



COVID-19 Operational Guidance for Indoor & Outdoor Special Events

This guidance document provides you with support on how to implement regulations and other requirements that have been issued by the Province of Ontario, the City of Ottawa, and public health officials. You will also find additional *recommendations* on how to be [Social Wise](#) in the workplace. Please consult the links to posters and resources to further support your special event.

Please note: this is not a regulatory document and should not be treated as such. This guidance document does not replace applicable legal requirements, nor does it purport to be or to provide an interpretation of the law. You should always refer to [the provincial public health measures and restrictions that apply to your business or organization](#), any other applicable Provincial requirements, to [City of Ottawa rules](#), [Class Orders of the Medical Officer of Health of the City of Ottawa](#) and [mandatory instructions](#) issued by the Medical Officer of Health.

You may encounter situations where provincial rules and local public health rules cover the same types of public health measures. When this is the case, businesses/organizations will need to ensure compliance with the measure that is most restrictive to reduce risks and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Event 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 to set up plans 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, and patrons).

Event organizers should also consult the [Provincial Regulations](#) to see if they are required to comply with the proof of vaccination regulation for their setting. In addition to this regulation that applies to patrons, OPH strongly recommends that event organizers and employers develop and implement workplace vaccination policies for their employees/workforce, and that all those eligible receive a complete series of a COVID-19 vaccine. Please consult this resource to learn how to develop a [workplace vaccination policy](#).

All special events need to comply with the [provincial public health measures and restrictions](#), the [City of Ottawa rules](#), the [Class Orders of the Medical Officer of Health of the City of Ottawa](#) and the [mandatory instructions](#) issued by the Medical Officer of Health. For outdoor events of 500 people or more at one time, you are required to submit a formal application to [Event Central](#) at EventCentral@ottawa.ca. You do not need to submit a formal application to Event Central for events of less than 500 people, however you are welcome to connect with Event Central who can assist you in answering specific questions. Event Central will consult with Ottawa Public Health when required to ensure that your event meets the requirements.

The COVID-19 situation continues to evolve quickly. As such, Ottawa Public Health's (OPH) guidance is subject to change as new information is received. Please visit OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus regularly for up-to-date information. This guidance document and other supporting resources are available on OPH's [Be Social Wise – Guidance for Social Gatherings During COVID-19 web page](#).

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<p>What is permitted?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please refer to the most recent Ontario Regulations for current rules, regulations, and guidance. Permissions will vary depending on where the event or gathering will take place. • You are responsible to familiarize yourself with any additional requirements specific to your event activities, venue(s), or business sector regulations. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>Safety Plans</p>	<p>Events are required to have a safety plan that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes measures/procedures that have been or will be implemented in the business, place, facility, or establishment to reduce spread of COVID-19. • Includes measures for screening, physical distancing, masks, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects, wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) and crowd control along with emergency protocols. • Is in writing and made available to any person for review upon request. • Is posted in a visible place and is easily brought to the attention of those working at, or attending, the location. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>Emergency Preparedness Plans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify possible related exposure and health risks to your employees, volunteers, or guests and how to reduce these risks. • Ensure that hazard preparedness is encompassed in your event plans. • Prepare for possible increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in employees and their family members and/or dismissals of early childhood programs and schools. • Explore the flexibility of policies and practices, such as virtual events, flexible hours, staggering start times, • Establish a process for ongoing communication with employees and business partners. • Develop a contingency and operation continuity plan and ensure events are flexible to scale up or down based on current context. <p>Back to top</p>

Screening	<p>Perform staff screening before the start of each shift</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use OPH’s online screening tool or refer to the printable screening tool to screen staff before each shift. • Prevent staff from working if they show any signs and/or symptoms of COVID-19 before, or during their shift, and answer yes to any of the screening questions. • If staff experience symptoms of COVID-19 during their shift, they should return home, self-isolate and visit OttawaPublicHealth.ca/COVIDCentre or call Ottawa Public Health at 613-580-6744 for information about getting tested. • Employers must ensure that their employees are aware of the benefits/pay available to them, should they need to self-isolate due to COVID-19. • Consider updating your business policies for managing staff member absences and for backfilling shifts in case of absence. <p>Customer/attendee screening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform a passive screening of customers/attendees prior to entering the event site by using the Self Screening Poster at the door or encouraging customers to use the Customer QR Scan Screening tool. • Advise that customers/attendees are not to enter if they have COVID-19 symptoms, or if they answer yes to any of the screening questions. <p>Back to top</p>
Verify vaccine passport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult O. Reg. 364/20 to see if your event will need to confirm the vaccination status of patrons before permitting entry. • Assign a staff member to screen patrons at the door in order to confirm their vaccination status. • The vaccination screening steps are outlined in the Proof of Vaccination Guidance for Businesses and Organizations under the Reopening Ontario Act. • For clarification on the new regulations, please consult the Q&A document released by the province.

