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Governor Bullock Announces Additional Phase One Guidelines to Include Gyms, Movie Theaters, and Museums

MONTANA – Governor Steve Bullock today announced additional Phase One guidelines that will allow gyms and fitness studios, movie theaters and museums the option to reopen beginning Friday, May 15 as long as they adhere to strict guidelines limiting capacity, requiring social distancing, and imposing thorough sanitation requirements.

"In consultation with public health experts, we have determined that these businesses can carefully reopen under strict capacity, social distancing, and sanitation guidelines," Governor Bullock said. **"As Montana continues to aggressively manage the virus and we move forward with the plan to reopen, I am again reminding Montanans that social distancing is vital to continue curbing the virus. All of us must do our part to stay open and stay on a path of decline in positive cases."**

"So far, Montana businesses and customers are working together to practice the social distancing and hygiene measures necessary to restart our economy, restore our collective sense of well-being and keep each other safe. I am confident we will all do our part during this important next step," said John Felton, President and CEO of RiverStone Health.

"Health and wellness has always been our goal, and the advent of the coronavirus has only sharpened that focus. Our commitment is to our members, and our communities, keeping them safe. The protocols established by the state and the fitness industry will be instrumental in this endeavor. We want to bring back the physical and mental well-being of Montanans, get past this pandemic and return to what we do best - helping you stay fit and healthy," said Doug Mahlum, Montana Athletic Club.

The reopening date is set at May 15 at the request of the businesses and local public health to allow time to prepare and ensure guidance is being followed.

Under the updated guidance developed with input from public health officials, fitness studios, gyms and pools in gyms can begin operating at 50 percent capacity and with strict guidelines including requiring staff to sanitize frequently touched areas and equipment during hours of operation, train workers on symptoms and handwashing technique as well as posting relevant signage instructing members with symptoms to stay home. Hand sanitizer must be available, employees should wear masks and guests should wear masks when possible. Additionally, a six-foot distance must be maintained between equipment and in locker rooms. Personal training may be allowed if social distancing can be maintained. Indoor group classes may not be offered and outdoor group classes can be conducted as long as social distancing is maintained and in groups of 10 or fewer if appropriate physical distancing is not possible.

Gym pools are allowed to operate at half capacity as well. The CDC has indicated that properly maintained pool water inactivates the virus. It is critical that pools that have shut down during this time or reduced maintenance follow proper reopening procedures and sampling to ensure the water is safe for use before opening. In the event a confirmed COVID-19 case is associated with a facility the facility should clean in accordance with CDC's facility environmental cleaning procedures for workout areas, seating, locker rooms, and other areas of the establishment frequented by swimmers. Pool classes may continue if social distancing can be observed and swimmers should maintain a six foot distance in the pool at all times. Guidance was also issued this week to allow pools at licensed public accommodations (Hotels, Motels, Bed and Breakfasts, Tourist Homes, etc) to operate if at a 50 percent capacity and with additional social distancing and safety measures.

Non-tactile museums and movie theaters will be allowed to open under the updated guidance. Interactive museums or museums that allow touch interactions and displays and live performance theaters cannot operate.

Museums and theaters must keep their capacity at 50 percent and maintain six feet between non family members or the immediate party. Signage must be posted instructing those who have COVID-19 related symptoms to stay home. Facilities must increase cleaning and sanitizing of frequently touched surfaces and control customer flow to maximize distancing. Hand sanitizer or hand washing stations must be available and each venue should create and implement a written COVID-19 response plan. Cleaning and sanitizing should be completed no less than every two hours. Facilities should install shielding between workers and attendees whenever possible.

Theaters should increase cleaning time period between events, performances and showings to ensure that commonly touched areas such as arm rests and railings are cleaned frequently. Ushers should monitor and enforce social distancing in theaters. At museums, gift shops are also limited to 50 percent capacity.

The full guidance will be posted at covid19.mt.gov and is included below. The directive for establishing conditions for Phase One will be updated to reflect these additions.

