

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Events

Guidance for Event Spaces during COVID-19 in Step 3

September 20, 2021

Version 14.0

Key Points

- Starting September 22, 2021, proof of vaccination is required to enter indoor areas of meeting and event spaces (with limited exceptions).
- Meeting and event facilities must follow restrictions outlined in Step 3 of the Roadmap to Reopen, including applicable gathering and capacity limits.
- Staff must be **actively screened** for symptoms of COVID-19 before each shift and reminded to stay home and get tested if they are sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
- All staff and patrons must wear a face covering when in the indoor area of a premise.
 - Face coverings are not mandatory outdoors, but should be worn whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- If providing food, ensure that food is being served in accordance with the **Food Premises Regulation** and current emergency measures.
- Tables and seating should be arranged so that seated patrons are positioned at least 2 metres from other seated patrons at all times, unless physical barriers are installed.
- Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces at least twice per day, and more often as needed.

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly. This guidance is subject to change. Please visit the Southwestern Public Health website (<https://www.swpublichealth.ca/>) regularly for updates and announcements. This guidance is to support event operators on how to keep events operating safely and includes mandated restrictions and capacity limits in place in Step Three of Ontario's **Roadmap to Reopen.**

General Principles

- The more people an individual interacts with at a gathering and the longer that interaction lasts, the higher the potential risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 and spreading COVID-19 to others.
- In a region that has experienced widespread community transmission, there is a greater risk of COVID-19 spreading during an event or gathering. One infected person can spread COVID-19 to many others at an event where people are close together. Therefore, it is important to make informed decisions when determining if and what event you attend.

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COVID-19 Roadmap to Reopen

Meeting and event spaces and people hosting events must follow the requirements outlined in the [Roadmap to Reopen](#). The below chart provides an overview of restrictions in place in step 3 of the Roadmap.

Events held at private residences or spaces that are not operated by businesses or organizations have different capacity limits as outlined below.

Step in Roadmap	Requirements
<p>General Public Health Measures for Businesses and Organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ NEW Starting September 22, 2021: Proof of vaccination is required to enter indoor areas of meeting and event spaces (with limited exceptions). ✓ Workplaces must actively screen all workers and screen visitors or patrons entering the work environment. See the COVID-19 Screening Tool for Workplaces for more information. ✓ Face coverings are required to be worn by members of the public and workers in indoor public places and workplaces, with limited exceptions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Patrons are permitted to temporarily remove their face coverings when eating or drinking. ✓ Personal protective equipment (PPE), including face coverings and eye protection, is required when a worker must come within 2 metres of another person who is not wearing a face covering. ✓ All businesses must ensure that every person who performs work for the business or organization and whose mask or face covering is temporarily removed to consume food or drink (i.e. at break time) is separated from every other person by a distance of at least 2 metres or an plexiglass or other impermeable barrier. ✓ All businesses or facilities must limit capacity so that every member of the public can maintain 2 metres of physical distance from every other person outside their household. ✓ All businesses or organizations must post signs at all entrances to the premises in a conspicuous location visible to the public that informs individuals on how to screen themselves for COVID-19 prior to entering the premises (passive screening). ✓ Ensure that washrooms that are accessible to the public are cleaned and disinfected at least twice per day or as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition. ✓ All workplaces must develop a COVID-19 workplace safety plan and have it available should an inspector or compliance officer request to see it during an inspection. ✓ Ensure that patrons in lines outside are able to maintain physical distancing from other patrons/groups. Patrons in lines inside must also be wearing face coverings.
<p>Step 3</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Indoor meeting or event spaces can be rented out with the following restrictions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The total number of members of the public permitted to be in an indoor portion of the rentable space must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres from every other person and cannot exceed 50% capacity, or 1,000 persons, whichever is less. ○ The number of people in a particular room of the indoor meeting or event space cannot exceed 50% capacity of the room at any one time.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Outdoor meeting or event spaces can be rented out with the following restrictions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The total number of members of the public permitted to be in an outdoor portion of the rentable space must not exceed 75% capacity at any one time, or 5,000 persons, whichever is less.✓ The space must be configured so that patrons seated at different tables are separated by 2 metres or plexiglass/impermeable barrier.✓ Must post a sign in a conspicuous location which states the maximum capacity.✓ Rooms must be separated by a partition with a hard, non-porous surface that can be easily and routinely cleaned and disinfected.✓ Must actively screen patrons before they enter the premises. See COVID-19 Customer Screening tool for more information✓ Must record the contact information for every member of the public who attends a meeting. Records must be kept for 30 days.✓ Gathering Limits for Private Events and Social Gatherings<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Maximum 25 people for indoor gatherings. Maximum 100 people for outdoor gatherings. These limits also apply to social gatherings associated with a wedding, funeral or a religious service.○ Limits for religious services, rites or ceremonies (i.e. weddings, funerals):<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Indoor religious services, rites and ceremonies with capacity limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres from every other person in the room.▪ Outdoor permitted with capacity limited to permit physical distancing of 2 metres✓ Some restrictions outlined above do not apply to any part of the facility that is being used for a day camp, overnight camp, child care provider, or for the provision of social services. See Ont. Regulation 364/20 Schedule 1 Section 4 for further details.
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***Please note that businesses or organizations are not required to be onsite at the time of the event as long as there is an agreement with the renter that all applicable COVID-19 requirements will be met. Businesses can use this [template](#) to provide to renters to ensure that they are fulfilling these requirements.**

