

# COVID-19 Response

## Guidance for Plexiglass Barriers

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Reviewed:

Revised:

Environmental Health and Safety and Facilities and Property Management have reviewed the benefits, limitations, and performance standards of plexiglass barriers as a method of prevention of spreading airborne viruses and developed criteria for the installation. PSU uses plexiglass barriers in certain instances where individuals cannot maintain a 6-foot distance, but they are only one part of PSU's COVID-19 safety controls. When implementing all safety methods, the potential for transmitting an airborne virus diminishes drastically.

### Risk Reduction

While plexiglass barriers can be effective in certain situations to intercept respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing, etc. that may transmit COVID-19, it is the least effective protective measure. Masks are generally superior for source control. Barriers are most effective at transactional locations, such as reception desks or retail points of sale, where people may be in close proximity and pass objects between one another. Since masks are required at Portland State University, installation of partitions or barriers is not necessary for most settings if people remain 6-feet apart. Similarly, based on the current physical distancing guidelines of 6-feet, plexiglass barriers are unnecessary in classrooms because students and instructors must wear masks. As public health guidance adapts to changes in COVID-19 related infections, PSU will continue to follow the best practices available. Note that partitions may not be installed in classrooms, work areas, or break areas for the purpose of creating physical distancing.

### Limitations of Plexiglass Barriers

The following are limitations of plexiglass barriers that should be considered:

- Barriers do not provide a zero-risk solution. They do not address all possible modes of transmission, such as aerosol transmission, or fully protect anyone from COVID-19.
- Barriers do not replace the need to maintain 6-feet of separation between individuals when possible.
- Barriers do not replace the need to follow other public health requirements such as practicing good hygiene (e.g., washing hands, not touching your face, staying home if you are ill), wear face coverings and PPE, or other requirements and recommendations.

- There may be constraints in the physical/structural environment that prevent the installation of appropriately sized barriers.
- Barriers may not be feasible or appropriate in all workspaces or for all work activities.
- If not designed or installed properly for the specific work environment, barriers may obstruct or interfere with the ventilation system airflow, and fire and life safety protection systems (e.g., fire alarm notification devices, fire sprinklers, fire pull stations).
- Barriers may break if individuals lean against the material and may expose sharp edges. Sturdier materials may be necessary if individuals apply weight or push against them.

## Criteria for Installation

PSU will follow these criteria to evaluate each request for plexiglass barrier installations.

- The location is:
  - A front reception desk e.g. Campus Rec front desk, Advising & Career Services front desk
  - A transactional desk e.g. ID Card Services
  - A retail point of sale, e.g., ticket sales, University Market
  - A high-traffic area staffed with employees, e.g. tabling events, temporary stands
  - A space where 6-foot of distance cannot be maintained due to confidential nature of information shared or space available
- Plexiglass barriers may not be installed in individual, shared offices, or in cubicle spaces where individuals can maintain 6-foot distance. Plexiglass barriers can be installed in other locations as an accommodation for employees with disabilities. In order to request this, please work directly with [Human Resources](#).

## Installation Request

Plexiglass barriers are available for installation by trained Facilities and Property Management Staff. Depending on the specific individual needs of the spaces, customizable or store-bought options are available. Installation requests are made via the online [Work Order System](#). Requests are reviewed and prioritized based on specific factors, such as workplace type and risk level, occupant and visitor frequency, density, placement, and pedestrian pathway density.

FPM and EHS will ensure the following items before the installation:

- University provided plexiglass barriers will be added to the cleaning schedule by housekeeping
- The path of egress from the building is not impacted by the installation.
- The ventilation system airflow, and fire protection systems are not impacted by the installation
- Regulated buildings materials, which may have been used in construction, will not be impacted