Montana is still under phase one of the Reopening the Big Sky phased approach and adjustment of the phases is at the discretion of the Governor. Other places of assembly such as performance theaters, concert halls, bowling alleys, bingo halls, music halls, and pools that are not in gyms or at a licensed public accommodation shall remain closed. Gatherings should continue to be avoided in groups of more than 10 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing. Senior living and assisted living facilities must continue to restrict visitors. The 14-day travel quarantine remains in effect.

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Guidance for gyms and fitness studios

Gyms and fitness studios contribute to the health and wellness for many Montanans. As such, and in recognition of the continued progress toward recovery that Montana has made, beginning Friday, May 15, 2020 they will be allowed to operate at 50% capacity with sanitization and social distancing requirements met.

In the event a confirmed COVID-19 case is associated with a facility, the facility should be thoroughly cleaned in accordance with the CDC's facility environmental cleaning procedures for workout areas, seating, locker rooms, and other areas of the establishment frequented by patrons.

- Only registered members can use the facility, no day passes or walk-in.

- Facility must have a dedicated staff available during operating hours to wipe down frequently touched areas on a regular basis and monitor gyms zones to ensure that users are wiping down equipment properly.

- Train workers on symptom awareness and proper handwashing technique.

- Signage must be posted with the following or substantially similar wording:
    - "Patrons with fever, shortness of breath, a cough, or other COVID-19 symptoms must refrain from using the gym"
    - Signs shall be positioned for effective visual observation by gym guests, such as at the front desk and in locker rooms.

- Front desk should track occupancy to ensure facilities stay at or below 50 percent capacity.

- Hand sanitizer must be made available at front desk and at stations throughout the workout area.

- Approved sanitizer for cleaning equipment after use must be provided at stations throughout the workout areas along with disposable towels. Reusable towels shall not be used to clean equipment.

- Post signs throughout workout area reminding patrons to wipe equipment after each use.
- Masks should be worn by all staff.
- Masks are encouraged to be worn by guests when possible.
- Six-foot distance should be maintained between equipment. Cardio studios should limit guests to every other piece of equipment to achieve this.
- Guest using free weights shall maintain six feet of separation except when a spotter is necessary. In this instance, workout groups shall be limited to two people.
- Sitting areas must be closed for use.
- Food vendors must follow applicable COVID-19 procedures for restaurants and retail food service. Vendors should be encouraged to use single-service items whenever possible, especially for condiments and similar foods.
- Social distancing must be maintained in dressing rooms and other common areas. No congregating in these areas may be allowed.
- After closing, establishments must clean using an EPA approved disinfectant. Twenty-four-hour establishments must close from 11:30 pm to 12am so that proper disinfection can happen.
    - Facility must develop a checklist to ensure that no equipment is being missed during disinfection. Checklist should include large items, such as treadmills and smaller items, such as weights and bands.
- Frequently touched surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized regularly throughout the day and disinfected each night after closing.
- Personal training sessions may be offered with strict adherence to social distancing guidelines and masks are encouraged to be used by the trainer and trainee.
- Indoor group classes may not be offered.
- Alternatively, group classes may be offered outdoors with strict adherence to social distancing guidelines and should avoid gathering in groups of more than 10 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing.
- Additional time between group classes outdoors must be provided so that a designated gym employee can disinfect any equipment and other cleanable surfaces before the next class begins.

Guidance for Pools at Gyms

Gym pools are allowed to operate with reduced capacity of 50% of normal bather load and basic compliance with social distancing requirements.

The CDC has indicated that properly maintained pool water inactivates the virus. It is critical pools that have shut down during this time or reduced maintenance follow proper re-opening procedures and sampling of chemical parameters to ensure water is safe for use, prior to opening to the public. Operators should work with their Certified Pool Operator and/or local/state sanitarian if questions arise regarding re-opening.

In the event a confirmed COVID-19 case is associated with a facility the facility should clean in accordance with CDC's facility environmental cleaning procedures for workout areas, seating, locker rooms, and other areas of the establishment frequented by swimmers.