Safety Plan

- A safety plan must be prepared and available upon request. Information on how to create a safety plan is [found here](#).
 - The safety plan should describe the measures and procedures implemented or will be implemented to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. It should include information on screening, face coverings, physical distancing, use of personal protective equipment and cleaning and disinfection.
 - A copy of the safety plan must be posted in a conspicuous place.

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Capacity Restrictions

- The total number of members of the public permitted to be in the outdoor rentable space at any one time is limited to the number that can maintain 2 metres physical distance from all others and cannot exceed 75% capacity, or 5,000 persons, whichever is less.
 - To calculate 75% capacity: Total square metres of floor area (accessible to the public, not including shelving and store fixtures) ÷ 1.33. Round number down to nearest whole number.
- The total number of members of the public permitted to be in the indoor rentable space at any one time is limited to the number that can maintain 2 metres physical distance from all others and cannot exceed 50% capacity of every room in the rentable meeting or event space, and totalling the result, or 1,000 persons, whichever is less
 - The number of members of the public permitted to be in a particular room of the rentable space cannot exceed 50% capacity of the room at any one time.
- Must post a sign in a conspicuous location which states the maximum capacity.

Face Coverings and Personal Protective Equipment

- The Province of Ontario has mandated face coverings in indoor areas of businesses or organizations. Certain exemptions apply. See Schedule 1 section 2(4) of [O. Reg. 364/20](#) for more information.
 - Face coverings can be temporarily removed while eating and drinking.
 - Staff working in indoor areas accessible only to employees who can physically distance (at least 2 metres) from all other staff members in that space do not need to wear a face covering while in this area.
- Personal protective equipment covering the eyes, mouth and nose is required when a worker must come within 2 metres of another person who is not wearing a face covering (i.e. because they are eating or drinking). At a minimum, this would include a **medical mask and eye protection** (face shield or goggles). If a plexiglass or impermeable barrier separates the worker from the person not wearing a face covering, additional PPE is not mandatory (but a face covering is still required).
 - See our [Eye Protection Guidelines](#) for more information on appropriate eye protection.
- Employers should:
 - Have a policy in place outlining how the provincial face covering requirements will be implemented as per the [Southwestern Public Health Letter of Instruction](#).
 - Provide staff with a sufficient supply of face coverings and eye protection.
 - Consider having a supply of face coverings for attendees.
 - Train staff on implementing the provincial face covering regulation, including how to manage individuals claiming exemptions.
 - Provide all staff with information on [proper use, removal, and washing of face coverings](#).
 - Post [signs](#) at entrances to remind attendees of [face covering requirements](#).