<p>Attendance Log and Reporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an attendance log for employees, including start and end times of their shifts. • Maintain an attendance log for customers/clients if prescribed in the regulation. • Patron information is confidential and must be retained by the business for at least 30 days. The information may only be released to a Medical Officer of Health or a Public Health Inspector by request under the Health Protection and Promotion Act for a purpose specified in Section 2 of that Act, or as otherwise required by law. • If two (2) or more people in your workplace test positive for COVID-19 (e.g. two or more cases) within 14 days, you must immediately notify Ottawa Public Health by using the Workplace COVID-19 Case Reporting Tool or by calling 613-580-2424 ext. 26325 • Please note that reporting cases to OPH is not a punitive measure, it will help OPH to control COVID-19 cases in the workplace and work with the business to prevent closures. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>Masks and Face Coverings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow provincial masking regulations requiring that masks be worn indoors and in some outdoor situations. • Masks are required in public indoor spaces and whenever physical distancing is a challenge. This includes workplaces that are not open to the public. You are required to post signage to remind customers to wear a mask indoors. • It is strongly encouraged to wear a mask outdoors where physical distancing may be challenging or impossible. You are encouraged to post signage that recommends masks outdoors. • The mask should cover the mouth, nose and chin and have 3 layers. • It is the responsibility of the business or workplace to ensure that anyone not wearing a mask is given a verbal reminder to do so. • There are exemptions, including (but not limited to) children under 2 years of age and individuals with medical conditions. • Plastic face shields alone are NOT equivalent to wearing a mask. <p>Back to top</p>

<p>Physical Distancing and Line Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure physical distancing of at least 2 metres between staff and customers. • Modify the layout and use signage to encourage one-way traffic flow and to ensure enough space is provided for staff and customers to maintain physical distancing. • Ensure enough space for people in high traffic areas and places where people may gather. • Identify areas where crowding and bottlenecks are common, such as lobbies, washrooms, and use staff or barriers to redirect people who may gather in these areas. • Monitor and manage lines within and outside the facility. • Post physical distancing signage at all entrances, service desks or other high visibility locations. • Place visual/textural markers spaced 2.6 metres apart (e.g., tape on the floor, pylons, signs) to encourage physical distancing and to guide customers. • Physical distancing must be maintained for people lined up outside of the establishment. • Encourage the use of masks/face coverings for customers waiting/lining-up outside (masks are mandatory indoors). • Assign staff to monitor lines and to make public announcements reminding customers to keep at least 2 metres apart. • Consider pre-order/pick-up/delivery models to limit interactions, if possible or required for your event. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>Reduce contacts and exposure</p>	<p>When participating in activities, avoid the three C's. The more C's the higher the risk. The longer the length of time, the greater exposure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confined or Closed spaces – especially those with poor ventilation. Outdoors is better than indoors. • Crowds – the more people, the higher the risk, especially if the crowd is unmasked, talking, singing, shouting, or breathing hard (exercising). • Close Contact – staying further apart is safer than being close together. <p>Back to top</p>

Capacity and Gathering Limits

- Capacity limits refer to the maximum number of people allowed in the place while allowing for physical distancing of at least 2 metres to be maintained. Gathering limits are provincially mandated for certain types of gatherings including an organized public event, social gathering, or a wedding, a funeral or a religious service, rite, or ceremony. You must always comply with capacity limits as well as gathering limits. Where one measure exceeds the other, you must comply with the more conservative of the two measures.
- The owner and/or operator is responsible for determining the specific limit for their venue based on provincial regulations governing capacity limits, its layout, equipment, structure, traffic flow, the activities hosted, and requirements to maintain physical distance. Organizers must review the permitted capacity limited in [O. Reg 364/20](#) and should consult the Province's [Reopening Ontario](#) webpage for more details.
- For information on capacity and gathering limits for your setting, please refer to the [COVID-19 public health measures and advice](#) webpage.

Tips to monitor capacity and gathering limits

- Limit the number of people based on calculations above and do not exceed the gathering limits.
- Designate and manage entry and exit points to control the number of people entering the facility and each space within. If the maximum number of people is reached, allow one person in for every person that leaves.
- Stagger arrivals and departures, where possible, to reduce congestion at points of entrance and exit and in common areas.
- Review and coordinate the use of all amenities to ensure physical distancing can be maintained in common areas if the facility is a community center, multi-purpose facility, or other complex with multiple uses.

