Interim Guidance for Indoor and Outdoor Venues  
(July 30, 2021)

Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Venues: Any scenario in which many people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. All businesses and agencies where groups of people gather in an enclosed space should create and implement a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission at their facility. The guidance below will help venues—like arenas and music halls—reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their communities. Additionally, we strongly encourage all employers to direct employees and customers to information Find Your Spot, Take Your Shot and encourage them to get vaccinated. For guidance on vaccinations, please refer to our Interim Guidance for Individuals Who Have Been Vaccinated Against COVID-19.

This guidance covers the following topics:

- Vaccination
- Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure
- Cloth Face Coverings
- Cleaning and Hygiene
- Monitoring for Symptoms
- Protecting Vulnerable Populations
- Combatting Misinformation
- Water and Ventilation Systems
- Additional Resources

Vaccination

We strongly recommend all employers to direct employees and customers to information Find Your Spot, Take Your Shot and encourage them to get vaccinated. For guidance on vaccinations, please refer to our Interim Guidance for Individuals Who Have Been Vaccinated Against COVID-19 and Recommendations for Protecting Each Other.

It is strongly recommended that businesses:

- Require employees to report vaccination status.
- Require employees who are unvaccinated, or do not disclose vaccine status, participate in screening/testing programs.
Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure

Social distancing is a tool we currently have to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing (“physical distancing”) means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. If you are not fully vaccinated, stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people; do not gather in groups; stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings.

It is recommended that venues:

- Ensure social distancing by arranging tables and seating to achieve at least 6-foot separation between parties.
- Provide floor markings to help customers stay 6 feet apart in concession lines, ticket counters, restroom lines, and other areas where people gather, including if they are waiting outdoors due to limits on indoor capacity.
- Clearly mark designated entry and exit points.
- Clearly mark stairwells, walkways, and other areas of entering/exiting to separate people and reduce close contact to the extent possible. In waiting areas and other areas where people may be standing and waiting, install partitions between entrances and exits and other areas to limit close contact.
- Make walkways or stairways one-way or clearly divided for bi-directional travel.
- Install plexiglass or other barriers at ticket counters, information desks, and other areas to limit contact between customers and workers. Physical barriers do not replace face coverings.
- Limit capacity in restrooms, elevators, and other enclosed areas to accommodate social distancing.
- Use smart phone apps, online reservations and electronic payment or other method to limit contact between customers and workers.
- Use timed entry for tickets to reduce number of people entering facility at the same time.
- Alternate check-in lines and ticket queue areas to increase social distancing when possible.
- Assign people seats that are evenly distributed throughout venue
- Assign people set entrance and exits, restrooms, concession stands based on their ticketed seat to maintain even distribution of people throughout the venue.
- Update bag policy and other security measures to facilitate distancing for security staff. Use touchless methods for metal detection and item checks and implement policy for pat downs or other close contact security checks to protect workers.
- Discontinue use of concession workers walking through the seating area to sell concessions directly to reduce close contact.
- Cohort workers to the extent possible, allowing employees to work in the same concession, ticket, gate, or other areas to reduce the amount of cross contact between employees.

Cloth Face Coverings

There is evidence that wearing a face covering can help reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially because people may be infected with the virus and not know it.
It is strongly recommended that venues:

- Have all employees and patrons who are not fully vaccinated wear a face covering and maintain physical distance from others when they are indoors, unless the individual states that an exception applies.

It is recommended that venues:

- Encourage all employees and patrons who fully vaccinated wear face coverings when they are indoors and less than 6ft away from others, if they are in a county of high or substantial levels of transmissions as defined by the CDC.
- Provide disposable face coverings to customers to wear while in the establishment.
- Visit NC DHHS COVID-19 response site for more information about the face covering guidance and access sign templates that are available in English and Spanish.

Cleaning and Hygiene

Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of transmission.

It is recommended that venues:

- Promote frequent use of hand washing and hand sanitizer for staff and individuals. Require handwashing of staff immediately upon reporting to work, after contact with individuals, after performing cleaning and disinfecting activities, and frequently throughout the day.
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) at the entrance, and any other areas throughout premises as needed.
- Clean surfaces once a day, prioritizing high-touch surfaces. If there has been a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, clean and disinfect the space using an EPA-approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19).
- Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers throughout the day or event and assure soap and hand drying materials are available at all sinks.
- Provide tissues for proper cough and sneeze hygiene.
- Develop and implement plan for disinfection of restrooms and concession areas. Disinfection should follow Interim Guidance for Safe Application of Disinfectants and should take into consideration appropriate contact time for disinfectant to work properly.
- Provide additional trash receptacles to accommodate additional use of single service eating and drinking utensils and disposable personal protective equipment (PPE). Plan for additional trash removal during operating hours.

Monitoring for Symptoms

Staff should be encouraged to self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath.

If they develop symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and return home. More information on how to monitor for symptoms is available from the CDC.
It is recommended that venues:

- Have a plan in place for immediately removing employees from work if symptoms develop. Employees who have symptoms when they arrive at work or become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home or to their healthcare provider.

- Post signage at the main entrance requesting that people who have been symptomatic with fever and/or cough not enter, such as Know Your Ws/Stop if You Have Symptoms flyers (English - Color, Black & White; Spanish - Color, Black & White).

- Establish and enforce sick leave policies to prevent the spread of disease, including:
  - Enforcing employees staying home if sick.
  - Encouraging liberal use of sick leave policy.
  - Expanding paid leave policies to allow employees to stay home when sick.

- Per CDC guidelines, if an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is presumed positive by a medical professional due to symptoms, the employee should be excluded from work until:
  - No fever for at least 24 hours since recovery (without the use of fever-reducing medicine) AND
  - Other symptoms have improved (e.g., coughing, shortness of breath) AND
  - At least 10 days have passed since first symptoms

  *A test-based strategy is no longer recommended to discontinue isolation or precautions and employers should not require documentation of a negative test before allowing a worker to return.

- Per CDC guidelines, if an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 but does not have symptoms, they should remain out of work until 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test, assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test.

- Require symptomatic employees, volunteers and concession workers to wear cloth face coverings until leaving the facility. Cleaning and disinfecting procedure should be implemented by designated personnel following CDC guidelines once sick employee leaves.

- Provide employees with information on help lines to access information or other support in reference to COVID-19, e.g. 211 and Hope4NC Helpline (1-855-587-3463).

Venues can consider:

- Conducting daily symptom screening (use the standard interview questionnaire English | Spanish) of employees at entrance to workplace with immediately sending symptomatic workers home to isolate.

Combatting Misinformation

Help make sure that the information your employees is getting is coming directly from reliable resources. Use resources from a trusted source like the CDC or NCDHHS to promote behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Promote informational helplines like 211 and Hope4NC and other Wellness Resources.

Put up signs and posters, such as those found Know Your W’s: Wear, Wait, Wash and those found Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19.

Water and Ventilation Systems
Reduced use of water and ventilation systems can pose their own health hazards. There is increased risk for Legionella and other waterborne pathogens from stagnant or standing water.

Before opening, it is recommended that venues:

- Follow the CDC’s Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation to minimize the risk of diseases associated with water.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and as feasible direct air outside, and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety or health risk to people using the facility.

Additional Resources
- CDC: Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers
- CDC: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA): Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA): Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

Staying apart brings us together.
Protect your family and neighbors.

#StayStrongNC
Learn more at nc.gov/covid19.