

Special Events and Gatherings

Gatherings like special events can contribute to the spread of respiratory pathogens, such as COVID-19.

It is important to note that the health unit does not **“APPROVE”** these events. Our role is to work with event operators, before and during, to ensure that proper public health measures are being followed. We review the details of event plans to determine if proper public health measures are being implemented and how event operators will ensure they are followed.

The following guidance is to support event organizers and operators with their planning and overall operation of an event during the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides recommendations to reduce the risks of COVID-19 – it is not legal advice.

Indoor and outdoor events or gatherings covered in the guidance include:

- Concert venues, theatres and cinemas
- Meeting or event spaces
- Other events, such as weddings and funerals

Event requirements

Event coordinators and operating venues must review and stay up to date with:

- [Provincial Emergency Orders](#)
- [Requirements](#) issued by Huron Perth Public Health or local municipalities to ensure your plan and venue complies with regulations.

Event Application

Individuals or groups planning to organize or operate any event where the **general public is invited** and food or beverages are offered for consumption onsite and/or personal services are offered **must notify** Huron Perth Public Health.

Please fill out the following forms within 8 weeks of the event for review by a public health inspector.

- Special Event Organizer [Form](#)
- Food Vendor [Form](#)

As part of the application process please provide a site plan of the venue and a detailed plan on **HOW** you will be meeting the minimum requirements for the event. Use the information below to guide you.

If your event or gathering does not have food or PSS vendors in attendance, it is strongly recommended that this guidance is followed,

This application doesn't replace the need for applicable municipal permits. You must contact your local municipality for more information.

Minimum Event Requirements

The province has set restrictions and public gathering limits for higher risk settings and activities where people gather. These limits apply to indoor and outdoor events and include staying at least two metres away from people who are from outside your household. Information on gathering limits [can be found on our website](#).

Indoor and outdoor events or gatherings cannot be combined to increase the applicable limit on the number of people attending the event or gathering.

Protective Measures to Keep Everyone Safe

- Stay home when you are sick or have mild COVID-19 symptoms
- Clean your hands often for 20 seconds, and avoid touching your face with unwashed hands
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or tissue
- Keep a two metre distance from others
- When you cannot maintain a two metre distance indoors or outdoors, wear a face covering/mask.
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces as least twice daily or more when visibly soiled

COVID-19 Screening for Patrons

- Consider pre-event / gathering communications to attendees to share information on protocols and expected behaviour. Reinforce the message that people must not attend if they're ill.
- Use posters to encourage passive screening before entering the venue. Direct anyone who answers YES to any of the screening questions to go home immediately, self-isolate, and call their health care provider or Huron Perth Public Health at 1-888-221-2133 and a public health professional will provide further direction.

Mask and Face Coverings

- All staff, patrons and performers must wear a face covering indoors, as per current regulatory guidance under the Reopening Ontario Act. Some exemptions apply, including children under the age of five, and people with medical conditions that make wearing a face covering difficult.
- Face coverings or masks are strongly recommended outdoors and are required when physical distancing cannot be maintained
- Workers must wear a surgical mask and appropriate eye protection where patrons without face coverings are within two metres of workers
- Employers should refer to the sector specific [guidelines](#) to find out what types of mask guidelines and preventive measures are appropriate for their workplace and event settings
- Educate staff and event attendees on the proper use and disposal of masks.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- Ensure to posts signs at the entrance and throughout the venue encouraging guests to practise safety measures such as hand hygiene, hygiene with alcohol-based hand rub and respiratory etiquette

- Provide hand sanitizer dispensers with at least 60-90 per cent alcohol concentration by entrances and throughout the venue for everyone to use
- Ensure an adequate supply of liquid soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer, tissues and waste receptacles are available throughout the venue and in washrooms