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Personal Protective Equipment

- Workers must wear [appropriate personal protective equipment](#) (PPE) that protects their eyes, nose and mouth, if in the course of providing services they are:
 - required to come within 2 metres of another person who is not wearing a mask or face covering when in an indoor area and,
 - not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier
- Some workplaces or sectors may require additional health and safety measures. Please refer to the [COVID-19 public health measures and advice](#) to review the guidance specific to your workplace, or sector.
- The employer/event organizer must determine what PPE is required and ensure that it is worn by workers.
- Educate staff on the [proper use and disposal of masks](#) and PPE.
- Gloves are not a substitute for proper hand hygiene, as they do not guarantee that foods or surfaces are not contaminated. Gloves should always be worn when a staff member or volunteer handling food has a break in their skin or has a bandage that is covering a wound. In the event you should need to or choose to wear gloves:
 - Wash your hands properly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before you put on gloves.
 - Do not touch your face or mask with your gloves on.
 - Do not touch personal items, such as a cell phone, while wearing gloves.
 - Throw the gloves out in a closed garbage bin right away after use and wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - Do not re-use gloves that are made for one use
- Find information for [protective eyewear](#), for [using face masks in the workplace](#), and for [face covering and face masks](#).

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Hand hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage all individuals to perform hand hygiene when entering and leaving the premises. • Develop a plan to facilitate and ensure hand hygiene on site for staff, volunteers, vendors, and attendees. • Provide stations for hand hygiene at entrances and exits, within the site, at comfort stations, back of house, etc. • Keep accessibility in mind for station locations and set-up. • When sinks are not available (e.g. during an outdoor event), hands-free alcohol-based hand sanitizer stations are recommended. • Ensure adequate supply of liquid soap, hand sanitizer and paper towels. Monitor availability and ensure items are frequently refilled. • Train employees on proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, including handwashing, use of hand sanitizer, covering coughs/sneezes, avoid touching face, etc. • Encourage frequent and proper handwashing. • Display posters at visible locations including sinks and hand hygiene stations. <p>Back to top</p>
Reduce Touch Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan for reducing the number of touch points that occur in scenarios such as entrance ticket scanning, bag checks, door handles, token exchanges, handling of merchandise, etc. • If possible, encourage patrons to pay by debit or credit (tap if possible) and have staff wipe machines and use hand sanitizer immediately before and after each interaction. • Consider the types of interactions during the event where transactions occur, and develop strategies to reduce risks at ticket booths, food, beverage, and merchandise vendors, etc. <p>Back to top</p>
Transactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your event includes transactions, consider installing impermeable barriers at the checkout to have an additional layer of protection in addition to physical distancing, masking and other public health measures. • If possible, encourage patrons to pay by debit or credit (tap if possible). • Staff should wipe the machine and use sanitizer immediately after each interaction. • Staff may choose to wear gloves. If they do so, they should practice proper glove use. • All cashiers should have hand sanitizer at their cash. <p>Back to top</p>

<p>Adapting Equipment and Logistics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install automatic, no-touch devices such as doors, faucets, and lights. • Ask customers to call ahead to schedule a pick-up time to minimize line ups and crowds. • Use chalkboard, electronic, web-based, disposable, or other non-contact or single-use menu formats, as relevant. • Supply hand sanitizer at all entrances, exits and other high traffic areas. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>Cleaning and Disinfection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonly used cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19. The following cleaning and disinfection recommendations aim to reduce the risks associated with surface transmission. Remember to clean surfaces first, then disinfect them. • Frequently touched surfaces are most likely to be contaminated. Clean and disinfect these surfaces often. Refer to OPH’s cleaning and disinfection checklist. • Refer to Health Canada’s list of hard surface disinfectants for use against COVID-19. • Follow manufacturer’s instructions on any products being used: • Properly prepare solutions. • Allow adequate contact time for disinfectant to kill germs (see product label). • Wear gloves when handling cleaning products, including wipes. • Wear any other personal protective equipment recommended by the manufacturer. • Do not mix different cleaning or disinfecting products. • In addition to routine cleaning, surfaces that have frequent contact with hands should be cleaned and disinfected twice per day and when visibly dirty. <p>Back to top</p>

