

# Protect Your Household

## Updated Business Guidance (2-12-2021)

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Rhode Island hit Pause for three weeks, ending December 20. The Pause was implemented to keep COVID-19 hospitalizations below hospital capacity limits and to reduce community transmission of COVID-19 by dialing down overall mobility and social activity. Beginning December 21, Rhode Island began slowly dialing up economic and social activity while continuing to maintain necessary social and commercial restrictions. The State will continue to dial restrictions up and down to balance public health and economic need.

Overview of changes to Executive Orders and Guidance as of February 12, 2021:

- Social gathering size: two households indoors and three households outdoors
- Venues of Assembly and Houses of Worship: May operate at 40% capacity, but not more than 125 people may be present at the event or venue
- Bar areas: Now open until 11 p.m., limited to two households with a maximum of four people seated together and seated for no longer than 90 minutes

The guidance below outlines frequently asked questions relating to post-Pause restrictions implemented via Executive Orders 20-108, 21-09, 21-11, and 21-13. Unless specifically indicated via Executive Order, all Phase III regulations and guidance carry forward through this period. All Phase III guidance continues to be available on [www.ReopeningRI.com](http://www.ReopeningRI.com). Individuals and business owners are encouraged to review community and industry-specific guidance documents online. Additional public health guidance relating to quarantine, isolation and travel can be found through the RIDOH website at [www.covid.ri.gov](http://www.covid.ri.gov).

All Rhode Islanders are encouraged to continue protecting their households at all times by (1) wearing a mask, (2) getting tested often, and (3) limiting interactions with individuals outside of their households.

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### Social Gatherings

The social gathering size changed to two households indoors and three households outdoors. Who does that mean I can gather with?

As of February 12, you may gather with up to one other household inside and up to two other households outside. If you do gather with one or more households outside of your own, you should gather with the same household(s) every time. In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) still strongly recommends that you only gather with the people you live with.

Does the social gathering size – two households indoors and three households outdoors – apply when I go to a restaurant?

Yes, restaurant dining is limited to two households indoors or three households outdoors, up to a maximum of 8 people. Bar seating is limited to two households, up to a maximum of 4 people. Restaurants must follow existing restaurant guidance and Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH)'s Safe Activities regulation regarding physical distancing, mask wearing when not eating or drinking, and other public health protocols.

## Catered Events

### Are catered events allowed?

Yes. During this period, catered events must be held in accordance with restaurant rules. They may only occur in non-residential settings with the licensed caterer on site. Indoor catered events for more than thirty (30) people are prohibited. Outdoor catered events for more than fifty (50) people are prohibited. Indoor weddings with licensed catering on site in a non-residential setting may have up to fifty (50) people. Catered events with more than 15 attendees must also require pre-event testing (i.e. rapid testing at the door and/or evidence of negative test within the 48hrs leading up to the event) and have a designated COVID Safety Officer in attendance.

### 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 with 15 or more attendees, including weddings, must test negative for COVID-19 (via PCR or rapid testing) within the 48 hours leading up to the event and provide proof of a negative test to the event's designated COVID Safety Officer. The Department of Health recommends that employees and attendees test negative as close to the event date and time as possible.

### What is a COVID Safety Officer and how do I ensure compliance at my catered event?

All events must have a designated COVID Safety Officer that is present on-site for the entire duration of the event. The COVID Safety Officer must be familiar with all COVID event executive orders, regulations, and guidance and ensure employees and attendees are in compliance. The COVID Safety Officer 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.

The COVID Safety Officer will be the point of contact for the Department of Health's case investigation and contact tracing efforts. To facilitate this process, the COVID Safety Officer must keep a list of all event employees and attendees, including each person's contact information.

Lastly, the COVID Safety Officer must verify all event employees and attendees have tested negative within the 48 hours leading up to the event. If any employee or attendee has tested positive, they may not attend or work the event and must follow the Department of Health's isolation guidance.

## Funerals

### Are funerals allowed?

Funerals taking place at houses of worship must adhere to the Houses of Worship capacity limits of 25%, but not more than 125 people. Indoor wakes and other group-based ceremonies and activities relating to wakes and funerals are allowed, with a maximum of 15 people indoors, and 25 outdoors/gravesite. Masking and 6ft physical distancing between members of different households must be maintained at all times.

## Venues of Assembly (e.g. Event/Performance Venues)

### Are venues of assembly such as event venues, performance venues, or movie theaters allowed to be open?

Indoor and outdoor venues of assembly, including event venues, performing arts venues, movie theaters, professional spectator sporting events, and comedy clubs may operate at 40% capacity, but not more than 125 people may be present at the event or venue. Events where singing or any other performances occur must be done in accordance with RIDOH regulations for live performances, including, but not limited to, requiring performers to be spaced at least fourteen (14) feet apart.

Should venues of assembly continue to hold virtual performances or events?

Yes. All indoor venues of assembly are encouraged to continue virtual performances and events.

