

# COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR ORGANIZED PUBLIC EVENTS AND GATHERINGS - STEP 3

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The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is currently at Step 3 of the province's [Roadmap to Reopen](#). This document provides guidance to help stop the spread of COVID-19 when organizing and/or attending an indoor or outdoor organized public event or gathering at Step 3 of the province's [Roadmap to Reopen](#) by following [Ontario Regulation 364/20: Rules for Areas in Step 3 and at the Roadmap Exit Step](#) (O. Reg. 364/20) under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#).

The Ontario government requires **patrons** 12 years and 12 weeks of age or older to be [fully vaccinated against COVID-19](#) and provide proof of vaccination and proof of identify with an original identification document (photocopies of ID and digital versions (stored in phone) are generally not acceptable, but allowed for youth aged 12-17 years) to access certain businesses and organizations, with limited exemptions. More information can be found in [O. Reg. 364/20](#), in the province's [proof of vaccination guidance](#), on SMDHU's [website](#), and in the proof of vaccination section below.

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. Events or gatherings can contribute to the transmission of infections, including COVID-19. The province's [Roadmap to Reopen](#) has the following gathering limits for events and gatherings at Step 3.

## CAPACITY LIMITS

**Note:** If the event or social gathering is held at a venue that is a place of business permitted to operate under the regulation, different capacity limits and rules regarding additional protective measures (e.g., number of patrons permitted to sit at a table, hours of operations) may apply as per [O. Reg. 364/20](#) Schedule 1 section 3.(1) and Schedule 3.

	Social Gathering (e.g., party, reception)	Organized Event (e.g., parades, festivals)
Indoor	Up to 10 people.	Up to 25 people.
Outdoor	Up to 25 people.	No capacity limits. Masking is a requirement when 2 metres (6 feet) physical distance cannot be maintained from those outside one's household.

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

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZERS

### GENERAL GUIDELINES

- If an outdoor area is covered by a roof, canopy, tent, awning, or other element, at least two full sides of the entire outdoor area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.
- If an outdoor area at the business or place is equipped with a retractable roof and the roof is retracted, at least one full side of the outdoor area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.
- 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 temporary safe indoor space while ensuring physical distancing and provide masks/face coverings for all attendees or cancelling the gathering/event if inclement weather is predicted or if the attendees cannot be safely moved indoors temporarily).
- Promote personal protective practices (e.g., face coverings, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, staying home if ill) by posting [signs](#).

### SAFETY PLAN

- A [safety plan](#) must be written and available on request. A copy of the safety plan must be posted in a conspicuous location where it can be viewed by staff and patrons.
- The safety plan shall describe the implementation of public health measures in the location, including but not limited to, screening, proof of vaccination verification process (where applicable), physical distancing, masks/face coverings, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects, the wearing of personal protective equipment, and preventing and controlling crowds.
- Additional guidance on how to develop a safety plan can be found [here](#).

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## SCREENING

- All staff must be [actively screened](#) before attending work.
- Active screening of patrons is **required** for some venues (e.g., food establishments, meeting/event spaces) as per [O. Reg. 364/20](#). More information can be found in SMDHU's guidance for [workplace safety plan, screening and proof of vaccination](#).
- Please see the provinces [website](#) for direction on screening employees/workers and patrons.
- Advise attendees to complete a COVID-19 [self-assessment](#) before coming to the event and follow the direction provided.
- Post self-screening [signs](#) at all entrances to the business in a location visible to the public that inform individuals on how to screen themselves for COVID-19 before entering.

## PROOF OF VACCINATION

- Operators of indoor meeting and event spaces, food establishments, concert venues, and theatres and cinemas are required to check and verify proof of vaccination (via [enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code](#)) and proof of identity with an original identification document (photocopies of ID and digital versions (stored in phone) are generally not acceptable, but allowed for youth aged 12-17 years) of patrons 12 years and 12 weeks of age and older at the point of entry, with limited exemptions.
- Individuals are **required** to use a digital or printed paper copy of the [enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code](#) (vaccine receipts are no longer accepted), with limited exemptions for members of nine First Nations communities and visitors from outside of Canada. See the province's [proof of vaccination guidance](#) for more information.
- Operators are required to verify proof of vaccination using the [Verify Ontario app](#) (visual verification is no longer accepted) in settings where proof of vaccination is in effect.
- Operators are also advised not to accept physician notes as medical exemptions. Those with eligible medical exemption will have access to a certificate with QR code that can be verified using the [Verify Ontario app](#).
- Certain businesses/facilities, specified in [O. Reg. 364/20](#) may elect to opt-in (on a daily basis) to require proof of vaccination for all patrons 12 years and 12 weeks of age or older, at the point of entry, with limited exceptions. More information can be found in the opt-in requirements and details section below, [O. Reg. 364/20](#) and in the province's [proof of vaccination guidance](#), and on SMDHU's [website](#).

