

Preparing to Return to Premises

Briggs and Veselka has always been dedicated to excellence and compassion for our associates and clients. COVID-19 has tested many organizations' cultures, including our own. However, we have been able to withstand the negative effects of this pandemic, largely in part because of our workforce's commitment to *support one another to discover the best in ourselves and in others*, no matter what comes our way. As we begin to adjust to the new normal, we will seek to optimally meet our associates' needs while also exceeding our clients' expectations.

To that end, we recognize that associates can handle many tasks remotely. As we continue working from outside the office, we'll seek the balance between flexibility and the sharing of ideas, values, triumphs, everyday challenges and socializing in the same premises (albeit at a safe distance). Fostering our firm's culture will continue to be a high priority, even as we consider this new hybrid approach to working remotely and within the office.

Protecting Associate's Health is our Utmost Priority

Healthy associates are crucial to our firm. While the Texas Governor's order included accounting services as an essential business, which allowed us to continue an in-office work environment, we requested that everyone in our offices work from home effective March 18, 2020, in an abundance of caution and safety to associate health.

The firm has continued to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and stay-at-home restrictions by federal, state and local governments. We will now begin to focus on a return to our physical workplaces with a focus on health, safety, and security. **An initial closed pilot group will test our protocols first. After successfully working through these procedures and any related improvements, we will determine how to partially phase-in other associates. At that time, associates will be given the opportunity (not obligation) to volunteer.**

We know that everyone's situation is different. Associates should continue to work from home if you (a) do not have child care available, (b) are considered at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and/or (c) are caring for someone in your household who is considered a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Work time in the office is supported by the firm only if it makes sense for you, your family *and* the firm. All efforts will be made to assist those remaining out of the office with flexible work times if we can continue to meet client expectations and deadlines. Equipment and connectivity, IT support, productivity guidance and any other assistance will also be provided where reasonable.

Reasons for Coming into the Office

- **Innovation.** While we proved we can certainly work independently at home, true innovation and problem-solving sometimes requires people to be together and work as a team. With a large practice spanning multiple service lines, in-person collaboration sometimes makes sense.
- **Productivity.** Our home environments are vastly different, and the interruptions we encounter on a day-to-day basis differ and can affect productivity. Our high-quality offices and workspaces were created to positively impact associate well-being and will aid associates in feeling comfortable in physical spaces that allow them to do their best work. Over time, we expect the social distancing restrictions to be relaxed and we will gradually prepare for that period. In the interim, our offices more than allow for the CDC suggested 6 foot separations using a hybrid schedule.

Readiness Essentials

We have outlined the following focus areas for our workplace readiness:

1. **Building Readiness**
2. **Office Readiness**
3. **Control Access**
4. **Social Distancing**
5. **Ongoing Communication & Re-evaluation**
6. **Going to Client Offices**
7. **Submitting the Point of Entry Screening form**
8. **Travel**

1. Building Readiness

We have been in constant communication with our building owners/management teams to discuss our associates' safe return to our workplaces. The COVID-19 Response Team has initiated operations plans to deal with COVID-19 that include:

- a. **Face Coverings** – Required in all building and office common areas (i.e. lobby, elevators, hallways, restrooms, breakrooms)
- b. **Restricted Building Access** – Access cards are needed to enter the building, as applicable
- c. **Visitors** – During our RTP pilot, visitors are barred from entering our offices. After the pilot, Briggs & Veselka still discourages visitor visitations except for business-critical visitors, such as vendors that are needed to maintain our current business needs and supplies or client meetings that have no other available options to meet remotely or due to timing circumstances. All other meetings are expected to meet virtually if possible.
- d. **Mail Delivery** – Mail will be delivered to mail rooms for tenants to retrieve and distribute. Deliveries will not be sent directly to tenant floors.
- e. **Day Porters** – Day Porters may be on-site to continue cleaning and disinfecting the common areas of the building throughout the day, including elevator buttons and door handles.
- f. **Janitorial Services** – Nightly cleaning crews will continue as normal, Monday through Friday. Associates must leave each day by 5:30pm to allow cleaning crews to safely and thoroughly disinfect all work areas.
- g. **Elevators** – Limiting elevator passengers to 4 per cab. The firm encourages single passengers when able.

2. Office Readiness

In addition to the steps that our building management teams have taken, Briggs & Veselka has also implemented new policies and practices to help ease any anxiety about returning to our offices. Mitigating associate fears and concerns is our top priority. Early on, we secured hand sanitizer, antibacterial wipes, face masks, gloves and no-touch tools for door handles and elevator buttons.

