

Career/Vocational Technical Education Reopening Guidelines

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Introduction

As the Commonwealth prepares for the fall reopening of schools, including resuming in-person instruction, we are issuing the following guidance to support the safe reopening of vocational technical schools and comprehensive schools offering vocational technical programs. The guidance includes appropriate safety measures to promote the safety of students, teachers, and staff. This guidance may also be used as a reference for other related programs, such as Innovation Pathways and Connecting Activities. This guidance may be revised as we continue to monitor COVID-19 trends and the latest medical research.

All career/vocational technical education (CVTE) programs must follow the following workplace and industry guidance related to COVID-19 health and safety requirements:

- [Massachusetts COVID-19 Employee Health, protection, guidance and prevention](#)
- [Massachusetts Reopening: Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplaces](#)
- [Massachusetts Reopening: Sector-specific protocols and best practices](#), as applicable
- [OSHA guidance](#), as applicable

Programs must also follow the reopening guidance previously issued by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE):

- [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#)
- [Protocols for responding to COVID-19 scenarios](#)
- [Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations Guidance](#) (*download*)
- [Fall Reopening Transportation Guidance](#) (*download*)
- [Guidance for Courses Requiring Additional Safety Considerations](#) (*download*)
- [Chapter 74 Manual for Vocational Technical Cooperative Education](#) (*download*)
- [Massachusetts Elements of Model Internship Programs](#) (*download*)

This document provides additional considerations on how to effectively apply the guidance above to CVTE programs, including **exploratory programs, cooperative education (co-ops), clinical placements, and internships.**

In addition, this document provides further guidance for the initial months of operation for the following school-based programs, to promote the health and safety of students and staff:

- Culinary Arts
- Early Education and Care
- Cosmetology
- Automotive Technology and Automotive Collision
- Graphic Communications and Marketing

Guidance for CVTE programs

Health and safety practices

In DESE's [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#), we put forth the goal of the safe return of as many students as possible to in-person school. This requires us to establish a new culture of health and safety in our schools this fall. Our medical advisors have indicated that it is not one mitigation strategy, but a combination of several strategies that will substantially reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in school settings. These measures include staying home when sick, symptom screening, physical distancing, use of masks, frequent hand hygiene, creating student cohorts as feasible, and improving ventilation as feasible.

Career/vocational technical education programs must follow the federal and state guidelines for safe workplaces, industry-specific protocols, as well as DESE's and other agencies' COVID-19 health and safety guidelines, as outlined above.

Additionally, CVTE programs should follow the below guidance.

- **Maintain safe student collaboration.** Student collaboration, such as group projects, is a core part of vocational technical education. Student collaboration is permitted if modified to accommodate all applicable health and safety guidelines. Programs will need to modify projects so that students can work collaboratively while still wearing masks and maintaining 6 feet of distance when feasible; 3 feet being the minimum distance allowed.
- **Use proper eye protection.** When used, face shields do not replace eye protection. Industry-standard eye protection must still be used when required.
- **Use proper hand coverings.** Technical programs must follow industry guidelines on the use of protective hand coverings (gloves).
- **Focus on safety training.** Consider designating "Safety September" to focus on safety training, including establishing new protocols necessary to mitigate COVID-19 for each CVTE program, with regular updates.
- **Prepare outdoor workspaces.** When possible, it is preferable for students to work outdoors. Make sure any outdoor work sites are outfitted with the required safety equipment. For instance, a work site may require fire extinguishers, Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) protected outlets, and first aid kits, among other items.
- **Provide safe transportation.** Student transportation (by van, bus, or other approved vehicle) should follow the same capacity guidelines, health and safety guidelines, and cleaning and disinfecting guidelines outlined in DESE's [Fall Reopening Transportation Guidance](#) (*download*).
- **Maintain safe equipment and materials sharing practices.** Sharing equipment and materials should be minimized when feasible, but it is permitted as outlined in DESE's [Guidance for Courses Requiring Additional Safety Considerations](#) (*download*).
- **Minimize personal belongings onsite.** Students should come to their class/program/technical area prepared and in uniform each day. Programs should follow the locker guidance in the [Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations Guidance](#) (*download*).
- **All customers or visitors must comply with DESE and industry health and safety standards, including wearing masks at all times.**

