



FITNESS CENTERS AND HEALTH CLUBS OVERVIEW

The framework below represents the City of Boston’s operational recommendations for **Fitness Centers and Health Clubs**. These operational recommendations incorporate the Commonwealth’s Sector-specific Workplace Safety Standards and supplement them with recommendations based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and industry associations to offer best practices for preparing and returning to the physical workplace, preparing the workforce, and ensuring continuity of operations.

These operational recommendations apply to operations during Step 1 of Phase 3 of the Commonwealth’s phased reopening plan and are subject to change by the City of Boston at any time based upon changes to the Commonwealth’s Workplace Safety Standards, CDC guidance, or other public health information or analysis. For the City of Boston, Step 1 of Phase 3 of the Reopening Plan will commence on July 13, 2020.

These operational recommendations provide Boston businesses with clarity about how to operate in Boston given its unique diversity, density, population, and built environment, but businesses must comply with all current state standards at all times.

All actions undertaken to comply with Commonwealth standards and City of Boston recommendations must also comply with regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board.

Per the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, “fitness centers and health clubs” are defined as any fitness facility that provides access to and/or instruction of personal fitness training, including fitness activities such as the following:

- Weight and resistance training
- Cross training
- Yoga
- Martial arts
- Spin classes
- Boot camp training



Indoor and outdoor athletic facilities, such as those for gymnastics, tennis, and swimming (whether a standalone facility or part of a fitness center or health club) must follow the Youth and Adult Sports guidance and the Pools guidance, which are available on the State’s Reopening Site. Indoor fitness centers and studios may not operate or provide any service unless previously allowed as part of Phase 2 until specifically authorized to do so in Phase 3, Step 1 of the Commonwealth’s Workplace Reopening Plan.

Although authorized, no fitness centers or health clubs should open unless it can do so safely and in compliance with the operational recommendations below. These standards apply to all fitness centers and health clubs until rescinded or amended by the state. The owner of the fitness center or health club shall be responsible for meeting these standards. While these standards permit operation of both indoor and outdoor fitness facilities, fitness centers and health clubs are strongly encouraged to offer outdoor classes to reduce the risk of disease transmission. In addition to these standards, fitness center and health club operators should continue to abide by any and all applicable local, state and federal regulations, policies, certifications, and licensure requirements for the facility.

Following these recommendations will ensure greater public health and safety. The City of Boston strongly encourages people in vulnerable populations, especially the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions, to continue to avoid unnecessary public outings and inessential services. Staff health is also a critical factor in whether fitness centers and health clubs can safely open and serve customers.

Key Considerations

- Reopening services will increase the risk of COVID-19 spread; thus, the goal is to know, communicate, and manage transmission risk.
- Programs, services, and industries must be altered, some significantly, for several months or longer until a vaccine or effective treatment is developed.
- All plans must include mechanisms for how programs and services can be quickly scaled back if COVID-19 cases and deaths begin to spike.
- Linguistically and culturally appropriate public messaging and communications are critical.
- The experiences and needs of those disproportionately affected will be overlooked if not explicitly considered in all plans.



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS MANDATORY STANDARDS

No activity in fitness centers and health clubs shall occur without meeting these sector-specific COVID-19 workplace safety standards for fitness centers and health clubs. The owner and/or operator of the indoor fitness or studio shall be responsible for meeting these standards. These standards, developed using the workplace safety standards listed below, apply to all fitness centers and health clubs until rescinded or amended by the state.

- Massachusetts Safety Standards and Checklist: Fitness Centers and Health Clubs:
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/sector-specific-workplace-safety-standards-phase-iii-for-fitness-centers-and-health-clubs-to/download>

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

These additional safety guidelines and resources are available to support fitness centers and health clubs.