Physical distancing

- Physical distancing is critical to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Physical distancing means keeping a distance of at least two metres from others who are not a part of your household.
- Face coverings/masks should be worn when physical distancing (two metres) is hard to maintain outside. Face coverings/masks must be worn when indoors.
- Workers must wear appropriate eye protection where patrons without face coverings are within two metres of workers or attendees
- Design an attendee flow that encourages clearly marked directional floor markings. One way flow is recommended
- Ensure enough space is available for people in high traffic areas, between chairs, tables, and places where people may gather to allow proper physical distancing
- Identify areas where crowding and bottlenecks are common, such as lobbies, bathrooms, entrances/exits and use volunteers, staff or barriers to redirect people who may gather in these areas
- Ensure a minimum distance of at least two metres between performers and audience seating by blocking off the front two rows of spectator seating, if necessary
- A plexi-glass shield or other impermeable barrier is required between singers and players of brass or wind instruments and any spectators. or in any other situations where a person is closer than 6ft (e.g. Paying for services or food)

Cleaning and disinfection

- Assign staff to complete environmental cleaning and disinfection duties
- Ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces and objects at least twice daily or more often when visibly soiled in staff, vendor, performer and patron areas, such as doorknobs, tabletops and railings
 - Review [Public Health Ontario's Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#)
 - Refer to Health Canada's [list of hard surface disinfectants for use against coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- Ensure washrooms and hand sinks are cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily, or as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary environment
- Provide waste receptacles lined with a plastic bag, and empty as often as necessary
- Ensure all products used for disinfecting contain a DIN

Food and drink

- Refer to the most current information on current colour zones <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/zones-and-restrictions> for the details on what is allowed in restaurants, bars and other food and drink establishments
- If food is being served, prepared or sold there may be additional food safety requirements that will apply. Ensure a food vendor application form is filled out for each vendor at the event.

Modified programming

- Consider virtual options, such as live streaming, pre-recorded shows or virtual reality and other digital experiences
- Where possible, hold events outdoors instead of indoors (following current government guidelines)
- Offer multiple events / gatherings on separate days at a reduced capacity rather than hosting a single large event / gathering. Stagger activities with a limit on the number of attendees (following current government guidelines)
- Allow sufficient time between events / gatherings for safe and distanced exiting and entry of attendees, and sufficient environmental cleaning and disinfecting between events
- Keep the duration of the event / gathering to a minimum to limit contact among attendees. It's important to maintain physical distancing.
- Close or restrict access to non-essential common areas, such as photo booths with props, merchandise kiosks, concession stands and communal lounges
- Discourage activities that can contribute to the spread of COVID-19, such as singing, cheering, dancing, playing wind instruments and hugging. Encourage alternative practices, where applicable, such as humming, clapping, noisemakers and waving.

COVID-19 Outbreak Preparedness and Contact Tracing

- Keep a list of names and contact information for all individuals who attend the event / gathering. The contact list must be disclosed to a Huron Perth Public Health professional for COVID-19 contact tracing or where other public health purposes where required. The contact list must be securely stored for 30 days and then destroyed by the premise operator, if it's not used for the purposes outlined above.
- Develop protocols in advance that specifically address how to safely care for attendees who develop COVID-19 related symptoms, or who need care for such things as injury, illness or who are emotionally upset while at the event / gathering
- Contact Huron Perth Public Health at 1-888-221-2133 for guidance if you have been notified that an employee, vendor, performer or attendee has tested positive, and / or you have concerns that others may have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 at the event / gathering

Workplace Health and Safety

- Businesses and organizations are responsible to comply with the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) and its regulations
- Review the [HPPH COVID-19 Prevention: Business and Organization Tool Kit](#) to plan and implement protocols to keep staff safe
- Create, implement and post a [Safety plan. Ensure it is](#) made available upon request

Communication

- Develop a plan to communicate requirements of staff and participants of the gathering or event including:
 - Information about event / venue operations
 - Public health measures
 - Available amenities and screening tools through different communication platforms, such as event website, email and social media
- Download and display the following posters in high visibility areas in your setting to promote messages about how to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic:

[Link to all of our posters and signs](#)

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