



Re-Opening and Recovering: Best Practice Recommendations for Yoga Schools, Businesses, and Professionals

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The global COVID-19 pandemic has created health and safety challenges for communities across the United States and around the world. In response, many jurisdictions adopted social distancing policies to slow the spread of the coronavirus and to keep healthcare systems from being overwhelmed. There is evidence that these efforts helped to “flatten the curve” and save lives.

On March 15, Yoga Alliance recommended that in-person yoga instruction cease in locations where social distancing had become the requirement or the norm. In issuing this recommendation, we called upon yoga professionals to consider the roles that they play in their communities as civic leaders, trusted advisors, and holders of wisdom and to prioritize the well-being of their communities. We understood that this was not the easiest course of action, but the right and responsible one.

Now, as regions globally begin to lift social distancing requirements in preparation to re-open public spaces, we remain committed to supporting yoga schools, businesses, professionals, and practitioners in prioritizing and protecting the health and safety of our communities. In harmony with our values, we are issuing best practice recommendations to serve as a guide for our community’s re-opening and recovery.

These recommendations are based on guidance from leading public health organizations and experts, U.S.-based federal and state agencies, legal advisers, and Yoga Alliance’s collective expertise on yoga business operations and yoga practice and may be updated or revised to reflect new information. This document is intended for use by yoga schools, businesses, and professionals and is designed to serve as a reference guide to support individual planning and decision-making. Please note that these best practices do not take the place of government orders or regulatory requirements, which may prescribe specific operating standards during the COVID-19 crisis. The information contained in this document does not constitute legal advice.

Yoga Alliance recognizes that schools, businesses, and professionals have their own operating practices, space limitations, varying resources and capabilities, and differing legal and regulatory obligations. We strongly recommend that you consult with legal counsel and your insurance provider before re-opening your business and resuming operations.

Please note: the information contained in this best practice guidebook is heavily slanted towards a United States perspective, but many of the recommendations are universal and may be applicable in other regions around the world. We will publish additional information to help address specific needs amongst the most populous countries and regions where Yoga Alliance members live and work, addressing the local needs of as many members as possible. Additionally, these best practices do not take the place of government orders or regulatory requirements, which may prescribe specific operating standards during the COVID-19 crisis. The information contained in this document also does not constitute legal advice. It is important that you weigh all of the advice and counsel provided to you as you plan for the coming weeks and months.

i. Understanding Government Orders and Restrictions on Business Operations and Social Gatherings

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, states and territories across the United States issued various orders and restrictions on business operations and social gatherings. Some jurisdictions have operated under “stay-at-home” or “shelter-in-place” orders, which direct residents to stay put and reduce social interactions except for limited reasons like obtaining necessary supplies. Some areas have issued orders directing so-called “non-essential businesses” to close to the public, sometimes in conjunction with a “stay-at-home” order. Still other states or localities have not adopted any direct orders, but rather urged residents and businesses to voluntarily adhere to social distancing guidelines. The orders and guidelines in each jurisdiction vary in scope, rigidity, and duration.

Just as orders, guidelines, and restrictions were issued on a piecemeal basis that escalated in response to the increasing severity of COVID-19’s impact, they are likewise being lifted or allowed to expire in a comparable fashion that varies from locality to locality and/or reduced in a phased approach as the disease’s impact decreases. As such, states, territories, and localities are preparing to allow businesses to ease into re-opening and for public life to resume at different intervals over the coming weeks. In the course of doing so, some states are tasking businesses and service providers with health and safety obligations as a condition for resuming operations.

Because the rules governing business operations and social gatherings vary from state-to-state and even, sometimes, from city-to-city, it is important for you to understand the regulatory landscape where you live and work. To find out about the rules that may affect you, refer to publications and announcements from your Governor, your Mayor or County Executive, the public health department in your state or locality, and your most trusted local news sources.

Be sure to identify the following critical information:

- Is your state, county, city, or town subject to an order that restricts business operations or social gatherings?
- To whom does the order apply?
- When does the order expire? When are the restrictions set to be lifted?
- If business restrictions or stay-at-home orders have been lifted, has your state, county, city, or town issued another order that sets new health and safety requirements for businesses and professionals or members of the public?
- Has your state, county, city, or town issued guidance or FAQs to help the public understand relevant orders and restrictions?

ii. Making a Plan to Operate and Practice Safely

Just because you can open your doors for business does not mean it is safe or prudent to resume business as usual, right away. To protect yourself and the well-being of others, you

must first consider whether you have now or can develop the space, resources, and capacity to operate and practice in a manner that prioritizes health and safety.

