Communities, Culture and Heritage

COVID-19 Prevention Guide for event organizers, theatres and performance venues
(MARCH 16, 2021)

All businesses, organizations, volunteers and employees need to follow the Health Protection Act Order and public health directives to limit the spread of COVID-19. It is important that we all understand the current restrictions and public health advice currently in place. You can read the full Health Protection Act Order here.

If there is COVID-19 activity in the community, the likelihood of it being introduced during an event or at a venue is high. Gatherings and events may pose a greater risk of COVID-19 spread if there are many attendees over an extended period. Organizers should consider alternative options for an in-person gathering, such as a virtual event, if COVID-19 is present in the community.

About this guide

This document is specifically for event organizers, venues and facilities, live theatres, faith-based gatherings, cinemas, and drive-in events. It is meant to help you develop a plan adhering to public health requirements to reduce the risks related to COVID-19.

Approval is not required, but the venue or organizer is responsible for communicating and adhering to the plan.

Keep copies of the plan on site. Compliance officers may visit unannounced and the organizer must be able to produce its plan and demonstrate how staff are working within the guidelines.
About COVID-19

COVID-19 spreads from an infected person through respiratory droplets and aerosols generated by coughing, sneezing, laughing, singing, and talking. It spreads more easily in closed spaces, crowded places with close contact (within 2 metres) for a prolonged period (more than 15 minutes). People may be asymptomatic (no symptoms) or pre-symptomatic (have not yet developed symptoms) and spread COVID-19.

COVID-19 can also be spread by close personal contact with someone who is infected – such as touching, hugging, shaking hands – or touching an item carrying the virus and then touching one’s mouth, nose or eyes before washing one’s hands. People who have few or no symptoms can still spread COVID-19.

The most effective measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 include maintaining physical distance and using physical barriers. A layered approach that applies multiple measures including – environmental cleaning, frequent hand washing/sanitization, wearing non-medical masks, physical distancing, attention to gathering limits – is the most effective way to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

We are confident event organizers will be creative and innovative in implementing public health measures.

Gathering Limits

Gathering limits apply to social events, faith gatherings, sports and physical activity, weddings, funerals and arts and culture events like theatre performances, dance recitals, festivals and concerts. Gathering limits also apply to businesses and organizations that run social events, faith gatherings, weddings, funerals, arts and culture events or sports events.

You need to follow gathering limits, unless your group has an exemption identified in the Health Protection Act Order. You must also ensure you are adhering to the current gathering restrictions.

For your facility to host audiences larger than the current gathering limits, your plan needs to outline how the facility will safely manage zones, along with how all public health directives will be followed. You are required to build a plan following the Guidelines for Venues and Facility document found here.

Venues and events can have tables/groupings, but attendees at that table must be within the same household or social group. Businesses cannot mix these groups.
Illness

Your plan should address:

- How you will communicate to staff, and attendees that they must stay home if:
  - They are sick or symptomatic
  - They travelled outside of Nova Scotia or Prince Edward Island in the previous 14 days
  - They are a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19
  - They are awaiting a COVID-19 test result
  - They have been directed to self-isolate for any reason

- The expectation that staff must monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms and should not come to work even if they have minor symptoms. They must report to their facility/event planner immediately if they develop symptoms.

- How attendees and staff will be monitored for signs and symptoms of COVID-19?

- How you will ensure staff are kept informed of the most updated list of signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and how they are monitoring for those symptoms daily
  - This list of symptoms should be posted at entrance locations and attendees should be asked to confirm they do not have symptoms of COVID-19, have not been in close contact with a known case of COVID-19, have not been outside the Atlantic Region in the past 14 days, and are not required to self-isolate for any reason.

- How you will ensure that staff will not work while ill, even with mild symptoms, and how staff absenteeism will be tracked by your organization

- How a staff member who becomes symptomatic while they are working will immediately wash their hands, don a mask if they’re not already wearing one, tell their supervisor, avoid contact with others and go home to isolate. Staff and volunteers with symptoms should complete the COVID-19 self-assessment

- How you will immediately isolate an unwell attendee or staff from the event/venue and other attendees
• How you plan to track all participants, volunteers, attendees, and event officials. It is recommended facilities, venues, event organizers keep these records for a minimum of 30 days after the event or activity has taken place

Wearing of Masks

All persons must wear a commercial medical or non-medical mask or a home-made mask made as per the PHAC instructions that covers the nose and mouth when indoors.