Our new office policies are:

- a. **Face Coverings** – The firm will provide one reusable face covering per associate. Face coverings must be worn when entering and exiting the buildings and our office entrances. Masks are optional only when an associate is within an enclosed work area (i.e., office). Associates in open workspaces must use their masks. Associates in open and common areas must also use their masks when interacting within 10' of other associates visiting / conversing with them in open workspaces.
- b. **Office Temperature Checks** – Associates reporting to any B&V office will administer one self-screen temperature check every workday at the respective locations below. At the Austin, Greenway and Pathway offices, a Protect98 automated, stand mounted software unit will be available at the locations below to offer associates an immediate temperature reading as well as confirm face mask compliance. Other offices will have a self-screening station inclusive of an infrared thermometer for associates to self-administer temperature checks at the start of every workday. Associates in these offices will therefore need to complete their pre-screening by using the MyBV app or the form referenced at the end of this document. MyBV will also be used when Protect 98 is not operating effectively, no matter what office.
 - i. **Houston** – Lobby of the 21st Floor.
 - ii. **Austin** – Lobby.
 - iii. **The Woodlands** – Lobby.
 - iv. **El Campo** – Lobby.
 - v. **Pathway** – Lobby.
- c. **Person Health Information (PHI)** - Any PHI shared through the processes above will be kept confidential within Human Resources. Associates with a temperature of 100 degrees or higher will need to immediately leave the premises, stay home and quarantine/self-monitor, and advise Human Resources of their progress. As always, if you encounter any COVID symptoms for any reason, we ask that you stay home and not report to work.
- d. **Entering the Office** – All offices are equipped with sanitizer and disposable paper products, such as napkins, paper towels or wipes, which should be used to access and open entry doors upon arrival. Dedicated waste baskets for PPE are available at the site of each entry door and should be used to discard towels, facemasks and gloves, if used.
- e. **Workspace Management** – schedules for associates working from open workspaces will be coordinated to ensure we manage any risk of exposure. Associates working from enclosed offices will also be expected to follow certain protocols to minimize risk, including keeping doors closed and ensuring no small meetings are held within offices. All associates are required to book their workspace each time they will be going into the office and must check-in and check-out daily through AgileQuest.

- f. **Hand Washing** – All associates are required to wash their hands upon entering the office. Associates are also encouraged to wash their hands frequently throughout the day, especially after visiting common areas.
- g. **Office Common Area Cleaning** – The Houston office has implemented additional daily cleaning and sanitizing of all common areas, door handles, elevator buttons, stairwell doors and breakrooms due to the number of associates. Cleaning supplies and equipment have been purchased for use solely within the office areas. Nightly cleaning and sanitization will take place. All janitorial workers will wear both face coverings and gloves.
- h. **In-Office Cleaning** – All associates will be provided antibacterial wipes and/or spray to maintain a clean personal office environment. The firm encourages associates to wipe down cell phones, office phones, computers and desks daily. Wipes will be available in breakrooms to clean up after meals.
- i. **In-Person Meetings** –The firm has established video conferencing capabilities for all associates. The use of video or audio conferencing is strongly encouraged, even while in the office and between practice groups. If in-person meetings do occur, they should be in a large area where a 6 foot social distance between everyone can be easily maintained. Refer to B&V's Premises Protocols. The conference rooms will need to be booked in advance, and meeting room capacity has been reduced to ensure social distancing standards can be met.
- j. **Shared Kitchen Items** – All shared kitchen items (condiments, container snacks, glassware, coffee mugs, serving utensils) will be removed or not available for use. The firm will now only provide disposable cups, stir sticks, plastic utensils, coffee, drinks, water and pre-packaged snacks in our kitchens, lounges and coffee areas. Hygiene procedures (e.g., washing hands or sanitizing before using coffee machine, using paper towel to open refrigerator or wiping down the handle after every use, etc.) must be followed.
- k. **Refrigerators** – All personal items must be contained within a closed bag and labeled. Associates should remove any personal food items on a daily basis.
- l. **Ice Machines** – All ice machines will be purposefully inoperable for the foreseeable future.
- m. **Copier Rooms/Shared Printers** – Copier locations will also have reduced capacity limits. If using the large copiers, associates are required to wipe down any touch surfaces before leaving.
- n. **Medicines** – OTC medicines will only be available in individual packets. These packets will be available at specific locations in each office. See your administrative professionals or HR for more details.
- o. **Paperless** – Our goal is to be 95% paperless now and going forward. This includes prebilling, shared documents between team members, mark-ups, handwritten notes, communications between attorneys and assistants, etc.

3. Control Access

Our new office policies are:

- a. **Elevators** – We encourage associates to take the elevators by themselves (i.e. one person per elevator). Always ensure face coverings / masks are worn. Greenway has a 4-person max policy in their elevators.
- b. **Visitors** – During the RTP Pilot, Briggs & Veselka will not allow visitors, guests or non-contract vendors in our offices. After the pilot, we'll still discourage visitors in our offices, except for business-critical visitors. Refer to the BV Premises Visitor Protocol. After the pilot, if you are expecting a visitor to the building, including food or package delivery, please meet them in each building's main lobby on the first floor.
- c. **Mail Delivery** – Mail and package deliveries will be received via our building mail rooms and will remain downstairs. No deliveries should be made within our offices.
 - i. Houston – B&V's COO, with the assistance of the Tax Department Chair, will coordinate all firm mail. Incoming mail will be placed within the mail room on the 17th floor to be distributed. Face coverings and gloves shall be worn while distributing mail throughout the office.
 - ii. Austin – Mail and packages will be delivered to the designated area outside of the office door prior to opening and delivering.
 - iii. The Woodlands – Debra Seefeld will coordinate all office mail. All mail and packages will be delivered to the processing room prior to opening and delivering. Face coverings and gloves will be worn while distributing mail throughout the office.
 - iv. El Campo – Beverly Hensley will coordinate all office mail.
 - v. Pathway – Pathway Forensic's Office Manager will coordinate all office mail.