U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA):

- [OSHA – COVID-19 Webpage](#)
- [OSHA – Enforcement Guidelines Webpage](#)
- [OSHA Fact Sheet](#) – Protecting Workers During a Pandemic

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- [CDC – Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#)
- [CDC – Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease](#) (Updated 3/21/20)

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

List of EPA-approved disinfectants:

- <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

U.S. Department of Labor:

Information on employee leave rights:

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- [Department of Labor Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#)



The following workplace specific safety standards are organized around four distinct categories covering Physical Space and Social Distancing; Management and Employee Checklist; Cleaning, Disinfecting, and Hygiene Protocols; and Confirmed Cases. Please Note: For all the following checklists, items listed in bold are mandatory standards or recommendations that have been issued by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Items listed not in bold are additional standards recommended by the City of Boston.

PHYSICAL SPACE AND SOCIAL DISTANCING CHECKLIST

Fitness center and health club management and employees must implement physical amendments and procedures to ensure social distancing is available and followed for customers and employees. Fitness center and health club operators should also consider implementing items listed as “Best Practices/Recommendations” when appropriate and feasible.

Mandatory Requirements	Status
<p>Each facility must monitor visitor entries and exits, ensure social distancing, and limit occupancy at all times to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forty percent of the facility’s maximum permitted occupancy as documented in its occupancy permit on record with the municipal building department or other municipal record holder; or, • Facilities for which no permitted occupancy limitation is on record may allow eight persons per 1,000 square feet of accessible indoor or outdoor space. <p>In any case, no enclosed space within the facility may exceed occupancy of eight persons per 1,000 square feet.</p> <p>All occupancy counts and calculations shall include visitors, staff, and other workers</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Arrange all equipment (e.g., weights, machines, treadmills, bikes) so that exercise areas are spaced out at least 14 feet apart. Spacing of machines may be adjusted to at least 6 feet apart if barriers are installed.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>If spacing of equipment is not possible, block off equipment (e.g., make every other machine available) to maintain 14 feet distancing.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Install visual markers (e.g., boundaries, walkways, signage) to encourage customers to remain at least 6 feet apart while moving throughout the space.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing

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Establish directional pathways to manage visitor flow for foot traffic to minimize contact (e.g., one-way entrance and exit to rooms, one-way pathways). Post clearly visible signage regarding these policies.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Stagger lunch and break times for workers, regulate the maximum number of people in one place, and ensure at least 6 feet of physical distancing between workers.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Close or reconfigure common spaces and high-density areas of facilities where workers are likely to congregate (e.g., break rooms and eating areas) to allow 6 feet of physical distancing.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Close or reconfigure other common spaces where customers are likely to congregate or where social distancing is not possible, such as lobbies and waiting areas.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Require face coverings for all workers and visitors, except where unsafe due to medical condition or disability.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
If customers cannot wear a face covering during strenuous fitness activities, physical distancing must be at least 14 feet. If customers are wearing face coverings during fitness activities, physical distancing must be at least 6 feet.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Install physical partitions in areas where physical distancing is not possible, such as at service counters.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
In group fitness classes, 14 feet of physical distancing must be maintained between attendees at all times. If physical barriers are installed between group fitness equipment, 6 feet of physical distancing should be maintained.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Best Practices/Recommendations	Status
Consider installing plastic barriers between equipment where possible. Barriers must extend high enough to effectively block respiration from someone using the equipment. If barriers are installed, they must be cleaned regularly.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Consider establishing “workout zones” to encourage spacing of customers using free weights, dumbbells, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Encourage contactless payment and sign-in methods.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing



FITNESS CENTERS AND HEALTH CLUBS MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE CHECKLIST

Fitness center and health club management and employees must ensure mandated staffing and operations requirements are implemented and followed at all times. Fitness center and health club operators should also consider implementing items listed as “Best Practices/Recommendations” when appropriate and feasible.