For more information on masks, requirements and allowable exemptions visit https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/masks/

Crowd control

Physical distancing of 2 metres or 6 feet between all individuals or groups helps reduce the spread of illness. Gatherings make this more difficult, so your plan should implement measures to encourage physical distancing across all facets of your operation.

• A 2 metre / 6 foot physical distance must be maintained
  - Between households or close social groups, outlined in the Health Protection Act Order
  - Between staff and/or volunteers throughout the venue/event, including back of house
  - Between any booth or vendor spaces
  - Between participants/attendees at all times

• The Order must be followed regarding maximum gathering limits
  - Stagger pick-up times (for food)
  - Have staff monitor line-ups to ensure physical distancing is being maintained
  - Visual cues such as drawing circles in the venue or on the grounds where seating isn’t available to encourage family/group physical distancing

• Signage should be posted to promote physical distancing
• Clear directional signage for entry and exit locations, with extra staff to monitor physical distancing

• Signage must be posted to promote and ensure one-way traffic for entering and exiting the venue, as well as the flow of people to and from washrooms and concessions

• Increase the distance between seating, picnic tables and benches to ensure there is a 2 meter/6-foot distance between the participants at one table and participants at another table

Parking, transportation, and traffic flow

• Installing physical distancing controls for queuing for parking, entry to the venue/event

• Assigning staff/volunteers to monitor physical distancing throughout

• Stagger parking spaces to allow for space for physical distancing

• Visual cues, such as floor/ground markings, can be used to encourage physical distancing

• Make narrow walkways one-way to facilitate physical distancing

• Physical barriers can be used when physical distancing cannot be maintained where appropriate. Consider the need for additional cleaning and disinfecting of any barriers or dividers

• Use traffic markers to ensure one-way entry and exit

• Signage to ensure one-way flow of pedestrian traffic to gates or entrance.

Entertainment, Vocalists, Singers, Instrumentalists and Public Speakers

Singing, use of wind instruments, speaking loudly and cheering may pose a higher risk of spreading the virus. Please see the COVID-19 Guidance for Musicians, Vocalists and Instrumentalists. Gatherings and events should limit the risk by implementing/considering the following:

• Limit the number of performers according to the current gathering limits.
• Members of a performing group should not mingle with audience members, patrons, venue staff, or volunteers during or after performances

• Presenters at a conference are required to wear masks, even if physical distancing is in place, unless the following apply:
  
  o The performer or officiant who is performing activities that require vocalization (like talking or singing) at a faith gathering (see COVID-19 Guidance for Faith-Based Gatherings), a wedding, funeral, social event, or arts and culture event
  
  o The presenter is in a room for events (like a hotel, convention, or conference meeting room) attending a private business meeting with no more than 50 people

• Karaoke is only permitted at dedicated karaoke bars that have dedicated private rooms. Otherwise, karaoke must not take place at this time.

Dancing at events such as weddings and family celebrations must maintain physical distancing between attendees from households or close social groups, as described in the current gathering limits.

• If alcohol is involved, dancing is prohibited.

• Non-medical masks should always be worn while dancing.

• If hiring a DJ or musicians, ensure physical distancing is maintained between all participants except between households or close social groups, as described in the current gathering limits.

Seating And Management of Venues

You must ensure your venue/event does not exceed the maximum capacity as per the Order by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. Larger facilities are able to host multiple zones of the current gathering limit, only if they are able to follow these guidelines.

