

# COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR INDOOR AND OUTDOOR EVENTS & GATHERINGS

This guidance document provides recommendations to help stop the spread of COVID-19 when organizing and attending an indoor or outdoor event or gathering. For additional information to assist with the identification of risks associated with an event or gathering please see the Public Health Agency of Canada's [Risk mitigation tool for gatherings and events operating during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

An event or gathering is any occasion that involves a number of people in proximity to each other for an extended period of time. This includes weddings, receptions, concerts, festivals, conferences, and cultural and sporting events. The level of risk depends on several factors, including the number of people, participants' health, the environment (e.g. indoors vs outdoors, ventilation), and activities being undertaken. Events or gatherings can contribute to the transmission of infections, including COVID-19. The potential risks for transmission include increased crowds, limited physical distancing, and restricted points of access/exit which force participants through high touch areas (e.g. doors, elevators).

Due to the recent increase in COVID-19 cases, the [Government of Ontario](#) has made changes to the gathering limits for events and social gatherings as of September 19, 2020.

	Monitored Gathering/Event*	Unmonitored Gathering Event
Setting	Businesses and facilities operated in accordance with <a href="#">Ontario Regulation 364/20</a> .  Example: Bars, restaurants, cinemas, convention centres, banquet halls, gyms, places of worship, recreational sporting or performing arts events. See figure 1.0 for additional information.	Place or location not operated in accordance with O. Reg. 364/20.  Example: parties, dinners, BBQ's, receptions (weddings) at private residences, backyards, parks and other recreation areas.
Indoor Capacity	50 people or less	10 people or less
Outdoor Capacity	100 people or less	25 people or less

\*A monitored gathering event is achieved by the organization/business responsible for/operating the facility/space whereby it is expected that the organization/business responsible for the gathering/event will take all reasonable steps to ensure compliance with public health restrictions and "monitor" the event

An indoor event or gathering **cannot** be combined with an outdoor event or gathering so as to increase the applicable limit on the number of people at the event or gathering.

People at their place of work, including performers and crews, **do not** count towards gathering limits but vendors are included in these numbers.

In all cases, individuals are required to continue to maintain physical distancing of at least two metres with people from outside their household or social circles

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZERS

- Consider canceling or postponing all non-essential public events (e.g. meetings, dinners, communal services), particularly if they include people who are more vulnerable to the virus, such as the elderly or those who are immune-compromised.
- Plan events outdoors whenever possible. Outdoor gatherings provide greater opportunity for physical distancing and continue to provide the safest means of socializing.

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- Reduce the number of attendees or change the venue to prevent crowding.
- Singers and players of brass or wind instruments must be separated from any spectators by an impermeable barrier (e.g. plexiglass) in both indoor and outdoor venues.
- Plan to accommodate physical distancing by maintaining a minimum of 2 metres (6 feet) distance between participants from different social circles (e.g. taping off chairs, staggering tables).
- Face coverings are mandatory in all indoor public spaces and recommended outdoors when physical distancing is a challenge.
- Advise employees, volunteers and attendees not to attend if experiencing [symptoms](#) (i.e. fever, cough, difficulty breathing, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, sore throat, runny nose) or have come into contact with someone who has shown symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19.
- Stagger arrivals and departures to avoid congregation of crowds on the initiation and conclusion of the event.
- Provide pre-packaged refreshments.
- Post [handwashing](#) and [hand sanitizing](#) posters in high traffic area and encourage all attendees to wash their hands with soap and water or sanitize their hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol-based) as they arrive.
- Increase access to handwashing and hand sanitizing stations.
- Promote personal protective practices (e.g. face coverings, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, staying home if ill).
- Follow [Public Health Guidance for Use of Public Washrooms](#) for important information about requirements for safety and cleaning precautions.
- Offer virtual or live-streamed activities.
- Eliminate high risk activities such as those that may result in physical contact between attendees outside of a social circle.
- Close or restrict access to non-essential common areas (e.g. photo booth with props, merchandise kiosks, concession stands, communal lounges).
- Provide sufficient numbers of garbage receptacles for attendees to dispose of used sanitizing wipes, masks, gloves, and other waste properly.
- Dancing is not permitted. Discourage activities that can contribute to the spread of COVID-19 (e.g. singing, cheering, dancing, playing wind instruments, hugging), and encourage alternative practices, where applicable (e.g. humming, clapping, noisemakers, waving).
- If meal service is provided follow these [best practices for food safety](#) and these [guidelines for food service](#).
- A business or place where concerts, artistic events, theatrical performances or other performances are rehearsed or performed require singers and players of brass instruments must be separated from any spectators by Plexiglas or some other impermeable barrier.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ATTENDEES

- Do not attend events when you are sick. Stay home, and seek medical care if needed.
- At the event, maintain a 2 metre (6 feet) distance from others not in your social circle or immediate household.
- Ensure you wash your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Wear a mandatory face covering in all indoor public spaces and also wear a face covering outdoors when physical distancing is a challenge.

