

## 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 unless a member is actively speaking during debate.

Staff and members should continue to maintain distance, especially in areas with poor ventilation or with any interactions with the public. 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. Nonetheless, Senate facilities will be open to employees and legislators who are fully vaccinated and verify their vaccination status with the Senate HRO through a secure portal. Employees and legislators are considered "fully vaccinated":

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines; or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Vaccination status must be verified by January 3, 2022. Beginning January 4, 2022, those employees and legislators who choose to work on campus but have not verified their vaccination status must test within 72 hours of presenting to campus before accessing Senate facilities.

Onsite testing will be available on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The Senate will bear the cost of onsite test administration; the cost of the tests themselves will be billed to legislators and employees. On floor action days, onsite testing will be required regardless of vaccination status for legislators and designated staff at no cost.

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 vaccination verification and 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

Senate leadership has determined that all legislators will be expected to be physically present for floor action. A remote voting option will not be available unless a legislator tests positive for COVID-19, develops COVID-19 symptoms, or is otherwise required to quarantine in accordance with public health and Senate COVID guidelines. In such circumstances, it must be determined and verified by the Senate HRO that the member should not be on campus before a remote voting option will be permitted. If not, the legislator's failure to appear will be treated as any other absence and can be excused by members.

Members authorized to participate remotely will use a secure voting system devised by LegTech. Members participating remotely must be seen through a video link provided by LegTech in order to vote or to be recognized to speak. Phone calls will not suffice.

Members must remain socially distanced at their desks. 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

Each caucus staff director will designate those caucus employees who may be present in the wings to observe floor action and provide necessary staffing.

**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.

**No members of the public may access the wings,** with the exception of individuals temporarily passing through to meet with members located on the Third Floor of the Legislative Building.

#### Caucus Meetings

During floor action, full caucus meetings will take place in the caucus rooms. On non-floor action days, 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.

"Designated staff" includes caucus and administrative floor staff and legislative office staff who may be present in leadership offices located on the Third Floor of the Legislative Building while floor action is taking place. Should additional caucus staff be expected to be physically present at any full caucus meeting, 24 hours' advance notice must be given to the Senate HRO in order to be added to the testing protocol for that day.

#### Senate Dining Room

The member dining room will provide boxed lunches for those members who choose to work onsite. Members will be able to sign up for meals on designated days at the beginning of the week. Meals will be delivered to member offices.

On floor action days, boxed lunches will be prepared for all members and designated caucus and administrative floor staff.

Member access to the dining room will be limited to the stairwells off the Senate floor and private elevators.

#### **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

Members are encouraged to conduct meetings with constituents, stakeholders, and other members of the public remotely.

Senate facilities, which include designated portions of the third and fourth floors of the Legislative Building plus the Newhouse and Cherberg Buildings, will be open for member meetings subject to these restrictions:

- No more than **three members of the public** may physically meet in a member's office at a time.
- Members of the public must present to security and check in, answer Covid-19 screening questions, and check out with security at the conclusion of the meeting. This will address social distancing and contact tracing needs.
- Alternative meeting spaces (e.g., JAC ABC, conference rooms) will be available by reservation **by members only** to accommodate members' needs to meet with larger groups of constituents. The number of attendees will be capped based on social distancing guidelines for the desired space. **Members or their office staff must be in attendance at such meetings for the duration of the meeting. The Senate will not accommodate meeting requests by third parties for Senate spaces, or meeting requests by members on behalf of third parties.**
- Members may require that visitors show proof of vaccination status before meeting in their office. Security will verify vaccination status. Members must include this requirement in their office work plan that is provided to the HRO so this additional screening can occur.

#### Viewing Floor Action

The Senate galleries can safely accommodate up to twelve members of the public per side to observe Senate floor action. Masks and social distancing will be enforced.

Up to two members of the Capitol Press Corps will be permitted to observe floor action from the press desks on the Senate floor. Those members of the press who wish to be on the floor must provide advance notice to the Secretary's Office and submit to onsite testing (at no cost to the individual) before entering. Additional press may observe from the Senate gallery and reserve space in advance.

TVW will continue to broadcast all floor and committee action via their cable and web streaming platforms.

### **6. How will Covid-19 safety protocols be enforced?**

Senate Security will be responsible for enforcing Covid-19 safety protocols, including 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 members and staff 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:

<b><u>Class A Symptoms</u></b>	<b><u>Class B Symptoms</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fever (subjective or greater than or equal to 100.4°F)</li><li>• Chills</li><li>• Cough</li><li>• Loss of sense of taste and/or smell</li><li>• Shortness of breath</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fatigue</li><li>• Headache</li><li>• Muscle or body aches</li><li>• Sore throat</li><li>• Congestion or runny nose</li><li>• Nausea or vomiting</li><li>• Diarrhea (at least 2 loose stools in 24 hours)</li></ul>

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

- **Class A Symptoms.** If a member or employee is experiencing one or more Class A symptoms they must be tested for Covid-19 and may not return to legislative facilities until they receive a negative test.
- **Two or more Class B Symptoms.** If a member or employee has two or more Class B symptoms, they must be tested for Covid-19 before they may return to legislative facilities.
- **One Class B Symptom.** If a member or employee has one Class B symptom, they should not enter legislative facilities. If that symptom does not resolve within 24 hours they should be tested for Covid-19.
- **Non-Covid Diagnosis.** If a health care provider makes a non-Covid alternative diagnosis that explains all symptoms, a member or employee should not return to campus 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.

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

If staff or members have been working in legislative facilities and receive a positive diagnosis of COVID-19, they should not return to legislative facilities and immediately notify the HRO. The employee or member should isolate according to guidance from their health care provider. See [guidance from the DOH](#).

The Senate will work with local public health authorities and follow DOH and Department of Labor & Industries guidelines to reduce the risk of transmission in the workplace. Additionally, the Senate will notify employees and members who may have been exposed to 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.

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.

In a situation where a person with COVID-19 has been in legislative facilities, DES will clean and disinfect the area 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.

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

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. 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 DOH. See [guidance from DOH about isolation and quarantine guidelines](#).

Fully vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine or get tested if identified as a close contact of someone who has COVID-19 unless symptomatic. If symptoms develop, they should follow quarantine recommendations and get tested.

### **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.
- Unless impossible to do so, all meetings should occur virtually.
- Members and employees must wear 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.