Guidance for Service-Related Programs

The following sections provide guidance for specific service-related programs. We are issuing additional guidance for these programs because they:

- **Involve increased interaction with external customers or the public**, and/or
- **Involve activities that may require modifications to adhere to DESE's or other agencies' COVID-19 health and safety requirements.**

Please note: At this time, we are issuing guidance for these programs that we estimate will be in place for the first two months of the school year. This is consistent with the way many CVTE programs already operate, in which the initial months of the school year are dedicated to training and preparing students for work in program settings. The Department will provide additional guidance in the coming months based on updated state guidance and COVID-19 trends.

Culinary Arts

Culinary arts programs should follow **both** the DESE reopening guidance and the [Massachusetts Safety Standards and Checklist for Restaurants](#). In implementing these guidelines, culinary arts programs should:

- **Limit customers.** Culinary sites should only serve internal guests (e.g., staff and students) within a dine-in restaurant setting for the first two months.
- **Set up online ordering for curbside pick-up for external customers.** This will enable a broader customer base to buy food at the restaurant while limiting the number of external customers entering the building.
- **Designate meal pick-up sites.** In order to further limit interaction with customers, sites should identify a single area where meals will be picked up.
- **Set up disinfecting stations.** These should be available at the front and back of the house for students and staff.

Early Education and Care

Early education and care programs should follow **both** the DESE reopening guidance and the [Massachusetts Child and Youth Serving Programs Reopen Approach](#). In implementing these guidelines, early education and care programs should:

- **Limit childcare to professional teaching staff.** Students should not participate as direct caregivers for the first two months. Instead, they can conduct observations through observation windows if available or through online professional development materials.
- **No external placements permitted.** Students should not visit offsite childcare centers for the first two months.

Cosmetology

Cosmetology programs must abide by **both** the DESE reopening guidance and the [Massachusetts Safety Standards and Checklist for Close Contact Personal Services](#). In implementing these guidelines, cosmetology programs should:

- **Limit customers.** Cosmetology sites should only serve classmates and staff for the first two months of operations and not permit external customers. Use of mannequins should be prioritized as feasible.
- **Limit services.** Haircuts and other services are permitted if the individuals are not face-to-face for extended periods of time, so long as DESE and industry safety standards are followed. These standards include wearing masks, gloves, gowns or smocks, and prescription glasses, safety glasses, or goggles.

Automotive Technology and Automotive Collision

Automotive technology and automotive collision programs must abide by **both** the DESE reopening guidance and the [Massachusetts Reopening Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplaces](#). In implementing these guidelines, automotive technology and automotive collision programs should:

- **Provide appointment-based services only.** For services provided to external customers (i.e., the public), service should be by appointment only to limit interaction.
- **Minimize public entry to the building.** Create drop-off and pick-up procedures that do not require personal interaction, such as key drop-boxes. If customer interactions are needed, they must occur outside of the building.
- **Consider online payment systems.** If feasible and to limit interaction with customers, consider using or creating online booking systems with automotive service signature and credit card payment options.

Graphic Communications and Marketing

Graphic communications and marketing programs must abide by **both** the DESE reopening guidance and the [Massachusetts Reopening Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplaces](#). In implementing these guidelines, graphic communications and marketing programs should:

- **Limit external customers.** For external customers, graphic communications and marketing programs should utilize virtual operations.
- **Provide appointment-based services only.** For services provided to external customers, service should be by appointment only to limit interaction.
- **Minimize public entry to the building.** Create pick-up procedures for graphic communications and marketing products that do not require personal interaction.

Cooperative Education (Co-op), Clinical Placements, Practicums, and Internships

Adult postsecondary education students in health career programs may participate in clinical placements with the following safeguards.