Commonwealth Mandatory Requirements	Status
<p>Ensure that personal trainers maintain 6 feet of distance from customers to the extent possible and minimize any prolonged close contact. Personal trainers must wear face coverings. Any equipment used during the personal training session must be sanitized after each use or at the end of the session if the customer was the only person who used the equipment during the session.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Provide training to workers on up-to-date safety information and precautions including hygiene and other measures aimed at reducing disease transmission, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social distancing, handwashing, and proper use of face coverings • Self-screening at home, including temperature and symptom checks • Reinforcing that staff should not come to work if sick • When to seek medical attention if symptoms become severe • Which underlying health conditions may make individuals more susceptible to contracting and suffering from a severe case of the virus 	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Adjust workplace hours and shifts (working teams with different schedules or staggered arrival and/or departure) to minimize contact across workers and reduce congestion.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Require customers to sign up for classes in advance.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Maintain a log of workers and customers to support potential contact tracing (name, date, time, contact information).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Close or limit waiting areas and, for class-based activities with distinct session times, ask customers to wait outside or in cars until 10 minutes prior to their class.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing

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Schedule 30-minute windows between classes to allow for thorough cleaning and appropriate ventilation of the fitness room and to discourage congestion.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Close or mark lockers to enforce 6 feet social distancing, especially in locker rooms. Lockers should be sanitized after each use. Gyms should provide sanitizing wipes near the lockers or in the locker room.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Close all communal and individually partitioned showers. Showers that accompany pools may follow guidance for pools located on the Reopening Website .	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Require that towels be stored in clearly labeled (i.e., clean vs. soiled) sanitary containers. Appropriate temperatures should be used when washing and drying towels. Employees must wear proper protective equipment (gloves and face covering) while handling towels. Towels should not be shaken out.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Operation of related services may be allowed to open and must follow sector-specific safety protocols for each setting. Some examples are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In-facility childcare: Must follow childcare guidance• Bars and food services: Must follow restaurant guidance• Pools: Must follow pool guidance• Athletic facilities (e.g., tennis courts): Must follow adult and youth sports guidance• Massage: Must follow close contact personal services guidance• Saunas, hot tubs, and steam rooms: May not open before Phase 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Fans should not be used indoors and should only be used for outdoor classes if directed away from other customers.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
For indoor and outdoor sports guidance, please refer to the EEA Reopening Site	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Clearly designate staff responsible for sanitizing, cleaning, and supervision during each shift.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Facilities must screen workers at each shift by ensuring the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The worker is not experiencing any symptoms such as fever (100 degrees and above) or chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat,	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing



<p>fatigue, headache, muscle and/or body aches, runny nose and/or congestion, new loss of taste or smell, or nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The worker has not had close contact with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19. “Close contact” means living in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, caring for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, being within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more, or coming in direct contact with secretions (e.g., sharing utensils, being coughed on) from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, while that person was symptomatic. • The worker has not been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by a doctor or a local public health official. • Workers who fail to meet the above criteria must be sent home. 	
<p>Workers must stay home if they feel ill.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Post notice to workers and visitors of important health information and relevant safety measures as outlined in the Commonwealth’s Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplace.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Best Practices/Recommendations	Status
<p>Consider creating “shifts” for customers engaging in unstructured exercise (i.e., open weight rooms) by using a reservation system to enforce occupancy limits.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Encourage outdoor exercise, classes, sessions, etc., where possible and as long as appropriate physical distancing is maintained at all times and any equipment used is sanitized after each use.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Encourage workers who are at a particularly high-risk of COVID-19 according to the CDC (e.g., due to age or underlying conditions) to stay home.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Encourage workers to self-identify symptoms or any close contact to a known or suspected COVID-19 case to the employer.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Encourage workers who test positive for COVID-19 to disclose to the workplace employer for purposes of cleaning and/or disinfecting and contact tracing.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Consider setting aside specific hours of operation exclusively for vulnerable populations.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing



Limit employees to discrete work zones to minimize overlap where possible.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Perform symptom screening checks as customers check in at the front desk. Encourage customers to return home when potential COVID-19 symptoms are indicated by the customer or possibly by someone in the household.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Draft: “In the last 2–14 days, have you or in person in the household been exposed to the COVID-19 virus and/or are experiencing the following COVID-19 symptoms?<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Fever or chills● Cough● Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing● Fatigue● Muscle or body aches● Headache● New loss of taste or smell● Sore throat● Congestion or runny nose● Nausea or vomiting● Diarrhea”	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>If possible, implement a reservation system for the facility. Use the reservation system to contact patrons with reservations 24 hours before their scheduled arrival to confirm their reservation and ask if they or someone in their household is exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms. If the patron answers in the affirmative, the patron should be reminded that he or she should only use the fitness facility if he or she does not pose a health risk to other patrons or fitness facility workers. Such communication can be done via app, email, or text, if possible.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Communicate workplace policies clearly, frequently, and through various channels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Consider daily team all-staff conference calls or virtual check-ins to disseminate information and policy changes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace by keeping health information private in compliance with state and federal laws. • Uphold stringent anti-discrimination policies, with a zero-tolerance policy for any assumption of COVID-19 risk or infection status based on race or country of origin and offer a safe way for workers to report an instance of discrimination. • Clearly communicate changes in policy and procedures to staff several days or more in advance whenever possible and provide a mechanism for receiving questions, suggestions, and feedback from staff. 	
Use an emergency notification system and maintain updated contact information for employees.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Provide employees with personal protective equipment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Encourage workers to report any safety and health concerns.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Encourage temperature and/or symptom screenings for all workers at the beginning of their shift and any vendors or contractors entering the facility. Make sure the temperature and/or symptom screener avoids close contact with workers to the extent possible.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
If providing temperature screenings on-site is not feasible, implement self-screening at home. Ensure that screening is performed prior to the worker leaving the home for his or her shift and follows CDC guidelines.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
When possible, allow for flexibility in working hours so employees can commute during non-peak times.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Encourage employees to wash their hands as quickly as possible upon entering the workplace.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing

CLEANING, DISINFECTING, AND HYGIENE CHECKLIST

Fitness center and health club management and employee personnel must ensure these mandated cleaning and hygiene requirements are implemented and being followed at all times. Fitness center and health club operators should also consider implementing items listed as “Best Practices/Recommendations” when appropriate and feasible.

Mandatory Requirements	Status
Ensure access to handwashing facilities on site, including soap and running water, and allow enough break time for workers to wash hands frequently;	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing



alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol may be used as an alternative.	
Distribute hand sanitizer and disposable wipes abundantly throughout the space for workers and customers to disinfect their hands and equipment before and after use.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Disposable wipes should be placed next to each piece of large equipment (such as treadmills, bikes, rowing machines) and next to each area containing smaller equipment (such as free weights).	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Require trainers to wash hands before and after each training session and sanitize frequently during each session.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Sanitize all equipment between uses. No equipment should be used by another customer or returned to the storage rack and/or container without being sanitized.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Close off any piece of equipment if sanitation (or the monitoring thereof by employees) is not possible or practical.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Post visible signage throughout the site to remind workers and customers of hygiene and safety protocols.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Allow water fountains to be used as refill stations only, provided that social distancing can be maintained. Customers and workers should bring their own water bottles or purchase them from the business.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Require that towels be stored in clearly labeled (i.e., clean vs. soiled) sanitary containers. Appropriate temperatures should be used when washing and drying towels. Employees must wear proper protective equipment (gloves and face covering) while handling towels. Towels should not be shaken out.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Clean commonly touched surfaces in restrooms (e.g., toilet seats, doorknobs, stall handles, sinks, paper towel dispensers, soap dispensers) frequently and in accordance with CDC guidelines.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Conduct frequent cleaning and disinfection of the site at least daily and more frequently if feasible. The City of Boston recommends the following cleaning schedule (at a minimum): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All handwashing sinks must be well-stocked with soap and paper towels for handwashing and checked and/or restocked at least three times a day.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common areas of the building should be cleaned by staff or professional cleaners no less than two times a day. • Clean and disinfect lobbies, entryways, elevators, and break rooms no less than two times a day. • All high-touch areas must be cleaned and disinfected with an EPA-approved disinfectant at least three times a day and five times a day if possible. Examples of high touch areas include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doorknobs, handles, and bars at entrances and exits and bathrooms • Weights, ropes, and other workout equipment (in addition to between each use) • Light switches and elevator buttons • Sink faucets and knobs • Toilet seats and handles • Stall door handles in bathrooms • Reception desks, countertops and similar surfaces • Shared telephones, computer mice, and keyboards • Payment processors and registers • Storage containers and towel and equipment bins 	
<p>Keep cleaning logs that include date, time, and scope of cleaning.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Conduct frequent disinfecting of heavily transited areas and high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, handrails, equipment, etc.).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>In the event of a positive case of a worker, customer, or vendor, shut down the site and wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting the workplace in accordance with current CDC guidance.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Disinfect all fitness equipment or mutually touched objects (e.g., spin shoes, jump ropes, dumbbells, etc.) immediately after each use. At no point should customers come in contact with objects that others have touched without first being disinfected according to CDC guidelines.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<p>Best Practices/Recommendations Status</p>	
<p>Where possible, open windows for better ventilation.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing