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Physical Distancing

- Follow capacity limits outlined in Step 3 of the [Roadmap to Reopen](#) and limit the number of people at events to allow for adequate physical distancing.
- Ensure attendees maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from others outside their household.
 - Distance between tables or groups must be at least 2 metres and allow sufficient space for the safe circulation of customers and staff. Block off rows or sections of seating to space people at least 2 metres apart.
 - If a distance of 2 metres between tables or groups cannot be easily maintained, plexiglass or another impermeable barrier may be used. See [Guidance for Physical Barriers](#) for more information.
 - The co-mingling of groups should be avoided.
- Consider creating a one-way flow of traffic throughout the space to facilitate physical distancing.
 - Use multiple entrances and exits and discourage crowded waiting areas. Create separate entrance and exit points.
 - Allow enough space for staff movement.
- Venues are responsible for ensuring patrons lining up or congregating outside the venue maintain a physical distance of 2 metres.
- If possible, eliminate lines or queues and encourage people to stay at least 2 metres apart by providing [signs](#) or other visual cues such as tape or chalk marks if lines cannot be avoided.
- For washrooms, ensure patrons can practice physical distancing (2 metres) when in line and when using the public washroom.
 - Place floor markers 2 metres apart in busier washrooms.
 - Post maximum occupancy signs to ensure physical distancing can be maintained.
 - Tape off sinks and urinals that are not spaced 2 metres apart.
- Minimize the time staff spend within 2 metres of customers. Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 2 metres apart (e.g. at cash registers)
- Offer online attendance options in addition to in-person attendance to help reduce the number of attendees.
- Stagger and limit attendance times to minimize the number of guests at the venue.

Before Events

- Consider designating an individual to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All staff and attendees should know who this person or office is and how to contact them.
- Put communication systems in place to:
 - Notify staff, attendees, and the public of cancellations and restrictions in place to limit people's potential exposure to COVID-19 (e.g., proof of vaccination requirements).
 - Identify and address potential language, cultural, and disability barriers associated with communicating COVID-19 information to event staff and participants. Tailor information that

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is easily understood by various audiences and is available in alternative formats and languages.

- Include messages about behaviours that prevent the spread of COVID-19 when communicating with staff, vendors, and attendees (such as videos on the event website and through event social media accounts).
- To minimize the risk of **Legionnaires' disease** and other diseases associated with water, **take steps** to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., sink faucets, drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown. Drinking fountains should be cleaned, sanitized, and flushed.
- Ensure adequate supplies are available to minimize the sharing of high-touch materials where possible; otherwise, limit the use of supplies and equipment to one group of staff members or attendees at a time, and **clean and disinfect** them between use.
- Organizers should encourage staff and attendees to bring their own water, as feasible, to minimize touching and use of water fountains.

During Events

- Beginning September 22, 2021, proof of vaccination is required to enter indoor areas of meeting and event spaces such as banquet halls, conference and convention centres.
 - Certain exemptions for wedding services, funeral services and social gatherings associated with weddings or funerals may apply.
 - Visit **Proof of Vaccination Guidance for Businesses and Organizations under the Reopening Ontario Act** and see **Ontario Regulation 364/20** (schedule 1, section 2.1) for more information.
- Passive screening of patrons is required (e.g. by posting a **sign** at the entrance).
- Active screening of patrons is also required in accordance with **instructions issued by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health** (see PDF version for more information)
- Meeting and event organizers are **required** to collect contact information for attendees and store for 30 days.
 - The following information must be collected:
 - name and contact information of at least one person in each party
 - date and check-in/check-out times
 - location of seating
 - On request, this information must be disclosed to the Medical Officer of Health or a public health inspector for contact tracing.
- Make announcements over the PA system reminding staff/volunteers and patrons to practice respiratory etiquette, use face coverings, frequently wash/sanitize hands, maintain physical distancing etc. Prompt attendees with verbal reminders as needed to ensure compliance.
- Provide hand sanitizer (60-90% alcohol) throughout the event facility for attendee use.

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- Discourage exchanging handshakes, fist bumps, high-fives and other physical interactions at events. Discourage people from sharing items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect (i.e. pens for signing in, etc.).

