

Guidance for Safe Celebrations and Events

Latest updates: General recommendations for gatherings added to page 1 and new guidance for dancing at events and celebrations on page 4.

Exposure to COVID-19 can lead to serious medical conditions and even death for people of all ages. We cannot predict who will become severely ill, although we know that older people and people with underlying health conditions are at higher risk. We do not yet know what the long-term effects of infection from COVID-19 are; even people with mild cases may experience long-term complications. Because people without symptoms can spread COVID-19, this guidance can help everyone protect themselves and others in the community.

This guidance is for event planners, venue managers and owners, catering companies, and others who may be involved in the planning and coordination of celebrations and events. These events may take place in indoor or outdoor venues, including but not limited to, rental space in event centers, fellowship halls and gathering spaces in faith-based buildings, community centers, halls, or outdoor event spaces. Examples of celebrations and events covered by this guidance include but are not limited to catered parties, wedding receptions, funeral receptions, school dances, and other social gatherings related to ceremonies.

General recommendations

Keep in mind that anytime you gather with people you do not live with, the risk of infection increases for everyone. Consider whether having an event encourages people in high-risk groups (particularly older adults and people with underlying health conditions) or ill people to increase their risk of infection. Consider offering a virtual celebration instead. Only consider an in-person gathering if planners and participants can commit to keeping at least 6 feet of space between people from different households (social distancing) at all times and face coverings will be worn throughout the event.

- **Stay home if you do not feel well or are at higher risk** for getting very sick from COVID-19. See [CDC: People at Increased Risk \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html). Invited guests should stay home if they have been exposed to COVID-19 in the last 14 days or are showing COVID-19 symptoms. Invited guests who live with people who are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19 should think about any added risks to their loved ones.
- **Keep gatherings small.**

- **Hold small gatherings outside**, if possible. Wear masks and stay 6 feet away from other guests.
- **Wear a mask indoors and outdoors** if gathering with anyone that does not live with you.
- **Always stay at least 6 feet away** from people that do not live with you.
- **Open windows and/or doors to allow air to flow** if gathering indoors.
- **Remember who came to the gathering.** Keep a list of invited guests in case one of them gets COVID-19. This list will be helpful if you're contacted by a health department case interviewer.

For the ceremonies themselves, see [Guidance for Gatherings: Faith-based Communities, Places of Worship, and Ceremonies \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidfaith.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidfaith.pdf). Please note that if a social gathering follows a ceremony, the capacity requirements below apply to that gathering.

Key requirements and considerations

- **Preparedness Plan:** All businesses, organizations, and venues where gatherings take place are required to develop and implement an event specific COVID-19 Preparedness Plan in accordance with the guidance below, and other applicable guidance on [Stay Safe Minnesota \(staysafe.mn.gov\)](http://staysafe.mn.gov). This plan must be available so any persons on the premises can easily see this document. Vendors servicing one event may collectively agree to one comprehensive plan, if they so choose.
 - Acknowledge the shared responsibility for your event and the need to keep all participants and staff safe. The host(s), organizer/planner(s), vendor(s), and facility staff are all responsible for the success of the event and the implementation of plans to minimize the spread of COVID-19.
 - Prior to the event, plan how to address a situation where people are not following the face covering and social distancing requirements -- including while dancing.
 - If guests are not complying with applicable requirements, stop the event.
- **Masks and face coverings:** As of July 25, 2020, people in Minnesota are required to wear a face covering in all businesses and public indoor spaces, per Executive Order 20-81. This includes indoor event venues and indoor spaces of combined indoor/outdoor venues. Additionally, the Executive Order requires workers to wear a face covering when working exclusively outdoors in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained. The Executive Order includes exemptions for people who are unable to wear or tolerate a face covering due to medical or mental health conditions or other reasons. There are also situations in which a face covering may be temporarily removed, such as when eating or drinking, if social distancing is maintained between members of different parties and the face covering is put back on when not eating or drinking. Businesses and venues may choose to have more protective requirements than those in the Executive Order.
 - For more information, see [Masks and face coverings \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks).

