



Town Council Agenda Report

Date: August 25, 2020 Item No. 9

To: Honorable Mayor and Town Council

Subject: OPTIONS RELATING TO HOLDING BROWN ACT COMPLIANT PUBLIC MEETINGS DURING THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY

From: Douglas Robertson, Town Manager

Submitted by: Thomas A. Rice, Town Attorney

Budgeted Item: Yes No N/A

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends the Town Council receive the update and provide direction related to the preferred method for holding Town Council meetings during the COVID-19 emergency.

BACKGROUND:

On March 21, 2020, the Town Manager issued Proclamation No. 2020-01 proclaiming the existence of a local emergency relating to the worldwide spread of respiratory illness due to the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19. On March 24, 2020, the Town Council adopted Resolution No. 2020-10, ratifying Proclamation No. 2020-01 and declaring a local emergency.

Since March 2020, to reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19 while also providing opportunity for contemporaneous participation in the meetings, Town Council meetings have been held in Town Council Chambers with only the Town Council and key Town staff present in person. The public is able to provide input on items either in-writing or by requesting a call-back during the meeting. At its August 11, 2020 meeting, the Town Council requested a report on the options available to it for holding public meetings during the COVID-19 emergency.

DISCUSSION:

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Governor issued several executive orders concerning public meetings under the Brown Act: Executive Orders N-25-20 (March 12, 2020), N-29-20 (March 17, 2020) and N-35-20 (March 21, 2020). For the purposes of holding public meetings, the executive orders eliminated many of the restrictions associated with teleconference meetings. In addition, the orders excuse public agencies from the requirement of providing a physical location for the public to observe and

comment so long as members of the public are able to observe the meeting telephonically or otherwise electronically.

In addition to complying with the Brown Act, as adjusted by the executive orders, the Town must consider how best to conduct its meetings in a manner which does not contribute to the spread of COVID-19. The CDC and CDPH have released a significant amount of public guidance on this topic. The following methods are among those recommended by the CDC to reduce the spread of COVID-19: (1) staying at least 6 feet away from people outside your household in indoor spaces; (2) generally avoiding crowded places and gatherings; and (3) wearing masks in public settings.

Keeping in mind these dual concerns (compliance with the Brown Act and reducing the spread of COVID-19), the Town might consider a number of options for holding public meetings, including the following:

Option 1 – Fully Remote Meeting

Under this option, all Council Members and staff participate through an electronic meeting service (e.g., Zoom or Microsoft Teams). The meeting is then streamed online and on local television. The public may participate through written comments or, contemporaneously, through a call back system. Many public agencies throughout the state are utilizing this approach. This is the safest approach in terms of reducing the spread of COVID-19 as it requires no personal contact. However, this option can present technological challenges and generally results in a less smooth meeting.

Option 2 – Closed Meeting, Streamed for Public, With Opportunity to Participate

This is the approach currently used by the Town. This involves an in-person meeting for the Town Council and key Town staff, where all individuals are required to wear masks and maintain social distancing. The public is able to participate through written public comment or by requesting a call back during the time of the meeting. This approach provides for a smoother meeting as the chair is easily able to identify who wishes to speak and when. It also provides the public with an opportunity to participate during the meeting through the call-back process. With that said, the call-back process can present technological challenges which make public participation more difficult. ***Nevertheless, Town staff recommends continuing with this option because it balances the running of a smooth meeting with the desire to provide the public access to contemporaneously comment on items before the Town Council.***

Option 3 – Fully Open, Socially-Distanced, Meeting

Under this option, the Town Council could return to open public meetings with seating marked to provide for social distancing. The public would be required to abide by social distancing rules and would be required to wear a mask to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This option has the benefit of being the closest to a 'normal' meeting. However, this option is the most risky in terms of the spread of COVID-19 because it involves a gathering of a potentially large number of individuals in an indoor space. Under CDC guidelines, even medium-sized in-person gatherings that are adapted for social distancing are considered higher risk. CDPH guidelines generally encourage the postponement or cancellation of in-person gatherings. In holding an in-person meeting, the Town would be relying on the exception for activities that are essential to the

functioning of the State. Also, if more members of the public wish to attend than capacity allows, the Town would have difficulty providing additional space to safely view and also participate in the meeting. ***Town staff does not recommend this approach.***

Option 4 – Partially Open with Lobby for Public Comment

Under this option, the Town Council would continue as before but with a lobby area or waiting line where the public would wait until called on to provide their public comment in person. This option allows members of the public to be in the same room as the Town Council when providing their public comments. However, this option creates a number of logistical issues. First, the public may be uncomfortable giving public comment at a microphone recently used by another speaker. Town staff would likely need to sanitize the microphone and lectern area between each comment. Second, the Town requires masks for entry to the building and would need to determine how to enforce that requirement, particularly when faced with individuals who assert an exemption. Third, members of the public must be able to observe the meeting. The Town complies with this requirement by streaming the meeting online and on local television. However, members of the public who choose to provide comment in person would not necessarily have access to observe the meeting in the lobby area. Establishing a safe viewing area in compliance with social distancing principles is not possible at this time. While the Town could inform those planning to attend in person of this limitation, it is possible that the Town would be criticized for not providing a viewing area for individuals who choose to attend in person despite streaming being made available. ***Town staff does not recommend this approach.***

FISCAL IMPACT:

Depending on the option selected, there may be additional costs associated with technology or equipment required to enforce social distancing.

