

Advisory Guidelines for Activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Adapted from WHO and US CDC Guidelines

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Summary Statement

The 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic has disrupted human life as we know it. Events considered staples of our daily routine have now been deemed unsafe, and quarantine measures were put in place in an attempt to contain and delay the disease.

This document is designed to provide additional advice and research for organizing events and gatherings while the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing. It can supplement, and is based on, the WHO's guidance. As always, defer to your local, national, and international health authorities for advice on how to proceed.

The World Health Organization (WHO), the leading international organization on matters of public health, issued guidelines and bulletins on the nature of the infectious disease to show us how we can protect ourselves during the pandemic. These included two guidelines on mass gatherings: *Key planning recommendations for mass gatherings in the context of COVID-19* dated 29 May 2020 & *WHO Mass Gathering COVID-19 Risk Assessment Tool - Generic Events* dated 10 July 2020 and updated 5 August 2020. Also included are general *COVID-19 prevention guidelines* of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We have summarized some of their findings here.

Planning Recommendations for Mass Gatherings during the COVID-19 Pandemic (adapted from WHO and US CDC)

The recommendations for mass gatherings should be used in accordance with the risk assessment tool also developed by the WHO. This risk assessment should be done regularly based on the changing context. The recommendations contain three parts: Consideration of the COVID-19 situation of the host, Assessment of risks related to the event, Capability to enforce safety measures. We have summarized some of their findings and included associated recommendations here to support decision-making.

Consideration of the COVID-19 situation of the host

- IAYG recommends against mass gatherings in areas where there is sustained community transmission, as determined by national and local health authorities, since these areas have a higher risk of COVID-19 being spread as a result of the gathering.

Assessment of risks related to the event

- The venue, participants, interactions, duration, and healthcare response should be taken into consideration.

Capability to enforce safety measures

- We recommend that these steps be taken first:
 - Modify the characteristics of the event (in-person to virtual/indoor to outdoor/etc), or
 - In the event where risk cannot be fully mitigated, enhance preparedness to assist public health authorities

Before an Event

- Event organizers should have a directory containing contact numbers/hotlines of relevant health authorities.
- A protocol for contacting and collaborating with public health officials should be developed with regards should a case of COVID-19 be reported after an event.

For the Event

- Modifications related to the venue
 - If it is possible to hold an event entirely virtually, we recommend that at this time, and we are prepared for all levels of technical support.
 - Since we would like to limit the number of people attending the event, portions of the event should be held virtually or online if possible, while prospective attendees may participate in the same manner mentioned. [7]
 - It is much safer to hold gatherings outdoors since indoor environments with poor ventilation are riskier. [1]
 - In response to the previous point, adjustment of the official capacity of the venue
 - To maintain physical distancing, the following strategies are recommended [7]:
 - Limit attendance or seating capacity as well as blocking of sections or rows to maintain physical distancing
 - Use multiple entrances and exits and remind participants to remain separated, where applicable
 - **Avoid having multiple people handle a single piece of equipment, as**

COVID-19 can spread through surfaces. Disinfection of high touch surfaces should be done on a regular basis. These include handles, posters, and equipment. Areas that cannot be disinfected regularly should be closed. [3]

- Alcohol solutions that are 70% alcohol are strongly recommended [4]
- Regulation of the flow of people to and from the venue

For Attendees

For any in-person events, we recommend the observation of the following protocols:

- Physical distancing of at least two meters
- Regular hand washing using soap and water for 20 seconds. Use of alcohol with 70% concentration can be used as a substitute. [2]
- Proper respiratory etiquette should be followed.
 - Wearing a mask that fully covers the nose and the mouth at all times is recommended. [6] A surgical mask (see picture) is preferred, but cloth masks can also be used if a surgical mask is not available.



- Masks with valves are not recommended. [6]
- Encourage people with heightened risk of contracting or transmitting COVID-19 to no longer attend the event. This includes people with symptoms, with close contact with COVID-19 cases, and those from areas with community transmission.
- Encourage people with heightened risk of serious illness and those with close contact to high risk individuals (e.g. those with family members in the medical profession) to no longer attend the event. This includes people >65 years old and with pre-existing illnesses.
- If someone appears to be sick or ill, ask them and any of their contacts

to self-isolate immediately, return home, and monitor symptoms.

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Post-event Phase

- Communication lines should be prepared for the stakeholders of the event: organizers, participants, and local health authorities, in case that it is necessary.
 - IAYG is here to assist with contacting stakeholders if that is necessary.

For advice on whether and how to proceed on an event, your local public health authority is the best source of advice. This document is designed to provide some additional international context, especially if it is deemed appropriate to host an event, but it is not a substitute for official public health guidance.

The WHO believes that areas with community transmission should consider cancelling a mass gathering since it may intensify the spread of the disease, however, they issued a disclaimer that it has no mandate to enforce any postponement or cancellation of events, as it only advises best practices based on evidence available at present.

The IAYG Family wishes everyone the best of health and safety at this unique and challenging moment.

Resources and References

[1] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/deciding-to-go-out.html>

[2] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

[3] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/event-planners-and-attendees-faq.html>

[4] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html>

[5] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>

[6]

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>

[7]

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/event-planners-and-attendees-faq.html>

Key planning recommendations for mass gatherings in the context of COVID-19 (29 May 2020)

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/10665-332235>

WHO Mass Gathering COVID-19 Risk Assessment Tool - Generic Events (5 August 2020)

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/10665-333185>