

# The (Str)Ideas of March (Part Two): The Upcoming Easing of Connecticut's COVID-19 Restrictions (and Impacts Upon Employers)

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## Working Together

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Last week, we wrote about the continuing expansion of and revisions to the COVID-19 vaccination schedules in Connecticut in this blog post. Perhaps due to a combination of the expansion of vaccination availability and the continuing drops in infection rates, Governor Lamont has announced plans to ease some of the COVID-19 related restrictions and protocols in Connecticut. While the Governor has not yet issued any Executive Orders fully explaining and implementing these plans, and while no state agency has yet issued any specific revised protocols, the following is what

we do know regarding the soon-to-be-updated capacity and travel protocols:

Beginning **March 19, 2021**, all **capacity limits** will be eliminated for the following businesses (while face coverings, social distancing, and other cleaning and disinfecting protocols will continue to be required):

- Restaurants (note, however, that the 8-person table capacity limit and 11:00 PM required closing time for dining rooms will continue);
- Retail;
- Libraries;
- Personal services;
- Indoor recreation (excluding indoor theaters, which will continue to have a 50% capacity limit);
- Gyms/fitness centers;
- Museums, aquariums, and zoos;
- Offices; and
- Houses of worship.

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In addition, **gathering limits** will be revised as follows:

- Social and recreational gatherings at private residences – 25 indoors/100 outdoors; and
- Social and recreational gatherings at commercial venues – 100 indoors/200 outdoors.

Furthermore, **all sports** will be allowed to practice and compete, and all sports tournaments will be allowed, subject to Department of Public Health guidance. Finally, Connecticut's **travel advisory** (which imposed required quarantining upon individuals who traveled out of state) will be modified from a requirement to "recommended guidance."

Looking further into the future, beginning **March 29, 2021**, capacity limits on **early childhood classes** will increase from 16 to 20. In addition, beginning **April 2, 2021**:

- Outdoor amusement parks can open;
- Outdoor event venues can increase to a 50% capacity, capped at 10,000 people;
- Indoor stadiums can open at 10% capacity; and
- Summer camps and summer festivals "are advised to begin the planning stages to open for the upcoming season."

### **SO, WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN (I.E., CAN WE OPEN UP YET)?**

Again, we wait for the State to develop the specific protocols, including Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) "sector guidance" for specific businesses and employers. However, what we do know is that the lifting of capacity limits in offices may lead certain businesses to contemplate whether to ease away from having their employees largely working remotely, and whether a more "in person" or "back to the office" approach may be warranted. While the lifting of the capacity limits may auger well for such a "return to work," businesses must remember that *masks/face coverings, social distancing, and other cleaning and disinfecting protocols remain in effect*. These continuing restrictions may effectively prevent a "full" return to work approach, depending upon the layout of a particular business. In addition, while many of the enterprises listed (restaurants, gyms) will breathe a sigh of relief in terms of being able to theoretically "fully" open, the continuing social distancing, masking and other specific restrictions are likely to continue to limit their operations. Indeed, a) bars that only serve "beverages" will remain closed, and b) the 11:00 PM closing time remains in place for events at venues, restaurants, and entertainment facilities.

While the travel advisories (i.e., quarantine requirements) will cease to be a requirement on March 19, 2021, they remain as "recommended guidance." Businesses will have to weigh if they wish to modify their travel protocols/policies or keep them in place as is. It may be a wise course of action to keep **some** restriction based upon the latest CDC guidance and the location/situs of one's travel (i.e., travel to a state with higher

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rates of infection or where there may have been an improvident/overly ambitious easing of restrictions leading to a resurgence).

**FINALLY, PLEASE REMEMBER: The face coverings/mask mandates will continue to remain in place (both generally in public, and inside one's business).** Indeed, all the protocols that relate to face coverings, social distancing, and cleaning measures are being maintained in Connecticut. Simply put, we must all continue to **mask up**. Pullman & Comley has policy templates and other useful resources available to assist employers in considering and implementing their options and navigating the web of executive orders, laws, regulations, and other state and federal guidance related to COVID-19. Specifically, we have developed model travel and vaccine policy templates which we can easily conform to address the unique needs of your organization. Please contact any of Pullman & Comley's **Labor and Employment attorneys** for assistance.

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