

# What is social distancing?

## Additional information:

### The governor's order 20-12

[https://www.oregon.gov/gov/Documents/executive\\_orders/eo\\_20-12.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/gov/Documents/executive_orders/eo_20-12.pdf)

### OHA guidance on social distancing

<https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/le2268.pdf>

### Centers for Disease Control business guidance

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

Social distancing is a public health practice that aims to prevent sick people from coming in close contact with healthy people in order to reduce opportunities for disease transmission.

Social distancing is deliberately increasing the physical space between people to avoid spreading illness by reducing groups of people and crowded spaces. Staying at least six feet away from other people reduces your chance of catching COVID-19. It can include large-scale measures like canceling group events or closing public spaces, as well as individual decisions such as avoiding crowds.

With COVID-19, the goal of social distancing is to slow down the outbreak in order to reduce infection among high-risk populations and to ease the burden on health care systems and workers.

Per the governor's executive order 20-12, Oregon businesses deemed essential should implement policies and practices that emphasize the importance of social distancing and provide for at least six feet between employees and business-critical visitors while working and during break times.

## What is a social distancing officer?

In accordance with the executive order, a social distancing officer is designated by a business or nonprofit to establish, implement, and enforce social distancing policies consistent with the Oregon Health Authority guidelines. Although the order has not established



guidelines for selecting the officers, employers may want to consider the following:

### The officer should have the knowledge and authority to perform the following functions:

- Develop appropriate policy content
- Communicate the importance and relevance of social distancing
- Communicate and model social distancing practices to employees and business-critical visitors
- Communicate how to practice social distancing on and off the job
- Communicate how the policy will be enforced, and be responsible for enforcement

*(Continued)*

**Examples of social distancing that could be considered and communicated to employees are:**

- Minimizing travel other than essential travel, per the governor’s order. Essential travel has been defined as to and from a residence or workplace for food, shelter, essential consumer needs, education, health care or emergency services, or essential business services.
- Travel is also deemed essential if it’s necessary to care for family members and vulnerable people, pets, or livestock. There are other instances of allowed travel in the governor’s order; [please review it for additional information](#).
- Setting aside a dedicated spot for package pick-up and drop-off that allows for six-foot separation
- Working from home instead of at the office
- Switching to virtual meetings
- Cancelling or postponing conferences and large meetings
- Visiting loved ones by electronic devices instead of in person

**"Social distancing" to "physical distancing"**

There is a shift from the term "social distancing" to "physical distancing" because, while keeping physical distance from people is crucial for slowing the spread of COVID-19, social connection with family, loved ones, and co-workers is essential. "Find ways to remain connected," says the WHO's Maria Van Kerkhove, "because your mental health going through this is just as important as your physical health."

