



Dear Business Owners and Managers,

Thank you for everything you have done to help slow the spread of COVID-19. We know the pandemic has been extremely challenging for businesses across the state. Your partnership has been crucial in promoting the safety and well-being of your employees and customers and in keeping our economy going.

The COVID-19 response remains a high priority as the changing virus remains a threat to Rhode Islanders and our neighbors across the country. Rhode Island has been experiencing high COVID-19 community transmission since August 2021 and we have seen the transmission rate increase during the month of December. With the identification of expected new variants, people spending more time indoors, and the high rate of community transmission, hospitalizations in Rhode Island are predicted to increase in the coming weeks and into early 2022. Although the dominant strain of COVID-19 is the Delta variant, a new variant, Omicron, has been identified in Rhode Island and is expected to cause a significant number of COVID-19 infections in Rhode Island within the coming weeks and months. In addition, Rhode Island and other states have experienced early influenza outbreaks with a strain of flu known to be associated with more hospitalizations and deaths in people age 65 or older. **This is why it is important to implement strategies to keep your staff and customers safe and your business thriving.**

We know you may have questions about implementing mitigation measures and ensuring a successful holiday season for your business. The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) and our State partners remain committed to supporting your business's short-term and long-term needs.

In September, [a letter](#) was sent to businesses across Rhode Island, which included information about four key prevention strategies that would help ensure that Rhode Island reopened safely: masking, vaccination, testing, and ventilation. We know these mitigation strategies work. Studies show that wearing a high-quality mask can decrease transmission by 70% or 80%. RIDOH has updated some of the resources that are available for you and that can help you make decisions about how to keep your staff and your customers safe. The attached guide lists/shows you the most current RIDOH resources for business owners.

Thank you,

The Rhode Island Department of Health in cooperation with Rhode Island Commerce



## [Wear a Mask](#)

As of December 20, 2021, [masks are required](#) indoors in all businesses with a capacity of 250 or more, regardless of vaccination status. For indoor venues with a capacity of fewer than 250 (as well as office-based businesses, manufacturers, construction, gyms/fitness centers, and personal care services with capacity of 250 or more), masks are also required; however, the facility can allow people who show proof of vaccination to not wear a mask. For more information on this new executive order and what it means for your businesses, please visit our [FAQ document](#). Masks protect the person wearing the mask **and** people around them. It is ideal to mask all the time, so with masking AND vaccination, people have multiple layers of protection. The resources available via the links below include several masking signs and an optional employee and client screening tool that you may choose to display.

- [Rhode Island masking frequently asked questions](#)
- Printable Masking Signage Resources can be found here [Information for Workplaces | RI COVID-19 Information Portal](#)

## [Get Vaccinated](#)

In addition to masking, any Rhode Islander age five or older should get the COVID-19 vaccine. The COVID-19 vaccine is effective and helps prevent serious illness, hospitalization, and death. We know that unvaccinated Rhode Islanders are **four times** more likely to be infected with COVID-19 and **11 times** more likely to be hospitalized than vaccinated Rhode Islanders.

Early data tell us that the Omicron variant spreads more quickly than other variants, so we can expect to see more and more cases of Omicron. Early data also tell us that getting a booster dose may give you more than twice as much protection against Omicron than if you only have the primary vaccination series. **Getting a booster shot is now the new norm.** You need that extra dose of vaccine to get the best protection. Anyone age 16 or older is eligible to get a booster dose.

RIDOH encourages and supports businesses that implement policies requiring employees to be vaccinated, including a booster dose, and show proof of vaccination before coming to work.

## [Onsite Business Vaccination Clinics](#)

- Onsite vaccination clinics are available for many Rhode Island businesses and community partners. If your business or organization is interested in holding a clinic before December 31, please fill out the [COVID-19 Vaccination Community Partner Interest Form](#)
- [If you are interested in hosting a vaccination clinic after December 31, please visit Resources for the Public | RI COVID-19 Information Portal](#)



### Schedule an Appointment Online

- [C19VaccineRI.org](https://www.C19VaccineRI.org)
- [vaccinateri.org](https://www.vaccinateri.org)
- [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)
  - [CVS](https://www.cvs.com)
  - [Walgreens](https://www.walgreens.com)
  - [Walmart](https://www.walmart.com)
  - [Stop & Shop](https://www.stopandshop.com)

### Call for an Appointment

Please call the State's COVID-19 Information Line at 401-222-8022 (8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday).

### Vaccine Record Look-Up

- Get a copy of your COVID-19 vaccine record through [portal.ri.gov/VaccineRecord](https://portal.ri.gov/VaccineRecord) or through the 401Health mobile app.
- If there is an error with your Immunization record, use the [Immunization Record Correction Request](#).

