

Gathering Requirements for Celebrations and Significant Life Events

1/15/2021

Updates made on Jan. 15, 2021, include clarifications on pages 2 and 3 to the celebrations, receptions, parties, and similar gatherings to which this document applies.

Executive Order (EO) 21-01 begins Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021 at 11:59 p.m. and does not have an end date. Celebrations, receptions, parties, significant life events, and similar gatherings must comply with the requirements set forth in EO 21-01 and the requirements in this document, which mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19 at these events.

Frequently asked Questions about all Executive Orders may have additional clarifications about requirements and recommendations. See [Frequently Asked Questions about Stay Safe MN \(mn.gov/covid19/stay-safe/faq/index.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/covid19/stay-safe/faq/index.jsp) or [Stay Safe Guidance for Businesses and Organizations \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp).

This document does not apply to wedding ceremonies, funeral ceremonies, and religious services, but it does apply to the related receptions, celebrations, parties, and gatherings that occur before or after the service or ceremony. For services and ceremonies, please see the [Preparedness Plan Requirements for Faith-Based Communities, Places of Worship, Weddings, and Funerals \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefait.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefait.pdf).

Your health and COVID-19

Any time people are gathering with others, they are at risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. COVID-19 spreads through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly inhaled into the lungs. People with symptoms and without symptoms can spread the virus.

COVID-19 can lead to serious medical conditions and even death for people of all ages. We cannot predict who will become severely ill, although we know that older people and people with underlying health conditions are at higher risk. We do not yet know what the long-term effects of infection from COVID-19 are; even people with mild cases may experience long-term complications.

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid exposure to this virus. The masking, physical distancing, and other steps work together to help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. We can all take these actions to protect our families, others, and ourselves:

- ✓ Stay home when sick.
- ✓ Stay at least 6 feet apart from other people.
- ✓ Wear face coverings.
- ✓ Wash your hands often.
- ✓ Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.

Executive Order 21-01

Celebrations, receptions, private parties, and other similar gatherings

This document **applies to** private celebrations, receptions, parties, or other similar gatherings.

- This includes receptions, parties, and gatherings connected to weddings (e.g., wedding receptions), funerals (e.g., celebrations before or after a funeral service), life milestones (e.g., birthday parties, retirement parties, graduation parties, and parties for other similar milestones), family reunions, and other similar occasions.
- This also includes receptions, parties, and gatherings connected to planned religious services (e.g., receptions before or after a religious service), and other private social events (e.g., cocktail parties, dances, work parties, professional networking events, and other similar events).

This document **does not apply to**:

- Events at venues that are open to the general public (e.g., concerts, theater, sporting events, etc.), regardless of whether the event is free or requires payment for entry.
- Professional or business meetings within a workplace that follow applicable industry guidance, including applicable limitations on meeting size.
- Social gatherings in private homes or other gatherings that are not held in a venue or business (such as an entertainment facility, ballroom or conference center, restaurant or bar, faith-based setting, or other facility used as event space).
 - Such gatherings are limited by Executive Order 21-01 to no more than two households indoors (up to a maximum of 10 people) and no more than three households outdoors (up to a maximum of 15 people). People may wish to consider this guidance if they choose to host these social gatherings.
- Private events hosted in a venue that are arranged or organized for educational or informational purposes (e.g., lectures, seminars, continuing education, presentations, and similar events), to carry out a commercial, business, or professional activity (e.g., a board meetings, auctions, trade shows, fundraising activities, professional training, testing or certification activities, and similar events), or to carry out any other activities that are expressly allowed to take place under the Governor's Executive Orders (including Executive Order 21-01).

- These events must comply with the [Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp).
- Notwithstanding this paragraph, any private social, celebratory, or networking components associated with these events that are hosted by a business or venue are subject to the requirements of this Guidance for Celebrations and Significant Life Events, including capacity limitations.

COVID-19 spreads more when people who are familiar with one another gather together to socialize or to celebrate special occasions. It is easy for us to “let our guard down” in these situations and to forget the steps needed to keep ourselves and others safe. When food and beverage are involved, the risk is even higher because people must remove their masks to eat and drink. Alcohol also creates its own special risks by lowering inhibitions, and we know that these risks increase in the later hours of the night. **In balancing the importance of milestone occasions with the risks of COVID-19 transmission, these private celebrations and parties are limited significantly if they involve food and beverage.**

Venues that host these events must develop and comply with an event-specific COVID-19 Preparedness Plan that incorporates the requirements in this document. If a venue hosts an event that falls within this guidance and also remains open to other members of the public (e.g., a private party in a section of a restaurant or bowling alley), the venue must comply with the following:

- It must designate an exclusive and separate event space within the establishment (e.g., a ballroom, private room, or other separated space) to ensure persons attending the event remain separated from other patrons who are not attending the event, and areas or activities not associated with the event.
- Workers hired specifically for the event, such as an outside caterer or entertainer, must also be separated from other workers, patrons, or activities not associated with, staffing, or attending the event.
- The attendees of the event must be included in calculating the overall capacity of the venue, restaurant, bar, or other event space.