Please ensure you’re considering physical distancing and the impact on seating, capacity, and/or the layout of your indoor facility and available outdoor space. Also consider:

• How you will ensure the gathering sizes within your event or venue do not exceed the maximum gathering limits set out in the Health Protection Act Order. The most current information on gathering limits can be found here.
• How you will ensure your attendees find their seats while maintaining physical distancing. Ushering patrons directly to the appropriate seats gives you maximum control and allows you to load and unload the room/site safely

• How you will administer tickets to minimize interaction with attendees and staff

Some suggestions could include:

• Using electronic ticketing if possible

• Installing barriers to protect staff at box office

• Ensuring non-medical masks are provided to all staff

• Ensuring guests know that masks are required upon entry (people with a valid medical reason for not wearing a mask are exempt, as well as children under 2 and children 2 to 4 when their caregiver can’t get them to wear a mask)

• Using electronic ticketing to minimize paper ticketing

• Implementing assigned entry door numbers to reduce crowds at main doors

• Installing traffic flow signage

• Installing physical distancing controls for queuing for parking and entry to the venue/event

• Adopting touchless ticket scanning – guest retains ticket or electronic device during scanning

• Relocating scanning locations away from doorway to promote physical distancing

• Making alcohol-based hand sanitizers (60%) available to guests at touch points

• Ensuring microphones, headphones, and other personal equipment are not shared, and are sanitized before and after each use

• Ensuring set-ups, modifications, or designed usage factor in fire safety and emergency response measures
Tradeshows & Exhibitions

If your event involves a variety of vendors or trade booths, you will need to build the following into your plan:

• Every booth/vendor should have 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers available
• All staff must wear a non-medical mask
• Floor plans must maintain a minimum six-foot physical distance between each booth.
• If a six-foot physical distance can’t be maintained between vendors, then barriers will need to be installed. The following information will help you design the necessary configuration.

Information on Barriers for Venues

When planning an event with multiple exhibitors the first priority of the design and set up will be to ensure no less than a 2-metre/6-foot spacing between individual booths and exhibitors/vendors as well as patrons visiting the booths. In situations where the 6ft/2m physical distance cannot be maintained, a barrier can be installed to manage exposure risks between exhibitors/vendors. Patron to patron interactions between exhibitor booths must maintain six-feet physical distancing.

• Barrier design and construction:
  
  o Barriers must be constructed with a hard, non-porous material that prevents the transmission of air
    
    • Plastic sheeting is appropriate when constructed with a minimum 6 mm thickness
  
  o Barriers must extend 8 feet high (from the ground) for the full depth of the booth to provide an effective barrier between the breathing zones of people on either side
  
  o Barriers must be smooth, non-absorbent, and easily cleanable to allow for proper disinfection
  
  o All barriers should be fixed in place when events are happening (i.e. no swinging or other movement)
Barriers must be set up in a manner that does not create a hazard (such as in the case of an emergency and/or injure someone by falling). Consultation with the Office of the Fire Marshal can provide additional guidance.

The integrity of barriers must be maintained

- Cracks, rips, or other damage to barriers must be immediately fixed or the barrier must be replaced
- Regular visual inspections should be conducted to monitor the integrity of the barrier system

If using barriers, a review of the impact to air supply and airflow must be completed to ensure it is not altered from normal operating conditions. This requirement must be done for venues with passive or mechanically supplied ventilation systems. Venue operators may need to seek ventilation system experts for assistance to complete assessments (see below).

Air supply and airflow assessments should include:

- Airflow patterns need to be mapped out to ensure workers and attendees are not downstream from potentially infected individuals
- Any type of fixed or mobile fan should not be used in situations unless positioned in a manner that does not aerosolize potentially viral particles in peoples breathing zones and does not produce horizontal or countercurrent airflow
- Consideration of room pressurization and what impact this will have to control potential transmission
- An assessment for how barriers effect mixing of air in the space and potential for airflow disturbances to avoid virus transmission
- If make-up air and recirculating systems exist, then a plan for how filtration is managed, factoring in, at minimum, the use of an electrostatically charged MERV (minimum efficiency reporting value) of 13 filter or HEPA filtration depending on the systems capability given the added pressure drop is required
- Minimum ventilation rates need to be established to ensure air quality remains reasonably pure which involves either:
• Ensuring at least 8 air changes per hour, which will provide greater than 99% purge in 35 minutes: or
• Providing 5 cubic feet per minute (outdoor air) per person or 0.06 cubic feet per minute (outdoor air) per square foot floor space