## Opt-in requirements and details

- Permitted businesses identified in [O. Reg. 364/20](#), including but not limited to those listed below, may elect to opt-in to proof of vaccination requirements:
  - Museums, galleries, aquariums, historic sites, and similar attractions, in respect of indoor areas.
  - Fairs, rural exhibitions, festivals, and similar events, in respect of indoor areas.
  - Marinas, boating clubs and other organizations that maintain docking facilities for members or patrons, in respect of indoor areas.
- **Capacity limits pursuant to, [O. Reg. 364/20](#) must be adhered to regardless of whether the business/facility elects to opt-in to require proof of vaccination.**
- During each day when the election is in effect, the person responsible for the location:
  - Must check and verify proof of vaccination and proof of identity.
  - Is required to post [signs](#) at all entrances to the premise in a conspicuous location visible to the public that informs patrons that proof of vaccination is required.
  - Must ensure capacity limits that the business or organization is permitted to operate under as per [O. Reg. 364/20](#) are followed.
- More information can be found in the opt-in requirements and details section below, [O. Reg. 364/20](#) and in the province's [proof of vaccination guidance](#) and on SMDHU's [website](#).

## PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- Ensure a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) is maintained between attendees from different households. [Post signage](#) to remind attendees of this.
- Stagger arrivals and departures to avoid congregation of crowds on the initiation and conclusion of the event.

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- Eliminate high-risk activities such as those that may result in physical contact between attendees outside of their household members.
- Persons waiting in line or congregating outside must also maintain at least 2 metres (6 feet) distance from every other person.

## USE OF MASKS, FACE COVERINGS AND EYE PROTECTION

- Masks and [face coverings](#) are mandatory at all outdoor organized events when physical distancing of 2 metres (6 feet) is not possible from people outside your households.
- Masks and [face coverings](#) are mandatory in all indoor public spaces.
- It is recommended that all individuals wear a [well-fitted](#) high quality 3-layered non-medical mask, medical mask or respirator (i.e., N95s, KN95).
- Staff are required to wear a medical mask and approved eye protection when within 2 metres (6 feet) of someone who is not wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that covers that person's mouth, nose, and chin.
- More information on masks and face coverings can be found [here](#).

## DANCING, SINGERS AND MUSICAL PERFORMERS

- Singing and dancing is not permitted in select settings except for workers or performers as per [O. Reg. 364/20](#).
- If live entertainment is performed for spectators, the performers must maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from any spectators or be separated from any spectators by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.

## HAND HYGIENE

- Make alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content available at the entrances and exits.
- Encourage all attendees to [wash their hands](#) with soap and water or [sanitize their hands](#) with alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content as they arrive and frequently during the event.
- Ensure hands are washed before and after handling food, after handling dirty utensils, using the bathroom, handling cash, etc. Gloves are to be replaced/changed at this time as well. Glove use does not replace handwashing.
- Post handwashing and hand sanitizing posters in areas that can be clearly seen. Sample signage can be found [here](#).
- Where possible, open windows and keep doors open to increase air flow.

## CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- In addition to routine cleaning and disinfection, surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition, as well as when visibly dirty.
  - Examples of frequently touched surfaces include but are not limited to: hand contact areas, door handles, switches, tabletops, chairs, sneeze guards, restrooms, taps, utensils and dispensers, credit card machines and baby change tables.
- Use only disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) given and [approved by Health Canada](#). Ensure products are not expired and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Dining tables are to be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition and between sittings.
- More guidance on cleaning and disinfection is provided by [Health Canada](#) and [Public Health Ontario](#).
- While the risk of COVID-19 transmission through touching surfaces is low, it does occur. It is important to continue to follow infection control measures to reduce the various ways in which COVID-19 is spread. This includes appropriate cleaning and disinfection as well as proper hand hygiene, masking, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, and immunization.

## SIGNAGE

Post signs promoting wearing masks/face coverings, handwashing, capacity limits, proof of vaccination and physical distancing and make them visible to staff and patrons. Sample signage can be found [here](#).

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## 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>. If meal service is provided follow these [best practices for food safety](#) and these guidelines for food service.

## OTHER GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

It is recommended that operators also refer to SMDHU's guidance for [Public Washrooms](#).

## SUPPORTING EACH OTHER AND OUR COMMUNITY

We understand that this is a challenging time, but public health measures like this are needed to limit the spread of COVID-19. We thank you for the service that you provide to the community.

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

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