

## Novel Coronavirus: Events, Public Gatherings, and Schools Guidance

### Background:

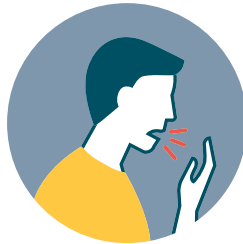
Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by a new virus strain that can spread from person to person, causing severe illness including pneumonia in some people.

Symptoms can appear 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus. The most common symptoms reported are:

Fever



Cough



Fatigue



Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing



### Purpose of Guidance:

The purpose of this document is to provide recommendations and guidance for events and public gatherings to help limit people's exposure to COVID-19 to protect people attending and working the event, as well as the community. These recommendations are intended for organizers and staff responsible for planning events with a large number of people in attendance. Additional guidance is provided for school closures.

*Events include concerts, festivals, conferences, worship services, sporting and other such events.*

One critically important way to slow the spread of respiratory viral infections, like COVID-19, is to reduce close contact (**increasing social distancing**).

Nebraska DHHS outlines two (2) scenarios that should be adhered to by event organizers and communities, as well as, closure guidance for schools.

Community transmission (i.e. where we cannot identify a direct link to a case) triggers for closure by community size or region:

- For Omaha: 2 cases of community transmission
- For Lincoln: 1-2 cases of community transmission
- For other Nebraska communities and Nebraska's Education Service Units (ESUs): 1 case of community transmission



## Before community transmission it is critical that:

- Event organizers:
  - **Limit the size of events and public gatherings (e.g. parades, theatres, sporting events, etc.) to less than 50 people for the next eight (8) weeks.**
  - Anticipate events may need to be modified (e.g. teleconference/videoconference), canceled, or postponed.
  - Cancel events primarily for or attended by older adults and people with chronic medical conditions at higher risk for severe illness.
  - Collaborate and coordinate with community partners including the local health departments.
  - Create an emergency operations plan for how to modify, cancel, or postpone the event if community transmission begins.
  - Start the event and use event communications to promote everyday preventive health messages, including:
    - ◆ Attendees and workers must stay home if they are sick.
    - ◆ Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
    - ◆ When washing with soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
    - ◆ Cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing with a tissue then throw it away.
    - ◆ Encourage participants to minimize close contact (e.g. no hand shaking or hugging).
  - Provide prevention supplies as available. Plan to have extra supplies for attendees and workers like sinks with soap, hand sanitizers, and tissues. Promoting frequent and proper hand hygiene.
  - If workers or attendees develop symptoms, provide a designated space separated from the other attendees/workers for them to remain until they are able to go home.
  - If the event location, audience, or other major details can be modified consider:
    - ◆ Televising the event
    - ◆ Holding event outdoors or moving to a location where people can spread out more (e.g. larger venue)
    - ◆ Teleconferences/videoconferences
    - ◆ Reducing the audience size (e.g. immediate family member attendance, limited number of tickets)
    - ◆ Spreading people out (e.g. less individuals at tables, spreading desks apart)
    - ◆ Or other ways to limit the number of people gathered in an enclosed space
    - ◆ Consider postponing an event to a later date.

*Consider creating refund policies or remote participation opportunities to further encourage staying home if they are sick or caring for the sick.*

## After community transmission has begun:

- Event organizers:
  - **Limit the size of events and public gatherings (e.g. parades, theatres, sporting events, etc.) to 20 people. Restaurants will be takeout only and bars are to be closed.**
  - Put your emergency operations and communications plans in action.
  - Collaborate and coordinate with community partners including the local health departments.
  - Anticipate events may need to be modified (e.g. teleconference/videoconference), canceled, or postponed.
  - Cancel events primarily for or attended by older adults and people with chronic medical conditions at higher risk for severe illness.

- Start the event and use event communications to promote everyday preventive health messages, including:
  - ◆ Encourage attendees and workers to stay home if they are sick.  
*Consider creating refund policies or remote participation opportunities to further encourage staying home if they are sick or caring for the sick.*
  - ◆ Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
  - ◆ When washing with soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
  - ◆ Cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing with a tissue then throw it away immediately.
  - ◆ Encourage participants to minimize close contact (e.g. recommend no hand shaking or hugging).
- Provide prevention supplies as available. Plan to have extra supplies for attendees and workers like sinks with soap, hand sanitizers, and tissues. Promoting frequent and proper hand hygiene.
- If workers or attendees develop symptoms, provide a designated space separated from the other attendees/workers for them to remain until they are able to go home.
- If the event location, audience or other major details can be modified consider:
  - ◆ Televising the event
  - ◆ Held outdoors or move to a location where people can spread out more (e.g. larger venue)
  - ◆ Teleconferences/videoconferences
  - ◆ Reducing the audience size (e.g. immediate family member attendance, limited number of tickets)
  - ◆ Spreading people out (e.g. less individuals at tables, spreading desks apart)
  - ◆ Or other ways to limit the number of people gathered in an enclosed space
  - ◆ Consider postponing an event to a later date.
- Maintain a registration list of attendees 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.

- **School Closure guidance for after community transmission has begun:**

*Reports suggest that school age students are not shown to be a high risk group for serious illness from COVID-19. Despite this, closures are recommended to protect family members who might be in a high risk group, the community, and minimize the spread of illness.*

- It is recommended to close schools in the event community transmission has begun in your area.
  - ◆ **Schools should consider modifying attendance to classes (e.g. remote options like videoconference, recorded sessions, etc.) or cancel classes for 6-8 weeks and reevaluate reopening every 2 weeks thereafter for community transmission.**
  - ◆ Schools should modify, postpone, or cancel extracurricular events.
  - ◆ Collaborate and coordinate with community partners including the local health departments.