



Tips and Frequently Asked Questions for Gatherings

UPDATED September 30, 2020

This document was updated from September 17, 2020, to reflect expanded authorizations for outdoor and indoor gatherings.

AUDIENCE: Hosts and Participants in different types of gatherings involving people from more than one household.

BACKGROUND: As of Sept 30, 2020, [Health Officer Directives 2020-19c and 2020-34](#) authorize and provide updated guidance for Gatherings. This document summarizes tips and frequently asked questions about how to participate in these types of gatherings during COVID-19. Additional guidance can be found in the Directives (www.sfdph.org/directives) and documents located at www.sfdcp.org/covid19.

| Overview of Types of Gatherings | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|
| | GATHERING TYPE | DESCRIPTION OF GATHERING | NUMBER OF PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT HOUSEHOLDS |
| <i>Outdoor</i> | Outdoor Meal Gatherings | Eating or drinking | 6 |
| | Outdoor Special Gatherings | Religious services or ceremonies, political protests | 200 |
| | Small Outdoor Gathering | All other types (e.g. reception, fitness, gathering at a park, any hosted tours) | 12 |
| | Drive-in Gatherings | In vehicles (e.g. for movie) (see Directive) | 100 (vehicles) |
| <i>Indoor</i> | Indoor Religious and Cultural Ceremonial Gatherings | Indoor religious and cultural ceremonies (see Health Directive No. 2020-34), including wedding ceremonies and funerals (but not receptions) | 25% of capacity or 100, whichever is fewer |



Frequently Asked Questions

How can I keep a Gathering as safe as possible?

- Keep your gathering under 2 hours; the shorter it is, the safer it is.
- Don't attend if you are or a family member is feeling ill or experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms (see www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/covid-screening.pdf).
- Consider staying home if you are a member of a vulnerable population, e.g. those over age 50 or with chronic medical conditions (see www.sfcddp.org/vulnerable).
- Bring items such as masks, hand sanitizers, and your own water bottles.
- Wear a face covering or mask at all times, unless you are specifically exempted per [Health Order C19-12](#).
- Avoid high risk activities that expel more air and thus increases COVID-19 transmission such as singing, chanting, shouting, and playing wind or brass instruments. See more under "How can singing, chanting, shouting, and playing wind/brass instruments be done more safely?"
- Do not do any activities or sports that don't allow physical distancing. Sports with shared equipment are only allowed among members of up to 2 households.
- Flu vaccines are critical in the fight against COVID-19 by (1) keeping workers and communities healthy and (2) reducing strain on our healthcare and testing systems that are responding to COVID-19. **Strongly encourage all personnel to get a flu shot.** Post signage to encourage flu vaccine among customers, visitors, etc.

What do I need to do as a Host business or organization?

- Complete, maintain, and implement the following documents for your Gathering:
 - The relevant [Health and Safety Plan](#) for the type of gathering (see www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus-health-directives.asp to find the correct link for your gathering), including, among other requirements, COVID-19 screening for all [Personnel](#) (www.sfcddp.org/screening-handout) and [Participants](#) (www.sfcddp.org/screeningvisitors). This must be provided to Host Personnel, available to Participants, and posted at the physical entrance where the Host operates.
 - A [SFDPH Social Distancing Protocol](#) that includes, among other requirements, a plan to clean and disinfect high touch surfaces such as seating, doors, and others before each Gathering (see [SFDPH Cleaning/Disinfection Guidance](#), posted at www.sfcddp.org/covidcleaning).
- **Indoor Religious/Cultural Gatherings** are required to post [SFDPH Approved Signage](#), including standalone signage stating:
 - That COVID-19 is transmitted through the air and that indoor settings carry a much higher risk of infection.
 - That seniors and those with health risks should avoid indoor settings with crowds.
 - The maximum capacity of the space and the maximum capacity currently permitted under the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order.
- Hosts are responsible for assisting public health authorities in contact tracing efforts in case an attendee develops COVID-19 and there is a need to conduct contact tracing.
 - Consider keeping a list of Personnel and Participants willing to voluntarily provide their names for three weeks after an event. Any lists should be discarded after three weeks.
 - Try to maintain an up-to-date email or contact list to alert attendees in the event of potential exposure.
- Keep the Gathering as short as possible to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Follow SFDPH's guidelines on "[COVID-19 Positive At Workplace](#)" if someone at your gathering tests positive for COVID-19.



Indoor gatherings are more risky than outdoor gatherings. How do we make these as safe as possible?

