

Rhode Island on Pause

November 30th through December 13th

Beginning November 30, Rhode Island will be hitting Pause for two weeks. The Pause is intended to reduce community transmission of COVID-19 by dialing down overall mobility and reducing social gatherings. These reductions are key to stemming Rhode Island's recent increase in cases and hospitalizations over the winter months.

Unless specifically indicated via Executive Order, all Phase III restrictions and guidance will carry forward through the Pause. All Phase III guidance continues to be available on www.ReopeningRI.com. Individuals and business owners are encouraged to review the latest community and industry-specific guidance documents online.

Below are some frequently asked questions regarding Rhode Island's Pause, which will last two weeks from Monday, November 30th through Sunday, December 13th.

Social Gatherings

The social gathering size changed to household. Who does that mean I can gather with?

You should only be gathering with people who you live with. Any adult who lives alone or is a single parent may gather with one other household, capped at five people. Children who reside with more than one substantial caregiver or parent may gather with each household.

Does the social gathering size – household – apply when I go to a restaurant?

Yes, you should only dine at a restaurant with your household during the Pause. If you are seated at a restaurant outdoors, you may be joined by one additional household capped at eight. Restaurants providing outdoor dining must ensure that parties are maintaining social distancing, mask wearing when not eating or drinking, and other public health protocols.

Is there a separate rule for social gatherings during a holiday?

Those celebrating holidays during the Pause should do so with the people they live with – their household.

Catered Events

Are catered events allowed during the Pause?

Catered events should not be scheduled during the Pause. Pre-scheduled weddings or other catered events that follow restaurant rules may occur if approved by the Department of Business Regulation.

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Funerals

Are funerals allowed during the Pause?

Houses of Worship must implement 25% capacity limits during the Pause. If a funeral is taking place at a house of worship during the Pause, capacity is limited to 25%. Indoor wakes and other group-based activities relating to wakes and funerals are not allowed during the Pause. Outdoor gravesite services may occur with up to five individuals in attendance.

Venue of Assembly (e.g. Events, Performance Venues) and Houses of Worship

Are Venues of Assembly such as festivals, community events, performance venues allowed during the Pause?

All Venues of Assembly should be closed to audiences during the Pause. Venues of Assembly include: event venues, performing arts venues, movie theaters, spectator sporting events, festivals, and conferences/conventions. Performing and presenting professionals may gather in limited numbers in order to broadcast or live stream their performances or presentations by exception. Please contact DBR in order to seek such an exception.

Are houses of worship allowed to hold services in person?

When possible, attending virtual services is strongly encouraged. Houses of worship – in indoor and outdoor settings – may hold services with no more than 125 people, up to 25% of seating with appropriate physical distancing between households.

Childcare and Education

Will child care facilities remain open?

Child care facilities will remain open throughout the Pause. Facilities are not required to change their current operations.

Will schools still be holding in-person classes?

Students in pre-school through eighth grade should continue in-person learning. We are giving superintendents the flexibility to implement their limited opening plans for high schools if they determine it is necessary. If they elect to do so, high schools should still be offering in-person learning options for multi-lingual learners and differently-abled students. Parents and guardians should consult their student's school district website and other communications for further detail.

I'm a college student. How does the Pause affect me?

Nearly all college students will be taking classes remotely during the Pause. Most out-of-state college students returned home prior to Thanksgiving and are not expected to return to Rhode Island until after the New Year. Only in the limited circumstances that a class cannot be completed remotely should a student expect to have any in-person classes during the Pause.

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Healthcare and Nursing Homes

Will primary care, specialty providers, and other health care businesses remain open?

Yes. Health care providers will remain open.

Nursing homes and hospitals are currently limiting visitation. Will those limitations continue throughout the Pause?

Visitation will continue to be restricted throughout the Pause. Please consult the facility's website or call for more information on specific limitations.

Restaurants

Are restaurants allowed to continue in-person dining options?

Outdoor dining is allowed and encouraged. Indoor dining is allowed at up to 33% of the restaurant's capacity. All restaurants should stop service at 10:00 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. After 10:00 p.m. and 10:30 p.m., only takeout and delivery are allowed. Indoors, each restaurant seating (each table) may contain only one household. Outdoors, up to two households are permitted to be seated together provided that they wear masks when not eating or drinking and follow other public health protocols.

How are restaurants expected to ensure party size is equal to a household?

When taking a reservation or receiving a non-reserved party at the restaurant entrance, the restaurant must ask whether the party to be seated is a household, in accordance with the social gathering size. A restaurant must also post the one household rule prominently at its entrance and at its host/hostess desk or reception area. Restaurants are not to seat parties indoors that do not affirmatively attest to being from a single household.

Are bars allowed to be open? Is alcohol service allowed?

The bar area must be closed to customers at all times in every establishment during the Pause. The bar area is defined as the physical bar where food or beverages are prepared as well as seating at the physical bar and all seating and tables within six feet of the physical bar. The bar area must be roped off or otherwise physically separated from the rest of the space in the establishment. Alcohol may still be served to patrons who are seated at tables (not in the bar area).

Gyms and Fitness Centers

Can gyms and fitness centers still operate indoors? What about group classes?

