COVID-19 Emerging Topic: A Public Health Framework for Reopening Tribal Economies

Purpose

- Provide Tribal leaders with some resources and information to guide their decision-making around reopening businesses and resuming community operations
- Decisions should be guided by cultural values, non-maleficence, and grounded in public health principles
- The risks of increased transmission of COVID-19 are balanced against risks to the health and well-being of the public, society, and the economy from measures taken to reduce the spread of the disease

Phased Approach

- Phase I
  - Controlling the spread of COVID-19 through strict social and physical distancing policies
- Phase II
  - Conducting epidemiological and clinical assessments and determine capabilities to meet required public health principles
  - Conducting environmental public health risk assessments of specific facility and business types to determine what modifications and protective measures need to be in place to reopen
- Phase III: Availability of therapeutics and a vaccine
- Phase IV: Policies for increasing preparedness for the next threat

Public Health Principles & Epidemiological Assessment - Phase II

Tribes should consider waiting to initiate the reopening process when the following are met:

1. Downward trajectory of number of new cases for at least 14 days;

2. Rapid diagnostic testing capacity is sufficient to test, at minimum, all people with COVID-19 symptoms, including mild cases, as well as close contacts and those in essential roles;

3. The healthcare system is able to safely care for all patients, including providing appropriate personal protective equipment for healthcare workers; and

4. There is sufficient public health capacity to conduct contact tracing for all new cases and their close contacts.

- Tribes should also have a plan in place for what to do when the number of new cases rises again and/or they discover a case has visited one of their establishments.

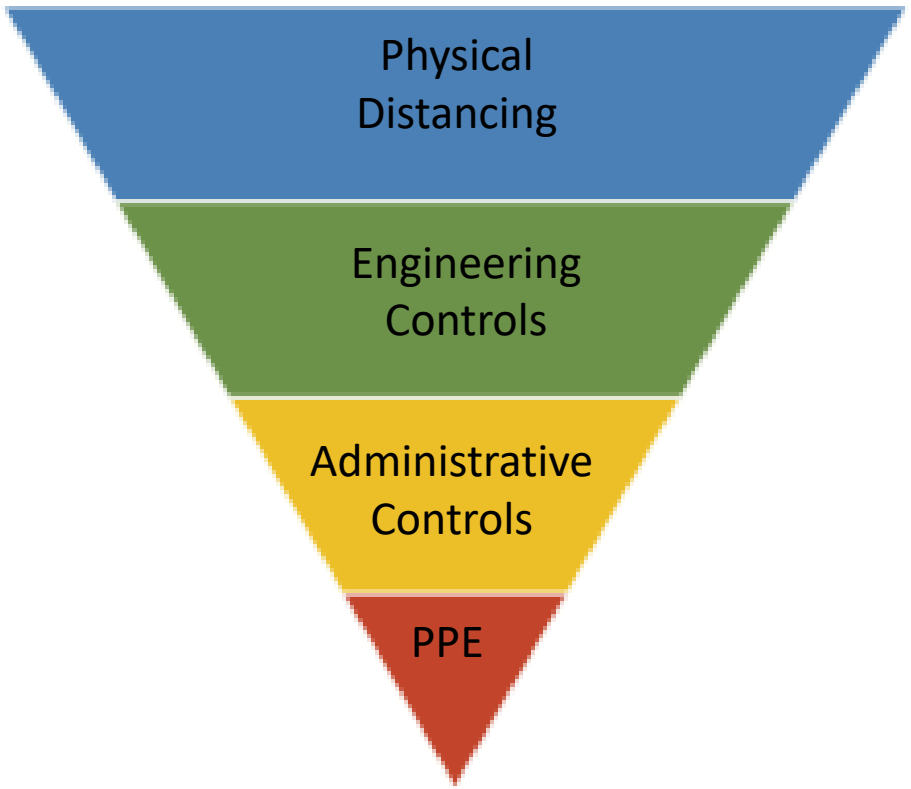
Environmental Public Health Risk Assessments – Phase II

- Formal process for evaluating risks and hazards
- Measure of the likelihood or probability of the risk or hazard – increased disease transmission and new cases
- Measure of the consequences or severity of impact – includes health impacts to individuals and society
- Measures to consider
  - contact intensity as a function of contact type (ranging from close to distant) and duration (ranging from brief to prolonged)
  - number of contacts as the approximate number of people in the setting at the same time, on average
  - modification potential (the degree to which mitigation measures can buy down those risks) is a qualitative assessment of the degree to which activities can be modified to reduce risk

Likelihood x Consequence = Risk

Mitigation Measures

Modified Hierarchy of Controls



- Physical Distancing — wherever possible having people work or access the business from home; this should include restructuring responsibilities to minimize the numbers of workers that need to be physically present, and reducing the number of patrons allowed in the business
- Engineering controls — creating physical barriers between people (e.g., Plexiglas panels between cashiers and customers) and reconfiguring space to enable people to be located apart (ideally, at least 6 feet)
- Administrative controls — redistributing responsibilities to reduce contact between individuals, using technology to facilitate communication and payment
- PPE — having people wear nonmedical cloth masks

Summary – Reopening Requires….

- Epidemiological, Clinical, and Environmental Public Health Risk Assessments
- Business- or Facility-specific Plans for Reopening
  - Include Risk Assessment Results
  - Controls and Mitigation Measures to Reduce the Risks
  - Plan for Training of Employees
- Monitoring – ongoing surveillance of cases and monitoring of facility operations
- Evaluation – periodic evaluation and inspection of facility operations
- Actions and adjustments as necessary, based on current conditions and monitoring and evaluation results