



# National Indian Health Board NATIONAL TRIBAL COVID-19 RESPONSE

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## Reopening During COVID-19: Considerations for Tribal Nations

Many Tribes have implemented stay at home orders, and other social distancing measures to protect their citizens from COVID-19, a disease caused by the Novel Coronavirus. Some jurisdictions may choose to loosen some of these restrictions as COVID-19 cases decrease or other criteria are met. . As each Tribe works to balance their citizen’s needs to determine when and how to reopen, this fact sheet contains some considerations to keep in mind.

### Proposed Guidance for Reopening

The White House released guidance for reopening with assistance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While information was developed for states and regions, this guidance may be helpful for Tribes who are considering reopening.

For the full guidance, click here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/>

The White House recommends the following criteria before considering reopening <sup>1</sup>:

Symptoms	Cases	Hospitals
Downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses reported within a 14 day period.	Downward trajectory of documented cases with a 14 day period	Treat all patients without crisis care
AND	OR	AND
Downward Trajectory of covid-like syndromic cases reported within a 14-day period	Downward trajectory of positive tests as a percent of total tests within a 14-day period (flat or increasing volume of tests)	Robust testing program in place for at risk healthcare workers, including emergency antibody testing

The guidance includes phased approaches to reopen from both an individual and business standpoint.

CDC has released additional guidance for various establishments who are considering reopening, including [workplaces](#), [childcare centers](#), [youth programs and camps](#), [schools](#), [restaurants, and bars](#) could begin reopening, as well as guidance for [cleaning and disinfecting](#). All CDC guidance is available [here](#).

## Are you ready to reopen?

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Tribes may want to consider these additional health-related factors to assess the costs and benefits of reopening. We recognize there may be other factors for consideration.

Health-related factors that may support *delaying* reopening:

- Hospital and healthcare capacity, including workforce availability, access to respirators and personal protective equipment.
- Surveillance capacity (the ability to identify new cases, conduct COVID-19 testing, monitor cases, and identifying contacts through contact tracing).
- Vulnerability of your population:
  - Elders and those with pre-existing chronic disease are at higher risk of complications due to COVID-19. What is the age distribution of your population? What are the rates of chronic diseases including diabetes, obesity, and smoking, etc.?
  - Population density or crowding situations, including how many families live in multi-generational housing? Do community members have the ability and space to isolate?
  - What is the average distance community members travel to healthcare? Do community members have access to transportation?
- Chances of COVID-19 introduction or re-introduction
  - Do non-community members visit who could introduce or reintroduce the disease? What does your tourism industry look like?
- Strength of your emergency operations system and emergency communication system

Health-related factors that may support *implementing* reopening:

- Economic challenges and their impact on citizen's ability to afford necessities
- Challenges for citizens, including students, in accessing food and other key services
- Challenges in access to care and services for citizens managing other chronic illnesses including diabetes, addiction, and mental health conditions
- Loss of health revenue and the impact on health systems

## What steps can Tribes can put in place to reopen?

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Both White House and CDC guidelines propose phased reopening. Guidelines highlight which services should be opened during each phase, and implement activities to limit risk including continued physical distancing, limiting capacity, requiring cloth face coverings, promoting personal hygiene, and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces.

Many states have started the process of reopening, and the services opened vary by state. In addition to White House guidance for each phase, *The New York Times* has a list of the reopened services by state [here](#). While similar information is not available for Tribes, some Tribes have also started phased reopening.

Examples include encouraging employees to continue teleworking when possible, opening facilities at 25-50% capacity to maintain distancing, requiring companies to minimize non-essential travel, putting up physical barriers such as plexi-glass to protect employees, and vigorously cleaning and disinfecting facilities. Additionally, some jurisdictions are continuing to require masks and requesting individuals maintain good hygiene. Jurisdictions can promote personal responsibility by providing cloth face-coverings, setting up handwashing stations, and providing services for vulnerable populations who may need to stay at home. Ultimately, it is up to each Tribal Nation to make the best decision for their citizens, and the path to reopening will be unique to each Tribe