



## NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

### Interim Guidance for Organizations that Gather Less Than 50 People Together

March 23, 2020

Any gathering of a group of people can pose a risk of COVID-19 transmission. Organizations that gather less than 50 people, including but not limited to conferences, sporting events, faith-based organizations, concerts, and other community events, should create an emergency plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission at their events. [CDC recommend](#) that gatherings of 50 people or more be postponed or cancelled.

This guidance will help organizations with gatherings of less than 50 people create an emergency plan and prepare for COVID-19 in their communities.

#### Plan Ahead

- Communicate with the planning staff and/or emergency operations coordinator at your venue or facility. Discuss its emergency plans and procedures and determine how they would be implemented for your meeting or event.
- Make a plan for what you will do if large numbers of employees are unable to attend work, which may occur if schools are closed or their family members are sick. Identify key positions and cross-train staff to ensure all essential functions will be covered.
- Consider alternative options to gathering large groups of people, such as streaming video of the event or having patrons participate online.
- Stay informed about COVID-19 in your community.

#### Communicate

- Instruct participants to stay home if they are sick. Have a flexible refund policy so sick people and people taking care of COVID-19 patients are able to stay home.
- Encourage people who are at a higher risk for complications from COVID-19, including people over 65 and those with pre-existing medical conditions, to consult with their doctor before attending. If high-risk employees will be working during the event, find positions that minimize contact with the public.
- Create flexible sick leave policies so employees stay home from work when they are sick.
  - Employees may discontinue isolation and return to normal activities when it has been at least 7 days since their first day of illness AND they have been without fever for three days (72 hours) and their other symptoms are improving, in consultation with their healthcare providers and state and local health departments.
  - Employers should not ask for a negative COVID-19 test or a note from a medical provider for employees to return to work.

#### Keep Everyone Healthy

- Have respiratory hygiene supplies available for employees and participants, including hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol, tissues, and lined trash cans.

- Promote behaviors that prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including COVID-19, among participants and employees. Use resources from a trusted source like the [CDC](#) or [NC DHHS](#).
- During and after the event, disinfect frequently-touched surfaces with a [cleaning agent that is effective against coronaviruses](#).
- Decrease close contact between participants at the event. For example, place chairs farther apart, book a bigger venue, or reduce the number of attendees.

### **Be Prepared**

- Post signs encouraging participants to leave the event immediately if they begin to show symptoms of illness, COVID-19 or otherwise. If possible, identify a location away from other people where they can wait while they arrange transportation to their home or a medical facility via private vehicle or ambulance.

### **Practice Social Distancing**

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state people should practice social distancing by remaining six feet (about two arm's lengths) apart to minimize the risk of coronavirus infection. Recognizing that this may be challenging, below are examples of application.
- Ensure there is six feet between tables or chairs.
- If you typically have people waiting in line, consider marking six-foot intervals on the floor for patrons to stand on.
- Only let as many people in as your establishment can accommodate while everyone remains six feet apart. If people must wait to be let in, have them wait in their cars and contact them by phone when they can enter.
- Have employees remain six feet apart from patrons whenever possible.

### **Cancelling or Postponing Events**

- Identify circumstances under which you would need to postpone or cancel your event. Create a list of all actions that need to be taken under these circumstances.
  - Consider cancelling your event if there are many cases of COVID-19 in your community, there will be many high-risk attendees, or there have been several recent cases of COVID-19 among potential attendees.
  - [Contact your local health department](#) if you need further guidance.
- Identify all people that you will need to communicate with if you need to postpone or cancel your event, including employees, vendors, and participants. Ensure you have up-to-date contact information for these groups and create a plan for communicating with them in an emergency.
- If you determine that an event needs to be cancelled or postponed, immediately communicate this information to all stakeholders including participants, employees, and vendors. Include information about refunds and rescheduling, if applicable.

### **Attendees Later Diagnosed with COVID-19**

- If an attendee is diagnosed with COVID-19 after the event, your local health department may ask you for contact information for all attendees and anyone else who may have been exposed.
  - If this occurs, attendees who had close contact with the COVID-19 patient will be asked to monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days.

- If you hear about an attendee who was diagnosed with COVID-19, [contact your local health department](#). Do not take any action to notify attendees without consulting your local health department.
- If an attendee is later diagnosed with COVID-19, ensure that all areas of the venue they visited have been thoroughly cleaned with an [agent that is active against coronaviruses](#). You do not need to close the venue or cancel future activities.

For more information about preventing COVID-19 transmission at large gatherings, please see the CDC's [Guidance for Mass Gatherings](#). For general information about COVID-19, refer to the [North Carolina COVID-19 website](#).