Events without food and beverage

Events that **do not** involve food and beverage (whether complementary, for purchase, or brought on site) must be conducted in accordance with the requirements applicable to the venue hosting the event, except where this guidance imposes a different or conflicting requirement, in which case this guidance controls.

- For indoor events, capacity must be limited to ensure that social distancing of 6 feet can be maintained between members of different households at all times. Capacity must be further limited to the lesser of 25% capacity, or 150 patrons.
- For outdoor events, capacity must be limited to ensure that social distancing of 6 feet can be maintained between members of different households at all times. Capacity must be further limited to the lesser of 25% capacity, or 250 patrons.
- Face coverings must be worn by all persons in accordance with Executive Order 20-81 and the policies of the venue hosting the event.

- For more detail about the requirements applicable to venues and determining occupant capacity, see the relevant [Guidance for Entertainment Meetings and Venues \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp), which must be incorporated into the COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for the event.

Events with food and beverage

Events that **do** involve food and beverage (whether complementary, for purchase, or brought on site) must be conducted in accordance with the requirements applicable to the venue hosting the event, except where this guidance imposes a different or conflicting requirement, in which case this guidance controls.

- Events that involve food or beverage may not take place between the hours of 10 p.m. and 4 a.m.
- Indoor events must be limited:
 - To members of no more than two households, up to a maximum of 10 persons; and
 - To the lesser of the number of persons necessary to ensure 6 feet of social distancing can be maintained between members of different households, or 25% capacity.
- Outdoor events must be limited:
 - To members of no more than three households, up to a maximum of 15 persons; and
 - To the lesser of the number of persons necessary to ensure 6 feet of social distancing can be maintained between members of different households, or 25% capacity.
- The plan for the event must incorporate other relevant guidance applicable to the venue hosting the event:
 - [COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Requirements for All Businesses \(dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/COVID_19_preparedness_plan_requirements_guidelines_businesses.pdf\)](https://dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/COVID_19_preparedness_plan_requirements_guidelines_businesses.pdf).
 - [Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp)
 - [COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Requirements for Restaurants and Bars \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safedining.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safedining.pdf).

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Guidance: Celebrations and Significant Life Events

Anytime people from different households gather, there is an increased risk of spreading infections. Hold an in-person gathering only if planners and participants commit to keeping at least 6 feet of space between people from different households (social distancing) at all times and wear face coverings throughout the event. Consider whether having your event encourages people in high-risk groups (particularly older adults and people with underlying health conditions) to gather. If so, consider offering a virtual celebration instead.

This guidance is for event planners, venue managers and owners, catering companies, people or families requesting these services, and others who may be involved in the planning and coordination of celebrations and events. These events may take place in indoor or outdoor venues, including but not limited to, rental space in event centers, restaurants, fellowship halls and gathering spaces in faith-based buildings, community centers, halls, or outdoor event spaces. Examples of celebrations and events covered by this guidance include but are not limited to catered parties, wedding receptions, funeral receptions, and other similar gatherings or life milestones held at a venue.

Follow the COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

All businesses, organizations, venues, and event organizers hosting celebrations and events governed by this guidance are required to develop and implement an event-specific COVID-19 Preparedness Plan that incorporates the requirements in this guidance and other applicable guidance on [StaySafe MN \(staysafe.mn.gov\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov). This plan must be available so people on the premises can easily see this document. Vendors servicing one event may collectively agree to one comprehensive plan, if they so choose.

The host(s), organizer/planner(s), vendor(s), and facility staff are all responsible for the success of the event and the implementation of plans to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Acknowledge the shared responsibility for your event and the need to keep all participants and staff safe.

Prior to the event, plan how to address a situation where people are not following the face covering and social distancing requirements throughout the entire event. If attendees are not complying with applicable requirements, stop the event.

Requirements and recommendations

Health screening

Requirements

- Establish and implement health screening for all persons planning to attend the event to ensure that anyone with symptoms, or has tested positive without symptoms, or has been exposed to anyone who has tested positive and is in their quarantine period, does not attend.

Maintain physical distance of at least 6 feet

Requirements

- Implement and maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet between persons from different households throughout the event.
- Provide controlled flow of participants as much as possible, including upon start and at end of the event. Use signage, markings, barriers, paint tape or flags to eliminate congestion areas, bottle-necks and choke points, and provide queuing where necessary.
- Limit the number of speakers and make arrangements so that they maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others.

Recommendations

- Whenever possible, provide individual microphones for multiple speakers. If a microphone must be shared, consider leaving it untouched on a stand.
- Event photography: Standing close together is a high-risk activity, even when it is a shorter period of time. Consider taking individual photos and using editing software to combine them into a group photo. See additional recommendations in the [Preparedness Plan Requirements for Faith-Based Communities, Places of Worship, Weddings, and Funerals](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefaiht.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefaiht.pdf).

