

Senate Session Guidelines

The Washington State Senate is committed to maintaining a safe working environment and reducing the likelihood for transmission of the COVID-19 disease. These guidelines direct the members, staff, and workspaces of the Senate and are not intended to address the House of Representatives or Department of Enterprise Services staff or activities. This document is based on the latest guidance from the federal [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), the [Department of Health](#), [local public health authorities](#), and the [Department of Labor & Industries](#) and will be regularly updated. Changes will be communicated to staff and members as new guidance is provided. As guidance is constantly evolving, staff and members are encouraged to contact the Human Resource Officer (HRO) or the Secretary's Office if they have questions or concerns.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the goal of Senate Administration and Leadership in creating these guidelines is to provide for a legislative session that balances the following priorities:

- 1. A session that is safe.** Of paramount importance to Senate Administration and Leadership is the safety of Senate staff, the public, and the legislators charged with conducting the people's work.
- 2. A session that is transparent.** This legislative session will look unlike any other. But each necessary change taken to preserve the safety of Senate staff and legislators has been carefully balanced with the need for transparency to the public that holds its elected officials accountable.
- 3. A session that not only preserves, but enhances, public participation.** Increased efforts have been taken wherever possible to make the legislative process more open and accessible to those who may not have traditionally been able to participate in pre-COVID times. As a result, lessons learned will be taken beyond this pandemic to create additional transparency and increase public participation across our state.
- 4. A session that functions efficiently.** Our state Constitution charges the Senate with conducting the people's work within 60 days. To accomplish this during these unprecedented times will take great flexibility, nimbleness, and efficiency.

1. Overarching Public Health Principles

The following guidelines set the minimum public health standards for Senate workspaces. A Senate workgroup and/or member office is empowered to set standards which may be stricter than what Senate Facilities & Operations has adopted. Staff directors and legislators are advised to coordinate with the Senate HRO before implementing guidelines for their workspaces that may differ from the minimum standards set forth below.

Any person authorized to work on-site during the legislative session will be required to wear a mask in all legislative facilities unless alone in their office. This includes hallways, bathrooms, and outdoor locations where social distancing of at least 6 feet is difficult to maintain. The Senate will provide masks in

compliance with guidance from the Department of Labor and Industries. Senate-issued masks must be worn on the Senate floor at all times.

Staff and members should continue to maintain distance at all times. Staff and members are advised not to congregate in public spaces when walking throughout legislative facilities.

2. Who is authorized to work onsite during session?

Legislators and employees are encouraged to continue teleworking as much as possible. All in-person meetings are suspended. Visitors and members of the public will not be permitted in Senate facilities.

All members and staff working on campus must submit to onsite Senate-approved testing and have a confirmed negative test before entering Senate facilities. Tests will be offered on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and each day there is floor action. The Senate will cover all testing costs.

Members of the press may view floor action from the galleries. They must provide a Senate-approved confirmed negative test to Security before entering the galleries. Onsite Senate-approved testing will be provided. Access to the galleries by other members of the public is currently under review.

The Senate will reassess this plan at least every two weeks and make adjustments as conditions allow.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have identified [certain people who are at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#). If an employee or legislator is at increased risk for severe illness and in need of an accommodation they should contact the HRO.

Member Office Staffing:

- Legislators who wish to work onsite are reminded that their legislative assistants will continue to be encouraged to telework whenever possible. However, legislative assistants may present to campus if desired in accordance with the testing protocol. To assess testing needs for the legislative session, all legislators must submit an office staffing plan to the Senate HRO.
- Accommodations will be made for legislative assistants who should not physically present to campus in light of increased risk of exposure to themselves or members of their households.
- Members' offices with two legislative assistants may opt to have both legislative assistants onsite in accordance with social distancing requirements.
- Session aides should work remotely as much as possible. Members who wish to have session aides working in person may do so, and must include details on how this will be done in accordance with Senate guidelines in their office staffing plan.
- The Legislative Internship Program will operate remotely. The Senate Page Program is suspended for the 2022 Legislative Session.

Other Senate Workgroups:

- To assess testing needs for the legislative session, staff directors must submit a general session staffing plan to the Senate HRO. In creating a staffing plan, staff directors should keep in mind how

many employees are physically present on campus each day to ensure that social distancing can be maintained throughout the buildings.

- Accommodations will continue to be made for those Senate employees who should not physically present to campus due to increased risk of exposure to themselves or members of their household.

3. How will floor action work?

Member Participation:

- Floor action will be conducted in a hybrid format with some members participating in-person on the Senate floor and some members participating remotely. Taking into account the presiding officer and the number of rostrum and IT staff required to be present in order to run floor operations, the maximum number of members allowed on the floor will be 15, to be divided between 8 Democrats and 7 Republicans.
- Members must remain socially distanced. Arrows will be placed on the Senate floor to direct foot traffic and help maintain social distance throughout the day. Masks will be provided by the Senate and must be worn on the floor at all times, in accordance with guidance from the Department of Labor and Industries.
- The President of the Senate, together with the Senate Floor Leaders, will enforce mask and social distance rules and may call upon the Sergeant at Arms when necessary.

Caucus Floor Staffing and Access to Wings:

- A maximum of 3 staff members per caucus will be permitted in the Senate Wings during floor action.
- **No other staffers should congregate in the wings.** Members should contact necessary staff electronically while on the floor and may not invite additional staff into the wings.

Caucus Meetings:

- Caucus meetings will take place remotely on the Senate's Intranet.

Testing Protocols:

- Irrespective of vaccination status, all members and designated staff must test before presenting to the floor each day at no additional cost to the member or employee.

Senate Dining Room:

- The member dining room will be closed.
- On floor action days, boxed lunches will be made available at the request of members, designated caucus staff, and administrative floor staff.
- On non-floor action days, a limited number of self-serve boxed lunches will be available for members in the Senate Dining Room.

4. How will committee action work?

Committee meetings will continue to be held remotely via Zoom given the public health risk of people congregating at the Capitol from different parts of the state. Unfortunately, even despite the boon of vaccines, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread in our communities. New strains of the virus have thwarted plans for what we had initially hoped would be a "normal" legislative session.

While disappointing, we received overwhelming feedback praising the increased transparency and accessibility that remote hearings provided during the 2021 legislative session. Members of the public had the opportunity to sign in and testify directly from their homes, places of business, or wherever was most convenient for them.

Using the electronic sign-in process already utilized by legislative committees, the public will be able to sign-in up to one hour in advance of a scheduled committee meeting to receive a unique Zoom link. Chairs will then decide the order and length of public testimony as would be the case with an in-person committee meeting.

Additional procedures for committees to increase transparency and ensure public participation will be adopted via both Senate Resolution and Senate Committee Services guidelines.

5. Will the public have access to legislative buildings?

The Legislative Building is operated by the Department of Enterprise Services and, as of July 1, 2021, is open to the public.

Member Office Access

- Senate facilities are closed to visitors and members of the public.

Viewing Floor Action:

- Members of the press may view floor action from the galleries and submit to onsite Senate-approved testing.
- TVW will continue to broadcast all floor and committee action via their cable and web streaming platforms.
- Access to the galleries by members of the public is currently under review.

6. How will COVID-19 safety protocols be enforced?

Senate Security will be responsible for enforcing COVID-19 safety protocols, including testing verification and mask requirements. Any person who refuses to follow safety protocols will be escorted from Senate facilities by Security. Staff and members should contact Security if any problems arise.

7. How will the physical space of the Senate be prepared?

The Secretary will coordinate with the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) and Legislative Support Services (LSS) to make arrangements for the following:

- Ensure that ventilation and filtration systems are updated consistent with CDC guidelines.
- Make improvements to the engineering controls using the building's ventilation system.
- Identify problem areas for physical distancing and make changes such as removing or blocking seating limiting capacity in certain rooms or making certain narrow passages "one-way."

- Ensure availability and proper placement of sanitizing materials (e.g. wipes and hand sanitizer), protective equipment, tissues, and wastebaskets.
- Provide signage to reinforce safe practices.
- Support respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene. This includes, for example, making tissues available, providing soap and water, placing hand sanitizers in multiple locations, and displaying posters to remind individuals to wash their hands and refrain from touching their faces or masks.
- Perform routine environmental cleaning and disinfection, particularly of surfaces that are frequently touched.

8. What training and resources will staff and members receive prior to the start of session?

Prior to the start of session, members and staff will be required to become familiar with Senate guidelines and safety practices. The HRO will be available for questions and concerns regarding safety protocols and work accommodations. (See [General Requirements and Prevention Ideas for Workplaces](#)) Reference materials will be posted on the [Senate intranet](#).

The Secretary's Office will also regularly disseminate the latest data from DOH regarding COVID-19 infection rates around the state.

9. What happens if a member or employee is experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19?

The following symptoms are associated with COVID-19:

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| • Fever (subjective or greater than or equal to 100.4°F) | • Headache |
| • Chills | • Muscle or body aches |
| • Cough | • Sore throat |
| • Loss of sense of taste and/or smell | • Congestion or runny nose |
| • Shortness of breath | • Nausea or vomiting |
| • Fatigue | • Diarrhea (at least 2 loose stools in 24 hours) |

Testing and Isolation Requirements when a member or employee is experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19:

- If a member or employee is experiencing one or more symptoms associated with COVID-19, they must be tested for COVID-19 and may not return to legislative facilities until they receive a negative test.
- **Non-COVID Diagnosis:** If a health care provider makes a non-COVID alternative diagnosis that explains all symptoms, a member or employee should isolate until at least 24 hours after fever resolves without use of fever reducing medication AND symptoms have improved.
- **Awaiting test results:** If a member or employee is tested for COVID-19 for any reason, they must not enter legislative facilities until they receive a negative result.

Please note: A member or employee experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should not enter legislative facilities and should arrange for testing elsewhere. If you have symptoms and should instead seek [community-based testing](#) that is designed to serve symptomatic people.

