

COVID-19: Mass Gatherings Guidance

There is an expanding global outbreak of respiratory illness called COVID-19 caused by a novel (new) coronavirus. Based on the current U.S. case counts, a more than doubling of case counts in Illinois in recent days, and evidence of low-level community transmission in the Chicagoland area, we are strengthening our recommendations related to mass gatherings. The virus seems to be spreading easily from person to person and we encourage public event organizers to prepare for possible impacts and take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Please note that these recommendations could change based on the trajectory of case counts and if the level of community transmission.

Community event cancellations:

- 1.) **1,000 or more attendees:** Events banned over the next 30 days.
- 2.) **250 or more attendees:** Strongly consider canceling events based primarily on the population that historically attends the event (e.g., many attendees are age 60 and older, are known to have underlying medical conditions, or are likely to have traveled from [Travel 3 countries](#) in the last 14 days).
- 3.) **10 or more attendees:** Strongly consider canceling events if all attendees are at higher risk.

Event organizers should:

- Anticipate that some non-essential events may need to be modified (e.g., conducted as a video conference or webinar), canceled, or postponed.
- Consider canceling non-essential events primarily for or attended by older adults and people with chronic medical conditions at higher risk for severe illness.
- Stay informed about the local COVID-19 situation. Get up-to-date information about COVID-19 activity in Chicago at chicago.gov/coronavirus.
- Discuss event details with local health officials and prepare to implement an emergency contingency plan based on their specific guidance.
- Collaborate and coordinate with event and community partners including the local public health department, hotels where participants are staying, airlines, the event venue, and other partners.
- Use event messaging and communications to provide COVID-19 updates and to promote everyday preventive health messages to your participants and staff.

If a mass gathering or large community event does take place, in addition to basic prevention messages, CDPH recommends that event organizers should:

- Post in prominent places and message ahead of time that any individual with respiratory illness or fever must avoid large gatherings and must stay home. This message must be prominent in any communication/promotion of events.

*Adapted from the California Department of Public Health.
This version was released on 03/12/2020. It may be updated with new guidance.
Please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus to find the latest version.*



- Remind participants and staff not to attend if they have traveled within the past 14 days to an area identified by the CDC as having a [Level 3 Travel Health Notice](#) due to COVID-19.
- Recommend that participants and staff at higher risk of severe illness not attend. Those at higher risk include:
 - People over 60 years of age. The risk increases significantly thereafter and escalates with age, with persons over age 80 in the highest risk category.
 - People, regardless of age, with underlying health conditions including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, or chronic lung diseases like COPD, as well as those with severely weakened immune systems.
- Ensure that event venues are well ventilated and are adequately equipped with facilities for hand washing and supplies, including hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, tissues, and trash baskets.
- Increase the frequency of cleaning commonly used areas with detergent and water followed by a [disinfectant that is EPA-approved](#) for emerging viral pathogens.
- Encourage participants to minimize close contact (e.g., recommend no hand shaking or hugging).
- Maintain a registration list of participants and staff; this will significantly assist local public health in contact tracing in the event a COVID-19 case should later be identified as having attended the event.
- Promote messages that discourage people who are sick from attending events. Create refund policies that permit participants the flexibility to stay home when they are sick, need to care for sick household members, or are at high risk for complications from COVID-19.
- Isolate staff or participants who become ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 in a designated space at the event and provide them with a clean disposable procedure face mask to wear. It is not necessary to distribute masks to healthy participants. Establish procedures to help sick participants or staff leave the event as soon as possible without use of public transportation, shared rides, or taxis.
- Provide alternative options for attending the event via phone, video, or web applications.

For the latest updates, visit chicago.gov/coronavirus or cdc.gov/coronavirus.