• Groups to contact for ventilation system expertise are:
  o BOMA Nova Scotia
  o AIHA Consultants listing (Canada)
  o HVAC Engineering service providers (business listings)

Source info:
• American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists White Paper – Ventilation in Industrial Settings during the COVID-19 Pandemic
• American Industrial Hygiene Association Reopening Guidance for Street Vendors and Farmers Markets
• American Society of Heating and Air-Conditioning Engineers Standard 62.1 Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality

Please see:
• Federal guidance on indoor ventilation: COVID-19: Guidance on indoor ventilation during the pandemic - Canada.ca

Vendor/Booth Sampling

Product sampling, including food and alcohol, is currently prohibited at special events, markets, or trade shows.

Offering samples in these situations could increase the congregation of customers in confined spaces and encourage people to remove masks to consume samples.
Event/Venue Food Service

Food & Beverage Service

- Place minimum 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers at booth for customer use
- Use single service condiments, dispensed by staff, to avoid contamination
- Avoid contact and maintain physical distance from customers when providing food orders
- Consider a limited food and beverage menu
- Consider the option of offering food and beverage through a dedicated online/in-seat app
- Alcohol purchases from concession stands are not permitted; in-seat service only
- Attendees will only be permitted to eat and drink while in their seats and communication should be posted to advise on this requirement
- All vendors must have a food permit, unless exempt. Information on food permits can be found here
- Directional arrows and stanchions, ropes, or other form of physical crowd management must be in place at all concession areas to facilitate physical distancing in queues
- As an additional precaution to wearing non-medical masks within the venue, all concessions service areas should have plexiglass screens to protect staff and attendees
- Cashless payment options should be available and encouraged in all concession areas and bars.
  - If not an option, dedicate one staff person to handling money and one to food service if you are unable to adequately wash hands between tasks
Serving Alcohol at Your Event

If you plan to serve alcohol at your events, there are several regulations that apply under the Health Protection Order:

- Alcohol can be sold according to current public health measures
- Alcohol consumption is for in-seat service only; you are not permitted to have a bar where attendees can walk up and order a drink
- Alcohol must be delivered to the seat or table by staff
- You must ensure food and alcohol remains at the table
- You must ensure attendees remain seated at their table, except while going to the washroom and getting ready to leave
- Stand-up receptions, mingling/networking events, and dancing are prohibited (including at wedding receptions)
- Physical distancing of 2 meters/6 feet must remain in place between households or close social groups, as described in the current gathering limits.

We encourage you well in advance of your event to contact Alcohol, Gaming, Fuel and Tobacco to discuss obtaining a Special Occasion Liquor License at 1-877-565-0556 or via their website.

Selling Merchandise at Your Event

If your event is zoned and you are selling event or performer merchandise, you must have a separate merchandise area for each zone. Attendees are not permitted to cross over zones.

Physical distancing must be in place between points of transaction.

Conferences, Lectures & Presentation

If planning a conference or lecture, it is important to keep all of the measures within this document in mind. Here are a few other considerations to follow:

- Restrict loitering, queuing, and gathering in entrances; assign staff to encourage guests to proceed directly to the designated event space
• Assign staff to monitor entry/exit areas for latecomers and smokers to prevent groups of people gathering

• Develop a plan to communicate to participants well in advance, helping them understand entry points and the necessary protocols in place

• Design floor plans and room set-ups to ensure physical distancing is in place

Tournaments
The hosting of tournaments and events can create additional challenges and pressures for facilities. It’s important to consider that some facilities may not be able to support the hosting of tournaments and events. Hosting tournaments should be at the discretion of each individual facility based on their capacity and ability to host safely. Since each tournament or event is unique, it’s recommended that organizations reach out and work closely with facilities to determine the requirements.