10. What if a member or employee tests positive for COVID-19 and has been in legislative facilities?

If staff or members test positive for COVID-19 with the Senate’s on-site testing, they should immediately leave legislative facilities and contact the HRO for next steps. The HRO will provide them with information about CDC isolation guidelines and when they may return to campus. They should be prepared to share the names of close contacts and places in legislative facilities where employees may have potentially been exposed.

If staff and members receive positive test results for COVID-19 in a place other than the Senate’s on-site testing, they should contact the HRO for information on when they may return to campus. If they have been in legislative facilities during the infectious period, they will also be asked to share the names of close contacts and places in legislative facilities where employees may have potentially been exposed.

DES will clean and disinfect to minimize the potential of other employees being exposed to respiratory droplets. They will wait 24 hours before beginning the disinfecting process, but if 24 hours is not feasible, they will wait as long as possible. During this waiting period, the Senate will open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in these areas.

Requirements if Asymptomatic:

An asymptomatic person who has tested positive for COVID-19 may not enter Senate facilities for five full days from the date they tested positive. The day they test positive is considered day “0”. If an asymptomatic person does develop symptoms following the initial test, the day they first develop symptoms is considered day “0”.

After day five, a person should take a home antigen test. If the home antigen test is negative, they are cleared to enter Senate facilities to participate in the onsite testing for access. If the home antigen test is positive, they should wait until day 10 to enter Senate facilities for testing and access.

Requirements if Symptomatic:

If a person has tested positive for COVID-19 and develops symptoms, they may not enter Senate facilities for five full days from the date they developed symptoms. The day they first develop symptoms is considered day “0”. They must also be fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and their symptoms must be improving.

After day five, a person should take a home antigen test. If the home antigen test is negative, they are cleared to enter Senate facilities to participate in the onsite testing for access. If the home antigen test is positive, they should wait until day 10 to enter Senate facilities for testing and access.

Continued Positive Tests:

In certain cases, a person might continue to test positive on a home antigen test after 10 days of isolation. In these cases, the person should consult with a medical provider and may enter Senate facilities if cleared by their provider. Medical clearance should be provided to the HRO prior to entering Senate facilities so access arrangements can be made.

Detailed information on isolation and quarantine requirements can be found in these [CDC Guidelines](#).

Notification Information:

The Senate will work with local public health authorities and follow DOH and CDC guidelines to reduce the risk of transmission in the workplace. Additionally, the Senate will notify employees and members who may have been determined to be a close contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19 in the workplace and notify them of next steps. Exposure to COVID-19 means that someone has been within 6 feet of a person with a confirmed COVID-19 infection for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. Pursuant to the Health Emergency Labor Standards Act, the Senate will also notify all staff and members of any potential exposures in Senate Facilities.

The identity of those reporting any of this information to the HRO will remain confidential. If the HRO is required to share any information with public health authorities, they will notify the employee or member before doing so.

11. What if a member or employee is exposed to someone with confirmed COVID-19?

Being identified as close contact to COVID-19 means that someone has been within 6 feet of a person with a confirmed COVID-19 infection for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. Anyone who has been exposed to COVID-19 and has symptoms should isolate away from others. If the person does not have symptoms, they should follow quarantine guidelines from the CDC. See [CDC isolation and quarantine guidelines](#).

12. What is expected of staff and members when they are working on-site?

Legislative facility operations will be very different. Changes are necessary to keep staff and members safe and prevent the spread of air-borne illnesses, but many of these changes may feel inconvenient and unfamiliar. Staff and members will be asked to join in efforts to keep each other safer by reducing the likelihood for transmission of Coronavirus and other air-borne illnesses. (See [How to Protect Yourself and Others](#)) These changes include the following:

- Employees and members should maintain distance as much as possible.
- All meetings should occur virtually.
- Members and employees must wear KN95 masks or other DOH approved face coverings over their noses and mouths, except when they are alone in their office with a door closed. If an employee's workspace is not a private office with a closing door, they will be required to wear a face covering.

The Senate will provide masks. Members and staff should refrain from touching their face or masks during the day. (See [How to Wear Face Coverings](#) and [How to Wash Face Coverings](#))

- Members and staff must wash their hands or use hand sanitizer immediately upon entry in legislative facilities. (See [How to Wash Your Hands](#))
- Throughout the workday, members and staff should regularly wash their hands, refrain from touching their face or masks, and practice good hygiene habits. (See [Coughing and Sneezing Etiquette](#))
- Communal rooms will have posted capacity limitations and/ or safety protocols. The work-out room will be by appointment only.
- Capacity for elevators will be limited to one person at a time. Those with disabilities or other physical limitations have priority in elevator use.
- Chairs and seating in communal areas might be removed. Most kitchen equipment and water fountains will be unavailable for use.
- Food sharing, communal meals, and food in common areas where people congregate are not permitted.
- In order to request office supplies, staff should email LSS Supply and make an appointment.