



Mass Gatherings on Novel Coronavirus or COVID-19

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The South Carolina Department of Public Health (DHEC) will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

Background

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel virus that has been spreading worldwide. We are gaining more understanding of COVID-19's epidemiology, clinical course, immunogenicity, and other factors as time progresses, and the situation is changing daily. DHEC is in the process of monitoring COVID-19, conducting testing with local and federal partners, and providing guidance and resources to prevent, detect and respond to the occurrence of COVID-19 cases in South Carolina.

At this time, community transmission of COVID-19 has occurred in South Carolina. Public event organizers should prepare for possible impacts of COVID-19 and take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as well as other infectious diseases, including influenza and gastroenteritis.

Illness Severity

The complete clinical picture with regard to COVID-19 is not fully understood. Reported illnesses have ranged from mild to severe, including illness resulting in death. Older people and people with certain underlying health conditions like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, for example, seem to be at greater risk of serious illness.

Context

Mass gatherings and large community events bring people from multiple communities into close contact with each other and have the potential to increase COVID-19 transmission. One method to slow the spread of respiratory virus infections, including COVID-19, is by increasing social distancing (reduce close contact).

The goals of this guidance are **to protect people** attending and working at the event and the local community from COVID-19 infection; and **to reduce community transmission** and introductions of COVID-19 into new communities.

At this time, DHEC does not recommend closing large community events in our state. Event organizers should follow these steps:

- As the COVID-19 situation is evolving, event organizers should **create an emergency contingency plan** for how to modify, cancel, or postpone their mass gathering or large

community event if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in their community.

- Events may still need to be modified, canceled, or postponed if participants are traveling from communities with COVID-19 outbreaks.
 - Event organizers should:
 - **Collaborate and coordinate with 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 **promote everyday preventive health messages** to your participants and staff, which include:
 - **Stay home when you are sick**, except to get medical care. If you experience symptoms of Coronavirus, COVID-19. MUSC Health encourages you to do a free virtual visit at <https://campaigns.muschealth.org/virtual-care/index.html>. Enter promo code COVID19.
 - **Cover your coughs and sneezes** with a tissue or sleeve, then throw the tissue in the trash.
 - **Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds**, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.**
 - **Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects daily.**
 - **Recommend that participants minimize close contact** (e.g., recommending no hand shaking or hugging)
 - **Promote messages that discourage people who are sick from attending events.** Create refund policies or remote participation capability such as live stream 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.
 - **Provide COVID-19 prevention supplies at your events**, to the extent supplies are available. Plan to have extra supplies on hand for event staff and participants, including sinks with soap, hand sanitizers, and tissues. Promote proper and frequent hand hygiene.
 - **Isolate staff or participants in a designated space who become ill with symptoms** consistent with COVID-19 at the event and provide a clean disposable procedure facemask, to the extent available, to wear for those who become ill. It is not necessary to distribute masks to healthy participants.
 - **Implement a strategy to prevent the theft of prevention supplies.**
 - **DHEC does not recommend cancelation of community events at this time if no COVID-19 cases exist within the community.**
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Additional Resources

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#)
 - [DHEC website](#)
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