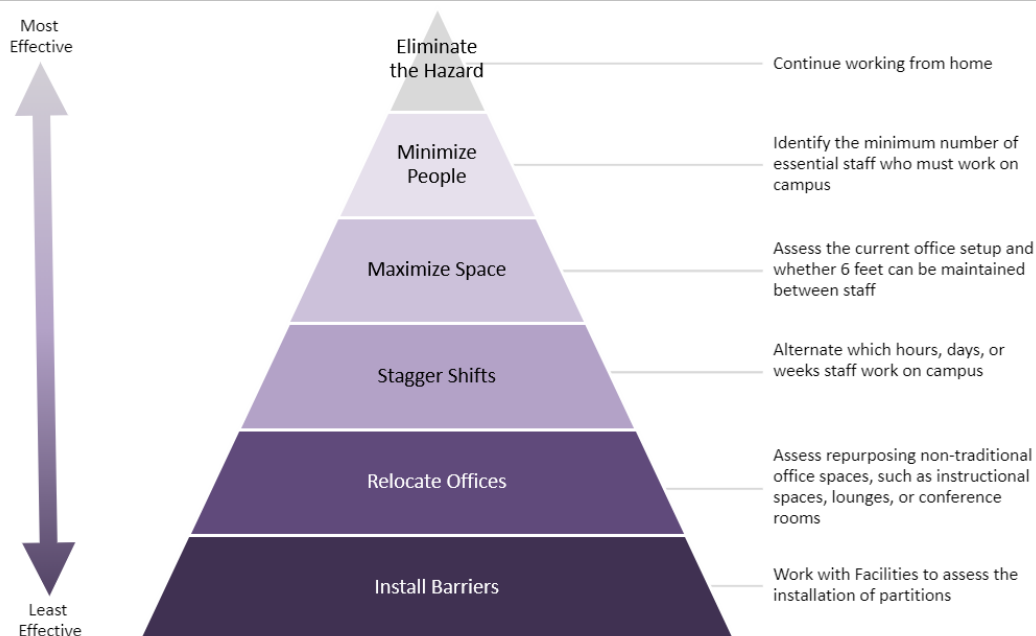


Physical Barriers in Office Spaces

As offices prepare for the [phased return to campus](#), it is essential to ensure all necessary measures have been taken so the University's Return to Campus [Policy](#) and [Guidelines](#) are followed. Consider Northwestern's hierarchy of controls for minimizing the potential spread of COVID-19 when assessing your office space.

Step	Task
	<p>Can your staff continue to effectively work from home without being in the office? If yes, have them continue working from home.</p>
1	<p>If no, determine the minimum number of essential personnel you need in order to continue operations, have the rest continue working from home, and continue to Step 2. Note: Remember to follow the guidance on how many people can return to an office: 50% of normal capacity (Restore Illinois: Phase 4) and 25% of normal capacity (City of Chicago: Phase 4).</p>
2	<p>For staff who will be on campus, work with the facilities lead within your school/unit to assess your current office, and determine if you can utilize the space/workstations available to maintain at least 6 feet of distance between each person in the office. If yes, consider taping-off work stations between staff and leaving them vacant. If no, continue to Step 3.</p>
3	<p>Can you stagger shifts (i.e., alternating which staff come in which hours/days/weeks) to ensure 6 feet can be maintained between staff? If yes, create a schedule and ensure staff adhere to it to meet state and local capacity guidelines and social and physical distancing guidelines. If no, continue to Step 4.</p>
4	<p>Can you relocate staff into non-traditional spaces (i.e., conference rooms, meeting spaces, lounges, or instructional spaces) for office use? If your current school/unit space allocations cannot accommodate the number of people who need to be working from it while maintaining 6 feet of distance, work with campus partners to assess opportunities for alternative workspaces. If yes, utilize the additional space so staff can work at least 6 feet from each other. If no, continue to Step 5.</p>
5	<p>If alternative space cannot be located, submit a Space Evaluation/Modification Request to the Business Recovery Workgroup to assess the installation of partitions to prevent exposure of staff to others who must work in close proximity to them (i.e., at reception desks, retail areas). Note: Departments are responsible for the costs associated with the purchase and installation of partitions.</p>



Physical Barriers

Northwestern

Combined with workplace strategy, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has identified physical distancing as essential to reducing the spread of COVID-19. Units are encouraged to use signs, tape marks, and/or other visual cues to indicate physical distancing. In most instances, these measures are appropriate, but, in some instances, this cannot be achieved and physical barriers may be considered. These spaces include, but are not limited to, transaction spaces where book, money, high-volume paperwork, and/or ticket exchanging occurs.

Physical barriers typically take the form of a transparent shield and are used to intercept respiratory droplets that are thought to transmit COVID-19. While this may increase separation, the risk of transmitting COVID-19 also depends on duration of exposure (i.e., time) and the effectiveness of hygiene practices. It is important to note that maintaining social distancing in the absence of effective hygiene practices may not prevent the spread of this virus. Further, physical barriers should not be used as a substitute for face coverings. Face coverings should be used at Northwestern where 6 feet of physical distancing cannot be achieved.

Funding

Schools/units will be required to fund physical barrier installations within office environments.

Physical Barrier Design Best Practices

There are numerous designs of barriers, but surface-mounted or free-standing partition is preferred, although there may be specific circumstances in which a hanging partition cannot be avoided.

Height: The height of a partition must take into account the tallest user, and the way in which s/he will approach or use the partition.

Width: The width of the partition should account for user behavior, including the likelihood that users will attempt to move to the side to speak around the barrier. Currently, industry best practice is to make the partition as wide as the surface will allow.

Procurement

Northwestern has procured some materials to assist with physical distancing and are working with our vendors to identify pre-fabricated solutions that may be appropriate.

Review Process

Physical barriers will be required to comply with all regulations, such as The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), along with any state and local requirements. The City of Evanston has established that fixed, physical barriers will require city review, regardless of application and height, to ensure code compliance. Further clarification is forthcoming with the City of Chicago. This, combined with cost, has required that all physical barriers be reviewed and approved by the COVID-19 Business Recovery Workgroup prior to installation.

Please submit a Physical Barrier and Space Modification request via the [Return to Campus, COVID-19 Space Evaluation/Modification Request Form](#). Please provide as much detail as possible, as all requests will be directed to the Business Recovery Workgroup, which meets weekly to review space modification requests. Following discussions, a team member will be in contact with the submitter for further discussion.