Gyms and fitness centers' indoor operations are not allowed to operate during the Pause, including indoor group classes.

If my gym or fitness center is outdoors, will it be open during the Pause?

Outdoor gym and fitness activities, excluding group classes, may still occur during the Pause. Group classes may not occur under any circumstance.

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Are indoor swimming pools, karate studios, roller skating rinks, climbing gyms, gymnastics studios, tennis and racquet clubs closed during the Pause?

Yes. These facilities are closed for any use during the Pause.

Sporting Facilities and School Sports

Are indoor sporting facilities allowed to operate during the Pause?

Indoor sporting facilities are not allowed to operate during the Pause.

How does the Pause affect sports?

During the Pause, all amateur adult and youth sports – outdoors and indoors – are prohibited. This means no competitions or games (including informal pick-up games), no scrimmages and no practices. Sports camps and classes must cease. Classes for fitness, yoga, martial arts, dance and other activities involving groups are not allowed during this period.

What can we expect for winter high school sports?

Organized high school winter sports are not allowed during the Pause. We will work closely with the Rhode Island Interscholastic League to develop updated regulations and guidance for high school winter sports. The goal is to have kids play as many winter sports as possible in a safe manner.

Are there any exceptions when it comes to sports during the Pause?

Yes. Professional and collegiate interscholastic athletic programs will be permitted to conduct indoor activities during this time at indoor sporting facilities. College and professional indoor sporting facilities and teams are highly regulated under NCAA rules and league rules (Big East, Ivy League, etc.) or associated professional rules. For example, college athletes are being tested for COVID-19 three times per week, and every day in some instances.

What can athletes do during the Pause?

Athletes are encouraged to exercise, train, and develop skills at home, alone, or with their household members.

What can coaches do during the Pause?

Coaches are encouraged to connect with the team virtually to encourage athletes to exercise and train, review game strategy, etc.

Retail Stores

Will retail stores remain open during the Pause?

Customers may still shop at retail stores during the Pause, though online shopping is encouraged. Retail stores of less than 30,000 square feet can allow 1 customer per 100 square feet of store area. Stores larger

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than 30,000 square feet may allow one person, including employees, per 150 square feet, and additionally, must manage their capacity limits by monitoring the store entrances. Dressing rooms are closed.

All retail stores are required to have the number of people that can be in their establishment posted at the entrance, as well as in their COVID-19 Control Plan.

Will common areas in multi-tenant retailers, like a mall, be open during the Pause?

Malls and other multi-tenant retailers can remain open during the Pause; however, common areas, like the food court or seating areas, must be closed or roped off. For malls and other multi-tenant retailers, both the larger structure and the individual stores within it must comply with the capacity limits.

Museums and Historical Sites

Will museums and historical sites be open during the Pause?

Museums and historical sites may remain open at 1 customer per 100 square feet. Museums and historical sites with non-recreation/entertainment operations (e.g. restaurants) may remain open under applicable industry-specific guidance. Facilities must ensure that customers maintain social distancing, wear masks, and follow other public health protocols. No indoor group-based tours, classes, lectures or presentations are allowed during the pause.

Recreation and Entertainment

What types of recreation and entertainment facilities are closed during the Pause?

Indoor recreation and entertainment facilities and operations are closed during the Pause, including but not limited to indoor movie theaters, bowling centers, arcades, social clubs, pool/billiard halls, performing arts venues, and comedy clubs. Facilities with non-recreation/entertainment operations (e.g. restaurants) may remain open under applicable industry-specific guidance; however, they must close and prohibit customer access to indoor recreation/entertainment features or activities during the Pause. For further clarifications or determinations, please consult the Department of Business Regulation.

To the degree that recreation and entertainment facilities have outdoor operations (including drive-in operations), those may remain open so long as the social gathering size, social distancing, and other public health protocols can be maintained; outdoor operations that require interactions between different households are prohibited.

Offices and Other Businesses

I work in an office. Are offices closed during the Pause?

Employees who have the ability to work remotely are required to do so. If your job requires you to perform duties on site daily or periodically, you may do so.

If your office does not have access to remote work technology, it may be eligible for a Remote Work grant through the Commerce Corporation. Find out more here: <https://commerceri.com/tech-support-covid-19-1/>

I operate another type of business (e.g. pet groomer, cleaning service, etc). What are the rules regarding my business during the Pause?

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Other types of public-facing businesses may remain open during the Pause but must follow general guidance and applicable industry-specific guidance. Where employees may do their jobs as effectively remotely, they must do so. Please review the latest general and industry-specific guidance available at www.ReopeningRI.com.

Manufacturing and Construction

Are manufacturing and construction impacted during the Pause?

Manufacturing and construction may continue to operate in adherence with public health regulations and guidance.

Personal Services

Are personal services businesses impacted during the Pause?

Personal service businesses may continue to operate in adherence to public health regulations and guidance.

Classification of Businesses and Organizations

How can I obtain a clarification regarding what classification or category my business or organization falls under and what rules apply?

For questions and determinations regarding what classification/category your business/organization is in, please contact the Department of Business Regulation.