Common areas and amenities

Because COVID-19 is most often spread person-to-person, shared spaces such as meeting/conference rooms, lounges, break rooms, and shared kitchens can contribute to the spread of COVID-19 on our campuses. The following provisions are intended to help lower the chances of catching and spreading COVID-19 in such locations.

Overview

Prior restrictions on use of break rooms and common areas have been lifted. However, those using such spaces are still responsible for taking precautions against the spread of COVID-19 as outlined below.

Definitions

Accepted vaccine. Any vaccine that was authorized for use in the United States at the time of administration.

Break room. A room in a workplace that is set aside for employees to use during a break from work, as to relax, socialize, or eat meals/snacks.

Common Area. An area available for simultaneous use by multiple building occupants including, though not limited to, lounges, break rooms, meeting/conference rooms, and shared kitchens. For purposes of these guidelines, common areas do not include hallways, stairwells, bathrooms, or dining halls.

Fully vaccinated. Someone who has received all recommended doses of an accepted COVID-19 vaccine and more than 14 days have passed since receipt of the final dose.

General provisions

All campus common areas must be prepared in accordance with the current URI guidelines for building reopening, available at uri.edu/emergency/covid/. These include:

- Posting signage regarding, hand hygiene, face covering requirements, etc. as applicable.
- Eliminating as many commonly touched items as possible (see Shared Kitchen Amenities below).

NOTE: Prior restrictions on water fountains and bottle fillers have been lifted. These devices may now be reactivated throughout all campuses.

Individuals are required to wear face coverings in common areas at all times regardless of vaccination status. See Face Coverings for additional guidance.

Shared kitchen amenities

Break room amenities (toasters, coffee pots, etc.) may be returned to breakrooms so long as sufficient measures are in place to clean and disinfect them regularly. Disposable dishes, cups, and eating utensils are preferred; non-disposable items should be eliminated from break rooms and shared kitchens as much as possible. Individuals should be strongly discouraged from sharing these items if present. If condiments are available in the kitchen, they should preferably be provided in individually packaged, single-use packaging including items such as salt and pepper.
Using common areas

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, use of common areas should be reduced as much as possible. The size and frequency of in-person meetings should be limited by using alternative means such as videoconferencing. (For more information regarding events, please see Campus Events.)

Residence hall kitchens

Residence hall kitchens are available for residents’ use for heating food and similar purposes, subject to the same provisions outlined above for Shared Kitchen Amenities including responsibility for sanitizing after each use. Housing and Residential Life will issue additional guidelines and requirements for use of residence hall lounges as needed.

Residence hall lounges

Designated lounges within each residence hall are available for resident use. Unvaccinated individuals must wear face coverings at all times except while actively consuming food and must reapply them immediately thereafter. Housing and Residential Life may issue additional guidelines and requirements for use of residence hall lounges as needed.

Cleaning and disinfecting

Every person who uses a common area, particularly a break room or shared kitchen, is responsible for its cleaning and disinfecting after use.

Sanitization supplies, like wipes for tables and hand sanitizer, must be available for individuals to use whenever they enter common areas and materials must be provided to disinfect all shared equipment and high-touch surfaces, like microwaves and refrigerators, after each use. See Cleaning and Disinfecting for additional guidance.

Used, non-disposable food service items should be handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher. Supplies must be provided (i.e., dish soap, gloves, disinfectant wipes) for cleaning shared cooking utensils such as knives, ladles, spatulas, and shared appliances such as stoves, microwaves, coffee makers, and refrigerators. Alternatively, these items may be removed from the kitchen area and stored.

Exceptions

Availability of break rooms and shared kitchens is at the discretion of the responsible department or college, and these spaces may be closed if department/college leadership believes they cannot be safely monitored and maintained.