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends the Town Council receive the update and provide direction related to the preferred method for holding Town Council meetings during the COVID-19 emergency.

ATTACHMENTS:

‘Social Distancing,’ CDC (Updated July 15, 2020, Retrieved August 18, 2020)

‘About Masks,’ CDC (Updated August 6, 2020, Retrieved August 18, 2020)

‘Considerations for Events & Gatherings (Updated July 7, 2020, Retrieved August 18, 2020)

‘CDPH Guidance for the Prevention of COVID-19 Transmission for Gatherings’ (March 16, 2020)

‘Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings,’ CDPH (Revised June 29, 2020)



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

MENU >

Social Distancing Social Distancing

Keep a Safe Distance to Slow the Spread.

Updated July 15, 2020

[Print](#)

Limiting close face-to-face contact with others is the best way to reduce the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

What is social distancing?

Social distancing, also called “physical distancing,” means keeping a safe space between yourself and other people who are not from your household.

To practice social or physical distancing, stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people who are not from your household in both indoor and outdoor spaces.

Social distancing should be practiced in combination with other [everyday preventive actions](#) to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including [wearing masks](#), avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands, and frequently washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Why practice social distancing?

COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) for a prolonged period. Spread happens when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, and droplets from their mouth or nose are launched into the air and land in the mouths or noses of people nearby. The droplets can also be inhaled into the lungs. Recent studies indicate that people who are infected but do not have symptoms likely also play a role in the spread of COVID-19. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to stay at least 6 feet away from others when possible, even if you—or they—do not have any symptoms. Social distancing is especially important for [people who are at higher risk](#) for severe illness from COVID-19.

If you are sick with COVID-19, have [symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#), or have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, it is important to stay home and away from other people [until it is safe to be around others](#).

COVID-19 can live for hours or days on a surface, depending on factors such as sunlight, humidity, and the type of surface. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes. However, this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Social distancing helps limit opportunities to come in contact with contaminated surfaces and infected people outside the home.

Although the risk of severe illness may be different for everyone, anyone can get and spread COVID-19. Everyone has a role to play in slowing the spread and protecting themselves, their family, and their community. In addition to practicing [everyday steps to prevent COVID-19](#), keeping space between you and others is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to this virus and slowing its spread in communities.

Tips for Social Distancing

When going out in public, it is important to stay at least 6 feet away from other people and [wear a mask](#) to slow the spread of COVID-19. Consider the following tips for practicing social distancing when you [decide to go out](#).

- **Know Before You Go:** Before going out, know and follow the guidance from local public health authorities where you live.
- **Prepare for Transportation:** Consider social distancing options to travel safely when running errands or commuting to and from work, whether walking, bicycling, wheelchair rolling, or using public transit, rideshares, or taxis. When using public transit, try to keep at least 6 feet from other passengers or transit operators – for example, when you are waiting at a bus station or selecting seats on a bus or train. When using rideshares or taxis, avoid pooled rides where multiple passengers are picked up, and sit in the back seat in larger vehicles so you can remain at least 6 feet away from the driver. Follow these [additional tips](#) to protect yourself while using transportation.
- **Limit Contact When Running Errands:** Only visit stores selling household essentials in person when you absolutely need to, and stay at least 6 feet away from others who are not from your household while shopping and in lines. If possible, use drive-thru, curbside pick-up, or delivery services to limit face-to-face contact with others. Maintain physical distance between yourself and delivery service providers during exchanges and [wear a mask](#).
- **Choose Safe Social Activities:** It is possible to stay socially connected with friends and family who don't live in your home by calling, using video chat, or staying connected through social media. If meeting others in person (e.g., at small outdoor gatherings, yard or driveway gathering with a small group of friends or family members), stay at least 6 feet from others who are not from your household. Follow [these steps](#) to stay safe if you will be participating in personal and social activities outside of your home.
- **Keep Distance at Events and Gatherings:** It is safest to avoid crowded places and gatherings where it may be difficult to stay at least 6 feet away from others who are not from your household. If you are in a crowded space, try to keep 6 feet of space between yourself and others at all times, and [wear a mask](#). Masks are especially important in times when physical distancing is difficult. Pay attention to any physical guides, such as tape markings on floors or signs on walls, directing attendees to remain at least 6 feet apart from each other in lines or at other times. Allow other people 6 feet of space when you pass by them in both indoor and outdoor settings.
- **Stay Distanced While Being Active:** Consider going for a walk, bike ride, or wheelchair roll in your neighborhood or in another safe location where you can maintain at least 6 feet of distance between yourself and other pedestrians and cyclists. If you decide to visit a nearby [park, trail, or recreational facility](#), first check for closures or restrictions. If open, consider how many other people might be there and choose a location where it will be possible to keep at least 6 feet of space between yourself and other people who are not from your household.