<p>Staff Training and Education</p>	<p>It is essential that all staff members receive training and education on all modified and new policies, procedures, and practices prior to working directly with patrons and colleagues. Ottawa Public Health recommends that employers pay close attention to ensuring that all staff working have current training on and are familiar with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace vaccination policies • Active and passive screening for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 • Actions to take if they experience symptoms of illness • Proper use of approved cleaning and disinfecting products • Cleaning protocols to sanitize reusable items between uses • Procedures for environmental cleaning • How to properly wear and use masks and face coverings • How to properly use gloves, face shields and other personal protective equipment if required by the employer • Maintaining physical distance of at least 2 meters when possible. <p>Information and resources are available through Ottawa Public Health to help support staff learning and training.</p> <p>Back to top</p>
<p>Communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • If applicable, communicate any provincial or setting-specific vaccination requirements or policies that may be required to access the event/venue. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>Encourage Vaccination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage guests and staff who are eligible to get vaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine. Read and share information about the vaccine and where to get vaccinated. • Post signs and share COVID-19 vaccine resources, available in multiple languages. • OPH strongly recommends that employers develop & implement workplace vaccination policies for their employees/workforce, & that all those eligible receive a complete series of a COVID-19 vaccine. Learn how to develop a workplace vaccination policy. <p>Back to top</p>

<p>Food, Drink, Dancing & Performing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow regulations for all related venues, services and performances associated with your event. • Refer to the most recent Ontario Regulation for current rules, regulations, and guidance. • 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. • For 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. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>Conditions for Drive-in and Drive through cinemas and events</p>	<p>Drive-in cinemas and businesses or places that provide drive-in or drive through concerts, artistic events, theatrical performances, or other performances may proceed if they comply with the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The driver of a motor vehicle at the drive-in cinema or the drive-in or drive-through concert, event or performance must ensure that it is positioned at least two metres away from other motor vehicles. • Ensure that you comply with all other applicable rules under the regulations including venue/event specific rules under the Ontario Regulations. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>Additional Considerations for Drive-in and Drive through cinemas and events</p>	<p>Organizers of drive-in cinemas and drive-in and drive-through events should also consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-sale of tickets for specific dates/times will minimize traffic congestion and potential driver frustration. • Hosting an event in the evening minimizes the potential health risks associated with remaining in a vehicle during the daytime heat and the potential for idling. • Be mindful of the duration of the event and keep it shorter to avoid having attendees leave their vehicle to stretch or use the washroom. • Parking stalls should be well marked and large enough to accommodate oversized vehicles. • Signage should be well placed and an appropriate font size to be visible from within a vehicle. • Alcoholic beverages are prohibited per Section 32 of the Liquor License Act. • Measures for maintaining physical distancing in washroom queues as well as disinfecting and cleaning. • You may require an event permit from Event Central. Please see this webpage to see if you need to apply for one. <p>Back to top</p>

<p>Heating and ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the HVAC system(s) are properly maintained. • Increase outdoor air-exchange by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or ○ Opening windows and doors if it is safe to do so. ○ Using the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system. • 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, and for proper maintenance. • For more information, review the COVID-19: Transmission, Aerosols and Ventilation fact sheet. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>Party Safer</p>	<p>Event organizers are encouraged to include <i>Party Safer</i> planning and messaging surrounding the use of substances and violence prevention as they plan and host their event. Information on Party Safer tips and strategies are available through Ottawa Public Health (OPH) websites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TheLinkOttawa.ca • StopOverdoseOttawa.ca <p>Examples of <i>Party Safer</i> planning include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to the event, organizers can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promote these websites as well as <i>Party Safer</i> messaging through their social media channels. ○ Reach out to OPH to discuss availability of training (i.e. how to ID an OD, naloxone, violence prevention and mental health) for themselves, their staff, and volunteers. Ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of the opportunity for them to attend these free virtual trainings sessions. ○ Post visuals (i.e. Stop Overdose Ottawa posters) in high traffic areas at your event. Please contact OPH for additional information on these posters. • Guests are encouraged to visit the websites, promote the <i>Party Safer</i> messages and practice <i>Party Safer</i> tips.

Additional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety Plan Overview Checklist for Special Events • Workplace Safety and Prevention Services – Guidance on Health for Outdoor Recreation and Drive-in/Drive-Thru Entertainment • Live Performance Health and Safety • Reducing COVID-19 risk in community settings: a tool for operators • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Considerations for Events and Gatherings • Event Safety Alliance – Reopening Guide • Province of Ontario - Resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace <p>Back to top</p>
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This guidance is subject to change as new information is received. Event organizers and venue operators should stay up to date with the Province’s current regulations and [Emergency Orders](#), and plan to regularly check for updates and new guidance from the Province, the City of Ottawa, and OPH as part of their event planning.

It is important to recognize that the COVID-19 situation is evolving very quickly. Please visit www.OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus for up-to-date information.

This document does not replace the need for applicable [City of Ottawa permits and protocols](#). 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.

Last updated: September 15, 2021