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<p>Encourage customers to use one piece of equipment at a time (e.g., limit circuit training or “super sets” with multiple pieces of equipment) to facilitate required sanitizing. Facilities must provide sanitization supplies at each piece of equipment for customers to clean in between each use.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing</p>
<p>Encourage customers to use their own personal exercise equipment (such as spin shoes, jump ropes, yoga mats, etc.) when possible. If shared items are used, they must be sanitized in between each use.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing</p>
<p>Consider implementing a contactless check-out system for customers to use for any small equipment and accessories (i.e., exercise bands, ropes, mats, foam rollers, etc.). Develop a process to clean and disinfect these items upon return.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing</p>
<p>Establish a Response Action protocol to clean spaces where there were confirmed cases of infection and/or exposure and notification to the workplace coordinator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If management is notified of a positive case in a building, close the section of the building to which that person had access for deep cleaning. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing</p>

CONFIRMED CASES CHECKLIST

Confirmed COVID cases for fitness center and health club employees, customers, vendors or anyone accessing the facility will require review and adherence to this checklist.

Mandatory Requirements	Status
<p>If the employer is notified of a positive case at the workplace (including employees, customers, vendors, delivery personnel, or anyone accessing the facility), the employer should notify the local Board of Health (LBOH) where the workplace is located and work with them to trace likely contacts in the workplace and advise workers and others who may have accessed the space to isolate and self-quarantine. Testing of others who accessed the same space may be recommended consistent with guidance and/or at the request of the LBOH.</p> <p>In the event of an employee notifying an employer of a positive COVID case: The employer should obtain consent from the employee to share his or her personal information with the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC). If the employer does not have consent to share the employee’s information, the employer can still call BPHC for general guidance on closures and identifying close contacts. The employer cannot reveal information about the confirmed case to close contacts due to privacy concerns. This function may be supported by public health agencies other than BPHC depending on the location of the confirmed case.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing</p>

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<p>When calling BPHC, employers should be able to identify whether the employee worked 48 hours prior to onset of symptoms or was asymptomatic 48 hours prior to the test. The employer should also be able to identify if the employee was wearing a face covering at work, details of work conditions, locations of work (i.e., inside, outside), proximity to other employees or customers, level of interaction with the public, and barriers or face coverings that were in place.</p> <p>The employer will help the LBOH to identify employee(s) who may have had contact with the confirmed case. The employer will notify these employees of the need to quarantine. The employer and LBOH will reach out to affected healthcare providers. Contacts to a confirmed case should be encouraged to have a COVID-19 test. Any employee that is identified as a close contact should not return to work for at least for 14 days.</p>	
In the event of a positive case, shut down the site for deep cleaning and disinfecting of the workplace in accordance with current CDC guidance.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Best Practices/Recommendations	Status
Workers who test positive for COVID-19 should not be allowed to return to work until cleared by a medical professional as being symptom-free for at least 3 days and having been at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Any previous customer who has notified the fitness center or health club operator of a positive case should be encouraged to contact LBOH. The fitness center or health club management or operator should also contact any employee and known customers who may have come into contact with that customer.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
Maintain and review customer and employee records as necessary for information to support contact-tracing efforts.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing