

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives



2023 Session Operations Plan

I. OVERVIEW

The Washington State House of Representatives (House) is committed to doing the people's work while reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. This document provides guidelines for House operations during the 2023 Session.

The following imperatives guided the development of this document:

- Ensuring accountable and transparent operations of the House;
- Preserving and enhancing public participation; and
- Protecting the health and safety of the public, House members, and staff.

This document relies on the latest guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), local public health authorities, the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I), and the Department of Health (DOH). Changes will be communicated and implemented as we receive new information or guidance.

II. 2023 SESSION OPERATIONS

The House will hold the 2023 Legislative Session in-person, while adjusting operations to support the health and safety of all of those who are on the capitol campus. To mitigate the spread of illness, anyone who is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or sickness due to a respiratory illness should refrain from physically entering House facilities.

During House floor sessions, the public may view sessions from the gallery or on TVW. The public may also view committee meetings in the public seating areas of hearing rooms or on TVW. The public has an option to provide testimony either in-person or remotely. Anyone signing up to testify remotely will be provided a zoom link. Members and staff may meet with the public in-person, virtually, or via a hybrid format. Access to House chamber wings is permitted in accordance with House rules, however staff should be mindful of crowding and limit their time in the wings. Members and staff who are ill should take the necessary time and leave to recover. However, in the event a member is ill but wishes to participate in committee or floor activity, the member should reach out to their respective leadership for alternative ways to participate. Staff should reach out to their staff directors.

The gallery and hearing room seating has been adjusted to mitigate crowding. House conference rooms have adjusted seating and have also been configured to support hybrid meetings. The hearing rooms, galleries and conference rooms have been outfitted with HEPA air purifiers. Hand sanitizing stations are located at various high traffic locations throughout the facilities. Staff and members may obtain KN-95 or KF-94 masks from House Human Resources, the Chief Clerk's Office, or Security.

Surgical masks will be available for the public at House Security, the entrances to the hearing rooms, and the reception or check-in locations for each work group. Rapid antigen COVID-19 tests are available from House Human Resources for staff and members to self-administer. DES will clean hearing rooms in-between committee meetings.

Anyone who has questions or concerns is encouraged to contact the Human Resources Director, House Counsel, or Chief Clerk's Office.

III. EXPECTATIONS FOR HOUSE OPERATIONS

Everyone is asked to continue efforts to keep each other safe by reducing the likelihood for transmission of COVID-19 or other respiratory illnesses. These include adhering to the following guidelines:

1. Anyone who is sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or other respiratory illnesses should refrain from entering House facilities. Signs are posted to remind everyone to be aware of symptoms. Members or staff who are ill should take the necessary time and leave to recover.
2. While masks are not required to be worn, anyone may opt to wear a mask. Moreover, masks are recommended by public health while indoors.¹ Members and staff must not prohibit masks from being worn or otherwise discourage their use. Members or staff may ask others who attend in-person meetings in their workspace to wear a mask for such meetings. While masks are generally optional, there are instances identified by public health guidance where they are required. See section IV below for masking requirements.
3. Everyone should continue to practice proper respiratory etiquette² (for example, hand washing, covering mouth when coughing, and covering mouth and nose when sneezing), and disinfecting of shared spaces (kitchen and copiers) after use.
4. Staff and members may pick up three boxes (6 tests) per week of rapid-antigen COVID test kits from House Human Resources (Leg 131) to self-administer. The House will track test kits to facilitate ordering enough testing supplies through session.
5. If a person is in an at-risk category and needs a work accommodation (including a need to access a building facility or a need to continue to telework when they would otherwise be directed to work in a building facility) they should notify the House HR Director, [Niki Pavlicek](#) (x7030). Supervisors who are contacted by staff for a work accommodation must notify the House HR Director.
6. While in-person meetings may occur in House facilities or other spaces, the House continues to encourage virtual or hybrid meetings. House conference rooms on the capitol campus are set up to support hybrid meetings.

IV. COVID SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Under RCW 49.17.064, employers are required to provide notification to employees of potential exposure to an infectious or contagious disease during a public health emergency either declared by the president of the U.S. or the Governor of Washington.³ The federal emergency declaration for COVID-19 remains in place.⁴ In order for the House to provide timely notice of potential exposure, members and staff who test positive must report this information to House Counsel at 786-7767 (ohad.lowy@leg.wa.gov).

Members and staff must provide House Counsel with information regarding the areas they have occupied and with whom they have had close contact (within 6 feet for 15 or more minutes in a 24-hour period). This enables the notification message to be addressed to the appropriate recipients. Anyone who has symptoms, even if testing negative, should refrain from accessing House facilities while ill. If staff and members receive positive test results for COVID-19, they should follow CDC precautions.

Members and staff should adhere to these guidelines:

1. Those who have been exposed to COVID-19 do not need to quarantine. However, staff and members who have been exposed to COVID-19 must wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days regardless of vaccination status or previous infection. Staff and members should also test on day 6. The date of exposure is Day 0.⁵
2. Those who test positive for COVID-19 while onsite should immediately put on a mask, exit House facilities, and notify House Counsel and if staff, their staff director as well.
3. Those who are asymptomatic and have tested positive for COVID-19 may not enter House facilities for five full days from the date they tested positive. The day they test positive is considered Day 0. If on Day 6 you continue to be asymptomatic, you can leave isolation and continue to wear through Day 10.
 - a. If an asymptomatic person subsequently does develop symptoms within 10-days of the initial test, the day they first develop symptoms is considered Day 0, and must follow the instructions for symptomatic individuals in the paragraph below⁶
4. Those who test positive for COVID-19 and develop symptoms, may not enter House facilities for five full days from the date they developed symptoms. The day they first develop symptoms is considered Day 0.
 - a. After Day 5, a person whose symptoms are improving may end isolation if they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.
 - b. After Day 5, a person whose symptoms are not improving continues to isolate until they are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and their symptoms improve.
 - c. After Day 5, a person who continues to experience symptoms and who had moderate to severe symptoms, or who has a weakened immune system should continue to isolate through Day 10. If you are unsure if your symptoms are moderate or severe or if you have a weakened immune system, talk to a healthcare provider for further guidance.
5. If a member or staff tests positive for COVID-19, whenever they leave isolation, they **must** continue to wear a well-fitting mask through Day 10.
6. Members and staff who are ill should take the necessary time and leave to recover.

V. MOVING FORWARD

As has been the case during sessions since the pandemic began, the Chief Clerk's Office will continue to monitor public health guidance and adjust operations as necessary. This may also include returning to more restricted access of House facilities if staff or operations are compromised. House member and staff diligence, grace, and flexibility are essential.

Thank you all for your contribution to keeping our workspace healthy.

¹ See:

<https://www.thurstoncountywa.gov/phss/Coronavirus/PublishingImages/Lists/Coronavirus%20FAQs/NewsroomFAQs/Local%20health%20officers%20and%20healthcare%20leaders%20recommend%20wearing%20masks%20indoors.pdf>

² See: <https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infectioncontrol/faqs/respiratory-hygiene.html>

³ See: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=49.17.064>

⁴ See: <https://aspr.hhs.gov/legal/PHE/Pages/default.aspx>

⁵ See: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/if-you-were-exposed.html>

⁶ *Id.*