Many people have personal circumstances or situations that present challenges with practicing social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Please see the following guidance for additional recommendations and considerations:

- [Households Living in Close Quarters: How to Protect Those Who Are Most Vulnerable](#)
- [Living in Shared Housing](#)
- [People with Disabilities](#)
- [People Experiencing Homelessness](#)

More Information

[How to Protect Yourself](#)

[Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home](#)

[Gatherings and Community Events](#)

Last Updated July 15, 2020



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

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About Masks

Updated Aug. 6, 2020

[Print](#)

A mask may not protect the wearer, but it may keep the wearer from spreading the virus to others.

COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice (e.g., while shouting, chanting, or singing). These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Recent studies show that a significant portion of individuals with COVID-19 lack symptoms (are “asymptomatic”) and that even those who eventually develop symptoms (are “pre-symptomatic”) can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, CDC recommends that people wear masks in public settings when around people outside of their household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

Why it is important to wear a mask

Masks may help prevent people who have COVID-19 from spreading the virus to others. Wearing a mask will help protect people around you, including those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and workers who frequently come into close contact with other people (e.g., in stores and restaurants). Masks are most likely to reduce the spread of COVID-19 when they are widely used by people in public settings. The spread of COVID-19 can be reduced when masks are used along with other preventive measures, including social distancing, frequent handwashing, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.

The masks recommended here are not surgical masks or respirators. Currently, those are critical supplies that should be reserved for healthcare workers and other first responders. Masks are not personal protective equipment (PPE). They are not appropriate substitutes for PPE such as respirators (like N95 respirators) or medical facemasks (like surgical masks) in workplaces where respirators or facemasks are recommended or required to protect the wearer.

Masks with Exhalation Valves or Vents

The purpose of masks is to keep respiratory droplets from reaching others to aid with source control. Masks with one-way valves or vents allow exhaled air to be expelled out through holes in the material. This can allow exhaled respiratory droplets to reach others and potentially spread the COVID-19 virus. Therefore, CDC does not recommend using masks if they have an exhalation valve or vent.

More Information

[Considerations for Wearing Masks](#)

[How to Wear Your Mask](#)

[How to Wash Your Mask](#)

[How to Make Your Own Mask](#)

[ASL Video Series: Easy DIY Mask](#)

[How to Make Your Own Mask Video \(Spanish\)](#)

Last Updated Aug. 6, 2020



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

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Considerations for Events and Gatherings

Considerations for Events & Gatherings

Updated July 7, 2020

[Print](#)

As some communities in the United States begin to plan and hold events and gatherings, the CDC offers the following considerations for enhancing protection of individuals and communities and preventing spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Event planners and officials can determine, in collaboration with [state and local health officials](#), whether and how to implement these considerations, making adjustments to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community. Because COVID-19 virus circulation varies in communities, these considerations are meant to supplement—**not replace**—any state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations with which gatherings must comply. Organizers should continue to assess, based on current conditions, whether to postpone, cancel, or significantly reduce the number of attendees for gatherings.

After reviewing the considerations listed on this page, event planners and administrators can use [CDC's Events and Gatherings Readiness and Planning Tool](#)  [9 pages] to protect staff, volunteers, and attendees.

Guiding Principles

- A gathering refers to a planned or spontaneous event, indoors or outdoors, with a small number of people participating or a large number of people in attendance such as a community event or gathering, concert, festival, conference, parade, wedding, or sporting event.
- The *more people* an individual interacts with at a gathering and the longer that interaction lasts, the higher the potential risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 and COVID-19 spreading.
- The *higher the level of community transmission* in the area that the gathering is being held, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spreading during a gathering.
- The size of an event or gathering should be determined based on state, local, territorial or tribal safety laws and regulations.

The risk of COVID-19 spreading at events and gatherings increases as follows:

Lowest risk: Virtual-only activities, events, and gatherings.

More risk: Smaller outdoor and in-person gatherings in which individuals from different households remain spaced at least 6 feet apart, wear masks, do not share objects, and come from the same local area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).

Higher risk: Medium-sized in-person gatherings that are adapted to allow individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart and with attendees coming from outside the local area.

Highest risk: Large in-person gatherings where it is difficult for individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart and attendees travel from outside the local area.