Signage

- Post signs in conspicuous location (e.g. at entrances and in washrooms) that promote [staying home if ill](#), [physical distancing](#), [hand hygiene](#), and use of [face coverings](#).
- Consider directional arrows to indicate flow or setting up tape or ropes to organize potential line ups, respecting physical distancing.

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection. Ensure these cleaning routines are followed by all groups who use your facilities. This schedule should include:
 - [Cleaning and disinfecting](#) frequently touched surfaces within the venue at least twice daily or between uses as much as possible—for example, door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains, grab bars, hand railings, and cash registers.
 - Only using disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN).
 - Cleaning and disinfecting shared objects between uses—for example, payment terminals, tables, countertops, bars etc.
 - Consider closing areas such as drinking fountains that cannot be adequately cleaned and disinfected during an event. If fountains remain open, ensure that the mouthpieces are regularly cleaned and disinfected according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
 - If [transport vehicles](#) like buses are used by the event staff, drivers should practice all safety actions and protocols as indicated for other staff—for example, washing hands often, wearing cloth face coverings, and maintaining physical distance from bus riders.
- Ensure adequate supplies are available to support hand hygiene and environmental cleaning and disinfection. Supplies include soap, water, hand sanitizer containing at least 60 percent alcohol, paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes and no-touch trash cans.
- For washrooms, all high-touch areas/surfaces must be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily. This includes door handles, sink taps, toilet handles, stall doors/locks, etc.
 - The frequency of cleaning and disinfection may need to be more than twice daily, dependent on the amount of use. Please refer to the [Public Health Ontario Guidance Document on Environmental Cleaning](#) for further guidance.
 - See [Guidance for Public Washrooms](#) for more information.

Staff

- Screening employees for COVID-19 is currently mandatory. Please see the [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Workplaces](#) PDF version for more information. Ensure all staff complete screening before

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each shift and do not attend work while sick. **Before each shift, staff must be actively screened** to identify if they:

- Have **symptoms of COVID-19** such as fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.
- Have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 10 days (particularly if staff are not fully vaccinated).
- Have been instructed by public health to self-isolate due to travel or contact history.

Any staff member that does not pass this screening must be sent home and advised to contact their local public health unit.

- Staff should be reminded to stay home if they are sick. If an employee becomes ill with COVID-19 **symptoms** while at work, they must go home right away to **self-isolate** and should contact their health care provider or an **Assessment Centre** to get tested.
- Workers with a household member who has symptoms and awaiting COVID-19 test results should self-isolate and not attend work until results are known, unless they are fully vaccinated. If the household members' results are positive, the worker must self-isolate as directed by public health. For more information, visit the **Self-Isolating section of our website**.
- Work in a manner that facilitates physical distancing between staff members and patrons as best as possible.
 - Encourage staff to maintain physical distancing of 2 metres from other staff and customers.
 - Train staff on how to best serve food and beverages while maximizing physical distancing and avoiding unnecessary handling (e.g. avoid handling coffee cups when refilling, let customers fill/pack leftovers in containers).
 - Assign staff to specific tasks to minimize contact between them.
- Train staff on the proper use of gloves and face coverings. Gloves are not required, but if used, they must be changed between tasks and frequently, with handwashing between uses.
- Require frequent employee **handwashing** (e.g., before, during, and after taking tickets, after handling money, and after touching garbage). If soap and water are not readily available and hands are not visibly soiled, employees and attendees can use a **hand sanitizer** that contains 60% to 90% alcohol.
- Practice safe respiratory etiquette (i.e. cough or sneeze into a bent elbow, and immediately wash your hands with soap and water).
- Rotate or stagger shifts and arrival times to limit the number of employees in a venue at the same time.
- When workers remove their face covering temporarily to consume food or drink (i.e. on lunch break) they must be separated by others by at least 2 metres or by plexiglass or other impermeable barrier.

Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

- Increase the introduction and circulation of outdoor air by maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or by opening windows and doors, where possible. Avoid recirculating air.

