NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES

Interim Guidance for Meeting Rooms and Event Spaces
(October 2, 2020)

Guidelines for Meeting Room and Event Spaces: 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 hotels and convention centers and other settings with meeting rooms and event spaces to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their communities.

This guidance covers the following topics:

- 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

Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure

Social distancing is one of the only tools 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. 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. Phase 3 includes several requirements and recommendations to support social distancing in spaces where the public may gather.

Meeting Rooms and Event Spaces are <u>required</u> to:
- ❑ Limit occupancy per room to 100 people, or 30% of fire capacity, whichever is less. (If there is not a fire capacity number for the room, limit occupancy to 100 people, or 7 people per 1,000 square feet, whichever is less.)
  - ❑ Workers and any other support staff do not count toward this capacity limit.
- ❑ Limit to seated events only.
  - ❑ Each group of guests must be seated to achieve at least 6-foot separation between each group of guests in all directions.
  - ❑ Guests must remain at their seats except to enter, leave, visit the restroom, and obtain food or drink.
  - ❑ Do not allow standing receptions, events or cocktail hours.

❑ Clearly provide 6 feet floor markings in waiting areas, check-out lines, and other areas where people may congregate or wait.
❑ Follow the DHHS Interim Guidance for Restaurants for reopening restaurants.
❑ Post the reduced "Emergency Maximum Capacity" at each entrance to the facility.
   o Sign templates are available in English (Full-Color and Grayscale) and in Spanish (Full-Color and Grayscale) on the NC DHHS COVID-19 response site.
❑ Post signage at the main entrance that reminds people to stay 6 feet apart, wear a face cloth covering and wash their hands frequently.
   o NC DHHS Know Your Ws provides English, Spanish, Combined English and Spanish versions of the "Wait" flyer.

It is recommended that meeting rooms and event spaces:
❑ Clearly mark designated entry and exit points; Encourage dedicated entry and exit locations for event attendees. If a building has only one entry/exit point, try to stagger entry and exit times if possible.
❑ Close dance floors and not allow dancing.
❑ Have dedicated staff for meeting rooms and event spaces.
❑ Develop and use systems that allow for online, email, or telephone transactions.
❑ Utilize self-check-in or place barrier/partition between ticket/check in areas and attendees.
❑ Close areas of congregation, such as lounge areas, gift tables and other areas that promote individuals gathering in groups.
❑ Develop reservation times to the extent possible to help limit wait times and lines.
❑ Limit capacity in restrooms, elevators, and other enclosed areas to accommodate social distancing.
❑ Space seating at least 6 feet apart when feasible or block off furniture that is within 6 feet of other sitting areas if it cannot be spaced out further.
❑ Assign people seats that are evenly distributed throughout the space and monitor that people do not move to other seats.

Shared Dining and Shared Restrooms

It is recommended that meeting rooms and event spaces:
❑ Use disposable food service items (e.g., utensils, dishes). If disposable items are not feasible or desirable, ensure that all non-disposable food service items are washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher. Individuals should wash their hands after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items.
❑ Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, or eating utensils.
❑ Set up handwashing stations when feasible at the entrance of dining areas. When handwashing stations are not available, ensure hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol is available at all entrances.
❑ Switch to individual packaged condiment containers to reduce shared condiment stations.

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.

Meeting Rooms and Event Spaces are required to:
- ❑ Have all employees wear a face covering when they are inside the establishment, unless the worker states that an exception applies.
- ❑ Have all guests wear a face covering when they are inside the establishment, unless the guest states that an exception applies or if they are eating or drinking.
- ❑ Make good-faith efforts to provide to workers either a one-week supply of reusable face coverings or a new disposable face covering each day.
- ❑ New face coverings should be provided during the work day if the worker's face covering becomes soiled, torn, or wet.
- ❑ 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.

It is recommended that meeting rooms and event spaces:
- ❑ Provide disposable face coverings to customers to wear while in the establishment.

Cleaning and Hygiene

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

Meeting Rooms and Event Spaces are required to:
- ❑ Promote frequent use of hand washing and hand sanitizer for staff and guests. 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.
- ❑ Perform ongoing and routine environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas (e.g., doors, doorknobs, rails) with an EPA approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), and increase disinfection during peak times or high customer density times.

It is recommended that meeting rooms and event spaces:
- ❑ 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.

Monitoring for Symptoms

Conducting regular screening for symptoms can help reduce exposure to COVID-19. 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.

Meeting Rooms and Event Spaces are required to:
- ❑ Have a plan in place for immediately removing employees from work if symptoms develop while at work. 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.

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

❑ Post signage at the main entrance requesting that people who are 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).

It is recommended that meeting rooms and event spaces:

❑ Establish and enforce sick leave policies to prevent the spread of disease, including:
  o Enforcing employees staying home if sick.
  o Encouraging liberal use of sick leave policy.
  o 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:
  o No fever for at least 24 hours since recovery (without the use of fever-reducing medicine) AND
  o Other symptoms have improved (e.g., coughing, shortness of breath) AND
  o 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 to wear masks 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).

Protecting Vulnerable Populations

Information on who is at higher risk for severe disease is available from the CDC and NCDHHS.

It is recommended that meeting rooms and event spaces:

❑ Enable employees to self-identify as high risk for severe disease and reassign work to minimize face-to-face contact and to allow them to maintain a distance of six feet from others, or to telework if possible.

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.

It is recommended that meeting rooms and event spaces:

- ❑ Provide workers with education about COVID-19 strategies, using methods like videos, webinars, or FAQs. Some reliable sources include NC DHHS COVID-19, Know Your W's: Wear, Wait, Wash, NC DHHS COVID-19 Latest Updates, NC DHHS COVID-19 Materials & Resources
- ❑ 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 reopening, it is recommended that meeting rooms and event spaces:
- ❑ 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 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

- NC DHHS: North Carolina COVID-19
- CDC: Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers
- CDC: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility
- CDC: Reopening Guidance
- EPA: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2
- FDA: Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
- HHS/OSHA: Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19
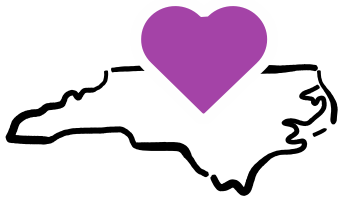
#StayStrongNC

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

Learn more at nc.gov/covid19.

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