



State of California—Health and Human
Services Agency
**California Department of
Public Health**



November 13, 2020

TO: All Californians

SUBJECT: CDPH Guidance for the Prevention of COVID-19 Transmission for Gatherings

Summary

This guidance provides an updated plan for Californians to gather outside their household and replaces the March 16, 2020, October 9, 2020 and other prior gatherings guidance. It applies to private gatherings, and all other gatherings not covered by existing sector guidance are prohibited. It also applies to activities protected by the First Amendment to the extent that they are not already permitted by other guidance, notwithstanding any guidance, orders, or directives to the contrary. Gatherings are defined as social situations that bring together people from different households at the same time in a single space or place. When people from different households mix, this increases the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Context

COVID-19 continues to pose a severe risk to communities and requires all people in California to follow necessary precautions and to adapt the way they live and function in light of this ongoing risk. The safest way to gather is to spend time with people in the same household, gather virtually, or gather outdoors.

The season of cold weather has now arrived in many parts of the state, and rainy season is imminent, making it more difficult to gather outdoors. Because of this, many people in California may feel the need to gather indoors instead. Indoor gatherings remain risky activities, and it would always be safer to gather outdoors or virtually whenever possible. But this guidance explains some important and necessary steps to make indoor gatherings less risky if they do occur.

In general, the more people from different households a person interacts with at a gathering, the closer the physical interaction is, and the longer the interaction lasts, the higher the risk that a person with a COVID-19 infection, symptomatic or asymptomatic, may spread it to others. Public health studies have also shown that the risk of transmission is increased in indoor spaces, particularly when there isn't appropriate ventilation. [1] Unlike indoor spaces, wind and air in outdoor spaces can help reduce spread of the virus from one person to another.

Planning scenarios published by the CDC estimate that, on average, a person with COVID-19 goes on to infect between 2-4 people, with a best estimate of 2.5 when there are no preventive measures.[2] For example, if each infected person spreads the virus to two people, who in turn spread it to two others each; those four will spread the virus to eight others; those eight will spread the virus to 16; and so on. As a result, after 10 transmission cycles, one person could be responsible for 1,024 other people contracting the virus.[3] Additionally, there is broad agreement that people who are not experiencing symptoms can still spread COVID-19[4].The fact that COVID-19

can be spread by people who don't have symptoms or aren't showing symptoms yet is one of the aspects of the COVID-19 that makes it difficult to control.

All gatherings pose a higher risk of transmission and spread of COVID-19 when people mix from different households and communities. The likelihood of transmission and spread increases with laughing, singing, loud talking and difficulty maintaining physical distance. Limiting attendance at gatherings is a way to reduce the risk of spread as it lowers the number of different people who are interacting. Additionally, by limiting attendance there is an improved ability to perform effective contact tracing if there is a positive case discovered, which can help to slow the spread of COVID-19[5]. People who do choose to attend gatherings should discuss and agree upon the specific group rules before convening together.

Like other types of activities, activities protected by the First Amendment pose risks of COVID-19 transmission. People who wish to engage in political, artistic, or other forms of expression or in religious expression and practice are strongly encouraged to find means of expression that do not involve in-person gatherings or to wait to gather in person until those activities are permitted by the Blueprint for a Safer Economy. However, because this guidance offers safer ways to operate in the colder climate, with higher likelihood of rain, associated with the time of year we now enter, the safeguards in this guidance apply as well to activities protected by the First Amendment and those activities are not prohibited if conducted in accordance with this guidance.

Recommendations & Mandatory Requirements for All Gatherings

All persons planning to host or participate in a private gathering, as defined above, must comply with the requirements identified below and are strongly encouraged to follow the recommendations as well. Activities protected by the First Amendment may proceed under this guidance notwithstanding any guidance, orders, or directives to the contrary. Local health jurisdictions may be more restrictive than this guidance. Refer to your local guidance for what is allowed in your area.

1. Attendance

- a. Gatherings that include more than 3 households are prohibited. This includes everyone present, including hosts and guests. Remember, the smaller the number of people, the safer.
- b. Keep the households that you interact with stable over time. By spending time with the same people, risk of transmission is reduced. Participating in multiple gatherings with different households or groups is strongly discouraged.
- c. The host should collect names of all attendees and contact information in case contact tracing is needed later.

2. Location: Gatherings Must be Outdoors for Counties in the Purple Tier

- a. Gatherings that occur outdoors are significantly safer than indoor gatherings. All gatherings must be held outside in the Purple Tier, and indoor gatherings are strongly discouraged in Red, Orange and Yellow Tiers.
 - i. If gathering indoors, increase fresh air circulation by opening windows or doors, as much as possible, especially in the rooms where people are gathering.

- b. A gathering of no more than three households is permitted in a public park or other outdoor space, even if unrelated gatherings of other groups up to three households are also occurring in the same park or other outdoor

space. If multiple such gatherings are occurring, mixing between groups gatherings is not allowed. Additionally, multiple gatherings of three households cannot be jointly organized or coordinated to occur in the same public park or other outdoor space at the same time – this would constitute a gathering exceeding the permitted household limits.

3. Don't Attend Gatherings If You Feel Sick

a. Anyone with any COVID-19-like symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, night sweats, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, tiredness, muscle or body aches, headaches, confusion, or loss of sense of taste/smell), must stay home and not come into contact with anyone outside their household.

b. Anyone who develops COVID-19 within 48 hours after attending a gathering should notify the organizer of the gathering and/or other attendees as soon as possible regarding the potential exposure.

4. Individuals in a High-Risk Group are Discouraged from Attending any Gatherings

a. People at higher risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 (such as older adults and people with chronic medical conditions) are strongly urged not to attend any gatherings, especially indoor gatherings.

b. If higher-risk individuals do attend any gatherings, they should do the following to decrease the risk for exposure:

i. Spend as much time outside, or near outside air flow such as open windows or doors, as possible.

ii. Wear a respirator or surgical mask instead of a cloth mask, and minimize any time at the event with the mask off.

iii. Remain at least six feet, or ideally even farther away, from others outside their household as much as possible, especially when people are eating or drinking without face coverings.

iv. Spend a shorter time at the gathering than others to reduce potential exposure.

5. Practice Physical Distancing and Hand Hygiene at Gatherings

a. For any gatherings permitted under this guidance, the space must be large enough so that everyone at a gathering can maintain at least a 6-foot physical distance from others (not including their own household) at all times.

b. Seating must provide at least 6 feet of distance (in all directions—front-to-back and side-to-side) between different households.

c. Everyone at a gathering should frequently wash their hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

d. Shared items should be minimized during a gathering. Food and beverages should be served by a person who washes or sanitizes their hands frequently, and who must wear a face covering. Self-serve items from communal containers should be minimized.

e. Remind all persons to sanitize hands before eating or drinking, and after touching shared items if shared items are unavoidable.

6. Wear a Face Covering to Keep COVID-19 from Spreading

a. When gathering, face coverings must be worn in accordance with the CDPH Guidance on the Use of Face Coverings, unless an exemption is applicable.

b. People at gatherings are advised to limit removal of their face coverings to when they are actively eating or drinking. While face coverings are removed for this purpose, they should stay at least 6 feet away from everyone outside their own household, and put their face covering back on as soon as they are done with the activity.

c. Face coverings can also be removed to meet urgent medical needs (for example, to use an asthma inhaler, take medication, or if feeling light-headed).

7. Keep it short

a. Gatherings should be two hours or less. The longer the duration, the risk of transmission increases.

8. Singing, Chanting, Shouting, Cheering and Similar Activities Are Strongly Discouraged at Outdoor Gatherings and Prohibited at Indoor Gatherings

a. Singing, chanting, shouting, cheering, physical exertion, and similar activities significantly increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission because these activities increase the release of respiratory droplets and fine aerosols into the air. Because of this, singing, chanting, shouting, cheering, and similar activities are strongly discouraged in outdoor settings, but if they occur, the following rules and recommendations apply:

i. All people who are singing, chanting, shouting, cheering, or engaging in similar activities should wear a face covering at all times while engaging in those activities, including anyone who is leading a song, chant, or cheer. Because these activities pose a very high risk of COVID-19 transmission, face coverings are essential to reduce the spread of respiratory droplets and fine aerosols;

ii. People who are singing, shouting, chanting, cheering, or exercising are strongly encouraged to maintain physical distancing beyond 6 feet to further reduce risk.

iii. People who are singing or chanting are strongly encouraged to do so quietly (at or below the volume of a normal speaking voice).

b. Instrumental music is allowed outdoors as long as the musicians maintain at least 6-foot physical distancing. Musicians must be from one of the three households. Playing of wind instruments (any instrument played by the mouth, such as a trumpet or clarinet) is strongly discouraged, and if played should use protective or tightly woven cloth barriers on the instrument bells or at the end of the instrument to protect from spread of condensation droplets. If music is played, it is recommended that the volume be quiet enough that attendees can speak in a normal voice without shouting.

c. Singing, chanting, shouting, cheering, playing of wind instruments and similar activities are not permitted in indoor gatherings.

[1] See, e.g., Hiroshi Nishiura, et al., Closed environments facilitate secondary transmission of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19); Hu Qian, et al., “Indoor transmission of SARS-CoV-2” [pre-print] published in medRxiv on April 4, 2020.

[2] See Planning Scenarios.

[3] See, e.g., Report 3: Natsuko Imai et al, WHO Collaborating Centre for Infectious Disease Modelling, MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis, J-IDEA, “Imperial college London, UK. Transmissibility of 2019 -n-CoV).” See also Inglesby T B JAMA Public Health Measures and the Reproduction Number of SARS-CoV-2. JAMA Network.2020.7878 (May 1, 2020).

[4] Transmission of SARS-CoV-2: implications for infection prevention precautions.

[5] See Preventing the Spread of the Coronavirus

California Department of Public Health
PO Box, 997377, MS 0500, Sacramento, CA 95899-7377
Department Website (cdph.ca.gov)



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