COVID-19 Guidance for Indoor & Outdoor Events & Gatherings

The following guidance is intended to help organizers and permit-holders of events and gatherings reduce the spread of COVID-19. This guidance is applicable to:

- Concerts and live shows, including performing arts events
- Meeting or event spaces
- Movie theatres/cinemas
- All other organized or spontaneous indoor and outdoor events and social gatherings (e.g. parties, fundraisers, fairs, wedding receptions, funeral receptions).

Toronto is currently in the grey-lockdown level of the provincial government's COVID-19 Response Framework. This guidance document describes the requirements organized public events and gatherings must comply with under the Reopening Ontario Act.

Organizers, operators and permit-holders of events/gatherings, regardless of their purpose or size, have a responsibility to assess the risks associated with their event/gathering, and their ability to mitigate these risks. They are responsible for implementing measures to reduce the risk of infection among all those who participate in their activities (e.g. staff, performers, volunteers, attendees). This includes managing lines and crowds within and around the perimeter of the event space. Events that contravene these public health orders are subject to fines.

Provincial Orders (Reopening Ontario Act)

- Indoor organized events and social gatherings are not permitted, except with members of the same household.
- Outdoor gatherings are permitted with 10 people or less with physical distancing.
- Religious ceremonies, rites and services can have up to 10 people indoors and 10 people outdoors.
- Indoor and outdoor dining at food establishments is prohibited.
- Meeting and event spaces are closed.
- Meeting and event spaces may only be rented for the following purposes:
  o Day camp for children as described in the provincial order
  o Providing child care within the meaning of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014
  o Delivering or supporting court services
  o Operations by or on behalf of the government
  o Delivering or supporting delivery of government services
  o Delivering or supporting mental health and substance use support services (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous) as long as no more than 10 people are permitted to occupy the rented space.

- Cinemas are closed.
  o Drive-in cinemas are permitted.

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Performing arts venues are closed to spectators.
- Rehearsals or performing a recorded or broadcasted event is permitted.
- Singers and players of brass or wind instruments must be separated from any other performers by plexiglass or other impermeable barrier.
- Concerts, artistic events, theatrical performances and other performances may be provided if they are provided in a drive-in or drive-through format.

**Workplace Health and Safety**

Review the [Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](https://www.toronto.ca/citydocs/health/preventing-covid-19/employers/) to plan and implement protocols to keep staff and customers safe, including:

- **Staff attendance and operations**
  - Collect contact information of all staff, performers, essential visitors and other persons who provide work for the venue who enter an indoor area of the facility.
  - Meeting and event spaces must also collect contact information for all members of the public who attend a meeting or event.
  - Promote work from home wherever possible.

- **Health screening for staff and customers:**
  - Health screening is required for everyone (staff, guests, event planners, security, suppliers, contractors etc.) entering the facility. Questions can be answered on paper, online or by asking people directly.
  - Temperature checks are not required or recommended.

- **Cleaning and disinfection:**
  - Minimise the use of linens so as to minimize exposure to contamination.

- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.**

- **Managing COVID-19 in the workplace.**

**Safety plan**

All businesses and workplaces must prepare and make available a [safety plan](https://www.toronto.ca/citydocs/health/preventing-covid-19/employers/). This safety plan must:

- Be available no later than November 30, 2020.
- Describe measures/procedures that have been or will be implemented in the business, place, facility or establishment to reduce spread of COVID-19.
- Include measures for screening, physical distancing, masks, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects and wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Be in writing and made available to any person for review on request.
- Be posted in a visible place to come to the attention of those working or attending the location.

**Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems**

- Ensure the HVAC system(s) are properly maintained.
• Increase outdoor air-exchange by:
  o Maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or
  o Opening windows and doors, if it is safe to do so
• Use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system, if provided.
• Keep seating and activities away from air vents and areas with high airflow.
• Do not obstruct HVAC inlets and outlets.
• When using ceiling fans, use an upward airflow rotation.
• If portable fans are used, position fan with an upward movement to avoid blowing of air across people and surfaces.
• There is no evidence the use of portable air purifiers will prevent the spread of COVID-19. If used, follow the manufacturer's directions to decide where best to place the device. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions on maintenance.
• For more information, review the COVID-19: Transmission, Aerosols and Ventilation fact sheet.

Use of Masks and Face Coverings
• All staff, performers and guests must wear a mask or face covering indoors, as per a new City of Toronto bylaw and O. Reg. 82/20.
  o Some exceptions apply, including children under the age of two, and people with medical conditions that make wearing a mask difficult. Also, masks may be temporarily removed if a person is performing or rehearsing in a film or television production or in a concert, artistic event, theatrical performance or other performance.
• Appropriate personal protective equipment that covers the eyes, nose and mouth must be worn if, while providing service in an indoor area, the person
  o is required to come within two metres/six feet of another person who is not wearing a mask or face covering; and
  o is not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier from a person described above.
• Masks or face coverings are strongly recommended outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
• See Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace for more information.

Physical Distancing
• All people must maintain at least a two metre/six feet physical distance from others.
• A maximum of four people are allowed per table.
• Plan and modify the layout of your setting to ensure enough space is provided for attendees, vendors, performers and staff to maintain physical distancing.
• Calculate the maximum number of guests permitted according to current provincial regulations or physical distancing requirements, whichever is less. Limit the number of guests accordingly.
The maximum number of guests that should be permitted at any one time based on physical distancing requirements can be calculated as one person per two metres squared (four square metres or 43 square feet) of publicly accessible floor space.