Owner/operators of liquor-licensed establishments may hold dart, pool, or bowling regular league games and tournaments, but in doing so, must adhere to requirements established by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Organizers of tournaments must implement the required guidelines for events and for venues and consider the following:

• Consider the number of teams for the tournament. It may be easier for the facility and the organizer to have a smaller number of participating teams to manage the logistics and Health Protection Act Order requirements

• Masks must be worn, and physical distancing followed

• Where appropriate, eliminate or reduce the number of items at the event that will be handled by multiple people. This could include items such as programs, handouts, promotional materials, prizes, clipboards and pens

• Use websites and/or applications to post tournament results

• Ask participants or sponsors to avoid providing samples, promotional items or brochures
• Avoid cash payments where possible; use contactless payment options for ticketing and 50/50 draws

• Consider how you will avoid crossover of tournament volunteers and officials between different teams and games being played

• Facilities should not host more than one tournament at a time (1 tournament per weekend)

• Participants are not to shake hands at the end of the game

• You must follow Return to Sport Guidelines. For protocols specific to your sport, please contact your affiliated Provincial Sport Organization

**Hospitality Rooms**

Avoid offering hospitality rooms for participants and attendees.

**Ceremonies/Awards**

You must ensure the presentation of awards and ceremonies are completed in a manner where participants are not in close contact with one another

Consider providing the awards on a table where each individual medal/award can be separated and picked up by each individual

Participants should not shake hands during a presentation/ceremony

**Hygiene Practices**

Hygiene practices refers to frequent hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

• Signage should be posted to promote hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

• Handwashing with soap and water is the preferred method of hand hygiene, especially when hands are visibly soiled

• Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers (60%) at the entrances and throughout the event space to encourage hand hygiene
• Consider providing temporary handwashing stations equipped with soap and water for individuals to wash their hands

• Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth

• Individuals should cough or sneeze into a tissue, or the bend of the arm, not their hand. Tissues should be disposed of as soon as possible in a lined waste container and hand hygiene performed immediately

### Environmental Cleaning

Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects helps prevent the spread of COVID-19. This will reduce the chance of people becoming ill after touching dirty surfaces. Cleaning does not kill germs but helps remove them from the surface. Disinfecting refers to using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This is most effective after surfaces are cleaned. Both steps are important to reduce the spread of infection. Do not mix cleaning agents and disinfectants together or use multiple disinfectants together.

• Areas touched often (e.g. tables, railings, light switches, doorknobs, toilets, cash boxes, etc.) should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily and more often as needed

• An approved disinfectant must be used to eliminate the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Consult the product’s instruction for proper dilution and use for disinfection and its Safety Data Sheets for storage and handling requirements. For a list of approved disinfectants, consult [this resource](#).

• Items used between customers (i.e. point of sale systems) must be disinfected between each use

• Sharing of items used by venue staff, participants or performers (i.e. equipment, instruments) should be avoided

• Equipment, instruments and other items that must be shared or passed between individuals should be cleaned and disinfected at an increased frequency. If this is not possible, individuals touching these props should perform hand hygiene before and after touching the items

• Try to avoid the use and handling of cash by using contactless payment. If not possible, it is recommended you keep the cash you receive separate from the cash you use to make change. Try to round your prices to dollar values that will not require change. Have a designated area on the table for customers to leave cash
• At indoor events, opening windows to increase ventilation when weather permits may help reduce the spread of illness

• Waste should be disposed of regularly. Hands should be washed after waste removal. No-touch waste receptacles should be used

**Washrooms**

• Consider limiting the number of people who occupy the restroom at one time to allow for physical distancing

• Do not allow lines or crowds to form near the restroom without maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres/6 feet between people. Clearly post signs or markers to help attendees maintain the appropriate physical distance of at least 2 metres/6 feet

• Ensure open restrooms are:
  
  o **Cleaned and disinfected** regularly, particularly high-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, stall doors, doorknobs, countertops, dispensers, diaper changing tables, and light switches
    • Clean and disinfect restrooms daily or more often, if possible, with Health Canada-approved disinfectants against COVID-19
    • Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep products away from children

  o Adequately stocked with supplies for handwashing, including soap and water and 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

