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. 263/20 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.

What is Permitted (O. Reg. 263/20)

Indoor concert venues, theatres and cinemas

Indoor 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 a physical distance of at least two metres 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.

• The person responsible for the concert venue, theatre or cinema must,
  o record the name and contact information of every performer and other person who provides work for the concert venue, theatre or cinema who enters an indoor area of the facility,
  o maintain the records for a period of at least one month, and
  o only disclose the records to a medical officer of health or an inspector under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* on request for a purpose specified in section 2 of that Act or as otherwise required by law.

### Outdoor concert venues, theatres and cinemas

Outdoor concert venues, theatres and cinemas may open if they comply with the following conditions:

• Spectators must be seated at all times while watching the concert, event, performance or film.
• The number of members of the public at a concert, event, performance or movie within the concert venue, theatre or cinema at any one time must not exceed 50 per cent of the usual seating capacity for the concert, event, performance or movie.
• No member of the public may attend a seated concert, event, performance or movie within the concert venue, theatre or cinema unless they have made a reservation to do so.
• No member of the public may be permitted to enter the indoor premises of the concert venue, theatre or cinema, except,
  o to access a washroom,
  o to access an outdoor area that can only be accessed through an indoor route,
  o to purchase admission,
  o to engage in retail sales, or
  o as may be necessary for the purposes of health and safety.
• The person responsible for the concert venue, theatre or cinema must post a sign in a conspicuous location visible to the public that states the capacity limits under which the concert venue, theatre or cinema is permitted to operate.
• Every member of the public who is outdoors at a concert, event, performance or movie must wear a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless they are entitled to an exception or are seated with members of their own household only, and every member of the household is seated at least two metres from every person outside their household.
• The person responsible for the concert venue, theatre or cinema must prepare a safety plan.
Drive-in and drive-through events
Outdoor drive-in or drive-through concert venues and theatres, drive-in cinemas may open if they comply with the following conditions:

• Each person in attendance at the drive-in or drive-through venue, must remain within a motor vehicle designed to be closed to the elements except,
  o where necessary to purchase admission,
  o where necessary to use a washroom, or
  o as may otherwise be required for the purposes of health and safety.

• The driver of a motor vehicle at the drive-in or drive-through venue must ensure that it is positioned at least two metres away from other motor vehicles.

Indoor meeting and event spaces, conference centres and convention centres

• The person responsible for a business or place that is open may only rent out indoor meeting or event space if the indoor meeting or event space is only rented out,
  o to a provider of child care within the meaning of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014;
  o for the purpose of the provision of social services;
  o for the purpose of collective bargaining, so long as no more than 10 people are permitted to occupy the rented space;
  o for the purpose of delivering or supporting the delivery of court services;
  o for operations by or on behalf of a government;
  o for the purpose of delivering or supporting the delivery of government services;
  o for the purpose of operations and services of the health sector, including immunization clinics;
  o for the purpose of delivering or supporting mental health support services or addictions support services, so long as no more than 10 people are permitted to occupy the rented space; or
  o for the purpose of conducting in-person examinations for the registration, licensing or accreditation of persons in any of the fields or occupations described in subsection 2 (2) of Schedule 8 to Ontario Regulation 82/20, made under the Act, so long as no more than 50 students are permitted to occupy the rented space.

• Nothing in this section prevents a business or place from showing a meeting or event space by appointment for a prospective rental.

Outdoor meeting and event spaces, conference and convention centres
The person responsible for a business or place that is open may rent out outdoor meeting or event space if the business or place complies with the following conditions:
• The person responsible for the business or place must post a sign in a conspicuous location visible to the public that states the capacity limits under which the business or place is permitted to operate.

• No more than 10 people may be seated together at any table in the rented space unless everyone seated at the table is,
  o a member of the same household,
  o a member of up to one other household who lives alone, or
  o a caregiver for any member of either household.

• Patrons must remain seated at all times in the rented space, except,
  o while entering the rented space and while moving to their table,
  o while exiting the rented space,
  o while going to or returning from a washroom,
  o while lining up to enter/exit the space or use the washroom, or
  o where necessary for the purposes of health and safety.

• No patrons are permitted to dance or sing, including by performing karaoke, within the rented space.

• The person responsible for the business or place must actively screen individuals in accordance with the advice, recommendations and instructions of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health before they enter the indoor premises of the business or place*.

• The person responsible for the business or place* must,
  o record the name and contact information of every member of the public who attends a meeting or event,
  o maintain the records for a period of at least one month, and
  o only disclose the records to a medical officer of health or an inspector under the Health Protection and Promotion Act on request for a purpose specified in section 2 of that Act or as otherwise required by law.

*Does not apply if the business or place is rented out,
  o to a provider of child care within the meaning of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014;
  o for the purpose of the provision of social services;
  o for the purpose of delivering or supporting the delivery of court services;
  o for operations by or on behalf of a government; or
  o for the purpose of delivering or supporting the delivery of government services.

**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.
**Organized public events**

- No person shall attend an organized public event of more than 5 people if the event is held indoors.

**Food and drink**

- Indoor dining is **not** permitted.
- See [Guidance for Food Premises](#) for more information.
- 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.

**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](#).

**Social gatherings**

- No person shall attend a social gathering of more than 5 people indoors or 10 people outdoors.

**Provincial Proof of Vaccination Policy**

- Patrons age 12+ are required to show proof of being **fully vaccinated** to access some businesses and settings, including outdoor meeting and event spaces, concert venues, theatres and cinemas that have a usual capacity of 20,000 or more persons. 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 age 5 and older 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, conference centres and convention centres must actively **screen patrons** in accordance with the advice, recommendations and instructions of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health before they enter the indoor premises of the business or place.

**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:
  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.

Capacity Limits

- Subject to any other provisions set out in O. Reg. 263/20, the person responsible for a place of business or facility that is open to the public shall limit the number of members of the public in the place of business or facility so that,
  o 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; and
  o the total number of members of the public in the business or facility at any one time does not exceed 50 per cent capacity
    ▪ 50 per cent capacity is determined by taking 50 per cent of the maximum occupant load of the business or facility, or part of a business or facility, as applicable, as calculated in accordance with Ontario Regulation 213/07 (Fire Code), made under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997.
- Unless otherwise provided, a capacity limit set out in O. Reg 263/20 applies to the whole business or facility, not to individual rooms or areas within the business or facility.

Physical Distancing

- All people must maintain at least a two metres physical distance from others they don’t live with.
• 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.
  o Post physical distancing signs at all entrances, kiosks and/or service counters.
  o 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. 263/20.

• Every person must wear a mask while attending an outdoor organized public event or gathering, including a concert, event, performance or movie, and within two metres of another individual who is not part of their household.
  o 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.

Recommendations to Promote Public Health Measures

Modify Programming

• When required, host events outdoors.
  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:
  o COVID-19: Posters & Graphics
  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
Planning a Funeral Reception / Celebration of Life during COVID-19 Checklist
COVID-19 Checklist for Planning a Wedding
Ontario Public Health Measures and Advice
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.