

Guidance for Operating Cooling Centers During COVID-19

Extreme heat is a major threat to the public's health. Exposure to extreme heat can cause a variety of health problems from general fatigue to muscular cramping to life-threatening heat stroke. Cooling centers are designed to provide relief and protection during extreme heat.

The health and safety of staff and visitors at cooling centers is our number one priority. As the Health Officer's *Responding Together at Work and in the Community Order* remains in effect, the following guidance is provided to safely operate cooling centers during times of high heat.

A. FACILITY SAFETY ACTIONS

- Signage is posted at each public entrance of the Cooling Center to inform all employees and the public that they should not enter if they have a cough, fever, or other symptoms of COVID-19 or are actively following isolation or quarantine orders, and that everyone must wear a face mask while in the Cooling Center regardless of vaccination status. Sample signage can be found at the following site: publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncorona2019/BestPractices/#signage.
- If possible, offer alternative cooling sites for those showing symptoms of COVID-19 illness. This should be separate rooms within the Cooling Center for each person with symptoms.
- Take steps, where possible, to reduce crowding in the Cooling Center by reducing bottlenecks at the entry and exit to the facility, separating the seating, and enabling easy access to restrooms.
- Place hand sanitizer at entrances and common areas, and assure soap and water are available within the facility. Restrooms normally open to the public should remain open to the public.
- Place signage with respiratory etiquette, hand washing, and face mask messages throughout the facility. Sample signage can be found at the following site: publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncorona2019/BestPractices/#signage.
- If the Cooling Center allows eating and drinking indoors, set up a designated seating area away from other seating areas that is specifically used visitors who are eating and drinking. Places that permit eating or drinking indoors are considered higher-risk settings because persons, both vaccinated and unvaccinated, are indoors for an extended period of time and may remove their face masks to eat or drink. Visitors using the designated area should be able to maintain a 6-foot distance from others while eating or drinking. Signage in the area should remind visitors that they must be seated while eating or drinking and that they may only remove their face mask while they are actively eating or drinking. At all other times, visitors must keep their face mask on.
- Wherever possible, take steps to increase ventilation in the Cooling Center. Make sure the Cooling Center's HVAC system is in good, working order. Consider installing portable high-efficiency air cleaners, upgrading the building's air filters to the highest efficiency possible, and making other modifications to increase the quantity of outside air and ventilation in all working areas. Decrease occupancy in areas where outdoor ventilation cannot be increased. See the [CDPH Interim Guidance for Ventilation, Filtration, and Air Quality in Indoor Environments](#) for more information.
- Designate staff to voluntarily sign in visitors each day (see Appendix A). Having a list of daily visitors can be helpful if there is a positive case of COVID-19 and the Cooling Center needs to reach out to contacts to notify them of their potential exposure. Staff should also keep a tally of visitors who decline to sign in. Keep a record of staff and volunteers who are at the Cooling Center each day.
- Follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [cleaning and disinfection guidelines for community facilities](#), and [cleaning facilities if someone is sick](#).

- Other actions as directed by facility management:
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B. STAFF SAFETY ACTIONS

- Cooling Centers must screen staff, volunteers, vendors, contractors, and other workers for COVID-19 symptoms. All staff should be screened for symptoms at the beginning of their shift. Options for screening include having staff evaluate their own symptoms before coming to the Center, using signage at the entrance of the workplace, or completing daily on-site screening to reinforce the message that employees who have COVID-19 symptoms and those who are under isolation or quarantine orders should not enter the workplace. See publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/coronavirus/docs/business/EntryScreening.pdf for a sample entry screening form.
- Staff are instructed to stay home if they do not feel well. Staff reporting or exhibiting signs of illness will be asked to leave and seek appropriate medical care. Make sure persons with COVID-19 follow [self-isolation](#) instructions. Staff who are close contacts to a case must [quarantine](#) unless exempt. Manage COVID-19 exposures in the workplace when it is learned that an employee is infected by readily identifying and informing exposed contacts as soon as possible. Have a plan to offer testing to employees who may have been exposed to COVID-19 at work. Refer to [Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) for more information.
- Staff are required to wear a face mask at all times except while eating or drinking in designated areas during break time. See the LA County Mask page for more information about masks: publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncorona2019/masks/.
- Staff are encouraged, but not required, to maintain a minimum of 6 feet distance from other staff members and visitors.
- Staff are required to wash or sanitize hands before/after shift, before/after breaks, and after any of the following activities: using the restroom, eating, entering or leaving the facility, and after touching high-touch surfaces (door handles, TV remote, handrails, etc.) using hand sanitizer, or soap and water available at the facility.
- Staff should be encouraged to take meal breaks outdoors or alone in a closed office, where possible. If staff must eat their meals indoors, they should do so while seated and distanced by at least 6 feet from others if in a shared indoor eating area.
- Staff are instructed to follow standard procedures to call 911 for anyone in distress or experiencing an emergency.
- Staff should receive a copy of this guidance.

C. VISITOR SAFETY ACTIONS

- Visitors are informed not to enter if they are ill or following isolation or quarantine orders via posted signage.
 - *Staff will advise anyone who is reporting or exhibiting signs of illness to leave and seek appropriate medical care if necessary, or, if available, will direct that person to an alternative Cooling Center area for individuals who are symptomatic.*
- Visitors are required to wear a face mask at all times.
 - *Staff will advise anyone who is not following the rules that face masks are required.*
 - *If feasible, staff will provide a face mask to those who arrive without them.*
- Visitors are encouraged, but not required, to maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet from others.

- Visitors have hand sanitizer, soap, and water accessible within the facility.
 - *Staff will remind visitors to wash or sanitize hands frequently, including upon entry and exit from the facility.*
- Visitors may bring their own food and beverages. Food deliveries are allowed. Visitors may only eat or drink in designated areas within the Cooling Center. The designated areas should be configured to enable distancing of at least 6 feet between persons in the space. Visitors must be reminded to wear their face mask except when they are actively eating or drinking. After they have finished eating or drinking, they must immediately put their face mask back on. The facility cannot store or refrigerate visitor food or beverages. Sharing meals is not allowed.

Exception: Members of the same family or household.

- *Staff will advise visitors that eating, and drinking may only occur in designated eating areas within the facility.*
- *Staff will remind visitors that face masks may be removed momentarily while visitors are eating or drinking but must be immediately put back on once the person is finished eating or drinking.*
- *Staff will advise any visitor requesting food or beverage storage that it is not allowed.*
- *Staff will ask anyone inappropriately sharing meal items to please stop.*

**APPENDIX A:
COOLING CENTER VOLUNTARY VISITOR LOG**

COOLING CENTER NAME: _____

COOLING CENTER ADDRESS: _____

TODAY'S DATE: _____

NAME	PHONE NUMBER
(1)	
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TODAY'S TOTAL COUNT: _____
 (total from sign-in sheet + those who did not wish to sign-in)