

## 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for Large Community Events / Mass Gatherings

COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that can cause respiratory illness. For more general information about COVID-19, see the [Toronto Public Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Fact Sheet](#).

The following interim guidance are recommendations for organizers and staff responsible for planning large events. Large community events and mass gatherings occur in a range of public places including conference halls, spiritual and cultural settings, theatres, sports arenas and festivals. These events can amplify the spread of respiratory infections that may already be occurring in the community. Canceling large events can cause significant disruption to individuals and communities. There are a number of considerations in the planning phase and at events to reduce risk.

Decisions to post-pone, modify, or cancel a mass-gathering event can be made based on thorough risk assessments. Some of the factors that are important to consider with respect to reducing the risk from COVID-19 transmission include factors related to the event such as who might be attending, issues related to crowding, activities planned, duration etc. as well as an understanding of the current environment around where the event is being planned.

### ***In the planning phase for your event, TPH recommends you consider the following:***

- The emergency operations plans at your venue
- Promoting everyday preventive measures promoted by Toronto Public Health
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 15 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
  - Avoid close contact with people who are ill
  - Stay home when you are ill
  - Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands
  - If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm
  - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Providing infection control supplies such as tissue boxes, soap, hand sanitizer and signage.
- Post [hand washing](#), [cough and sneeze etiquette](#), [hand sanitizing](#) posters.
- Planning for staff absences.
- Planning for the ability to have private space for someone in case they become ill until they can leave the event.
- Distribution of health messages related to COVID-19 for attendees
- Planning alternative arrangements that can be made for event staff and participants who are at high-risk for complications from COVID-19
- Promoting messages that discourage people who are sick from attending the event
- Developing flexible refund policies for participants
- Identifying strategies that may be needed to modify the event including
  - Reducing the number of participants or changing the venue to prevent crowding
  - Staggering arrivals and departures
  - Providing packaged refreshments instead of a buffet
- Identifying actions to take if you need to postpone or cancel events
- Communications with stakeholders and staying up to date from credible sources. Keep up to date with information on the [Toronto Public Health website](#).

**More information**

For more information, contact Toronto Public Health: 416-338-7600.

**References**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). Interim Guidance: Get your Mass Gatherings or Large Community Events Ready for COVID-19. Retrieved from <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/85514>

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2020) Risk-informed decision-making for mass gatherings during COVID-19 global outbreak. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/mass-gatherings-risk-assesment.html>