services to the public and related non-portable support work.

Gating to satisfy before implementing phased reopening from the [Guidelines for Opening Up America Again](#) is:

- **Gate 1 Symptoms:** Downward trajectory of influenza-like illness reported within a 14-day period AND downward trajectory of COVID-like syndromic cases within a 14-day period.
- **Gate 2 Cases:** Downward trajectory of documented cases within a 14-day period OR downward trajectory of positive tests as a percent of total tests within a 14-day period (flat or increasing volume of tests).
- **Gate 3 Hospitals:** Treat all patients without crisis care and robust testing program in place for at-risk healthcare workers, including emerging antibody testing.

¹ Telework in this document refers to temporary remote work arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PHASE 1

Agency Operating Guidance

- Encourage maximum telework and develop processes for further management oversight and employee accountability.
 - Strongly consider vulnerable populations;
 - Strongly consider transit disruptions;
 - Strongly consider childcare issues; and
 - Identify workloads that must be handled in person.
- Based on a data-driven process to consider local-level COVID-19 status, each component-level Deputy Commissioner will inform the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner regarding status and recommendations and will raise issues for decision, as necessary.
- Close common areas where personnel are likely to congregate and interact or enforce strict social distancing protocols.
- Prohibit travel to COVID-19 hot spots and significantly limit all non-essential travel in other areas. Adhere to CDC guidelines regarding isolation following travel.
- Strongly consider special accommodations for personnel who are members of a vulnerable population, who are caring for dependents who are members of a vulnerable population, or who have childcare or transportation needs.
- Strongly consider establishing alternative service levels, work arrangements, or processes to reduce the number of individuals in an office to promote social distancing.
- May require individuals to return to SSA workspaces if it is necessary to perform essential duties; maintain no more than 25 percent of office staffing.
- In-office service by appointment only and limit to person requiring service plus helper or appointed representative, when needed.

Facilities Management, Cleaning, Personal Protective Equipment, and Social Distancing

- **Building Management/Cleaning:** Routine building management activities and cleaning services will remain in place with additional cleaning of high-touch areas (e.g., handrails, elevators, bathrooms) following CDC and the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) protocols. SSA will engage the General Services Administration (GSA) regarding maintaining systems that may be affected by reduced usage (due to lack of building occupancy) and to ensure systems are compliant with CDC guidance, when possible.

- **Cleaning Supplies/Supply Chain:** Facilities will review the adequacy of our cleaning supplies and supply chain to ensure there are sufficient supplies (including hand soap and sanitizer/wipes) to support the reopening of the facility. SSA will follow CDC guidance.
- **Procurement and Installation of Supplies/Food Service:** Facilities will oversee the procurement and installation of relevant items (e.g., hand sanitizer dispensers, cleaning supplies, sanitizing wipes) to be placed near shared equipment and logical areas like entranceways. In sites with food service, facilities will continue to evaluate food service considering reduction of onsite staffing and consider if cafeterias and other vendors in SSA space may open for grab-and-go options and may reduce hours.
- **Personal Protective Supplies (PPS):** Facilities will ensure an adequate supply of PPS, including face coverings and gloves, is available and distributed to our locations across the country. Face coverings are required for SSA personnel, security guards, contractors, and members of the public who enter SSA facilities. We also will require all who enter our facilities to self-screen for COVID-related symptoms.
- **Social Distancing:**
 - Facilities will develop protocols regarding signage and use of common areas.
 - SSA will hold meetings and other gatherings virtually and employ collaborative technologies such as Skype videoconferencing, Microsoft Teams, traditional teleconferencing, or other tools as identified. SSA will explore the security and feasibility of other social interaction forums. If an in-person meeting cannot be avoided, participants will follow social distancing protocols of at least six feet. SSA will modify seating and capacity limits in common areas and may remove or block chairs or other structures (kiosks) to enforce social distancing.
 - SSA will consider rotating employees in cohorts between telework and in-office work and may consider other mitigation strategies to allow adequate space for social distancing.
 - SSA will install barriers (e.g., sneeze shields), especially where face-to-face public service occurs and no other barriers are present.

COVID-19 Data Tracking

- Human Resources will track COVID-19 incident reports while ensuring all required privacy rights of employees are protected.
- Continue to monitor data and state and local decisions on local level COVID-19 status.

Communication

- SSA will maintain sites dedicated to COVID-19 on both its intranet (including updated frequently asked questions (FAQ) for managers and employees) and internet (to make the public aware of office status and how we are providing service during the pandemic).

- Agency leadership will continue to report to all personnel on the agency's status, providing advance notice to all staff of the scheduled date for expanded staffing/service in a specific facility.
- SSA will review COVID-19 policies with visitors when scheduling appointments.