## OUTDOOR ORGANIZED PUBLIC EVENTS AND SOCIAL GATHERINGS

- If using a tent or covering with three or more sides/walls; refer to indoor requirements.
- Be aware of the potential for inclement weather and develop a plan to accommodate attendees if severe weather suddenly arises (e.g. plan for a safe indoor space while ensuring physical distancing and provide face coverings for all attendees, or cancelling the gathering/event if inclement weather is predicted or if the attendees cannot be safely moved indoors). If an event is moved indoors, it

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would be required to reduce capacity to align with indoor gathering requirements (either 10 persons or 50 depending on if the event is monitored)

## INDOOR ORGANIZED PUBLIC EVENTS AND SOCIAL GATHERINGS

- The only time there is an exception to this indoor capacity limit is for the purposes of a wedding, a funeral or a religious service, rite or ceremony, if the gathering is held in a building or structure other than a private dwelling. For these specific events, the following applies in accordance with [O. Reg 364/20](#):
  - The number of persons occupying any room in the building or structure while attending the gathering must not exceed 30 per cent of the capacity of the particular room.
  - All persons attending the gathering must comply with public health guidance on physical distancing.
  - Once the service is over, the 50 person maximum will then apply to any dinner or reception that follows.
- Face coverings are required by attendees and staff for all public indoor organized events and social gatherings.
  - Face coverings may be removed once seated at a table for eating and drinking.
  - Officiant can choose not to wear a face covering while speaking, and 4 metre separation between other people attending is adhered to.

## PUBLIC EVENTS AND SOCIAL GATHERINGS THAT SERVE FOOD

All special events that serve food require approval from the SMDHU. For more information regarding special events and applicable application forms please visit <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/FoodSafety/SpecialEvents>

**Please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit if you have any questions at 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

Figure 1.0: Business/Facility category and indoor/outdoor capacity limits

Business/Facility	Indoor Capacity	Outdoor Capacity	Exemptions
Meeting or Event Space that is regulated by Ontario Regulation 364/20	50 people	100 people	Does not apply if the event space is used for a wedding, funeral or religious service, rite or ceremony.  <b>If operates in compliance with the OCMOH approved plan:</b> The number of people in the meeting rooms cannot exceed <b>50 per room</b> ;
Food premises	Limited to space sufficient to ensure physical distancing	Limited to space sufficient to ensure physical distancing	If facility is used for special event or gathering, the capacity limits apply at 50 people indoor or 100 people outdoor
Places of Worship: Wedding, Funeral,	30% of room capacity or less	100 people	Note that once the ceremony

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Religious Service, Rite, or Ceremony			is complete, celebrations following are subject to indoor and outdoor capacity limits
Wedding, Funeral, Religious Service, Rite or Ceremony at a private residence	10 people or less for the service, rite or ceremony; and not to exceed 10 people for related social gathering	100 people or less for the service, rite or ceremony; and not to exceed 25 people for related social gathering	<b>Capacity exemptions only apply to the service, rite or ceremony and not to related social gathering</b>
Cinemas	50 people	100 people	Capacity limits do not apply to drive-in cinemas.  If facility is used for special event or gathering, the capacity limits apply at 50 people indoor or 100 people outdoor.  <b>If operates in compliance with the OCMOH approved plan:</b> The number of people in each viewing room cannot exceed 50 <b>per room</b> ;
Museums, galleries, zoos, botanical gardens etc.	Limited to space sufficient to ensure physical distancing	Limited to space sufficient to ensure physical distancing	If facility is used for special event or gathering, the capacity limits apply at 50 people indoor or 100 people outdoor
Place of business for performing Arts	50 spectators	100 spectators	Capacity limits do not apply to drive-in or drive-through concerts, artistic events, theatrical performances and other performances.

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## REFERENCES

- Public Health Agency of Canada. (2020). *Risk mitigation tool for gatherings and events operating during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/mass-gatherings-risk-assesment.html#a2>
- Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. (2020). *Public Health Guidance for Use of Public Washrooms*. Retrieved from: [http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/public-washrooms-guidance-document\\_aoda-web.pdf?sfvrsn=0](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/public-washrooms-guidance-document_aoda-web.pdf?sfvrsn=0)