Consider How COVID-19 Will Affect Your School, Business, or Practice

Consider how the COVID-19 outbreak may affect your school, business, and practice, including:

- Virus transmissions through in-person contact or use of shared space;
- Employee illness or inability to come to work due to other responsibilities (like childcare);
- Concerns and fears of the yoga public, which may temporarily reduce demand for in-person practice;
- Difficulty obtaining supplies, protective equipment, or cleaning products; and
- Difficulty implementing and enforcing health and safety measures at all, especially if individuals are non-compliant.

As you consider re-opening or restarting in-person group or private instruction, decide how you will address the COVID-19-related risks that you identified. You may need to modify how you did things before the pandemic, either by relying more heavily on virtual classes or by altering the configurations of your space or the size of your trainings or classes. You might need to obtain new or different equipment or implement a new disinfection and cleaning regimen. You'll certainly need to communicate with your staff, teachers, volunteers, students, and other patrons. For many yoga professionals and businesses, we imagine that this may mean that you may want to consider a phased approach to re-opening your business that allows you to grow into your old practices and some new ones, over time.

While we understand the serious economic and social toll of the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge yoga schools, businesses, and professionals to be realistic about their capacity and capability to re-open and quickly resume operations safely. It is likely that many yoga businesses will not be able to readily implement some or all of the health and protective measures that will be critical to protecting each other and our communities. Please visit Yoga Alliance's [COVID-19 Resources Website](#) for information on business and financial support, including guidance for transitioning your school, business, and/or teaching online.

Components of an Operations Plan

When you decide to re-open, we recommend that you develop a comprehensive operations plan. Your operations plan should account for all aspects of your school, business, or practice, including those related to:

- Studio, worksite, or practice space cleaning and sanitation protocols;
- Implementation of protective measures to promote employee and public safety, including temperature checks and social distancing protocols;
- Structure of classes or practice that take place in person;
- Management of reception, boutique, and bathroom spaces to limit surface contact;
- Staff leave policies;
- Continuity of operations if staff or teachers cannot come to work;

- Provision of protective equipment and the availability of handwashing and sanitation stations;
- Training for staff and teachers and communication with students and the public;
- Incident response protocols in the event of a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case; and
- Incident response protocols in the event of non-compliant students or practitioners.

Your operations plan should also account for laws and regulations governing your school, business, or practice, including, for example:

- Government orders setting health and safety requirements for businesses conducting in-person operations;
- Federal, state, and local employment laws on employee leave, work schedules, discrimination, and reasonable accommodation requirements; and
- Federal, state, and local workplace safety regulations, including those set by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (if located in the United States).

In developing your plan, you should also consult guidance issued by leading health and safety authorities, such as those below.

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration, [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [Resources for Businesses and Employers](#)
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), [Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act](#)
- U.S. Department of Labor, [Coronavirus Resources](#)
- World Health Organization, [Getting Your Workplace Ready for COVID-19 Guide](#)

Implementing Your Plan Consistently and Effectively

Once you set a plan, it is important to make sure that you implement it consistently and effectively. Failure to do so could lead to injuries, illness, or even potential liability.

Consider how you will implement your operations plan. It may be helpful to develop written policies and procedures that govern how you will handle certain situations or accomplish specific tasks. It will also be helpful to post signage, both on site and online, to instruct and set expectations for staff, teachers, students, and other patrons in your school, studio, and/or other physical location.

For example, if you plan to resume some in-person classes, develop a policy that sets your standards for:

- Maximum class size;
- Maximum class duration;

- Space configuration to maintain social distancing;
- Rules preventing or regarding hands-on adjustments or other touching;
- Pre-class health screening of employees and students (e.g., taking one's temperature);
- Pre- and post-class cleaning regimens;
- Face-covering rules;
- Rules on the use of mats brought from home and on the sharing of mats;
- Rules restricting or limiting the use of blocks, blankets, straps, and any other communal equipment;
- Personal protective equipment requirements for teachers and students; and
- Rules on the use of facilities including lockers, changing rooms, bathroom, and showers as well as the storage of personal belongings during class(es).

Having a written policy will make it easier to stay consistent and to engage your staff and community in making sure your standards are met (even if you are not providing direct oversight).