- Observe the applicable measures laid out in “How can I keep a Gathering as safe as possible?”
- Personnel and participants should be aware of this heightened risk of indoor gatherings and decide if they can safely attend based on how much risk they want to tolerate.
- Consider making alternations to facilitate social distancing between members of different households such as, moving podiums, creating physical barriers, taping off or moving seating, identifying entrance and exits, prohibiting access to common areas (if possible).
- Maximize ventilation and minimize crowding and touching of high touch surfaces such as keeping bathroom doors propped open, posting social distancing signage.
- Indicate walking paths between spaces designated for prayers to kneel so that people do not walk where someone may touch their head to the floor.
- Increase availability of hand sanitizer or hand washing stations, including at entrances and exits.
- Discontinue use of high touch water vessels, fonts, fountain, and sinks.
- Regularly clean and disinfect common and high touch areas, including bathrooms.
- Consistent with the State’s health guidance, singing and chanting activities are **not permitted** during any Indoor Gathering at this time. Even while wearing a face covering, these activities – in particular singing – greatly increase the risk of infection with COVID-19.
- Food and drink may not be served at an Indoor Gathering. If eating or drinking is required for a faith-based ceremony, see “Can we eat or drink at Gatherings?” below for more details.

Can we host multiple gatherings one after another or at the same time?

- A Host may allow Personnel to participate in sequential gatherings in the same day. If Hosting sequential gatherings, the Host must also:
 - Ensure at least 30 minutes between gatherings for Participants to leave and Personnel to clean and sanitize all high-touch areas.
 - Ensure Personnel thoroughly wash hands and clean, sanitize, or replace any items or clothing that became soiled or contaminated with secretions or bodily fluids from Participants or different Host Personnel during earlier gatherings.
- Hosts can hold only **one** gathering at a time, unless this event is an **Outdoor Meal Gathering** or a **Small Outdoor Gathering** (but not Drive-In or Outdoor Special Gatherings) and the Host can ensure the following rules are followed:
 - The Host must ensure the gatherings will remain separate, such as by placing physical barriers between the gatherings:
 - If a physical barrier is used to keep groups separate, groups must be at least six feet apart. If there is no physical barrier, groups must be at least 12 feet apart.
 - If the gathering occurs on a moving vehicle (such as a bus or a boat) where a physical barrier between groups is not possible, at least six feet must be maintained between groups.
 - The Host must prohibit mingling among personnel or participants from different gatherings or groups.
 - Hosts of fitness classes may hold two simultaneous classes (with 12 people total in each class, including instructors) if either physical barriers ensure 6-foot separation between the groups or markings / other device are used to ensure 12-foot separation between the groups.
- Hosts may **not** hold both indoor and outdoor gatherings simultaneously to allow for more people to attend a gathering (e.g. indoor and outdoor wedding or funeral).



Can we have multiple indoor Gatherings at the same time in a large facility?

- Simultaneous or overlapping Gatherings may be allowed in a multi-use facility only under the following circumstances:
 - Gatherings must occur in spaces that are physically separated from each other either in different rooms separated by sealed floor-to-ceiling walls or in a separate building.
 - Each room must meet all ventilation requirements of the Directive.
 - Participants from different gatherings should use separate avenues of entrances and exits; if only one shared entrance and exit exist, the Host must ensure participants from different gatherings do not enter or exit at the same time.
 - Hosts may **not** hold gatherings simultaneously to allow for more people to attend a single gathering or ceremony (e.g. multiple indoor rooms or a mix of indoor and outdoor spaces may not be used for the same wedding or funeral).
- Schedule at least 30 minutes between indoor gatherings to allow sufficient time for participants to exit safely and for personnel to clean/sanitize high touch areas.
- Staff may be allowed to work inside the facility while multiple indoor Gatherings occur as long as the rules are followed for [the Business Operating Office Facilities Directive](#) and Stay-Safer-At-Home Order
 - In general, keep the areas that are not reserved for an indoor gathering closed unless expressly permitted under the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order.

Can we eat or drink at Gatherings?

- Eating and drinking is permitted at **Outdoor Meal Gatherings** which are limited to 6 people from different households.
- Self-service food, potlucks, or family style eating and drinking events should not be held. By avoiding these situations, you can avoid the risk of cross contamination.
- If, as part of a faith-based ceremony, eating or drinking is required, it must be done in a way to minimize contact between people, especially involving the hands and mouth. In these circumstances, face coverings must be worn when Personnel and/or Participants are within 6 feet of one another. As an example, communion rituals could have the priest and participants masked at all times, with the participants receiving communion in the hand and moving away from others to briefly lower their mask to place the sacramental bread on the tongue (see example video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8tg8A5jmPO).
- Glasses, cups and utensils should not be shared. If they are, glass, cup, or utensil will be disinfected between each use and the users' hands will be cleaned using appropriate hand washing or hand sanitizer.

Must we wear masks/ face coverings all the time?

- All people must wear masks except as specified in the Face Covering Order.
- Proper use of face coverings is even more critical when in higher risk gatherings, such as indoors.
- Face coverings may be removed briefly while eating or drinking, however proper social distancing should be maintained. If removing face coverings/masks is deemed as essential in a ritual or ceremony, a person may briefly remove their face covering only if they (1) maintain social distance and do not speak, recite, chant, shout or sing; or (2) isolate themselves from all other people to speak or recite, such as by speaking inside an enclosed chamber or behind a plastic or glass partition or face shield no more than 12 inches from the mouth of the speaker and greater than 12 feet away from others.



What about camping, cookouts, or BBQs?

- Arrive with your own supplies including soap, disinfectants, hand sanitizer, paper towels, etc.
- Do not share BBQs or outdoor grilling stations with people outside of your household. Clean all stations frequently.
- If camping with someone from outside your household, consider self-isolating for 14 days before and after if you will be in close contact to minimize the risk of transmission.
- “Close contact” is defined by the CDC as being within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 2 days before the illness starts (for people without symptoms, this means 2 days before they were tested; www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/appendix.html#contact).

How can singing, chanting, shouting, and playing wind/brass instruments be done more safely?

- Singing, chanting, shouting, and playing wind/brass instruments raise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 because of the forceful exhalation involved and should be avoided. Ideally, play a recording to avoid live performance.
- These activities are permitted at an **Outdoor Special Gathering** by one person at a time and only if:
 - The person performing the activity is at least **12 feet** from any other person.
 - The person singing, chanting, or shouting is wearing a **Face Covering** at all times.
 - The instrument’s bells and/or openings where air/sound exit are covered with a mask/other fabric at all times.
 - Participants may not sing, chant, or shout along with the person who is engaging in that activity.
- When these activities are permitted, consider the following to reduce risk:
 - Ensure the performance is in a large, well ventilated area (see www.sfcddcp.org/COVID-ventilation).
 - Minimize the amount of time engaged in these activities.
 - Minimize the intensity to the extent possible (e.g., sing/play instruments at a reduced volume, use amplifiers, etc.).
 - Consider having a physical barrier between the performer and others in the Outdoor Special Gathering.
 - Project voices and air exhaust from instruments away from Participants (e.g. have performers position themselves in silhouette).
 - Encourage performers to get tested for COVID-19 as close to the performance date as possible, accounting for the turnaround time for the test (which is typically about 2 days but can be longer). People can get tested by their regular healthcare provider or at CityTestSF (<https://sf.gov/citytestsf>).
 - Prohibit anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 or anyone who is a “Close Contact” of someone with COVID-19 from performing these activities. See www.sfcddcp.org/screeningvisitors.
 - For wind instruments:
 - Performers must be masked at all times as much as possible when not performing.
 - Instruments must not be shared among individuals of different households.
 - If relevant to the instrument, performers should use a large, thin, plastic-lined pad on their chest and lap to collect spit.



Can ventilation reduce COVID-19 transmission risks for indoor activities?

- Hosts should follow **SFDPH Ventilation Guidance** for any indoor activities: Make any necessary improvements to the ventilation of the establishment, including:
 - HVAC systems (if one is present)
 - Ensure HVAC systems are serviced and functioning properly.
 - Evaluate possibilities for upgrading air filters to the highest efficiency possible.
 - Increase the percentage of outdoor air through the HVAC system, readjusting or overriding recirculation (“economizer”) dampers.
 - Disable demand-control ventilation controls that reduce air supply based on temperature or occupancy
 - Evaluate running the building ventilation system even when the building is unoccupied to maximize ventilation. At the minimum, reset timer-operated ventilation systems so that they start operating 1-2 hours before the building opens and 2-3 hours after the building is closed.
 - Increase natural ventilation by opening windows and doors when environmental conditions and building requirements allow.
 - Consider installing portable air cleaners (“HEPA filters”).
 - If the establishment uses pedestal fans or hard mounted fans, adjust the direction of fans to minimize air blowing from one individual’s space to another’s space.
 - For more information and additional resources, please see the following: San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH): www.sfcddp.org/COVID-ventilation.

Resources

Useful COVID-19 Resources to keep checking:

- San Francisco guidance: www.sfcddp.org/covid19
- San Francisco Health Officer orders: www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus-healthorders.asp
- Printable resources such as signage: <https://sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19>
- California guidance:
 - <https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/>
 - <https://files.covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-places-of-worship.pdf>
- CDC guidance: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/index.html