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- Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms).
- Ensure the HVAC system(s) are adequately maintained.
- Where provided, use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system.
- Keep areas near HVAC inlets and outlets clear.
 - Seating and activities should be arranged away from high airflow areas (i.e. not in front of air vents).
- In rooms where indoor ceiling fans are used, ensure the blade moves in a clockwise direction to create an updraft.
- If portable fans are used, limit the blowing of air across people and surfaces by positioning them to provide an upward movement of air.

Entertainment at food or drink establishments

- It is recommended that the volume of music is limited to allow for normal conversation.
- In Step 3, dancing is permitted under the following conditions:
 - Indoors: capacity must be limited to the number that can maintain 2 metres physical distance and must not exceed 25% capacity, or 250 people, whichever is less.
 - Outdoors: capacity must be limited to 75% capacity, or 5,000 people, whichever is less
- If there is live music at the establishment, the performer(s) must be physically distanced from patrons, and barriers must be used.
- Karaoke is permitted with restrictions (outdoors only).
 - Every person who is performing karaoke should be:
 - separated by plexiglass or another impermeable barrier, or
 - remain at least three metres apart from all other patrons.
 - Karaoke equipment used by the performers should be cleaned and disinfected between use.

Food Service

- Meeting and event spaces must operate in accordance with all applicable legislative requirements (e.g. Food Premises Regulation). See [Guidance for Food Premises](#) for more information.
- Buffet service is permitted with the following recommendations:
 - For self-serve buffets:
 - Hand sanitizer should be made available at the start of the buffet as well as on the tables for people to use.
 - The food container and serving utensil should be completely changed every time more food is needed.
 - Avoid any self-serve food that requires patrons to grab the food directly with their hands.
 - Physical distancing must be maintained between people in line.
 - Face coverings are required when inside and are highly recommended outside.

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- For caterer served buffets:
 - Have hand sanitizer available at the beginning of the buffet table as well as on the tables for people to use.
 - Set up stations 2 metres apart to accommodate for physical distancing.
 - Avoid employees switching stations. If they need to switch, change the serving utensil used.
 - Face coverings must be worn by patrons and employees inside and are highly recommended when outside. Plexiglass may also be used between patrons and employees.
- Plates and utensils should be separated in a manner to allow for patrons to only touch their own plate/utensils when retrieving them. Consider having plates and utensils available at the tables or have stacks of plates and utensils separated by table number at the buffet.
- Create a procedure for collecting dirty dishes.
 - Ensure dishes are cleared promptly by staff and ensure attendees do not handle the dirty dishes of people outside their household
 - Staff should wash their hands after handling dirty dishes.
 - Consider using disposable food service items, including utensils and plates/cups, which can be immediately discarded.
- All attendees must be seated when eating or drinking.

Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick

Event planners should consider several strategies to implement when someone gets sick.

- Isolate Those Who are Sick
 - Make sure that the staff and attendees know that they should not come to the event if they are feeling unwell or have been directed to self-isolate.
 - Immediately separate staff and attendees with COVID-19 **symptoms** (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath) at the event. Individuals who are sick should go home immediately and seek medical treatment, if necessary.
 - Individuals who have had **close contact** with a person who has **symptoms** should be separated, sent home, and advised to contact Southwestern Public Health at 1-800-922-0096 ext. 9.
- Advise Staff of Isolation Requirements
 - Communicate to all staff members that they should not return to work until it is safe and to follow public health recommendations.
- Clean and Disinfect
 - Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until they have been thoroughly **cleaned and disinfected** (for outdoor areas, this includes surfaces or shared objects in the area, if applicable).
- Notify Southwestern Public Health

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- Notify SWPH if attendees become ill with COVID 19 symptoms or if there is a confirmed case of COVID 19 that attended your event.
- Provide SWPH with information as requested to assist with contact tracing.

Additional Resources

- [Gathering Limit Guidance](#)
- [Guidance for Food Premises](#)
- [Ontario Regulation 364/20 - Rules for Areas at Step 3](#)
- [Proof of Vaccination Guidance for Businesses and Organizations under the Reopening Ontario Act](#)