Moreover, consider developing procedures, signage, checklists, or other documentation to guide and routinize tasks and to encourage consistent practices. For example, consider creating a procedure that governs studio cleaning and accounts for:

- All spaces, furniture, equipment, and surfaces that must be cleaned;
- Cleaning schedule with increased cleaning frequency to areas touched more often (e.g., doorknobs);
- Cleaning products to be used;
- Process to document that cleaning has taken place (e.g., a checklist or log); and
- Process to document and/or escalate any identified unsafe conditions.

If you work with others, consider how to communicate your policies and processes. You may need to: walk employees, teachers, and volunteers through your new policies; provide handouts and conduct trainings; and practice protocols. It may be helpful to conduct scenario drills, exercises, or workshops to make sure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in the event of an incident or emergency.

Review and Evaluate

As you build experience with your new protocols and learn more about operating during a public health emergency, and especially as new guidance becomes available, set time aside to review and evaluate your plans, policies, and procedures on a regular basis. Ask yourself:

- Are your written documents up to date?
- Do you need to update or modify your plan, policies, or procedures?
- Do you need more procedures to help guide tasks?
- Are there new rules or guidance that you need to address?

iii. Recommended Health and Protective Measures

As discussed in Section II, Yoga Alliance recommends that yoga schools, businesses, and professionals develop plans to protect the health and well-being of teachers, students and practitioners, and the broader community. To support this objective, we are providing the below health and safety measures for review and consideration. All of the recommendations that follow are based on guidance from leading public health organizations and experts, U.S.-based federal and state agencies, legal advisers, and Yoga Alliance's collective expertise on yoga business operations and yoga practice. These will help to create layers of protection against the primary method of transmission of the coronavirus, which is indicated by the CDC to be through close contact from person to person. COVID-19 also has been shown to be transmissible while not actively displaying symptoms.

According to these expert sources, [maintaining good social distance](#) (within about six feet) is very important in preventing the spread of COVID-19. The virus can spread through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, and these droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Yoga Alliance recognizes that schools, studios, and other classes and programs that take place in locations of all kinds operate differently and are subject to varying regulatory requirements; therefore, they may develop their own protocols to promote health and safety. For this reason, the following measures are not provided with the expectation that they will be adopted in totality. Rather, Yoga Alliance encourages all yoga schools, businesses, and professionals to assess their legal obligations, to explore guidance from health and safety authorities, and to use their overall best judgment in adopting and implementing protective measures. In fact, some of the following recommendations may necessitate that businesses and professionals weigh competing priorities (such as the benefits of CDC-approved disinfectants vs. the use of natural substances) and make the best decisions for themselves and their communities.

Consider Conducting Temperature Checks: Consider conducting temperature checks via a touchless infrared thermometer of every individual, including staff, teachers, volunteers, students, and practitioners. The CDC has [recommended](#) regular health checks, including temperature checks to identify individuals with a fever, as a community mitigation strategy to slow virus transmission. It defines a fever as a measured temperature of 100.4 degrees F/38 degrees C or higher.¹ Follow public health guidance indicating when it is safe for symptomatic individuals to return to public spaces.

Limit People in Studio: Assess the maximum number of people who can be physically present in your space without coming into close contact with each other. Your assessment should include class space as well as bathrooms, hallways, and

¹ Please note that several states and local municipalities have implemented orders or issued guidance requiring or urging temperate checks for returning employees, so be sure to check the rules in your area. The EEOC has issued guidance stating that temperature checks of employees do not violate the Americans with Disabilities Act.

other common areas. To limit the number of people coming to your studio/class at a given time, consider requiring advance sign-up for any students or practitioners using online or telephonic scheduling.

Ask Screening Questions: When individuals—staff, teachers, volunteers, students, or practitioners—arrive, ask questions of each person: have you had a cough? Have you had a fever? Do you live with anyone who is sick or quarantined? If anyone answers affirmatively, send them home.

Provide Advance Notifications: Inform people that they should not sign-up or come to the studio/class if they have a cough, are running a fever, or have been exposed to someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is experiencing [COVID-19 symptoms](#). Notify individuals of the health and safety policies that they will be expected to follow if they come to your studio/class.

Maintain Social Distancing: Configure your space to [maintain social distancing](#). Measure and mark distances of six (6) feet or more from outside your school's or studio's perimeter to within the inside of the registration area, boutique, bathrooms, locker rooms, and/or class space. Consider additional space as needed to accomplish social distancing. Maintain at minimum six (6) feet between all yoga mats. Do not offer hands-on assists.

