

New York Lifts Most Statewide COVID-19 Restrictions

New York State Lifts Restrictions. On June 7, 2021, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo [declared](#) that the State would lift most remaining COVID-19 restrictions when 70% of adult New Yorkers had received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. On June 15, 2021, Governor Cuomo held a press conference to [announce](#) that New York had reached the 70% first-dose threshold. Accordingly, COVID-19 guidance from the State health department and the New York Forward industry-specific reopening guidelines are now entirely optional for most businesses—including retail establishments, offices, and other commercial settings. The requirements that are now lifted include social gathering limits, capacity restrictions, social distancing, cleaning and disinfection, health screening, and contact tracing. Governor Cuomo stated during his press conference that these guidelines are now “voluntary” and that “the mandates are gone.” New York [previously permitted](#) employers to adopt CDC guidance that no longer requires vaccinated individuals to wear masks in most settings.

Certain Guidance Remains in Place. The Governor’s June 15 announcement did not lift restrictions for certain specified locations, including large-scale indoor event venues (with over 5,000 attendees), pre-K to grade 12 schools, public transit, homeless shelters, correctional facilities, nursing homes, and health care settings. Additionally, unvaccinated individuals are still required to wear masks and maintain social distance in indoor settings pursuant to both state and [CDC guidance](#).

Implications for Employers. Governor Cuomo’s announcement provides employers considering a general return to the office with greater flexibility. However, employers should continue to be mindful of the requirement that unvaccinated employees wear masks and socially distance. Employers should also consider how to handle the presence of unvaccinated employees in the workplace in a way that accounts for medical and religious accommodations, but also weighs safety concerns that may be raised by vaccinated employees. Employers who have not yet done so may wish to survey employees to gauge their comfort level with eliminating or scaling back COVID-19 safety measures which are no longer mandated.

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