PHASE 2

Agency Operating Guidance

- Continue to encourage telework and develop/implement processes for management oversight and employee accountability.
 - Consider vulnerable populations;
 - Consider transit disruptions, which may be diminishing;
 - Consider childcare issues; and
 - Continue to develop alternate service processes, where possible, for workloads that must be handled in person.
- Based on a data-driven process to consider local level COVID-19 status, each component-level Deputy Commissioner will continue to inform the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner regarding status and recommendations and will raise issues for decision, as necessary.
- Continue to keep closed common areas where personnel are likely to congregate and interact or enforce strict social distancing protocols.
- Continue to prohibit travel to COVID-19 hot spots and only allow essential travel in other areas. Adhere to current CDC guidance for travel including post travel.
- Continue to consider establishing alternative service levels, work arrangements, or processes to reduce the number of individuals in an office to promote social distancing.
- May continue to require employees to return to SSA workspaces when necessary to perform essential duties; maintain no more than 50 percent of office staffing. SSA may expand in-office workloads based on local conditions and needs, as necessary, while continuing telework for portable work.
- Continue to require appointments for visitors and limit to person requiring service plus helper or appointed representative, when needed.

Facilities Management, Cleaning, Personal Protective Equipment, and Social Distancing

- **Building Management/Cleaning:** Routine building management activities and cleaning services will remain in place with additional cleaning of high-touch areas (e.g., handrails,

elevators, bathrooms) following CDC and EPA protocols. SSA will continue to work with GSA regarding building systems and CDC compliance. SSA will provide guidance on appropriate cleaning levels for Phase 2, including if there is a COVID-19 incident.

- **Cleaning Supplies/Supply Chain:** Facilities will continue to review the adequacy of cleaning supplies and supply chain to ensure there are sufficient supplies (including hand soap and sanitizer/wipes) to support the reopening of the facility.
- **Procurement and Installation of Supplies/Food Service:** Facilities will ensure the maintenance of relevant items (e.g., hand sanitizer dispensers, cleaning supplies, sanitizing wipes) near shared equipment and logical areas like entranceways. In sites with food service, facilities will continue to evaluate food service considering reduction of onsite staffing and consider if cafeterias and other vendors in SSA space may open for grab-and-go options and may reduce hours.
- **PPS:** Facilities services will continue to evaluate the supply of PPS including face coverings and gloves to our locations across the country. Face coverings will continue to be required for SSA personnel, security guards, contractors, and members of the public who enter SSA facilities.
- **Social Distancing:**
 - SSA will ensure signage is maintained.
 - SSA will continue to hold meetings and other gatherings virtually and employ technologies such as Skype videoconferencing, Microsoft Teams, traditional teleconferencing, or other tools as identified. SSA will continue to explore the security and feasibility of other social interaction forums to improve remote service. If an in-person meeting cannot be avoided, participants will continue to follow social distancing protocols of at least six feet. SSA will continue to modify seating and capacity limits in common areas and may remove or block chairs or other structures (kiosks) to enforce social distancing.
 - SSA will consider continuing to rotate employees in cohorts between telework and in-office work and may consider other mitigation strategies to allow adequate space for social distancing.
 - SSA will continue to install barriers, as necessary, (e.g., like sneeze shields), especially where face-to-face public service occurs.

COVID-19 Data Tracking

- Continue to monitor data and state and local decisions on local level COVID-19 status.
- Track COVID-19 incident reports while ensuring all required privacy rights of employees are protected, and make adjustments as warranted.

Communication

- SSA will maintain sites dedicated to COVID-19 on both its intranet (including updated FAQ for managers and employees) and internet (to make the public aware of office status and how we are providing service during the pandemic).
- Agency leadership will continue to update all personnel on the agency's status and provide advance notice to all staff of the scheduled reopening date of a specific facility.

PHASE 3

Note: Given current information about COVID-19, while Phase 3 implementation of the White House Gating criteria permits a return to pre-COVID-19 operations, many members of the public we serve meet the definition of the CDC's vulnerable populations at higher risk for serious complications. This fact combined with our ability to maintain much of our public service over the telephone or online necessitates continuing to operate with an appointment only in-office service model.

Agency Operating Guidance

- Resume unrestricted staffing of worksites and continue telework where work is not negatively affected.
 - Consider vulnerable populations as necessary;
 - Consider transit disruptions, which may be diminishing;
 - Consider childcare issues; and
 - Continue to develop alternate service processes, where possible, for workloads that must be handled in person.
- Provide appointment only service model for most workloads.

Facilities Management, Cleaning, Personal Protective Supplies, and Social Distancing

- Review and revise, as necessary, PPS, social distancing, and self-screening protocols.

COVID-19 Data Tracking

- Continue to track data, including incident reporting, and make adjustments as warranted.