## 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 40% capacity, but not more than 125 people with at least 6 feet physical distancing between households. Houses of worship where the facility's space can accommodate significantly more than 125 persons within the facility's 40% capacity limit may submit a detailed COVID-19 control plan to the Department of Business Regulation (DBR) to exceed the 125 person cap. Plan approval shall be at the discretion of DBR and any approved plan must be predicated on preventing the spread of COVID-19 and adequately address physical distancing and ingress and egress.

## Childcare and Education

Will childcare facilities remain open?

Yes. Childcare facilities will remain open. Facilities are not required to change their current operations, but should review the updated quarantine guidance at <https://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, recently 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 be offering 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.

## Healthcare and Nursing Homes

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

Yes. Health care 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; however, 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

[Are restaurants allowed to continue in-person dining options?](#)

Outdoor dining is allowed and encouraged. Indoor dining is allowed at up to 50% of the restaurant's seating capacity. Indoor table seating at restaurants is limited to two households, not to exceed a total of (8) people per party, provided that all members of the party wear masks when not eating or drinking and follow other public health protocols. Outdoors, restaurants may seat up to three households together, not to exceed a total of eight (8) people, provided that all members of the party wear masks when not eating or drinking and follow other public health protocols.

[How are restaurants expected to ensure party size is limited to two households indoors and three households outdoors?](#)

When taking a reservation or receiving a non-reserved party at the restaurant, the restaurant must not seat parties of greater than (8) and must ask whether the party to be seated consists of no more than two households for indoor dining or no more than three households for outdoor dining. A restaurant must also post the party size rules prominently at its entrance and at its host/hostess desk or reception area.

[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 two households per party, up to a maximum of four people in the 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 6 feet of spacing between parties unless parties are separated by plexiglass or another similar divider and there is at least 3 feet of spacing between parties.

After 11 p.m. the bar area must be roped off or otherwise physically separated from the rest of the space in the establishment. 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 Reopening guidance for Restaurants.

[Are restaurants required to close early?](#)

No. As of January 29, 2021, the state's early closure restrictions (i.e. curfew) were lifted. However, bar areas within restaurants must be closed by 11 p.m.

## Gyms and Fitness Centers

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

Indoors and outdoors, gyms and fitness centers may resume operations at one person per 125 square feet. Customers/members must be separated by six feet indoors.

Indoor and outdoor group classes are permitted, provided appropriate spacing and that no person may come in physical contact with another person. One-on-one or personal training is permitted. Fitness activities that require physical contact between or with participants are not permitted.

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 individuals or reduce the one person per 125 square feet capacity limit, with DBR approval.

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

Requests for DBR approval or for clarifications on the above may be made here: <https://dbr.ri.gov/covid/plans/plans.php>.

## Sporting Facilities and School Sports

### Are indoor sporting facilities allowed to resume operations?

Indoor sporting facilities are allowed to resume operations at one (1) person per 125 square feet.

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

Yes. These facilities may resume operations at one (1) person per 125 square feet.

### May sports resume?

Beginning January 20, 2021, games and competitions were allowed to resume for moderate and lower risk sports. Practices (not competitions) were allowed to resume for higher risk sports provided close and sustained contact is avoided. Additional information can be found here: <https://reopeningri.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/20210120-Sports-FAQs-Updated-Final.pdf>. A list of sports sorted by risk level can be found here: <https://reopeningri.com/parks-recreation>.

### 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 during this time. 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.

### What are athletes and coaches encouraged to do?

Athletes are encouraged to exercise, train, and develop skills at home, alone, or with their household members. Coaches are encouraged to connect with the team virtually to encourage athletes to exercise and train, review game strategy, etc.

## Retail Stores

### Will retail stores remain open?

Customers may still shop at retail stores, though local and online shopping is encouraged. Retail stores of less than 30,000 square feet must limit the number of customers within the store at any time to no more than one (1) customer per 100 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, including employees, to one (1) occupant per 150 square feet, and, additionally, must manage their capacity limits by monitoring the store entrances.

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 20-98](#).

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

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

## Museums and Historical Sites

### Will museums and historical sites be open?

Museums and historical sites may remain open, with the number of patrons limited to no more than 1 per 100 square feet. Non-recreation/entertainment operations (e.g. restaurants) within museum and historical sites may remain open under applicable requirements in RIDOH's Safe Activities regulations and industry-specific guidance. Facilities must ensure that customers maintain physical distancing, wear masks at all times, and follow other public health protocols. No indoor group-based tours, classes, lectures or presentations are allowed.

## Recreation and Entertainment

### May recreation and entertainment facilities resume operations?

Yes. Indoor recreation and entertainment facilities and operations may operate at 1 person per 125 square feet and must ensure that individuals remain six (6) feet apart from members outside their household or fourteen feet apart for activities involving singing or performances (e.g. karaoke).

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 the social gathering size, physical distancing, and other public health protocols can be maintained; outdoor operations that require interactions between different households are prohibited.

Requests for clarifications may be made here: <https://dbr.ri.gov/covid/plans/plans.php>.

## Offices and Other Businesses

I work in an office. Are offices closed?

Offices are allowed to have up to 33% 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](http://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 in adherence to RIDOH's Safe Activities regulations and guidance.

## Classification of Businesses and Organizations

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

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