Gym Pools:

- Only registered members can use the facility, no day passes or walk-ins
- Train workers on symptom awareness and proper handwashing procedures
- Pool classes may continue; if:
    - All social distancing requirements must be observed during class; and
    - Any equipment used can be easily cleaned and disinfected between users.
- Youth swim lessons may be offered in-line with previous guidance for Phase 1, which includes youth activities should avoid gathering in groups of more than 10 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing.
- Front desk/gate attendant tracks occupancy, incoming and outgoing to ensure maximum occupancy does not exceed 50% capacity of normal bather load;
- Signage must be posted with the following or substantially similar wording.
    - "Members with fever, shortness of breath, a cough, or other COVID-19 symptoms must refrain from using this facility."
    - Signs shall be positioned for effective visual observation by members, such as on the entry way door
- No congregating in waiting areas, patrons should wait in an appropriately spaced line or way that observes social distancing
- Locker rooms should be monitored by a designated staff member to ensure they are not becoming crowded and that social distancing is being observed
- Signage must be posted on the locker room door with the following or substantially similar wording, "Observe social distancing while using this facility. No loitering in common areas."
- Social distancing should be applied in all common areas
- 6-foot spacing between unassociated members (i.e. not family members) in the pool.

- 6-foot spacing between groups of no more than 10 (i.e. family groups and unrelated individuals must maintain 6-foot separation) in the pool.
- Space pool deck tables and chairs to facilitate a 6-foot distance.
- Recommend, where possible, use of buoys and floating pool ropes to mark off lanes or areas of pool for separation of large swimming areas.
- Recommend, where possible, marking stairs and walkways with directional arrows to keep in/out traffic separated.

Guidance for theaters and museums

In the event a confirmed COVID-19 case is associated with a facility the facility should clean in accordance with CDC's facility environmental cleaning procedures for areas of the establishment frequented by patrons.

This guidance applies to non-tactile museums. Interactive museums or museums with sections that allow touch interactions with displays are not to be open under this guidance.

This guidance applies to non-live performance theaters such as movie theaters. Live performance theaters may not be open under this guidance.

General Guidance for theaters and museums

- Maximum number of attendees is 50 percent of normal capacity while maintaining 6 feet between non-family member groups.
- Signage must be posted with the following or substantially similar wording:
    - "Patrons with fever, shortness of breath, a cough, or other COVID-19 symptoms must refrain from using this facility."
    - Signs shall be positioned for effective visual observation by patrons, such as on the entry way door.
- Increase cleaning and sanitizing of frequently touched surfaces, including door handles, chairs and tables.
- Keep social distancing of at least 6 feet between non-family member groups or immediate party.
- Food vendors must follow applicable COVID-19 procedures for restaurants and retail food service. Vendors should be encouraged to use single-service items whenever possible, especially for condiments and similar foods.

- Facilities should try to control customer flow in a manner that maximizes social distancing such as signage or ropes and directing flow in one direction.

- Provide hand sanitizer or hand washing stations throughout the venue whenever possible.

- Each venue should create and implement a written COVID-19 response plan.

- Increase cleaning and sanitizing of restrooms to no less than every two hours whenever possible.

- Provide clear plastic shielding between workers and attendees whenever possible, such as event cashiers and food vendors.

- If possible do not use tables. Tables should be covered with single-use material and discarded between users, showings, performances or every two hours, whichever provides maximum spread protection.

- Train workers on COVID-19 symptom awareness and proper handwashing procedures.

Additional measures that apply to theaters

- Increase cleaning time period between events, performances and showings. Ensure that commonly touched surfaces such as arm rests and railings are cleaned frequently.

- Ushers should monitor and enforce social distancing practices in theaters and encourage additional distance between guests as appropriate.
    - Ushers should limit the number of people in lines to no less than 6 feet between families or immediate party.

Additional measures that apply to museums

- Gift shops should limit entry to 50% capacity and clean commonly touched surfaces frequently.

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