- d. **Associate Check-in** – Daily temperature checks are required. Associates are encouraged to monitor their temperature daily before leaving home to travel to work. In all offices, associates must first check-in at the office lobby for a temperature check. Associates must also check-in and out of their workspace through AgileQuest.
- e. **Access Cards** – Individual access and security cards will continue to be required to gain access to the floors. Additional access cards will not be distributed.
- f. **Symptomatic protocols** – If an associate exhibits COVID-19 symptoms while in the office, they should immediately leave the premises while limiting contact with others and maintaining social distancing requirements. Symptomatic associates should seek medical attention and/or contact their healthcare provider immediately. They should also contact HR@bvccpa.com as soon as practical to ensure contact tracing protocols.

4. Social Distancing

Briggs & Veselka is currently evaluating a strategically phased plan for certain associates to return to the office. The following space planning and social distancing guidelines have been established for all offices:

- a. Observance of 6-foot separation between all associates at all times.
- b. No small meetings or socializing within individual offices is allowed. We suggest “doorway” conversations.
- c. No more than one person should be within the copier rooms/coffee centers at any given time.
- d. Restroom capacity will be very limited, assuring 6 foot distancing protocols are maintained at all times.
- e. Observe 6 foot distance from any open space work station, including those located within the copier rooms.
- f. Observe digital transferring of files instead of physical paper between team members as mentioned previously.
- g. Breakroom capacity will be very limited. At any one time, we will have no more than 5 people in the large Greenway breakroom (21st floor) and 2 in the smaller breakrooms on 16 & 17. Using these capacity limits, associate use of each breakroom while observing appropriate social distancing will be allowed, and only for short durations (e.g., heating food, refilling water containers, etc.). Chairs have been removed.
- h. Conference rooms will have a reduced maximum capacity or number of occupants per room.
- i. Observe signage in all conference rooms, breakrooms, restrooms and all common areas.

In addition, the Houston and Austin offices will feature:

- a. A strategically phased plan based on floor design to lessen the density of associates returning at one time.
- b. Plexiglas shield surrounding the receptionist desk.
- c. Designated entrances and exits per each floor.
- d. Signage in hallways and around workstations on all floors, reminding associates of 6 foot protocol.

5. Ongoing Communication & Re-evaluation

In times of change and uncertainty, we recognize that everyone has different personal needs and concerns. Providing the resources and support to all associates to manage through these challenges is as important as the changes we have implemented in the workplace.

Naturally, given the current social distancing requirements, our ability to physically interact with one another will be limited. With time, we expect that some of these restrictions will be partially relaxed. In the interim, we'll be operating in a “new normal” environment and gradually prepare for the eventual optimal model of operating within our offices. For instance, all relevant equipment and physical documents needed should be taken home on a nightly basis to ensure the highest levels of productivity. Our business continuity will depend on how well we adapt and how we can safely return to our office spaces in a scheduled manner.

This plan is a working document, which we believe will change over time. In the interim, we want to ensure that everyone has a voice and feels comfortable addressing any concerns, issues or suggestions they might have in real time so that they can quickly be addressed.

We plan to provide frequent and ongoing updates to keep all associates informed.

6. **Going to Client Offices** – please see the [client protocols located on our intranet's COVID site](#) on our intranet for more details when you are visiting or working from client offices. Any networking events or referral / prospect meetings outside the office (i.e., at a restaurant) will also require submission of a [pre-screening form through MyBV](#).
7. **Point of Entry Screening Form** – if an automated, stand mounted check-in software unit is not available at our office location from which you are working, please make sure you fill out the screening form EVERY day you are working on premises or at client offices to minimize the risk of exposure for yourself and others. This form can be submitted digitally via [MyBV Pre-Screening Form](#) or [MyBV Pre-Screening Form for Client Visits](#) before you begin your workday on our or client's premises.
8. **Travel** – Consistent with state quarantine suggestions and restrictions for out-of-state travel, please report all out-of-state travel to HR before traveling and before returning to the workplace. This includes travel that does not require the use of time off, such as taking a weekend trip. You are required to remain out of the office for fourteen (14) days from the date you returned post out-of-state travel. This includes personal out-of-state travel and for travel to out-of-state client offices. Any travel in the last month to a restricted travel level 2-3 country per CDC travel health recommendations must be reported. Quarantine periods for post-travel may change depending on current government guidelines or Firm policy.