



Published on *Vermont League of Cities and Towns* (<https://www.vlct.org>)

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Vermont Forward Plan Overview

The Vermont Forward Plan (<https://www.vermont.gov/vermont-forward#gsc.tab=0> ^[1]) involves relaxing COVID-19 health and quarantine rules over time, starting on April 9, 2021, with the goal of no mandatory (only encouraged) health rules by July 4, 2021. All dates are subject to change, as they are dependent on reaching vaccine milestones. On certain dates, the various sector specific rules will be replaced with mandatory Universal Guidance. According to the Governor's press release

(<https://www.healthvermont.gov/media/newsroom/Governor-Scott-Announces-Vermont-Forward-Plan-April-6-2021> ^[2]), **"Universal guidance has five main tenets: Stay home if you're sick, wear a mask, ensure six-foot spaces and uncrowded places, practice good hygiene, and know the travel restrictions."**

The Universal Guidance requirements have a phased application based on Group Sectors:

- **Group A** are business operations that are low contact, have a short duration, and are outdoor or in a controlled environment (e.g. most town operations that are not meetings of public bodies or town meetings)
- **Group B** are business operations that are of longer duration or take place in close contact environments (e.g. meetings of public bodies)
- Until further notice, Education, Health Care, Sports/Organized Sports and Youth Summer Camps will retain individualized guidance and not move to universal guidance.

For a detailed list of what types of activities fall into each Sector and for the individualized guidance, visit <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/universal-guidance> ^[3].

As of April 9, 2021, municipal operations that are low contact, have a short duration, and that take place outdoors or are in a controlled indoor environment (e.g., town office activities, highway work, etc.) fall under Group A. Group A operations must, at a minimum, follow the required Universal Guidance.

Meetings of public bodies and town meetings are in the Group B sector. These activities must continue to follow section 13.1 sector specific guidance (<https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/universal-guidance#group-b-work-safe-guidance-13-1> [4]) until May 5, 2021, at which point they will fall under the required Universal Guidance requirements.

Universal Guidance requirements are as follows:

1. **Stay home if sick.** Organizations must have policies in place to remind employees to stay home if they have [signs and symptoms of COVID-19](#) [5]. No symptomatic or COVID-19 positive workers are allowed on site. Unvaccinated employees who have not had COVID-19 in the past 90 days and have had close contact for more than 15 minutes with any person who is diagnosed with COVID-19 are required to quarantine for 14 days or for 7 days prior to obtaining a COVID-19 test. See the [Department of Health's guidance](#) [6] for more information on work place exposures.
2. **Wear a mask.** The State of Vermont currently has a [mask mandate](#) [7] in place. All employees must wear face coverings over their nose and mouth when in the presence of others. In the case of retail cashiers, a translucent shield or "sneeze guard" is acceptable in lieu of a mask if the employee works alone and does not interact with customers outside the workstation. Businesses, non-profit and government entities may decline service to individuals who are not wearing a mask. This includes refusing service to those who are exempt from the mask mandate, however, the business shall provide an alternate way for those unable to wear a mask to access the business, such as offering curbside pick-up, delivery, or other innovative solutions
3. **Ensure six-foot spaces and uncrowded places.** Employees must observe strict social distancing of 6 feet while on the job. Businesses and non-profit or government entities must ensure customers observe strict social distancing of 6 feet while on location, to the extent possible. Employers are encouraged to use their best efforts to accommodate those workers who may have childcare needs which cannot be met due to the closure of schools or childcare facilities for reasons relating to COVID-19.
4. **Practice good hygiene.** Employees must have easy and frequent access to soap and water or hand sanitizer during the duration of work, and handwashing or hand sanitization is required frequently including before entering, and leaving, job sites. All common spaces (when open) and equipment, including bathrooms, frequently touched surfaces and doors, tools and equipment, and vehicles must be cleaned regularly and, when possible, prior to transfer from one person to another, in accordance with [CDC guidance](#) [8].
5. **Think before you travel.** Follow the state's travel guidance and educate your employees and customers about the state's policies.

The Universal Guidance listed above serves as a baseline. Municipalities are free to take additional safety precautions for the health and safety of its employees the public. The State and VLCT MAC recommend that municipal operations, like meetings of public bodies, continue to be held remotely, if possible. If you have a question about the Guidance, please fill out this

ACCD question form: <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/ask-a-question> [9].

The full schedule of the Plan is as follows:

Step 1 of the Plan has **Group A** sectors applying the required universal guidance starting **April 9, 2021**. Additionally, on that same day, no quarantine is required for unvaccinated visitors with a negative test within 3 days prior to arrival. Unvaccinated Vermonters must be tested within 3 days upon return to the state. Masks and physical distancing are required when in the presence of those outside your household.

Step 2. On **May 5, 2021**, **Group B** sectors move to required universal guidance. For gatherings and events that take place indoors, 1 unvaccinated person is allowed per 100 sq. ft. up to 150, plus any number of vaccinated people. For outdoor gatherings and events, 300 unvaccinated people are allowed, plus any number of vaccinated people. Masks and physical distancing are required when in the presence of those outside your household.

Step 3. On **June 1, 2021**, no quarantine or testing requirement for cross state travel. For gatherings and events that take place indoors, 1 unvaccinated person is allowed per 50 sq. ft. up to 300, plus any number of vaccinated people. For outdoor gatherings and events, 900 unvaccinated people are allowed, plus any number of vaccinated people.

Step 4. On **July 4, 2021**, universal guidance is encouraged for all sectors; there are no capacity restrictions for events and gatherings, and masks and physical distancing are encouraged.

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development will lay out full guidance as each step forward is taken. All guidance updates will now be made available in a central location, at <https://www.vermont.gov/vermont-forward> [10].

Links:

[VLCT Town Operations COVID-19 FAQs](#) [11]

[VLCT Coronavirus Home](#) [12]

Publication Date:

Monday, April 12, 2021

Resource Category:

- Guidance
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Links

- [1] <https://www.vermont.gov/vermont-forward#gsc.tab=0>
- [2] <https://www.healthvermont.gov/media/newsroom/Governor-Scott-Announces-Vermont-Forward-Plan-April-6-2021>
- [3] <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/universal-guidance>
- [4] <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/universal-guidance#group-b-work-safe-guidance-13-1>
- [5] <https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/symptoms-sickness>
- [6] <https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/COVID-19-What-employers-should-do-if-their-employee-tests-positive.pdf>
- [7] <https://governor.vermont.gov/sites/scott/files/documents/ADDENDUM%20%20TO%20AMENDED%20AND%20RESTATED%20EXECUTIVE%20ORDER%20NO.%2001-20.pdf>
- [8] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html?deliveryName=USCDC_2067-DM26911
- [9] <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/ask-a-question>
- [10] <https://www.vermont.gov/vermont-forward>
- [11] <https://www.vlct.org/town-operations-covid-19-faqs>
- [12] <https://www.vlct.org/coronavirus>