Targeting COVID-19's spread

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html>

1/8

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is thought to be mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, or sneeze. It is thought that the virus may also spread to hands from a contaminated surface and then to the nose, mouth or eyes, causing infection. Therefore, personal prevention practices (such as [handwashing](#), [staying home when sick](#), [maintaining 6 feet of distance](#), and [wearing a mask](#)) and environmental prevention practices (such as [cleaning and disinfection](#)) are important ways to prevent the virus's spread.

These prevention principles are covered in this document. They provide event planners and individuals with actions to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread during gatherings and events.

Promoting Healthy Behaviors that Reduce Spread

Event planners should consider implementing strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 among staff and attendees.

- **Staying Home when Appropriate**
 - Educate staff and attendees about when they should [stay home](#).
 - Advise [employees and attendees to stay home](#) if they have tested positive for COVID-19 or are showing COVID-19 [symptoms](#).
 - Advise employees and attendees to stay home and monitor their health if they have had a [close contact](#) with a person who has symptoms of COVID-19 within the past 14 days.
 - Develop policies that encourage sick employees to stay at home without fear of reprisal, and ensure employees are aware of these policies.
 - CDC's criteria can help inform when employees should return to work:
 - [If they have been sick with COVID-19](#)
 - [If they tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms](#)
 - [If they have recently had a close contact with a person with COVID-19](#)
 - Consider developing flexible refund policies for attendees for events that involve a participation fee.
- **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**
 - Require frequent employee [handwashing](#) (e.g., before, during, and after taking tickets; after touching garbage) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and increase monitoring to ensure adherence.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, employees can use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol and rub their hands until dry.
 - Encourage staff to [cover the mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing and sneezing](#). Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - Encourage attendees to [wash hands often](#) and cover coughs and sneezes.
 - Attendees often exchange handshakes, fist bumps, and high-fives at meetings and sporting events. Display [signs](#) (physical and/or electronic) that discourage these actions during the event.
- **Masks**
 - Require the use of [masks](#) among staff. Masks are **most** essential in times when physical distancing is difficult (e.g., when moving within a crowd or audience).
 - Provide all staff with information on [proper use, removal, and washing of masks](#).
 - Advise staff that [masks](#) should **not** be placed on:
 - Babies or children younger than 2 years old
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing
 - Anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance
 - Encourage attendees ahead of the event to bring and use [masks](#) at the event.
 - [Masks](#) are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have [symptoms](#). [Masks](#) are not meant to be a substitute for personal protective equipment such as surgical masks, respirators, or other medical personal protective equipment.
 - Masks are strongly encouraged in settings where individuals might raise their voice (e.g., shouting, chanting, singing).

- **Adequate Supplies**
 - Ensure adequate supplies to support [healthy hygiene](#) behaviors. Supplies include soap, water, hand sanitizer containing at least 60 percent alcohol, paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, masks (as feasible), and no-touch trash cans.
- **Signs and Messages**
 - Post [signs](#) in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances, in restrooms) that [promote everyday protective measures](#) and describe how to [stop the spread](#) of germs by [properly washing hands](#) and [properly wearing a mask](#).
 - Broadcast regular [announcements](#) on reducing the spread of COVID-19 on public address systems.
 - Include messages (for example, [videos](#)) about behaviors that prevent spread of COVID-19 when communicating with staff, vendors, and attendees (such as on the event website and through event [social media accounts](#)).
 - Consider developing signs and messages in alternative formats (e.g., large print, braille, American Sign Language) for people who have limited vision or are blind or people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
 - Find freely available CDC print and digital resources about COVID-19 on [CDC's communications resources](#) main page.

Maintaining Healthy Environments

Event planners should consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy environments.

- **Cleaning and Disinfection**
 - [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces within the venue at least daily or between uses as much as possible—for example, door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains, grab bars, hand railings, and cash registers.
 - Clean and disinfect shared objects between uses—for example, payment terminals, tables, countertops, bars, and condiment holders.
 - Consider closing areas such as drinking fountains that cannot be adequately cleaned and disinfected during an event.
 - Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection.
 - Plan for and enact these cleaning routines when renting event space and ensure that other groups who may use your facilities follow these routines.
 - If transport vehicles like buses are used by the event staff, drivers should practice all safety actions and protocols as indicated for other staff—for example, washing hands often and wearing masks and maintaining social distance of bus riders. To clean and disinfect event buses, vans, or other vehicles see guidance for [bus transit operators](#) and [drivers for hire](#), and adapt as needed.
 - Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of [cleaners and disinfectants](#) to avoid harm to employees and other individuals. Always read and follow label instructions for each product, and store products securely away from children.
 - Use [EPA-approved disinfectants against COVID-19](#).
 - Cleaning products should not be used near children. Staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent attendees or themselves from inhaling toxic vapors.
 - Use disposable gloves when removing garbage bags or handling and disposing of trash.
 - After using disposable gloves, throw them out in a lined trash can.
 - Do not disinfect or reuse the gloves.
 - [Wash hands](#) after removing gloves.
- **Restrooms**
 - Consider limiting the number of people who occupy the restroom at one time to allow for social distancing.
 - Do not allow lines or crowds to form near the restroom without maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet from other people. It may be helpful to post signs or markers to help attendees maintain the appropriate social distance of at least 6 feet.
 - Ensure that open restrooms are:
 - Operational with functional toilets.
 - [Cleaned and disinfected](#) regularly, particularly high-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, stall doors, [door knobs](#), [countertops](#), [dinner/chopping tables](#), and [light switches](#).

bookshelves, countertops, diaper changing tables, and light switches.