### SMART Health Card and Verifying Vaccination Status

- SMART Health Card Technology: the 401Health mobile app allows for access to the SMART Health Card (SHC) technology as a way to verify vaccination. SHC are paper or digital versions of your clinical information, such as COVID-19 vaccination history. They allow you to keep a copy of your record and make it easy to share this information if you choose. **The free Rhode Island app is now available through the Apple App store and on the Google Play store in English and Spanish, depending on smartphone settings.**
  - How to get a SMART Health Card
    - You can get a digital SMART Health Card by downloading the 401Health mobile app from the Apple or Android stores.
    - Once in the app, use *My COVID-19 Vaccine Record* to download and store your SMART Health Card.
  - Save it
    - You can keep a SMART Health Card as a digital file on your phone, computer, or anywhere you store digital information. You can also save a paper SMART Health Card and make copies of it. If you are a parent or a caregiver, you can keep SMART Health Cards for others, just as you do with other medical information.
  - Share it
    - You can share a SMART Health Card if you choose. For example, you might share it to show your vaccine status for school registration or travel. You share a SMART Health Card by letting someone scan the 2D barcode (QR code) on your paper or phone screen. You may also send it as a file or through a phone app.
  - Verify it
    - *401Health's* SMART Health card technology can be used by businesses and organizations to verify vaccination records. Businesses and venues can visit the



[Apple App Store \[r20.rs6.net\]](#) or [Google Play \[r20.rs6.net\]](#) to learn how to download a free compatible QR reader.

- For more information on the SMART Health Card, please see Rhode Island's [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

## Testing

### Onsite Business Testing Program

- This program provides Rhode Island businesses with rapid COVID-19 test kits and the training they need so they can conduct regular testing of employees. The employer agrees to train its team, conduct the tests, and report results to RIDOH.
- For more information about the on-site business testing program and how to enroll, email [RIDOH.COVID19BizTesting@health.ri.gov](mailto:RIDOH.COVID19BizTesting@health.ri.gov).
- If you would like to discontinue COVID-19 testing in your workplace, [please follow these out-processing procedures](#).

### Resources and Educational Materials

- **Test site locator:** Search for a COVID-19 test site near you. [\[English\]](#) [\[Español\]](#) [\[Português\]](#)
- **Frequently asked questions** about COVID-19 testing in Rhode Island. [\[English\]](#) [\[Español\]](#) [\[Português\]](#)
- **Frequently asked questions about at-home COVID-19 testing.** [\[English\]](#) [\[Español\]](#) [\[Português\]](#)
- **Download the latest handouts for:**
  - COVID-19 testing in Rhode Island [\[English\]](#) [\[Español\]](#) [\[Português\]](#)
  - Types of COVID-19 tests and swabs [\[English\]](#) [\[Español\]](#) [\[Português\]](#)
  - Testing yourself for COVID-19 at home [\[English\]](#) [\[Español\]](#) [\[Português\]](#) [\[Kriolu\]](#)
  - Confirmatory testing protocol [\[English\]](#) [\[Español\]](#) [\[Português\]](#)
  - Testing for travelers [\[English\]](#) [\[Español\]](#) [\[Português\]](#)
  - Employer screening Tool [\[English\]](#) [\[Spanish\]](#)

## Ventilation

COVID-19 spreads from person to person when an infected individual breathes out droplets and small particles that contain the virus. This happens when we breathe, talk, yell, or simply move around. Ventilation and good air circulation inside buildings, schools, and homes reduce the spread of COVID-19. During colder months, as more activities take place indoors, available windows may be closed. Improving ventilation in facilities with indoor activities can reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Each facility has different needs for ventilation and airflow. When assessing ventilation, it is important to consider the size of the area, the number of people in the area at any given time, the level of activity happening in the area (e.g., are people breathing heavily, talking loudly, moving around, or sitting still), and access to windows and doors that open to the outside.

Best practices include increasing outdoor air ventilation instead of using recirculated air and increasing air filtration as much as possible for the ventilation and filtration system.

Improved ventilation is even more effective against COVID-19 when combined with other steps to reduce the amount of airborne virus, such as masking, vaccination, testing, and distancing. If you are a



facility owner and would like more information on how to improve your facility's ventilation and air filtration, please review [RIDOH's guidance on airflow, ventilation and air filtration](#).

There are ways to measure or calculate if the ventilation methods you are using in a room are working the right way.

- For rooms with MERV 13+ or HEPA filtration, calculate the predicted Air Changes per Hour (ACH) using the system's designed Clean Air Delivery Rate (CADR) in cfm and the volume of the room:  $ACH = (cfm \times 60) \text{ divided by } (length \times width \times height)$ .
- There are other more complex [approaches](#) to measure airflow rates of outdoor air and/or filtered air you can use to see if a system is working the way it should.

## **RIDOH COVID-19 Contact Information**

- **COVID-19 Information Line:** 401-222-8022 (Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.); After hours, call 2-1-1
- **Email** us your COVID-19 Questions at [RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov](mailto:RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov)