During this COVID-19 crisis, the Washington State Board of Optometry (board) is working to assist the optometry community by providing information about governmental actions and developing messages, policies, or rules to support the profession.

**Office operations, essential procedures:**

Governor Inslee’s [proclamation 20-25](#) allows health care providers to continue essential health services. Some services provided by optometrists may be considered non-essential. To help control the spread of COVID-19, treatment should be limited to patients with a clear and documentable urgent medical need.

The CDC recommends that health care providers should prioritize urgent and emergency visits and procedures, and postpone routine visits. For optometrists, this recommendation means postponing routine eye care visits.

Optometrists should weigh their own health risk and comfort when deciding whether to continue in-person services. No in-person appointment is risk-free, even if the patient and optometrist appear well. Optometrists should consider if services can be appropriately provided via telehealth.

- Only provide in-person services to patients with urgent medical needs when the treatment cannot be safely or effectively delivered via telehealth. Examples include, but are not limited to, significant changes in vision, post-operative complications, or injury to the eye.
- Use your clinical judgement to cancel appointments that are not urgent, or consider adjustments such as telehealth services.
- When treatment is medically necessary, screen the patient for symptoms of respiratory illness (e.g., fever, cough, difficulty breathing) before they enter your practice. If a patient is symptomatic, they should be sent home and/or referred to the appropriate provider.
- Ensure appropriate physical distancing of a minimum of six feet between people in the clinic.
- If necessary to maintain physical distancing, ask patients to wait outside the clinic until the previous patient has departed and the clinic has been cleaned.
- Closely follow [CDC guidelines](#) for hand hygiene, and clean equipment and facilities between patients.
- Remind sick employees to stay home. Do not require them to work. Allow all employees who are uncomfortable with continuing to work in the clinic to stay home or work remotely, if possible.
- Consider wearing a face mask or [cloth face covering](#) when providing in-person services and when within six feet of another person. Provide face covers and request use by clients when close proximity is necessary.

**Background:**

The virus causing coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19), emerged in December 2019 and has since spread around the world causing a global pandemic. Eighty percent of cases are mild, but severe disease and deaths are more common in the elderly (older than 60 years) and in those with underlying health conditions. Health experts are concerned that increasing transmission in our state and an increase in severe disease will limit the ability of our healthcare system to provide urgent care to all who require it.

Additional resources for Optometrists:

- [DOH Workplace Recommendations](#)
- [DOH Coronavirus (COVID-19 Web Page)](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus (COVID-19) Web Page](#)
- [CDC Practice Preparedness Resources](#)
- [Optometric Physicians of Washington COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [American Optometric Association Coronavirus/COVID-19 Resources](#)