



# American Restroom Association

**Quick Resource**  
**June 18, 2020**

*OUR MISSION: The American Restroom Association (ARA) advocates for the availability of clean, safe, and well-designed public restrooms.*

## ARA Recommendations Regarding Re-Opening Public Restrooms

### Background

Well before the advent of COVID-19, and today's concerns relative to the re-opening of the country, the American Restroom Association (ARA) advocated for the availability of clean, safe, and well-designed public restrooms. For more than 15 years, it has documented the need for:

- enhanced restroom design and technology,
- increased restroom availability and accessibility,
- improvement of school restroom facilities, and
- the evolution of pertinent legislation and regulations to provide equity, address changing societal needs, and meet cultural priorities.

It also has acted as a champion for people who avoid activities because proper toilet facilities are not available, especially those with social phobias (such as paruresis) and special needs. While much more can be done in the long term regarding improving public restroom design and access (see ARA's position statement, "*The Future of Public Restrooms for the COVID-19 Era and Beyond*"), the recommendations below address the immediate heightened requirements brought on by COVID-19.

### Proximity

These recommendations are low-cost or no-cost in nature and can be implanted quickly.

- Hand-washing or sanitizing upon entering the restroom to minimize germ transmission
- Wearing of face masks to limit exposure to aerosolized infectious agents and to minimize face-touching
- Implementing education programs and signage supporting the two items above
- For existing facilities, consult with the local building inspector about blocking off every other urinal in men's rooms\*
- For existing facilities, if the urinals have no dividers, consult with your local building inspector about adding them in men's rooms (floor-to-ceiling installations of these dividers preferred)\*
- For existing facilities' partial-height toilet stalls, consider blocking off every other stall\*

*\* The distancing needs brought on by COVID-19 are outpacing regulatory requirements. ARA understands the blocking off of urinals or stalls is counter to plumbing codes. It recommends you confer with your governing officials to ensure compliance with toilet and urinal requirements.*

## Replacing/Installing Fixtures

The ARA recommends installing the following fixtures and devices. These recommendations can be implemented in a short time frame with a moderate cost investment.

- Sensor-activated water taps
- Sensor-activated sanitizer dispensers in each toilet room or stall
- Lids on toilet seats for rooms and stalls where not prohibited by ADA compliance
- Restroom door and stall door opening devices to eliminate the need to touch door handles, such as automated door mechanisms
- Single-paper, motion-activated towel dispensers

## Enhanced Cleaning Protocols

While changing and updating the physical attributes of public restroom design and fixtures are important in mitigating the spread of coronavirus, those efforts will be wasted without the proper cleaning protocols. ARA recommends a program of frequent disinfection and cleaning in combination with ongoing monitoring and documentation. The use of UV light as a component of public area disinfection is a promising area of study. The following organizations have prepared recommendations and standards on overall cleaning protocols relative to public and commercial spaces.

- Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification ([iicrc.org](http://iicrc.org))
- ISSA ([issa.com](http://issa.com))
- BOMA International ([boma.org](http://boma.org))

## For More Information

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**About American Restroom Association (ARA):** a nonprofit founded in 2004, ARA advocates for the availability of clean, safe, and well-designed public restrooms. Accomplishments include successfully advocating for enforcement of and revisions to the International Plumbing Code, congressional testimony on gender equity in public restrooms in US Federal Buildings, and representing the USA in educating international audiences at Summits and Conferences of the World Toilet Organization (WTO). ARA brings together a multidisciplinary team from architecture, engineering, education, academia, and social work. Learn more at <http://www.americanrestroom.org>.