- Clean and disinfect restrooms daily or more often, if possible, with EPA-approved disinfectants against COVID-19.
 - Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep products away from children.
 - Adequately stocked with supplies for handwashing, including soap and water or hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, and no-touch trash cans.
 - If you are providing portable toilets, also provide portable handwashing stations and ensure that they remain stocked throughout the duration of the event. If possible, provide hand sanitizer stations that are touch-free.
- **Ventilation**
 - Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example, by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk to staff or attendees (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms).
 - If portable ventilation equipment like fans are used, take steps to minimize air from them blowing from one person directly at another person to reduce the potential spread of any airborne or aerosolized viruses.
- **Water Systems**
 - To minimize the risk of [Legionnaires' disease](#) and other diseases associated with water, [take steps](#) to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., sink faucets, drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown. Drinking fountains should be cleaned and sanitized, but encourage staff and attendees to bring their own water, as feasible, to minimize touching and use of water fountains.
- **Modified Layouts**
 - Limit attendance or seating capacity to allow for [social distancing](#), or host smaller events in larger rooms.
 - Use multiple entrances and exits and discourage crowded waiting areas.
 - Block off rows or sections of seating in order to space people at least 6 feet apart.
 - Eliminate lines or queues if possible or encourage people to stay at least 6 feet apart by providing [signs](#) or other visual cues such as tape or chalk marks.
 - Prioritize outdoor activities where social distancing can be maintained as much as possible.
 - Offer online attendance options in addition to in-person attendance to help reduce the number of attendees.
- **Physical Barriers and Guides**
 - Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that individuals remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g., guides for creating one-way routes).
 - Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart. Barriers can be useful at cash registers and other areas where maintaining physical distance of 6 feet is difficult.
 - Change seating layout or availability of seating so that people can remain least 6 feet apart.
- **Communal Spaces**
 - Stagger use of shared indoor spaces such as dining halls, game rooms, and lounges as much as possible and [clean and disinfect](#) them between uses.
 - Add physical barriers, such as plastic flexible screens, between bathroom sinks and beds, especially when they cannot be at least 6 feet apart.
 - Clean and disinfect bathrooms regularly (e.g., in the morning and evening or after times of heavy use) using [EPA-registered disinfectants](#) [↗](#).
 - For more information on communal spaces in event housing (e.g., laundry rooms, shared bathrooms, and recreation areas) follow [CDC's guidance for Shared or Congregate Housing](#).
- **Food Service**
 - There is no evidence that COVID-19 is spread by food. However, people sharing utensils and congregating around food service areas can pose a risk.
 - If the event includes food service, refer to CDC's COVID-19 considerations for [restaurants and bars](#).

- Use touchless payment options as much as possible, if available.
 - Ask customers and employees to exchange cash or card payments by placing them on a receipt tray or on the counter rather than by hand to avoid direct hand-to-hand contact.
 - **Clean and disinfect** frequently touched surfaces such as pens, counters, or hard surfaces between use and encourage patrons to use their own pens.
 - Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that individuals remain at least 6 feet apart when waiting in line to order or pick up.
 - If a cafeteria or group dining room is used, serve individually plated meals or grab-and-go options, and hold activities in separate areas.
 - Use disposable food service items including utensils and dishes. If disposable items are not feasible or desirable, ensure that all non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher.
 - Individuals should **wash their hands** after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items.
 - Avoid offering any self-serve food or drink options, such as buffets, salad bars, and drink stations. Consider having pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee.
- **Shared Objects**
 - Discourage people from sharing items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect.
 - Limit any sharing of food, tools, equipment, or supplies by staff members.
 - Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials to the extent possible; otherwise, limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of staff members or attendees at a time, and **clean and disinfect** them between use.

Maintaining Healthy Operations

Event organizers and staff may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy operations.