Support physical distancing

- Events in private homes are subject to the social gathering limits in Executive Order 20-74 of 10 indoors and 25 outdoors. Unless the home regularly functions as an event space or venue, events larger than that in a private home are not allowed, even with a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan completed by the homeowner or event planner.
- In event spaces and venues, limit indoor and outdoor occupant capacity to no more than 25% up to 250 persons, so long as social distancing can be maintained. An exception to this is in the instance of an establishment that operates as a restaurant in the ordinary course of business, then they may adhere to restaurant capacity.
- Limit table to 4 persons, or 6 if part of one household (“household” means a group of individuals who share the same living unit).
- Provide controlled flow of participants as much as possible, including upon start and at end of the event.
- Limit the number of speakers and make arrangements so that they maintain distance from others. Whenever possible, provide individual microphones for multiple speakers. If a microphone must be shared, consider cleaning between speakers or leaving it untouched on a stand.
- Event photography: Standing close together is a high-risk activity, even when it is a shorter period of time. Consider taking individual photos and using editing software to combine them into a group photo. See additional recommendations in the [Industry Guidance for Safely Reopening Faith-based Communities, Places of Worship, Weddings, and Funerals](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefaitth.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefaitth.pdf).

Food and beverages

- Food must be prepared and served in accordance with applicable rules and regulations guiding the specific event. Licensed food establishments must follow the [Minnesota Food Code](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/rules/foodcode/index.html) (www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/rules/foodcode/index.html).
- Control lines at concession areas to ensure social distancing of at least 6 feet between members of different households. This can be done with floor markings or other indicators.
 - Curbside concessions may be available for pickup upon entry to the venue or exit from the premises to minimize crowding at concession stands.
- Use remote payment systems when possible.
- Self-service food and beverage areas are allowed as long as the Preparedness Plan includes protections such as oversight of the self-service area to ensure that social distancing is maintained, hands are being sanitized, and participants wear face masks in the self-service area. The responsible party can be the venue administrator or caterer.
- Best practice would be to serve prepackaged food as much as possible.

- Face coverings may be temporarily removed to enable eating and/or drinking when attendees are seated and apart from members of other households but must be put back on when not eating or drinking.

Music and dancing

Bands are allowed but must maintain social distancing, even during performance. For more information, see [Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf).

Dancing has a higher risk of spreading COVID-19 because vigorous physical activity results in heavier breathing. With high exertion and breathing, the potential for more respiratory droplets to be released in the air is increased. Because of this, **dancing at social gatherings and events is not recommended**. If you choose to include dancing as a part of your event, maximize safety for attendees by following these precautions:

- Everyone must wear face coverings while dancing at the event.
- Consider limiting dancing to ceremonial dances with designated participants according to your particular tradition and culture.
- People from different households must maintain social distance while dancing. In order to do this, consider the following options:
 - Limit the number of people on the dance floor at the same time.
 - Designate a person (DJ, performer, host, planner, or combination) to monitor and enforce the limited number of people on the dance floor at the same time.
 - Interrupt the music if crowding occurs. Resume the music and dancing when the crowd is appropriately spaced.
 - Divide participants into groups using nametags or other methods, and allow them access to the dance floor at different times.
 - Repeat or split popular songs if necessary so everyone can share the experience.
 - Consider only playing music that encourages touchless dancing rather than dancing while embraced.
 - Encourage socially distanced line dancing or other forward facing dances where people are able to maintain 6 feet of distance between people.
- Consider limiting dancing to ceremonial dances with designated participants according to your particular tradition and culture.

Restrooms

- Mark areas where people may need to line up to ensure social distancing.
- Provide an ample supply of hand sanitizer, or soap and water.

- Clean facilities regularly following the cleaning and disinfection protocol.
- Ensure your maximum number of guests allowed in the restroom will meet current capacity/size guidelines for social distancing.
- Turn off electric hand dryers and rely on touchless paper towel dispensers.

Summary

We all have a role to play in protecting ourselves and fellow Minnesotans from COVID-19. This guidance is based on insuring social distance and wearing face coverings to limit the potential spread of COVID-19 whenever people gathering. By following current [Executive Orders from Governor Walz \(mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp\)](https://www.mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp) and these guidelines on [Stay Safe Minnesota \(staysafe.mn.gov\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov), we can enjoy activities and events while supporting public health, slowing the spread of COVID-19, and minimizing added strain on local communities and health care systems in Minnesota.

Resources

- [CDC: Considerations for Events and Gatherings \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html)
- [CDC: Event Planning and COVID-19: Questions and Answers \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/event-planners-and-attendees-faq.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/event-planners-and-attendees-faq.html)



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