



## COVID-Related Safety Requirements for Help Desks

### Approval

Approval is required from the County Director prior to resuming in-person activity at the UC Cooperative Extension office. The County Director's approval will be determined by County and UC ANR standard protocols.

### Understand Location Safety Requirements

Volunteers working out of the UCCE county office must review, agree to, and follow any specific guidance or safety protocols provided by the UCCE county office. At some locations this may include symptom monitoring and/or temperature checks.

### Understand your Risks

Help Desk activities are voluntary and all persons should take precautions to prioritize their health and safety. The CDC advises that people 65 years and older or people of all ages who have chronic medical conditions, such as lung disease, asthma, heart conditions, etc., might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. More info: [cdc.gov/highrisk](https://www.cdc.gov/highrisk)

### Individual Work

Based on CDC guidance, UC ANR requires six feet of distancing between employees, volunteers, and participants/visitors at all times. Team/partner work is permitted only for those volunteers who share a household.

Volunteers showing symptoms of illness, including: frequent cough, fever, difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, recent loss of taste or smell, may not work in-person. In addition, if any household members are showing symptoms of illness or have been in contact with someone that is suspected of having contracted or tested positive for COVID-19, public health guidelines for self-quarantining must be followed prior to returning to the UCCE office.

No group gatherings, events, or meetings with more than 10 persons are allowed during this stage of reopening.

### Hygiene

According to the CDC, one of the best ways to prevent illness from COVID-19 is to wash your hands often with

soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

UC ANR requires face coverings (cloth or paper masks, cloth bandanas, etc.) be worn when six feet of separation between people cannot be maintained.

Hand sanitizer containing 60% alcohol, disinfecting wipes, and disposable gloves will be provided for volunteers as long as a supply is available. Volunteers are responsible for any personal protective equipment that UC does not provide including but not limited to face masks.

Volunteers must wash or sanitize their hands when arriving at the UCCE office before beginning any work, and before leaving. CDC information about protecting yourself and others must be followed at all times. More info: [cdc.gov/protection](https://www.cdc.gov/protection)

### Work Breaks

Wash or sanitize hands properly before and after work breaks, before and after eating or drinking, or using the restroom. Food sharing is not recommended.

### Help Desk Set-up & Alternatives

If the UCCE county office is open to the public and six feet of separation from the public cannot be maintained, a plastic barrier should be set up around the Help Desk. Use tape on the ground to designate 6' spacing. Self-serve brochures/handouts is not recommended. Create and laminate a poster with images of handouts available at the Help Desk. Allow the public to identify desired materials from the poster, volunteer will curate and provide from the materials on hand. Disinfecting wipes must be used on the laminated sign at the beginning and end of the Help Desk hours. If feasible, implement appointments/appointment times for the public.

Consider virtual Help Desk options including:

- Program email  
*Forward Help Desk calls to the program's generic email address. Allow multiple volunteer administrators to handle email Help Desk responses.*
- Zoom  
*Host a regular or special event Zoom drop-in Help Desk where the public can share their gardening issue with a volunteer from the comfort of their home, school, or community garden.*

Additional safe and creative solutions should be shared on the Master Gardener Coordinator Collaborative Tools group.

### **Samples**

Due to physical distancing and sanitation requirements, samples (including plant, insect, soil, or other) cannot be accepted at this time. The public should be encouraged to send photos of their garden-related questions to the local UC Master Gardener email address. Samples that are mailed into the UCCE county office can be handled by one individual using disposable gloves in order to photograph or record the sample. Fresh and dried samples should not be shared or otherwise distributed.