

SMALL-BUSINESS FAQs

Navigating the COVID-19 Crisis

Q: What is the current status for small businesses?

A: California's stay-at-home order is continually being modified as Gov. Gavin Newsom permits more sectors of the economy to reopen. Exactly what's open and what's not in California really depends on which county you're in. This is because Newsom is allowing for local variance when it comes to how quickly counties want to reopen their economies. The best thing to do is visit the [California Department of Public Health](#) guidance page for the latest information on small businesses by sector.

Q: My business is taking a hard hit. What can I do?

A: There are several things you can do to help your business:

- Many businesses have interruption insurance. Now is the time to contact your insurance agent to review your policy to understand precisely what you are and are not covered for in the event of an extended incident.
- The Small Business Administration provides a number of loan resources. For more information on loans or how to connect with a lender, visit <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans>.
- The [California Employment Development Department](#) is encouraging employers who are experiencing a slowdown as a result of COVID-19's impact on the economy to apply for an unemployment insurance work-sharing program.
- Orange County Community Services has implemented a call center to meet the needs of businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It offers information on and resources for layoff aversion, loans, utility reduction programs and community resource mapping. Businesses can call the Economic & Business Recovery Call Center at 714-480-6500 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Q: What should I tell my clients if they want to come in for services?

A: Be proactive. It's critical to communicate openly with your customers about the status of your operations, what protective measures you've implemented and how they'll be protected when they visit your business. Talk to your clients about the situation and learn what they're comfortable with. Make sure they understand that if they're not feeling well, it's best to stay home and follow [CDC guidelines](#). If you're proactive, your clients will appreciate your caring and look to you after this is over.

Q: If my customers can come in, what should I do?

A: Here are some tips to keep your clients and customers safe and comfortable:

- Be sure everyone on your team is committed to your sanitation practices around COVID-19, down to protocol for what happens if a guest (or a team member) arrives who appears to be ill.
- Use every platform you can – email, social media, in-store signage, on-hold messaging and more – to communicate how you're addressing COVID-19 and that the safety of your guests and associates is of the utmost concern. It's also required that all businesses complete and post a declaration of the steps they're taking. A sample attestation can be found [here](#).
- Emphasize that you're closely monitoring and following national and local health guidelines and requirements and that you'll provide regular updates on any changes or additions to your practices as they occur.

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- Take the opportunity to emphasize that your business and service providers are licensed and trained in strict sanitation practices that you follow every day and with every guest.
- Be specific about the sanitation practices you follow regularly and detail any additional measures you're mandating. Spell out the steps your team will be taking, e.g., wiping down all door handles and front desk surfaces every hour.
- Confirm all appointments and use the opportunity to reassure clients about the steps you're taking to keep them, your team and the community protected.
- After the visit, show gratitude. Thank patrons again, via email or text or whatever system you use. Acknowledging loyal guests is especially important in today's environment. Let them know how much it means to you that they came and encourage them to return soon.

Q: What if my clients can't come in anymore?

A: Coronavirus is forcing companies to think differently. If your business requires interacting with people – and you can't due to local and/or state restrictions – can your business go curbside? Can you offer your products or services to people who drive up? If not, work on creative marketing opportunities that can bring in revenue now.

Q: What should I do in terms of marketing?

A: This is a time when marketing is more important than ever. Think about packages and specials you can offer that will be redeemable when your area is cleared to resume business. For example, encourage clients to buy gift certificates now for future visits. Offer to mail them as an added service. Be creative. Think of low-cost things to bundle with your mainstay products.

Q: Should I continue with social media?

A: More people have been turning to social media these days for information and a way to stay connected to friends, family and local businesses. You should maintain your social media presence, but be sure to set a tone of empathy and community. Use social media as a place to promote any creative marketing packages you come up with, and try to offer tips on coping during this time related to your industry.

Q: Any tips on handling a client schedule?

A: Be flexible with scheduling your clients. Everyone is being thrown for a loop, and scheduling is difficult. Be more flexible by waiving cancellation/rescheduling fees and working at times you may not normally work. Your clients will remember your flexibility and goodwill.

Q: How can I be more proactive?

A: Plan. As a business, bring your staff together and prepare plans for what you will do if the situation worsens or improves. Discuss scenarios and how your business and staff might respond.

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Q: How should I handle my employees?

A: In addition to coping with new business realities related to COVID-19, small-business owners must focus on supporting and communicating with their employees, managing business expectations, and potentially making tough short – and longer-term decisions on staffing and locations. Explain to workers that in order to best navigate this crisis together, they will all need to be flexible and adapt to what the business requires. Come up with appropriate, responsible ways for sick employees to be able to stay home. The California Department of Public Health provides a checklist on [responding to COVID-19 in the workplace](#). Some key information from that site:

- Instruct employees to stay home and report to the employer if they're having symptoms of COVID-19, were diagnosed with COVID-19 or are awaiting test results for COVID-19.
- Develop mechanisms for tracking suspected and confirmed cases among employees.
- Determine contact information for the [local health department](#).
- Testing all employees in a workplace should be the first strategy considered for identification of additional cases. Testing may be done at a single point in time or at repeated intervals.
- Employers must maintain the confidentiality of employees with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infections.
- Employers should notify all employees who were potentially exposed to individuals with COVID-19 and provide any healthcare consultations needed to advise workers about their exposure, which is especially important for those with [high-risk medical conditions](#) (e.g., pregnancy or a compromised immune system).

Q: Where can I get more information?

A: There are several things you can do to help your business:

- [OC-COVID19.org](#): Powered by UCI and UCI Health, this website is devoted to providing timely, useful, evidence-based information about the novel coronavirus to our friends and neighbors across Orange County.
- [UCI coronavirus information hub](#): Campus status information and operational updates are available here.
- [UCI Health COVID-19 updates](#): This resource has important information related to UCI Health.
- [California Department of Public Health](#): Stats, videos and resources for all things health-related in the state are available here.
- [Orange County Business Council](#): This website represents and promotes the business community in Orange County and offers information on reopening.