- **Regulatory Awareness**
 - Be aware of local or state regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings to determine if events can be held.
- **Protections for Staff and Attendees who are at Higher Risk of Severe Illness from COVID-19**
 - Offer options for staff at **higher risk for severe illness** (including older adults and people of any age with underlying medical conditions) that limit their exposure risk. For example:
 - Offer telework and modified job responsibilities for staff, such as setting up for the event rather than working at the registration desk.
 - Replace in-person meetings with video- or tele-conference calls whenever possible.
 - As feasible, offer options for attendees at **higher risk for severe illness** that limit their exposure risk (e.g., virtual attendance).
 - Consider limiting event attendance to staff and guests who live in the local area (e.g., community, city, town, or county) to reduce risk of spreading the virus from areas with higher levels of COVID-19. If attendance is open to staff and guests from other communities, cities, town or counties, provide information to attendees so they can make an informed decision about participation.
 - Put policies in place to protect the privacy of people at **higher risk for severe illness** regarding their underlying medical conditions.
- **Limited, Staggered, or Rotated Shifts and Attendance Times**
 - Consider ways to significantly reduce the number of attendees.
 - Use flexible worksites (e.g., telework) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts) to help establish policies and practices for social distancing of 6 feet between employees, volunteers, and others.
 - Rotate or stagger shifts and arrival times to limit the number of employees in a venue at the same time.
 - Stagger and limit attendance times to minimize the number of guests at the venue.
- **Travel & Transit**

- Encourage employees to use transportation options that minimize close contact with others (e.g., walking or biking, driving or riding by car – alone or with household members only). Consider offering the following support:
 - Ask employees to follow the CDC guidance on how to [Protect Yourself When Using Transportation](#), including public transit.
 - Allow employees to shift their hours so they can commute during less busy times.
 - Ask employees to [wash their hands](#) as soon as possible after their trip.
 - Reconfigure parking lots to limit congregation points and ensure proper separation of employees (e.g., closing every other parking space).
 - Encourage [rideshare](#) drivers to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in the vehicle and avoid providing pooled rides or picking up multiple passengers who would not otherwise be riding together on the same route.
- **Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact**
 - Designate an administrator or office to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All staff and attendees should know who this person or office is and how to contact them.
- **Communication Systems**
 - Put systems in place to:
 - Encourage staff and attendees to self-report to event officials or a COVID-19 point of contact if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days, in accordance with health information sharing regulations for COVID-19 (e.g., see “Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts” in the [Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick](#) section below), and other applicable privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations.
 - Advise attendees prior to the event or gathering that they should not attend if they have symptoms of, a positive test for, or were recently exposed (within 14 days) to COVID-19.
 - Notify staff, attendees, and the public of cancellations and restrictions in place to limit people’s exposure to COVID-19 (e.g., limited hours of operation).
 - Identify and address potential language, cultural, and disability barriers associated with communicating COVID-19 information to event staff and participants. Tailor information so that it is easily understood by various audiences and is available in alternative formats and languages.
 - Learn more about reaching people of diverse languages and cultures by visiting: [Know Your Audience](#). You also can learn more about communicating to staff in a crisis at: [Crisis Communications Plan](#). [🔗](#)
- **Leave (Time Off) Policies**
 - Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices that are not punitive and enable employees to stay home when they are sick, have been exposed, are [caring for someone who is sick](#), or who must stay home with children if schools or child care centers are closed.
 - Examine and revise policies for leave, telework, and employee compensation as needed.
 - Ensure that any relevant policies are communicated to staff.
- **Back-Up Staffing Plan**
 - Monitor absenteeism of employees, cross-train staff, and create a roster of trained back-up staff.
 - Develop policies for return-to-work and event facilities after an employee has COVID-19. CDC’s [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#) and quarantine can inform these policies.
- **Staff Training**
 - Train staff on all safety protocols. Consider using CDC’s [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#) as a guide.
 - Conduct training virtually to ensure that [social distancing](#) is maintained during training.
 - If training needs to be done in person, maintain social distancing. Virtual training is clearly better for infection control when feasible.
- **Recognize Signs and Symptoms**
 - If feasible, conduct daily health checks (e.g., temperature screening and/or [symptom checking](#)) of staff and attendees safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.

- Event administrators may consider using examples of screening methods in CDC's [General Business FAQs](#) as a guide.
- **Sharing Facilities**
 - Encourage any organizations that share or use the same venue to also follow these considerations and limit shared use, if possible.
- **Support Coping and Resilience**
 - Promote employees' ability to eat healthy foods, exercise, get enough sleep, and find time to unwind.
 - Encourage employees to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.
 - Consider posting signs for the national distress hotline: 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUsto 66746; The National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224; and The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255).
- **Lessons Learned After the Event**
 - Meet with the emergency operations coordinator or planning team for your venue to discuss and note lessons learned.
 - Determine ways to improve planning and implementation processes if the event will happen again.
 - Update your plans regularly according to the state and local situation and orders.

Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick

Event planners should consider several strategies to implement when someone gets sick.

