



Law Society of Saskatchewan

Lawyer's Guide to Reopening the Office

If you are considering reopening your office, you should have an operation plan in place that focuses on the three main tools to avoid spread of COVID-19:

1. Physical distancing;
2. Frequent hand washing and cleaning;
3. Staying away from the office when showing signs of illness.

Learn about other preventions steps and things to consider in the [workplace](#).

What should I do to support employees?



To support and prepare employees, you should:

- Ask them if they have any concerns about returning to the office
- Manage concerns and expectations
- Develop a schedule that meets operational requirements and, where appropriate, limit the number of people in the office at any given time
- Review with employees changes that you have made in the office to promote physical distancing
- Advise employees to self-screen before coming to the office
- Advise employees not to come to the office if they are sick, waiting to be tested, have been exposed, or are under mandatory self-isolation
- Remind employees of the resources available to them and their families through the [Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers](#) (LCL), including [additional resources](#) on the Law Society website specific to dealing with mental health and workplace change during this time.

What should I do to prepare the office?



To prepare the office consider:

- Ordering sanitizers and disinfectant cleaner/wipes
- Arranging for expert cleaning service. If your employees normally clean, have them review and follow all [public health practices](#), and implement the [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection](#) recommendations in the workplace to limit exposure to and the spread of the virus.
- Developing a cleaning schedule to ensure that high touch-points are cleaned at least twice per day;
- Keeping cleaning supplies next to high touch office equipment to allow employees to clean before and after use.
- Implementing methods to limit numbers in commons spaces, such as reception, hallways, kitchens, meeting rooms, and washrooms
- Removing common use items in the reception area
- Encouraging employees not to use common use office tools (eg. staplers, pens, hole punch), but if they do, to clean the item before and after using
- Ordering and installing physical barriers (e.g. plexi-glass) for areas of the office where it is not possible to maintain 2 metres of separation
- Ordering or creating signs and floor decals to encourage physical distancing
- If you are in a rented space with common areas, ask your landlord about the measures they are putting in place for the common areas, so you can share this information with your employees.

How do I prepare to interact with my clients?



As more options become available for [client interaction](#), consider:

- Continuing to use telephone and video conferencing with clients and only use face to face meetings when absolutely necessary
- Providing the self-screen questionnaire to clients before visiting the office
- Setting limited / fixed hours for in-office client meetings and numbers of people in a meeting space
- Sending clients an email or text in advance of office meetings to outline any measures being taken to ensure safety in the office – e.g. directions for navigating office space; elevator and parking instructions; face mask requirements; procedures at front desk/reception; any suspension of food/beverage services
- Ensuring clients are aware of relevant office policies – e.g. around attending the office if they are sick, waiting to be tested, have been exposed, or are under mandatory self isolation

What risk management issues should I be considering?



In times of change, additional risks can arise in addition to normal practice management risks. To manage risk, you should:

- Monitor the [Court directives](#) for changes to deadlines that were previously abridged
- Continue to monitor your files for statutory limitations
- Implement systems created to re-execute estate documents or other documents executed remotely that may not be effective through remote execution
- Be mindful of and advise your employees of [fraudulent scams](#)
- Review your accounting controls
- Ensure that client documentation you or your employees took home or stored on a laptop/home computer is returned to your central filing system(s) and removed from home devices.

How do I prepare for future practice interruptions?



We know that future interruptions are likely to happen, due to both COVID-19 and other unforeseen reasons. Make best use of what you learned during this time by:

- Creating a [business continuity plan](#), if you don't have one (see General Resources, below)
- Documenting lessons learned in your business continuity plan
- Maintaining and improving upon changes that help(ed) your practice; e.g. electronic banking, electronic file storage; video conferencing; etc.
- Assessing and continually improving upon your ability to work from home – e.g. remote electronic access to files and client information; enhanced internet bandwidth at home; remote access to accounting records, etc.
- Involve your employees with your business continuity planning and review your plan annually

General resources and further information



We know that future interruptions are likely to happen, due to both COVID-19 and other unforeseen reasons. Make best use of what you learned during this time by:

- [Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers](#) service provider [Homewood Human Solutions](#) has compiled a Pandemic Toolkit to assist employers and employees including (but not limited to) information on programs dealing with mental health during these times, managing workplace change, supporting a hygienic workplace, reviewing employment policies, etc.
- [Returning to the Office: Considerations for Law Firms](#) is a CBA resource CBA developed this resource to help your law firm or organization transition back to in-office operations once permitted by the province/territory where you practice. The health and safety of your people and your clients remain paramount.
- For a general overview of the basic technology required for working remotely, view the Law Society of Saskatchewan's webinar: [An Introduction to Remote Working for Lawyers](#), hosted by Craig Zawada, Q.C.

Additional resources to help create a business continuity plan:

- * Canadian Chamber of Commerce: [Pandemic Preparedness for Business](#)
- * Canadian Bar Association: [Pandemics in the Workplace: A Resource for Lawyers](#)
- * LawPRO®: [Managing Practice Interruptions](#)
- * Law Society of Alberta: [When Bad Things Happen to Good Lawyers: Contingency Planning Guide](#) for general information on contingency planning
- * Law Society of Alberta [disaster planning and recovery website resources](#)
- * Law Society of British Columbia has developed [detailed checklists](#) on what to do before and after a disaster strikes.
- * American Bar Association: [A Lawyer's Guide to Disaster Planning](#)
- * LIANS: [Disaster Planning](#)
- * Cushman & Wakeman's "[Recovery Readiness: A How-to Guide for Reopening your Workplace](#)," outlines some best thinking and practices for bringing workers back into the physical workplace.

Questions

For additional questions & support please contact the Law Society at reception@lawsociety.sk.ca.