**Portable washrooms for outdoor activities**

• 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

• Organizers should develop a maintenance plan for these items that could include having staff in place to clean, sanitize, and ensure capacity limits and physical distancing are respected
Public health guidance for drive-in events

Drive-in events must follow the same public health measures as other events (e.g. hand hygiene, physical distancing, etc.); however, there are some unique considerations for these types of events

- Vehicles must be parked in a manner that ensures 2m/6 feet physical distancing between patrons
- The requirements for maximum numbers at a gathering and physical distancing between groups must be met
- No sharing of items between vehicles
- Only those in your social group can travel in the same vehicle
- Physical distancing must be maintained in common spaces (washrooms, food service areas)
- Consider flow of traffic in and out of event, including the use of unidirectional traffic and visual cues
- Consider contactless entry and payments for admissions, concessions, etc.
- Limit how often individuals leave their car (no loitering outside of car, should only leave to use washroom and purchase food)
- Ensure adequate number of handwashing facilities
- Ensure staffing levels allow for continued monitoring for maximum gathering limits and physical distancing

Declarations

Achieving a safe venue/event requires that an effective and responsible social contract be in place with patrons. They need to participate and contribute to achieving a safe event. Events and venues should include a patron declaration step in their safety/reopening plans. By asking basic questions like the following, we can identify individuals with a heightened risk for transmission.

- Is the patron sick or symptomatic?
- Have they traveled outside Nova Scotia or Prince Edward Island within the last 14 days?
- Are they a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19?
- Are they waiting for results of a COVID-19 test?
- Are they self-isolating for any reason?

In an ideal situation, the declaration questions are repeated both at the ticket purchase stage and upon arrival at the venue.

**Communication**

**Communicating Your Plan**

Delivering a safe event relies on ensuring attendees, clients and participants are properly informed and reminded about requirements. There are a variety of channels to consider clearly communicating expectations and ensure an enjoyable experience for all attendees.

- Consider how the facility will communicate COVID-19 protocols to stakeholders, ticket buyers, tenants and regular users of the facility well in advance of the changes taking place
- Use in-venue digital signage (if available), such as a video scoreboard or concourse signage, to reinforce the facility and hygiene protocols
- Make announcements throughout the event to remind attendees of the protocols
- Use facility social media channels and website to post and promote the protocols before the event
- Display signage throughout the facility and within back-of-house spaces that outline COVID-19 protocols, including reinforcement of the importance of monitoring for symptoms
**Event Budget Considerations**

Planning an event during the COVID-19 pandemic may impact or require additional costs to running your event safely.

- Consider your refund policy for attendees and the impacts it may have on your budget
- Plan for event sunk costs should your event be postponed or cancelled
- Costs for face masks or an additional PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)
- Providing hand wash stations or hand sanitizer
- Understand what your event insurance policy covers and does not cover
- Conduct a risk assessment to understand the potential risks around the event and understand the potential budget impacts from those risks

**Volunteers**

Depending on the scope and scale of your event it’s important to consider the number of volunteers you require to be at your event. Perhaps there are ways to reduce the number of volunteers required or maybe you need more to help manage COVID-19 protocols.

- Consider the required number of volunteers needed to help ensure COVID-19 protocols are followed
- Will you be supplying non-medical masks, hand sanitizer and/or gloves, or will volunteers be required to bring their own?
- Ensure training is provided to volunteers prior to the event to make them aware of the event COVID-19 protocols
- Review the number of volunteers needed to ensure you have enough to cover volunteers who may take ill or are not able to show up due to illness.
Suppliers to Your Event

• Ensure you communicate the COVID-19 event plans to your suppliers in advance of them coming onsite

• Provide a check-in location for suppliers who may be assisting in the setup of your event. You’ll want to record when they are onsite and how to contact them in case of an outbreak

We encourage you to reach out to Events Nova Scotia staff to discuss your event. Staff can provide guidance and support to you as you prepare to resume the hosting of your events and help you to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among your attendees.

Resources

https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/


https://events.novascotia.ca/event-news

https://novascotia.ca/reopening-nova-scotia/prevention-plans/#reopening