

Department of Human Services – Office of Income Maintenance’s County Assistance Office Re-Opening Plan

In order to comply with the Governor Wolf’s directions and guidance on re-opening Pennsylvania, the Department of Human Services, Office of Income Maintenance (DHS/OIM) has initiated plans to re-open County Assistance Offices (CAOs) to the public. We plan to reopen our offices based on the Governor’s office direction on re-opening PA. As each CAO is unique in its size, location, and physical layout, the reopening plan requires the input of the offices’ Executive Directors to individualize the plan to fit their offices. Each plan is expected to include procedures that address maintaining social distancing, ensuring coverage in the office to address the needs of clients who choose to come in, and addressing the health and safety needs of our employees and clients. The main goal of our plan is mitigating to the best of our ability COVID-19 exposure risks both to the public and our staff. To that end, we’ve broken down our planning into three parts:

1. Identifying and outlining staffing and procedural requirements in order to safely and efficiently re-open CAOs to the public.
2. Educating and providing information to the public regarding DHS/OIM services and community resources. These activities may help reduce in-person visits to the CAO.
3. Identifying and addressing health and safety concerns, this includes identifying and obtaining items that CAO staff would use safely and successfully re-open the CAO to the public.

CAO Staffing and Procedural Implementation for Re-Opening:

- Before a CAO opens to the public, the CAO will: determine how to safely conduct operations with clients in the CAO, including how to limit the number of clients in the office at any given time consist with social distancing guidelines. Offices will determine:
 - how admittance to the office will be controlled and who will be in-charge of this process.
 - how social distancing measures and masks will be enforced within lobbies.
- institute policies and procedures to mitigate risks for clients and staff during face-to-face transactions. Offices will determine:
 - the need for a face-to-face interaction.
 - how many face-to-face transactions can safely occur during intake and how many interviews can occur safely at one time.
 - how the public will be escorted to and from their face-to-face transaction and what the protocols before and after each interaction will be.
- evaluate how they will staff their offices to serve the public while allowing some staff to telework to maintain office social distancing, including:
 - which employees should work in the CAO to ensure sufficient in-person staffing will be based on bargaining unit seniority.
 - how to rearrangement of lobby seating for social distancing.

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This document is the proposed plan and may be updated as necessary based on new and/or updated COVID-19 information.

- which processes should apply regarding staff entry to the CAO and intraoffice staff interactions.

The CAOs would also continue general procedures they previously had in place such as social distancing of onsite staff and daily enhanced cleanings of the office.

Education of Public to Curtail In-Person CAO Visits:

DHS/OIM Executive Staff will continue to educate the public about all the available services and activities a customer can access without coming into a CAO. Signage, correspondence and recorded messages will provide helpful instructions to DHS customers. . . DHS provides numerous self-service tools. For example:

- verification Documents can be uploaded through the My Compass App or mailed to the CAO or Dropped off outside the CAO in a secure drop-box.
- clients can apply for or review their benefits at www.compass.state.pa.us
- the DHS/OIM Customer Service Centers can provide case status information and clients can report changes to their cases such as:
 - Address and income changes
 - Requesting EBT card replacements
- recorded messages alert DHS/OIM Customer Service Centers that waivers have been approved to eliminate face-to-face interviews and postpone benefit renewals and Semi-Annual Reporting requirements.

OIM Operations' goal through this education and messaging is to limit CAO foot traffic to as small a group as possible, such as

1. homeless individuals
2. those seeking emergency EBT Cards
3. those who want or need limited face-to-face interactions to address questions

Identifying Health & Safety Concerns Around Re-Opening:

In preparation for re-opening, OIM Operations has determined that the following is needed in order to successfully open. These items are vital to ensure the health and safety of our staff and the clients coming to us for service. We are surveying the CAOs to determine amounts needed and will be procuring these items as quickly as possible.

- Hand Sanitizer
- Cleaning and disinfectant supplies (such as sprays and paper towels, or wipes)
- Sneeze guards for areas where clients need to be seen face-to-face.

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In addition to the items above we are gathering information and determining the following for each individual CAO:

- How many clients can be safely socially distanced within office lobbies
- Whether the office has contracted security personnel for their lobby. An assessment is occurring if additional security guards needed.
- Whether the CAO is in a building with other tenants, and what impact opening may have on the building tenants (for example, overflow clients from the CAO, or the impact that other tenant(s) may have on us)

Lastly, we are determining if there are any other products or materials needed to re-open and the quantities that are need. In addition, signage is needed to relay proper and appropriate information to the public.

While our intent is to open region by region based on the movement of that region from red to yellow per the Governor's plan, Where a county in the region is ready to open prior to the others, it will not delay. They will open as soon as they have the required safety measures in place.

Summary:

OIM Operations believes they have put together a comprehensive plan to successfully open CAOs following the Governor's Office's lead in strategically opening Pennsylvania region by region by:

- ✓ decreasing (or minimizing) in-person visits through public education and messaging
- ✓ identifying and addressing cleaning and safety supply needs to mitigate customer and staff risks within a re-opened CAO
- ✓ establishing office policies and procedures for:
 - safely entering and exiting a CAO while observing social distancing protocols
 - customer and staff face-to-face interactions when requested or needed

This plan and the rollout defined will be heavily based on the counties moving from red to yellow and whether the CAO has a sufficient plan and necessary items to ensure the health of safety of our employees and clients.

Reopening Dates:

The following dates and locations are targeted for the CAO to reopen to the public utilizing the steps identified above. This is with the understanding that all mitigation steps are in place and plans have been approved.

July 6, 2020: Bradford, Cameron, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lycoming, McKean, Mercer, Montour, Northumberland, Potter,

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Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga, Union, Venango and Warren, Allegheny, Armstrong, Bedford, Blair, Butler, Cambria, Fayette, Fulton, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington, Westmoreland.

July 13, 2020: Adams, Beaver, Carbon, Columbia, Cumberland, Juniata, Mifflin, Perry, Susquehanna, Wyoming, Wayne, and York, Dauphin, Franklin, Huntington, Lebanon, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Schuylkill, Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lackawanna, Lancaster, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia.

Reopening Reports:

During the first week of reopening the CAO will be required to submit twice daily reports on the status of the office which will include walk in numbers and any concerns/incidents from staff or the public. The second and subsequent week the CAO will need to provide the report daily.

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