- **Advise Sick Individuals of Home Isolation Criteria**
 - Communicate to sick staff members that they should not return to work until they have met CDC's [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#).
- **Isolate and Transport Those Who are Sick**
 - Make sure that staff and attendees know that they should not come to the event and that they should notify event planners (e.g., the designated COVID-19 point of contact) if they become sick with COVID-19 [symptoms](#), test positive for COVID-19, or have been [exposed](#) to someone with symptoms or a suspected or confirmed case.
 - Immediately separate staff and attendees with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath) at the event. Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility, depending on how severe their symptoms are, and follow [CDC guidance for caring for themselves](#).
 - Individuals who have had [close contact](#) with a person who has [symptoms](#) should be separated, sent home, and advised to follow [CDC guidance for community-related exposure](#) (see "Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts" below). If symptoms develop, individuals should follow [CDC guidance for caring for themselves](#).
 - Planners may follow [CDC's Guidance for Shared or Congregate Housing](#) for any staff who live in event housing.
 - Work with venue administrators, local officials, and healthcare providers to identify an isolation area to separate anyone who has COVID-like symptoms or who has tested positive but does not have symptoms. Event healthcare providers should use [Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions](#) when caring for sick people. See: [What Healthcare Personnel Should Know About Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Possible COVID-19 Infection](#).
 - Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone sick to their home or to a healthcare facility. If you are calling an ambulance or bringing someone to the hospital, call first to alert them that the person may have COVID-19.
- **Clean and Disinfect**
 - Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after [cleaning and disinfecting](#) them (for outdoor areas, this includes surfaces or shared objects in the area, if applicable).
 - Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible. Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of [cleaning](#)  and disinfection products, including storing them securely away from children.
- **Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts**
 - In accordance with state and local laws and regulations, event planners should notify [local health officials](#), staff, and attendees of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the [Americans with](#)

attendees of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) [↗](#) and other applicable laws and regulations.

- Advise those who have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home, self-monitor for symptoms, and follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop.

After reviewing the considerations listed on this page, event planners and administrators can use CDC's Events and Gatherings Readiness and Planning Tool [📄](#) [9 pages] to protect staff, volunteers, and attendees.

Other Resources

[Latest COVID-19 Information](#)

[Persons at Higher Risk](#)

[Cleaning and Disinfection](#)

[Managing Stress and Coping](#)

[Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)

[HIPAA and COVID-19 \[↗\]\(#\)](#)

[Guidance for Schools and Childcare Centers](#)

[CDC communication resources](#)

[Guidance for Park Administrators](#)

[Community Mitigation](#)

[Shared and Congregate Housing](#)

[Transportation](#)

[COVID-19 Prevention](#)

[Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith](#)

[Handwashing Information](#)

[Crisis Communications Plan. \[↗\]\(#\)](#)

[Face Coverings](#)

[Restaurants and bars](#)

[Social Distancing](#)

[Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) and other applicable laws and regulations \[↗\]\(#\)](#)

[COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions:](#)

Last Updated July 7, 2020



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Governor

Released June 18, 2020

- Revised on June 29, 2020 to clarify that children under two years old are exempt from wearing face coverings due to risk of suffocation

GUIDANCE FOR THE USE OF FACE COVERINGS

Because of our collective actions, California has limited the spread of COVID-19 and associated hospitalizations and deaths in our state. Still, the risk for COVID-19 remains and the increasing number of Californians who are leaving their homes for work and other needs, increases the risk for COVID-19 exposure and infection.

Over the last four months, we have learned a lot about COVID-19 transmission, most notably that people who are infected but are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic play an important part in community spread. The use of face coverings by everyone can limit the release of infected droplets when talking, coughing, and/or sneezing, as well as reinforce physical distancing.

This document updates existing [CDPH guidance](#) for the use of cloth face coverings by the general public when outside the home. It mandates that face coverings be worn state-wide in the circumstances and with the exceptions outlined below. It does not substitute for existing guidance about social distancing and handwashing.

Guidance

People in California must wear face coverings when they are in the high-risk situations listed below:

- Inside of, or in line to enter, any indoor public space;¹
- Obtaining services from the healthcare sector in settings including, but not limited to, a hospital, pharmacy, medical clinic, laboratory, physician or dental office, veterinary clinic, or blood bank;²
- Waiting for or riding on public transportation or paratransit or while in a taxi, private car service, or ride-sharing vehicle;
- Engaged in work, whether at the workplace or performing work off-site, when:
 - Interacting in-person with any member of the public;
 - Working in any space visited by members of the public, regardless of whether anyone from the public is present at the time;

¹ Unless exempted by state guidelines for specific public settings

² Unless directed otherwise by an employee or healthcare provider

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[Department Website](http://www.cdph.ca.gov) (www.cdph.ca.gov)



- Working in any space where food is prepared or packaged for sale or distribution to others;
- Working in or walking through common areas, such as hallways, stairways, elevators, and parking facilities;
- In any room or enclosed area where other people (except for members of the person's own household or residence) are present when unable to physically distance.
- Driving or operating any public transportation or paratransit vehicle, taxi, or private car service or ride-sharing vehicle when passengers are present. When no passengers are present, face coverings are strongly recommended.
- While outdoors in public spaces when maintaining a physical distance of 6 feet from persons who are not members of the same household or residence is not feasible.

