



Guidelines for a gradual return to the workplace – Phase 1

Government of Yukon's Public Service

Guidelines for a Gradual Return to the Workplace

Purpose

These Guidelines for a Gradual Return to the Workplace are to be read in conjunction with the Government of Yukon's [COVID-19 Work from Home Directive](#). These guidelines are a living document, and outline a gradual approach to returning Government of Yukon employees to the workplace during Phase 1 of '[A Path Forward: Yukon's plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions](#)'.

These guidelines will be updated as required and implemented in line with Yukon's plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions. Guidelines for phases 2 and 3 will be developed at a later date, as appropriate.

Background

The Government of Yukon has released '[A Path Forward: Yukon's plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions](#)'. The plan aims to continue preventing the introduction and spread of COVID-19 while balancing and addressing the many unintended social, economic and health consequences of existing restrictions.

In line with this plan, the Government of Yukon is looking towards a gradual, phased approach to returning Yukon government employees who have been working from home, back to the workplace.

While we do not know what our 'new normal' will be, or how long it may take to get there, the Government of Yukon will continue to pursue a flexible, principles-based approach to returning our employees to the workplace where it makes sense. Public health and safety, and the well being of our employees, remain the priorities.

COVID-19 and the Public Service

While the COVID-19 pandemic has had a drastic impact on our lives, and we each have experienced this differently depending on our own unique situations, for the most part, we have been fortunate in Yukon.

Government of Yukon public servants have been involved in all aspects of the pandemic response, whether on the front lines, adjusting to working from home while balancing family responsibilities, or remaining in the workplace to deliver services to Yukoners. This has been a challenging time for all, but the professionalism and dedication of our public servants has been exceptional as we adjust and adapt to the ever-evolving situation.

In some cases, the public service has innovated and devised new ways of delivering services during the pandemic. Whether through new technologies, new processes, or otherwise, these efficiencies and learnings will be maintained and built upon as we transition through the various phases towards our new normal.

One of these innovations has been a sudden shift to many employees working from home. Although it is too soon to tell what the future may hold for our workplaces, we will continue to be flexible, learn from this experience, and keep an open mind as to what the Government of Yukon workplace may look like when the COVID-19 pandemic has passed. We are exploring the development of new approaches and policies to working from home that may endure well beyond COVID-19. We will be seeking input from employees as we undertake this work.

Transitioning to Phase 1

The Government of Yukon issued the [COVID-19 Work from Home Directive](#) on March 18, 2020. Since that time, and in accordance with the directive, each department has made best efforts to ensure as many employees as possible, taking into account operational requirements, work from home in order to increase social distancing and aid in the prevention and spread of COVID-19.

As of May 15, 2020, and the shift to Phase 1, nearly 50% of Yukon government employees are working from home. While that number varies by department as a result of the nature of work carried out, public servants across the organization have done an incredible job adjusting to life during the pandemic. Most of the services we provide to the public have continued throughout the pandemic, acknowledging we have had to adapt in many situations.

As we transition into Phase 1 of Yukon's plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions, it is important that we continue to prioritize the health and safety of Yukoners and employees as we begin a gradual return to full service delivery.

For this reason, during Phase 1, we will for the most part maintain the status quo, so that **employees who are currently working from home, continue to do so**. However, exceptions are permitted during Phase 1, allowing for some employees to return to the workplace in limited situations, as outlined in the next section.

While these Phase 1 guidelines apply to all Government of Yukon workplaces, it is acknowledged that there are specific arrangements for schools and these are referenced in Yukon's plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions.

Phase 1 – Guiding Principles for Gradual Return to the Workplace

The Government of Yukon is a large, diverse and dynamic organization. We recognize the variety of work our employees carry out across the territory.

Any decision to return an employee to the workplace during Phase 1 should be guided by all of the following principles, and must be authorized by the Deputy Minister (or delegate) of the employee's department:

- Employees should continue working from home if possible.
- Public health advice will ultimately guide any decision relating to a return to the workplace. Health and safety processes in an employee's workplace will be implemented and rigorously followed.

- A flexible approach is required. COVID-19 has been a significant disruption to individual lives and society at large.
- Service to Yukoners and other Yukon government departments is a key consideration.
- Employee wellbeing and individual personal situations will be carefully considered.

Departments should consider operational requirements and individual employee needs, balanced against a prudent approach to maintaining recommended [public health measures](#) advised by Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health and the [COVID-19 Directive 3 - Health and Safety Measures](#).

Phase 1 – Considerations for Gradual Return to the Workplace

Safety is the top priority for employees and citizens.

As we move through various phases of Yukon's plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions, guidelines for returning employees to the workplace will be re-assessed to ensure they continue to meet public health requirements, the needs of employees and ultimately, all Yukoners.

Departments should consider the following in determining which employees may be moved back into the workplace during Phase 1:

1. Are there services to the public that have been significantly interrupted or are not being delivered?
 - If not, employees should continue working from home.
 - If so, explore considerations for employees to return to the workplace.
2. Are there services to other Government of Yukon departments that have been significantly interrupted or are not being delivered?

- If not, employees should continue working from home.
- If so, explore considerations for employees to return to the workplace.

3. Safety measures for returning employees to the workplace:

- All workplaces are required to abide by the health and safety measures outlined in [COVID-19 Directive 3 – Health and Safety Measures](#) and advice from Yukon’s Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- Highways and Public Works has developed information on cleaning of workplaces and what areas may need additional cleaning. They have also developed information on how to plan your workplace to allow for physical distancing. These documents and related posters will be available on Yukonnect.
- Guidelines on returning IT equipment to the workplace are available on Highways and Public Works [‘Work From Home’](#) site on Yukonnect.
- Meetings should continue [virtually](#) or via-teleconference, where possible.

If it is determined that some employees are to return to the workplace in Phase 1 in accordance with the principles and considerations above, and the necessary safety protocols are in place, departments should take into account the following:

- Level of Service: What is the minimum number of employees required in the workplace at any one time to meet service needs?
- Employee’s Personal Circumstances: Are there employees with personal situations that require continued working from home, or circumstances that favour/desire a return to the workplace? Employee physical and mental wellbeing is an important factor to consider.
- Schedule and Timing: Is it necessary for employees to return to the workplace full-time or can they meet the service need and remain at home part-time? Will employees take turns or shifts returning to the workplace? How can flexible schedules be incorporated?

For additional information, departments are encouraged to use the [decision tree](#) for returning employees to the office.

Phase 2 and 3 of returning employees to the workplace will commence at a later date, and will be guided by additional guidelines based on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and in-line with Yukon's plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Personal Responsibility throughout the phases

As public servants, we all have a role to play in keeping the workplace safe. Employees must practise and promote the [6 steps to staying safe](#). The 6 steps are:

- Physical distancing – keep 2 metres (6 feet) away from everyone who's not a member of your household.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or use sanitizer with at least 70% alcohol
- Stay home if you're feeling sick
- Don't gather in groups of more than 10 and remember to keep 2 metres apart
- Avoid unnecessary travel to our rural communities
- Self-isolate if you've returned to the territory, or if you've been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19

Supervisor Responsibilities for Returning Employees

When returning employees to the workplace, supervisors are responsible for re-orienting and sharing information with employees on the return process and ensuring that the safety procedures outlined in the [COVID-19 Health and Safety Directive](#) are in place.

Tracking

Employees and supervisors must ensure the Work from Home form is updated to reflect any changes to an employee's work from home arrangement.