- Clinical sites follow guidelines issued by the Department of Public Health
- Students do not care for patients with a known or suspected COVID diagnosis.
- Students do not work on COVID care floors in a facility
- Separation is maintained between adult postsecondary programs and secondary programs within the school building, including passing times.

High school students in health career programs may participate in clinical or cooperative education placements in medical facilities with the following safeguards.

- Sites follow guidelines issued by the Department of Public Health
- Students do not care for patients with a known or suspected COVID diagnosis.
- Students do not work on COVID care floors in a facility
- If a COVID outbreak occurs in the facility, placement for students should be discontinued.

High school students in early childhood education and care programs may participate in practicums and cooperative education placements with the following safeguards.

- Sites follow guidelines issues by the Department of Early Education and Care, [available here](#).
- Student's school district must be in the designated green/unshaded zone.
- Childcare placement must be in the designated green/unshaded zone.

As of January 2021, co-op placements and internships will be open to both seniors and juniors.

Cooperative education and clinical placements must abide by the DESE reopening guidance and follow the [Manual for Chapter 74 Vocational Technical Cooperative Education](#) (*download*). Internships must follow the [Massachusetts Elements of Model Internship Programs](#) (*download*). These employers must provide COVID-19 safety procedures for their workplace. At a minimum, these procedures should follow current OSHA guidelines on [Returning to Work](#) and OSHA's guidance for [specific industries](#). Internship programs should follow the same procedures.

In implementing the above guidelines, these programs should:

- **Complete routine safety checks prior to students beginning programs.** Routine safety checks, including the COVID-19 compliance checklist found [here](#), must be completed prior to students beginning these programs. Add a COVID-19 specific checklist (mask requirements, equipment disinfecting protocols, handwashing/disinfecting stations on site, etc.) to existing safety checks.
 - **Programs should aim to keep students at least 3 feet apart with no extended close contact.**
- **Train students in COVID-19 safety and operational procedures.** Students must be

trained in these protocols prior to entering the workplace for their programs.

- **Incorporate COVID-19 practices into regular inspections.** As outlined in the Manual for Chapter 74 Vocational and Technical Cooperative Education, co-op coordinators or instructors must inspect the work facility. This inspection should include a review of COVID-19-specific safety processes and practices. These inspectors should follow their school's recommended safety protocols when visiting workplaces.
- **Consult with program advisory committee members for industry-specific information.**

Guidance for Exploratory Programs

Exploratory programs remain critical to foster **student engagement** and provide an important opportunity to **introduce students to an array of program options**. In preparing students to explore vocational technical areas, in-person practical applications and hands-on learning experiences should be utilized where safety permits. However, the safety requirements due to COVID-19 may impact students' ability to participate in in-person exploratory programs. As a result, schools should:

- **Revise timelines for exploratory program completion** as needed to accommodate students who are not able to complete in-person requirements during the 2020-2021 school year.
- **Provide exploratory program content and learning in school.** To the extent possible, exploratory programs should be held in schools. If program content and learning must take place online, programs may focus on career exploration and soft skills or essential workplace skills. Remote learning engagement strategies may include:
 - Alumni and business owner video presentations or virtual meetings
 - Career pathway awareness with student support services/guidance staff
 - Career interest surveys
 - Student-led video presentations or virtual meetings
 - Video lessons with vocational instructors
 - Live Zoom lessons from the vocational area
 - Ted Talks or other appropriate videos with discussion
 - Student-led discussions or project presentations
- **Maintain program rotations across programs as feasible.** For all Chapter 74 programs included in the exploratory program of a school or district, there should be consistent time and focus on all programs. Rotations should offer equal time in each program and an equal balance of in-school and remote learning, to the greatest extent possible.

Acknowledgements

The Career/Vocational Technical Education (CVTE) Reopening Guidance Group was convened to address the special circumstances of learning in a “real work setting,” particularly where it may differ from a traditional academic classroom. We thank the members of the CVTE Reopening Guidance Group for their significant contributions to this guidance.

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