Consider a booking system or issuing tickets, even for free events.

- Access to the event/venue should only be permitted to staff, volunteers, vendors, hired performers and guests who are registered or have a ticket.
- Unregistered public access to the event/meeting space, room or thoroughfare should not be permitted.
- The need to access a room through other rooms that are not part of the same event/meeting should be limited or minimized. This should be monitored by staff.

**Food and Drink**
- Indoor and outdoor dining at food service establishments is currently not permitted.
- Food may be sold or served as take-out, drive-through or delivery only.

**Performances**
- Concert venues, theatres and cinemas may open for the purpose of rehearsing or performing a recorded or broadcasted concert, artistic event, theatrical performance or other performance if they comply with the following conditions:
  - No spectators may be permitted in the concert venue, theatre or cinema.
  - Every performer and other person who provides work for the concert venue, theatre or cinema must maintain at least two metres physical distance from every other person, except:
    - if it is necessary for the purposes of the performance or rehearsal that the performers or persons who provide work for the concert venue, theatre or cinema must be closer to each other, or
    - where necessary for the purposes of health and safety.
  - Singers and players of brass or wind instruments must be separated from any other performers by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.
- Concerts, artistic events, theatrical performances and other performances may be provided if they are provided in a drive-in or drive-through format, compliant with applicable orders.

**Modify Programming**
- Consider virtual options (e.g. live streaming, pre-recorded shows, small acoustic concerts, solo performances, virtual reality and other digital experiences).
- Limit or cancel activities where distances or other appropriate controls cannot be implemented.
- Allow sufficient time between events/gatherings to allow safe and distanced exit and entry, and sufficient environmental cleaning in between.
- Keep the duration of the event/gathering to a minimum to limit contact among guests.
- Guests should remain seated as much as possible, with a maximum of four people per table.
• Close or restrict access to non-essential common areas (e.g. communal lounges).
• Discourage activities that increase the risk of spreading COVID-19 (e.g. singing, cheering, dancing, playing wind instruments, hugging). Encourage alternative practices, such as humming, clapping, noisemakers, waving.

Modify and Arrange Site/Floor Plan
• Design traffic flow that encourages one-way movement with prominent signage and/or floor markings.
• Increase floor marking and aisle signage to allow people to find their seats more easily.
• Arrange, mark and/or assign seating to ensure:
  o No more than four people per table, and
  o At least two metre/six feet distance between individuals who are not members of the same household.
• Ensure that guests can access their event/meeting area without wandering (i.e. entering other event/meeting rooms/areas). If possible, use a dedicated entrance/exit.
• Identify areas where crowding and bottlenecks are common, such as lobbies or bathrooms. Use volunteers, staff or barriers to redirect people who may gather in these areas.
• Ensure enough space for people in high-traffic areas, between chairs, tables, and places where people may gather.

Manage Lines and Gatherings Within and Outside the Event
• Use barriers/structures to enclose the event space/venue.
• Designate entry and exit points. Manage these areas to control the number of attendees. If the maximum number of attendees is reached, allow one person in for every person that leaves.
• Stagger arrivals, departures and breaks to reduce congestion at entrances and exits and in common areas.
• Monitor and manage customer lines within and outside the venue.
• Post physical distancing signs at all entrances, kiosks and/or service counters.
• Place visual/textural markers spaced two metres/six feet apart (e.g. tape on the floor, pylons, signs) to encourage physical distancing.
• Operators must ensure that guests waiting in line maintain a distance of two metres/six feet from others and wear a mask/face covering.
• Discourage people from gathering and loitering outside the venue.
• Assign staff to monitor lines and ensure guests stay two metres/six feet apart.

Ticket and Concession Kiosks/Booths
• Encourage online or telephone ticket purchases to minimize line-ups at the ticket/service counter.
• Include staggered arrival times to the ticket process to limit on-site queueing.
• Install physical barriers at the point of sale (e.g. plexiglass shield).
• Encourage electronic payment by debit or credit card, and to tap instead of using the PIN pad.
• Use a contactless transaction process to exchange concessions and/or scan tickets.
• Review the City of Toronto’s COVID-19 Guidance for Retail Settings, as applicable.

Communication
• Provide information to staff, performers and guests about event/venue operations (e.g. public health measures, available amenities).
• Encourage staff and attendees to download the COVID Alert app so they can be notified directly if they have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.
• Download information and display posters in high-visibility areas in your setting to promote messages about how to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic:
  o COVID-19: Spread the Word
  o COVID-19 Fact Sheet

Other Resources
Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace
Guidance for Employers on Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace
Reopening Toronto Businesses & Workplaces: A Four Step Public Health Planning Guide
Guidance for Drive-in/Drive-through Events
Planning a Funeral Reception / Celebration of Life during COVID-19 Checklist
COVID-19 Checklist for Planning a Wedding
Risk mitigation tool for gatherings and events operating during the COVID-19 pandemic
Risk mitigation tool for outdoor recreation spaces and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic

More information
For more information, visit our website at www.toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.

This document does not replace the need for applicable City of Toronto permits. COVID-19 mitigation and safety measures are a new consideration as part of event permitting, however, they do not replace any pre-existing permit requirements, health and safety practices, or conditions.