



March 10, 2020

Alameda County COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Mass Gatherings

What are the current recommendations for mass gatherings?

- Vulnerable populations should stay away from crowded social gatherings as much as possible.
- As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, community event calendars should be assessed on a rolling 30-day basis.
- **Large events** (more than 1000 people): Cancel or postpone
- **Medium events** (100-1000 people): Consider the following recommendations when determining event cancellation or postponement:
 - **Size:** Smaller is better. The risk of getting the virus increases as the size of the crowd increases.
 - **Duration:** Shorter is better. The risk of getting the virus increases as the duration of the event increases (e.g., a 2-hour meeting is lower risk than a 2-day conference).
 - **Density:** Risk of getting the virus increases in crowded settings. If the venue or setting doesn't enable people to keep social distance (more than arm's length of one another), the risk of spreading the virus increases. People should avoid crowded places where large numbers of people are within arm's length of one another.
 - **Geographic reach:** Mixing of people across regions, states, and countries
- **Small events** (<100 people): Cancel smaller community events where people at increased risk of severe illness (older adults and those with chronic medical conditions) will be congregating.

How long will these recommendations be in place?

These recommendations are effective immediately and will be reassessed as this COVID-19 outbreak evolves.

Why is the Health Department providing this guidance now?

The Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) offers this guidance to help people planning or attending large gatherings to make informed decisions. We have seen evidence of community transmission and increasing cases of COVID-19 across the Bay Area, and we have weighed the potential benefits to our community's health alongside the potential for disruptive impacts on event organizers and attendees. The goals for guidance on social distancing and mass gatherings are:

1. to protect people attending and working at the event and the local community from COVID-19 infection; and
2. to reduce community transmission, decrease the introduction of COVID-19 into new communities, and slow and decrease the spread of the virus.

How will social distancing help prevent the spread of the coronavirus?

To lessen the impact of coronavirus on our community, we must reduce the times and places when people come together. By acting now, we can reduce how fast and how far the virus spreads.



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What should essential large gatherings do to prepare?

- Do not attend if sick.
- For events that aren't cancelled, we recommend: Having hand washing capabilities, hand sanitizers and tissues; frequently cleaning high touch surface areas like counter tops and hand rails; finding ways to create physical space to minimize close contact as much as possible.

Vulnerable populations

Who are high risk populations?

People aged 60 years and older, and people with health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, kidney disease, and weakened immune systems, are at high risk for complications from COVID-19.

What about people experiencing homelessness?

The Alameda County Public Health Department and Health Care for the Homeless program have developed guidance for shelters and other transitional housing sites for staff who visit encampments, and for individuals experiencing homelessness. For more information, visit <https://www.achch.org/coronavirus.html>.

Workplaces and businesses

What are the recommendations for workplaces and businesses?

Workplaces and businesses should minimize exposure by following these recommendations:

- Suspend nonessential employee travel.
- Minimize the number of employees working within arm's length of one another, including minimizing or canceling large in-person meetings and conferences.
- Urge employees to stay home when they are sick and maximize flexibility in sick leave benefits.
- Do not require a doctor's note for employees who are sick.
- Consider use of telecommuting options.
- Some people need to be at work to provide essential services of great benefit to the community. They can take steps in their workplace to minimize risk.

Are workplaces considered places of mass gathering?

Workplaces are not a part of our mass gatherings recommendations. We encourage all workplaces to prepare and plan for possible disruptions, absences and modifications to policies and procedures.

Schools

Is the Alameda County Public Health Department recommending that school be cancelled?

No, the Public Health Department is not recommending that school be canceled. If there is a confirmed case of the coronavirus at a school, the Health Department will work with the school and the district to determine the best measures including potential school closure.



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What are the recommendations for schools?

Please visit <http://www.acphd.org/2019-ncov/resources/schools.aspx> to review school recommendations.

What should I do if my school remains open?

Do not go to school if you are sick. If you have a child with chronic health conditions, consult your doctor about school attendance.

Health Care Settings

What are the recommendations for health care settings?

ACPHD continues to provide specific guidance for clinicians and health care settings:
<http://www.acphd.org/2019-ncov/clinicians.aspx>

What should I do if I am sick?

- If you are ill, call your health care provider ahead of time; you may be able to be served by phone.
- The general public should avoid going to medical settings such as hospitals, nursing homes and long-term care facilities, even if you are not ill. Do not visit emergency rooms unless it is essential.
- Health care settings need to protect our health care workforce and people at high risk of complications from illness.

Staying Healthy

How can people reduce the risk of getting sick and prevent the spread of the coronavirus?

Our best safeguard continues to be good health hygiene and staying home if sick:

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your cough or sneeze.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Try alternatives to shaking hands, such as bows, foot taps, elbow bumps or waves.
- If you have recently returned from a country, state or region with ongoing COVID-19 infections, monitor your health and follow the instructions of public health officials.
- Keep common spaces clean to help maintain a healthy environment for you and others.
- There is no recommendation to wear masks at this time to prevent yourself from getting sick.

How can people prepare for the possible disruption caused by an outbreak?

To prepare for the possible disruptions caused by an outbreak, you should:

- Prepare to work from home if that is possible for your job, and your employer.
- Make sure you have a supply of all essential medications for your family.
- Make a child care plan if you or a care giver are sick.
- Decide how your family will manage a school closure.
- Plan for how you can care for a sick family member without getting sick yourself.
- Take care of each other and check in by phone with friends, family and neighbors that are vulnerable to serious illness or death if they get COVID-19.



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Stay informed

How can people stay informed on the latest news about COVID-19?

Be sure to get accurate information and facts. The best sources for up-to-date information include:

- Alameda County Public Health Department at www.achpd.org.
- California Department of Public Health www.cdph.org
- Centers for Disease Control at www.cdc.org

Information for specific groups

CDC offers more specific guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in communities:

- Homes <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/index.html>
- Childcare and Schools <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>
- Colleges and Universities <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities.html>
- Work <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>
- Community and Faith Based Leaders <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>
- Community Events <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/index.html>
- First Responders and Law Enforcement <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/first-responders.html>
- Public Health Communicators <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-communicators-get-your-community-ready.html>
- Higher Risk and Special Populations <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/index.html>