Appendix A: Site Readiness

Measure	Status
ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN	
Local Area Status	Office is in Phase 1 Community Office is in Phase 2 Community Office is in Phase 3 Community
Transportation/Parking	local and regional transportation and parking
Dependent Care	dependent care/schools/day care
Food Services	food services are available in building or community or SSA can provide safe food storage options
BUILDING/FACILITIES	
Building Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • routine, daily above standard cleaning (daily cleaning and disinfection of high-contact surfaces in common and high-traffic areas) • capacity for as needed enhanced cleaning (above standard cleaning plus the cleaning and disinfection of employee workspaces and agency-owned personal property)
Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adequate supply of cleaning and restroom supplies • supply chain for timely replacement as needed
PPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adequate supply of face coverings, gloves for employees and contractors • adequate supply of face coverings for public visitors • supply chain for timely replacement, as needed
Additional Protective Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hand sanitizer/wipes placed at entrances and near shared equipment • supply chain for timely replacement, as needed • social distancing enforced <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ signage ○ reduced in-office staffing/staff rotation ○ in-office service by appointment only • self-health check
COMMUNICATION PLAN	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all employee notification of agency plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ new protocols (masks, gloves, social distancing, self-health check) ○ training on face masks, gloves, self-health check • local management notification of return to office • internal and external websites updated • outreach to advocates and local organizations • signage • script for public appointments

Appendix B: Office Signage

 **NOTICE** 

IN-PERSON SERVICE BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

Due to COVID-19, you must have an appointment to enter.

Please try our online services at [SSA.gov](https://www.ssa.gov) or call this office at: _____

IF YOU HAVE AN APPOINTMENT ACTION IS REQUIRED BEFORE ENTRY

DO NOT enter if you answer **YES** to any of these questions:

(1) Do you have any of the following symptoms?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cough or sore throat• Fever (100.4 degrees or higher)• Chills• Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Muscle pain or body aches• Headache• New loss of taste or smell• Gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
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(2) In the last 14 days, have you:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Been diagnosed with COVID-19?• Received instructions to monitor for symptoms or self-quarantine?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traveled outside the country?• Been within 6 feet of a person who was diagnosed with COVID-19?
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If you answered **YES** to any of these questions or if you feel ill, please call _____ to reschedule your appointment.

If you answered **NO** to all of these questions, you must wear a face covering over your mouth and nose while in this office. We can give you a face covering if you do not have one.

You must wear a face covering over your mouth and nose to enter this facility. If you do not have one, we will provide you with one.

If you are unable to wear a face covering, call the office manager at _____.

Produced and published at U.S. taxpayer expense.

 **NOTICE** 

IN-PERSON SERVICE BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

Due to COVID-19, you must have a scheduled hearing to enter. Only you and your representative (if you have appointed one) may enter.

Please try our online services at [SSA.gov](https://www.ssa.gov) or call this office at: _____

IF YOU HAVE AN APPOINTMENT ACTION IS REQUIRED BEFORE ENTRY

DO NOT enter if you answer **YES** to any of these questions:

(1) Do you have any of the following symptoms?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cough or sore throat• Fever (100.4 degrees or higher)• Chills• Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Muscle pain or body aches• Headache• New loss of taste or smell• Gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
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(2) In the last 14 days, have you:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Been diagnosed with COVID-19?• Received instructions to monitor for symptoms or self-quarantine?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traveled outside the country?• Been within 6 feet of a person who was diagnosed with COVID-19?
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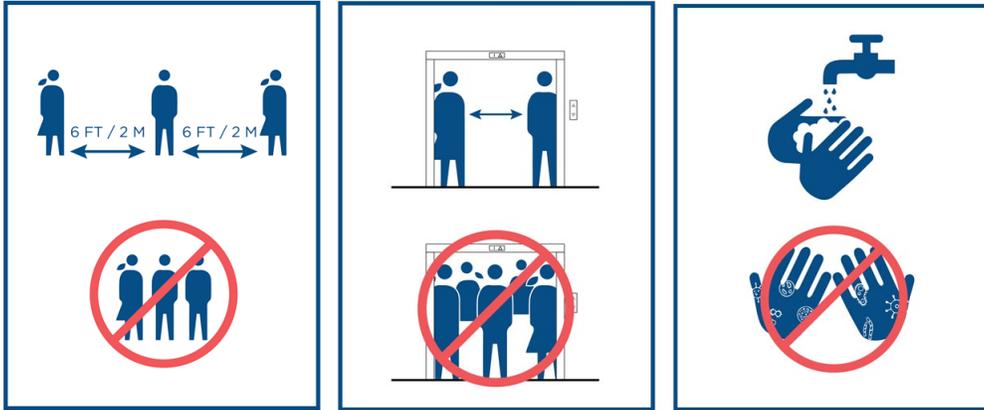
If you answered **YES** to any of these questions or if you feel ill, please call _____ to reschedule your appointment.

If you answered **NO** to all of these questions, you must wear a face covering over your mouth and nose while in this office. We can give you a face covering if you do not have one.

You must wear a face covering over your mouth and nose to enter this facility. If you do not have one, we will provide you with one.

If you are unable to wear a face covering, call the office manager at _____.

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Stop the Spread of Germs

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

<p>6 ft</p> <p>Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people.</p>	<p>Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.</p>
<p>When in public wear a cloth face covering over your nose and mouth.</p>	<p>Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth.</p>
<p>Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.</p>	<p>Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.</p>
<p>Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.</p>	

cdc.gov/coronavirus

Help Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19

Practice Social Distancing

Stay 6 feet (2 arm's lengths) from other people.

And Wear a Cloth Face Covering

Be sure it covers your nose and mouth to help protect others. You could be infected and not have symptoms.

cdc.gov/coronavirus