Use of face coverings

Face coverings are required in all indoor business and public indoor spaces. In addition, workers must wear face coverings outdoors when 6 feet of social distance from others cannot be maintained. For more information, including exemptions from the face covering requirement and situations where face coverings may be temporarily removed, see [Masks and face coverings](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks).

Requirements

- Require all workers and attendees to wear face coverings in compliance with Executive Order 20-81, (see [Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations under Executive Order 20-81](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html) [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html]), and establish a procedure for accommodating persons who cannot wear face coverings due to a medical or mental health condition or disability.
- Face coverings may be temporarily removed in certain situations. For example, face coverings may be removed when eating and/or drinking, but must be put back on when not eating or drinking. Because eating and drinking require attendees to remove their face covering, only eat or drink while seated and apart from members of other households.

Recommendations

- Have masks available at the event for persons who arrive without one.
- Require or strongly recommend that patrons wear face coverings outdoors when social distancing cannot be easily maintained.

Hand Hygiene Practices

Requirements

- Provide hand sanitizer at entrances and exits and other strategic locations.
- Provide instructions and signage for attendees on regular handwashing/sanitizing.

Food and beverages (if applicable)

Requirements

- Food must be prepared and served in accordance with applicable rules and regulations guiding the specific event. Licensed food establishments must follow the [Minnesota Food Code \(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/rules/foodcode/index.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/rules/foodcode/index.html).
- Control lines at concession, food, and beverage areas to ensure social distancing of at least 6 feet between members of different households. This can be done with floor markings or other indicators. Face coverings must be worn when in line for food or concessions.
- A limit of six people can be seated together at any one time with at least 6 feet between parties.
- Self-service food and beverage areas are allowed as long as the COVID-19 Preparedness Plan includes protections such as oversight of the self-service area to ensure that social distancing is maintained, hands are being sanitized, and participants wear face coverings in the self-service area. The responsible party for overseeing compliance can be the venue administrator, caterer, or event organizer.

Recommendations

- Best practice would be to serve prepackaged food as much as possible.
- Use remote payment systems when possible if attendees are purchasing food or beverages.

Music and dancing

Bands, DJs, and other live music performances are allowed but must maintain physical distancing of 6 feet between other performers and 12 feet from the audience. For more information, see [Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf).

Dancing has a higher risk of spreading COVID-19 and is strongly discouraged. Dancing, like other vigorous physical activity, results in heavier breathing and increases the volume of respiratory droplets being released into the air. Because of this, **dancing at social gatherings and events is not recommended.**

If you include dancing as a part of your event, follow these requirements and recommendations.

Requirements

- Everyone must wear face coverings while dancing at the event.
- Limit the number of people on the dance floor to allow for 6 feet of distance between people from different households at all times.
- If these requirements are not being followed, vendors and others who have planned and are monitoring the event are responsible for stopping the dancing portion of the event.

Recommendations

- Designate a person (DJ, performer, host, planner, or combination) to monitor and enforce the distancing, masking, and limits to the number of people on the dance floor at the same time.
- Divide participants into groups using nametags or other methods, and allow them access to the dance floor at different times.
- Repeat or split popular songs if necessary so everyone can enjoy the music in succession.

- Encourage socially distanced line dancing or other forward facing dances where people are more easily able to maintain 6 feet of distance between people.
- “Chair dancing” or dancing by moving to the music while seated in chairs at least 6 feet apart, can be a creative way to maintain distance and still dance with your arms and legs.
- Consider limiting dancing to ceremonial dances with designated participants according to your particular tradition and culture.

Restrooms

Requirements

- Mark areas where people may need to line up to ensure social distancing.
- Provide an ample supply of hand sanitizer, or soap and water.
- Clean facilities regularly following the venue’s cleaning and disinfection protocol.
- Set a maximum number of guests allowed in the restroom to meet applicable capacity/size guidelines for social distancing.

Summary

We all have a role to play in protecting ourselves and fellow Minnesotans from COVID-19. This guidance is based on insuring social distance and wearing face coverings to limit the potential spread of COVID-19 whenever people gathering. By following current [Executive Orders from Governor Walz](https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp) (mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp) and these guidelines on [Stay Safe MN](https://staysafe.mn.gov) (staysafe.mn.gov), we can enjoy activities and events while supporting public health, slowing the spread of COVID-19, and minimizing added strain on local communities and health care systems in Minnesota.

Resources

- [CDC: Considerations for Events and Gatherings \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html)
- [CDC: Event Planning and COVID-19: Questions and Answers \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/event-planners-and-attendees-faq.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/event-planners-and-attendees-faq.html)



Minnesota Department of Health | health.mn.gov | 651-201-5000
625 Robert Street North PO Box 64975, St. Paul, MN 55164-0975

Contact health.communications@state.mn.us to request an alternate format.