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. It describes the requirements under O. Reg. 364/20 of the Reopening Ontario Act and is applicable to:

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

Organizers can also use the COVID-19 Checklist for Safely Organizing Events & Gatherings.

The aim and purpose of this document is to assist individuals and businesses with information related to the Ontario Government’s reopening framework as well as Toronto Public Health requirements to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is important to know that breaches of some of these directions will constitute offences under provincial regulations or other public health legal requirements. While we aim to provide relevant and timely information, no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided. This guidance is not intended to nor does it provide legal advice and should not be relied upon or treated as legal advice. Users seeking legal advice should consult with a qualified legal professional.

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, patrons). This includes managing lines and crowds within and around the perimeter of the event space.

Provincial Proof of Vaccination Policy

- Patrons are required to show proof of being fully vaccinated to access some businesses and settings, including meeting and event spaces, concert venues, theatres and cinemas. Learn more at Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination.
  - Operators can download the Verify Ontario mobile app to scan COVID-19 proof of vaccination at entry.
- Encourage guests and staff born in 2009 or earlier to get vaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine. Read and share information about the vaccine and how to get vaccinated.
• Post signs and share COVID-19 vaccine resources, available in multiple languages.

Measures for All Workplaces, Organizations & Businesses

Review the Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace to plan and implement protocols to keep staff and patrons safe. Operators must also consider the following:

• **Staff attendance and operations**
  o Collect contact information of all staff, essential visitors and other persons who provide work for or attend the facility.
  o Meeting and event spaces are required to record the name and contact information of every member of the public who attends a meeting or event.

• **Health screening for staff and patrons:**
  o Active health screening (available in multiple languages) is required for every person who works at the business or organization before they enter the premises of the business or organization.
  o Ask all patrons to self-screen for COVID-19 (available in multiple languages) prior to entering the facility.
    ▪ Meeting and event spaces, including conference and convention centres, must actively screen all patrons entering the facility.

Safety Plan

All businesses and workplaces must prepare a safety plan. This safety plan must:

• 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, wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE) and preventing and controlling crowding.
  o Concert venues, theatres, cinemas and drive-in/through events/venues, shall also include information as to how the business, place or event will,
    ▪ prevent gatherings and crowds in the business or place or at the event;
    ▪ ensure that physical distancing and wearing of masks in lines as applicable is complied with in the business or place or at the event; and
    ▪ mitigate the risk of any interactive activities, exhibits or games that may be included in the business or place or at the event.

• 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.
Use the [COVID-19 Safety Plan Checklist](#) to develop your safety plan.

**Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Systems**

- Ensure the HVAC system(s) are properly maintained.
- Increase outdoor air-exchange by:
  - Maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or
  - 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.

**Capacity & Gathering Limits**

- The person responsible for a place of business or facility that is open to the public shall limit the number of persons in the place of business or facility so that the members of the public are able to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the business or facility. Exceptions include:
  - Meeting and event spaces, including conference centres and convention centres
  - Concert venues, theatres and cinemas.
  See chart below for details.
- Calculate the maximum number of patrons permitted according to current provincial regulations or physical distancing requirements, **whichever is less**. Limit the number of patrons accordingly.
  - The maximum number of patrons 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.
## Capacity Limits for Events and Gatherings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue/Event</th>
<th>Capacity limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meeting or event space</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indoors &amp; outdoors</strong>: Full capacity permitted. Physical distancing recommended, where possible. Proof of vaccination required Rooms must be separated by a partition &quot;a&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concert venue, theatre or cinema</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indoors &amp; outdoors</strong>: Full capacity permitted. Physical distancing recommended, where possible. Proof of vaccination required Reservation required to attend &quot;b&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social gathering c</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indoors</strong>: 25 people, with physical distancing <strong>Outdoors</strong>: 100 people, with physical distancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organized public event c</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indoors</strong>: 25 people, with physical distancing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"a" Rooms in a meeting or event space must be separated by a partition with a hard, non-porous surface that can be easily and routinely cleaned and disinfected.

"b" No member of the public may attend a concert, event, performance or movie within the concert venue, theatre or cinema unless they have made a reservation to do so.

"c" Exceptions include an event or gathering held at a business or place to which a capacity limit is described in Schedule 1 or 2 of O. Reg. 364/20.

### Capacity Limits where there is Food & Dancing

- Any business, place, facility or establishment at which food or drink is sold or served while dance facilities are provided, including meeting and event spaces, conference and convention centres; concert venues, theatres and cinemas, must comply with regulations for food and drink establishments with dance facilities,
  - at any time when food or drink is served or sold at the business, place, facility or establishment while dance facilities are provided; and
  - in any part of the business, place, facility or establishment where the food or drink is served or sold and dance facilities are provided.
- **Indoors**: the total number of members of the public permitted to be in the establishment at any one time must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the establishment and in any event may not exceed **25 per cent capacity, or 250 persons**, whichever is less.
- **Outdoors**: the total number of members of the public permitted to be at the establishment at any one time may not exceed **75 per cent capacity, or 5,000 persons**, whichever is less.
See Guidance for Food Premises for more information.

**Religious ceremonies, rites and services**
- Indoor and outdoor gatherings for the purpose of a wedding, funeral, religious service, rite or ceremony are permitted with restrictions.
- See COVID-19 Guidance for Places of Worship, Checklist for Planning a Funeral Reception / Celebration of Life and Checklist for Planning a Wedding for more information.

**Physical Distancing**
While capacity restrictions may be lifted due to proof of vaccination requirements, limiting capacity to reduce crowding and maintaining physical distance as much as possible are still recommended to prevent spread of COVID-19, especially when masks are removed.

- All people must maintain at least a two metres physical distance from others they don’t live with.
  - Exceptions include when attending an event or gathering at a meeting or event space, or a concert venue, theatre or cinema.
- If live entertainment is performed for spectators, the performers must maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from any spectators or be separated from any spectators by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.
- Operators must ensure that patrons waiting in line maintain a distance of two metres from others.
  - Post physical distancing signs at all entrances, kiosks and/or service counters.
  - Place visual/textural markers spaced two metres apart (e.g. tape on the floor, pylons, signs) to encourage physical distancing.

**Use of Masks and Face Coverings**
- All individuals must wear a mask or face covering indoors, as per O. Reg. 364/20.
- Every person must wear a mask while attending an organized public event or gathering and within two metres of another individual who is not part of their household.
- Masks are required outdoors at a concert, event, performance or movie unless seated with household members only and every member of the household is seated at least two metres from every other person outside their household.
  - Masks or face coverings are strongly recommended in all outdoor spaces when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Masks must be worn in line-ups indoors, and are recommended in line-ups outdoors.
• Some exceptions apply, including children under the age of two, and people with medical conditions that make wearing a mask difficult. Proof of exemption is not required.
• Masks may be temporarily removed to consume food or drink; or if a person is performing or rehearsing in a concert, artistic event, theatrical performance or other performance.
• City of Toronto bylaw requires that businesses with indoor spaces that are open to the public must develop a policy on the wearing of masks. Use the Mask By-law Checklist and Sample Policy.
• 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 of another person who is not wearing a mask or face covering; and
  o is not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.

Food and Drink
• Indoor and outdoor dining is now permitted with restrictions.
• Vendors engaged in onsite food/beverage preparation in temporary establishments (e.g. tents/booths) at special events must comply with O. Reg. 493/17: Food Premises; including, but not limited to: the provision of a handwashing station for food handlers which is adequately supplied with hot and cold running water, an enclosed waste collection tank, liquid soap in a dispenser and paper towels.
• See Guidance for Food Premises for more information.

Live Entertainment
• Performers must maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from any spectators or be separated from any spectators by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.
• For more information, see Live Performance Health & Safety during COVID-19.

Recommendations to Promote Public Health Measures

Modify Programming
• Host outdoors events whenever possible.
  o If using a tent or canopy, at least two full sides must be open to the outdoors and not substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable barriers.
• 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 patrons.
• Patrons should remain seated as much as possible.
• 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 encourage at least two metre distance between individuals who are not members of the same household, as required.
• Ensure that patrons 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 Venue
• Monitor and manage patron lines within and outside the venue.
• Use barriers/structures to enclose the event space/venue.
• Designate entry and exit points. Manage these areas to control the number of patrons. If the maximum number of patrons 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.
• Discourage people from gathering and loitering outside the venue.

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 patrons about event/venue operations (e.g. public health measures, available amenities).
- Encourage staff and patrons 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:
  - COVID-19: Posters & Graphics
  - 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
Planning a Funeral Reception / Celebration of Life during COVID-19 Checklist
COVID-19 Checklist for Planning a Wedding
Guidance for Drive-in & Drive-through Events
Live Performance & Safety during COVID-19
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.