Require Face Coverings: The CDC has [recommended](#) that all individuals wear cloth face masks in public and areas where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain in order to protect themselves and those around them. According to [recent reports](#), roughly 25 percent of people with coronavirus are thought to be asymptomatic, and people who contract COVID-19 usually don't develop symptoms until four or five days after being infected. Require teachers, students, and practitioners to wear protective masks at all times when not in yoga practice; encourage them to wear them to the extent possible while in practice. Consider providing masks to all students and practitioners. Sanitize all reusable masks regularly and between each use.

Promote (and Require) Hand Washing and Good Hygiene: Require staff and volunteers to [hand wash with soap and warm water for a minimum of twenty \(20\) seconds](#) before and after every registration period. Require teachers to hand wash with soap and warm water for a minimum of twenty (20) seconds before and after every class. [Hang signs](#) and encourage all students and practitioners to practice hand washing best practices.

Post signs in each bathroom and around the studio with respect to [cough-and-sneeze etiquette](#) (cover your mouth and nose with a tissue and then throwing it away, using upper sleeve if a tissue is not available, refraining from touching your mouth, nose, and eyes, etc.). Make tissues available to the extent possible.

Limit Contact Surfaces: The CDC has [advised](#) that it may be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. In an abundance of caution, work to minimize the surfaces that are touched by multiple people. For example, offer no-touch trash cans where possible and place them by the door(s). Remove all unnecessary items, like décor, from common spaces. In retail areas, encourage students and practitioners to only touch what they plan to purchase.

Invest in Up-Levelled Cleaning Protocol: According to the CDC, cleaning and disinfection decreases how much of the virus is on surfaces and objects, which reduces the risk of exposure. Create a [cleaning and disinfection plan](#) for school, studio, classroom space, and other common areas. Cleaning should take place regularly. Use disinfectants that are [EPA-approved](#) against COVID-19. Allow for ten (10) minutes for sprays and up to four (4) minutes for disinfectant wipes before wiping dry.

Clean the bathroom(s) before and after each class, including floors, sinks, and toilet bowls. Clean the studio floors before and after each class. Wipe telephones, keyboards, door handles, bathroom faucets, front desk surfaces, and anything that staff, teachers, or students commonly touch.

Stock Supplies: Stock and maintain products to clean and disinfect, including handwashing soap, paper towels, alcohol-based hand sanitizers (containing at least 60% alcohol), and [EPA-approved disinfectants](#) against COVID-19. If approved disinfectants are in short supply, the CDC recommends alternative disinfectants (for example, 1/3 cup of bleach added to 1 gallon of water). If you are unable to stock necessary supplies, suggest that people bring their own or consider a temporary closure until you are able to restock.

Restrict Use of Communal Mats and Props: Require students to bring their own yoga mats. Provide sanitizing wipes or sprays to disinfect mats before and after use. Do not offer props or allow students to bring their own props.

Restrict Payment Options to Avoid Person-to-Person Contact: Consider accepting only electronic (e.g., credit/debit card or mobile) payments, if possible, ideally using touch/swipe/no signature technology. Do not accept cash if you can avoid it. Clean pens for signature before and after each use.

Provide Policies for Sick Staff and Teachers: To reduce transmission, it is important for sick workers to stay home. Develop policies to ensure that sick staff and teachers stay home. Consider your leave and time off policies and be flexible with work schedules. Be sure to adhere to all federal, state, and local employment laws and regulations regarding leave and reasonable accommodations. For more information on employer responsibilities, visit the websites of the [U.S. Department of Labor](#) and [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#).

Maintain Records for Contact Tracing: Maintain clear records of who is present in the school or studio at any given time. In the event of notice of an infected visitor, records of others present at that time will be important to help identify who may have come in contact with the infected visitor.

Create Notice Mechanisms: Establish notice mechanisms to notify staff, teachers, volunteers, and students in the event you become aware that an infected, or potentially infected, person was at the school or studio. It is important to make sure that you have contact information for employees and students if contact is required.

Be mindful of privacy. If you provide notice, omit identifying details about the person infected or suspected to be infected.

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted you, your families, and our community significantly and immeasurably. As we navigate this period together, Yoga Alliance is continuing to monitor our community and develop guidance and resources for our members. Please be sure to visit us at our [COVID-19 resource site](#).

Reach out to us with feedback, questions, or concerns at 1-888-921-9642 (YOGA) or at info@yogaalliance.org. Thank you for the work that you do for your communities—always, and especially now in these difficult times.