The following individuals are exempt from wearing a face covering:

- Persons younger than two years old. These very young children must not wear a face covering because of the risk of suffocation.
- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.
- Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
- Persons for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
- Persons who are obtaining a service involving the nose or face for which temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to perform the service.
- Persons who are seated at a restaurant or other establishment that offers food or beverage service, while they are eating or drinking, provided that they are able to maintain a distance of at least six feet away from persons who are not members of the same household or residence.
- Persons who are engaged in outdoor work or recreation such as swimming, walking, hiking, bicycling, or running, when alone or with household members, and when they are able to maintain a distance of at least six feet from others.

- Persons who are incarcerated. Prisons and jails, as part of their mitigation plans, will have specific guidance on the wearing of face coverings or masks for both inmates and staff.

Note: Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition who are employed in a job involving regular contact with others should wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.

Background

What is a cloth face covering?

A cloth face covering is a material that covers the nose and mouth. It can be secured to the head with ties or straps or simply wrapped around the lower face. It can be made of a variety of materials, such as cotton, silk, or linen. A cloth face covering may be factory-made or sewn by hand or can be improvised from household items such as scarfs, T-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels.

How well do cloth face coverings work to prevent spread of COVID-19?

There is scientific evidence to suggest that use of cloth face coverings by the public during a pandemic could help reduce disease transmission. Their primary role is to reduce the release of infectious particles into the air when someone speaks, coughs, or sneezes, including someone who has COVID-19 but feels well. Cloth face coverings are not a substitute for physical distancing, washing hands, and staying home when ill, but they may be helpful when combined with these primary interventions.

When should I wear a cloth face covering?

You should wear face coverings when in public places, particularly when those locations are indoors or in other areas where physical distancing is not possible

How should I care for a cloth face covering?

It's a good idea to wash your cloth face covering frequently, ideally after each use, or at least daily. Have a bag or bin to keep cloth face coverings in until they can be laundered with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle. If you must re-wear your cloth face covering before washing, wash your hands immediately after putting it back on and avoid touching your face. Discard cloth face coverings that:

- No longer cover the nose and mouth
- Have stretched out or damaged ties or straps
- Cannot stay on the face
- Have holes or tears in the fabric

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Governor

CDPH Guidance for the Prevention of COVID-19 Transmission for Gatherings
March 16, 2020

To protect public health and slow the rate of transmission of COVID-19, gatherings as described below should be postponed or canceled across the state of California until further guidance is issued by the California Department of Public Health.

The California Department of Public Health finds the following:

- All gatherings should be postponed or canceled.
 - This includes gatherings such as concerts, conferences, and professional, college, and school sporting events.
- Gyms, health clubs, and theaters should be closed.
- A “gathering” is any event or convening that brings together people in a single room or single space at the same time, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, cafeteria, or any other indoor or outdoor space.

This applies to all non-essential professional, social, and community gatherings regardless of their sponsor. Gatherings that do not meet the aforementioned criteria should only be conducted when they are essential—that is, if the activity is essential and could not be postponed or achieved without gathering, meaning that some other means of communication could not be used to conduct the essential function.

What will this achieve?

The timely implementation of aggressive strategies that create social distance and those that reduce close contact of people not regularly together, including limiting gatherings, has proven effective in prior pandemics at delaying rates of transmission and reducing illness and death.

By decreasing the prevalence of disease across California we will:

- Reduce the number of Californians who contract COVID-19 before an effective treatment or vaccine is available.

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- Protect those most likely to experience severe symptoms, such as older Californians and those with underlying chronic conditions.
- Preserve and protect our health care delivery system, including our health care workforce, so they can care for the least healthy individuals in the community for any medical condition, not just COVID-19.
- Minimize the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 over the long run.

How long will these limitations apply?

This guidance will remain in place until further guidance is released by the California Department of Public Health. As with all guidance that relates to COVID-19 response, authorities will revisit this guidance on a regular basis to evaluate the continued public health need for it and to evaluate if any elements need to be changed. To stay informed, continue to monitor the California Department of Public Health's web page on [COVID-19 guidance](#).

Examples of Essential Events this Does Not Apply To

The goal of this recommendation is to prevent people physically coming together unnecessarily, where people who have the infection can easily spread it to others. This guidance does not apply to activities such as attendance at regular school classes, work, or essential services.

Please see the guidance for schools document for additional information.

Certain activities are essential to the functioning of our state and must continue. Hence, this does not apply to essential public transportation, airport travel, shopping at a store, mall, or farmers' market, or charitable food pantries and distributions. Other specific guidance can be found on the [CDPH website](#) to help people take actions that can protect them in those settings.

This does not apply to congregate living situations, including dormitories and homeless encampments. For more information on what can be done to protect homeless individuals, please see the [Guidance for Homeless Assistance Providers on Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) \(PDF\)](#).