

Safety Guidelines for Event Organizers, Venues, and Facilities

March 21, 2022

This document is designed for event organizers and staff of venues and facilities that host gatherings or events and will guide you through some of the measures that organizations can undertake to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Phase 3 of the provincial Reopening Plan lifts measures such as gathering limits, social distancing, and masking. Under Phase 3, certain measures still apply at long-term care facilities and at adult residential centres and regional rehabilitation centres. For a detailed breakdown of these, see: [Reopening plan: phase 3 - Government of Nova Scotia, Canada](#).

These measures may change and it is the responsibility of the event organizer and venue to stay up to date on public health requirements and adjust their plans as needed. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): restrictions and guidance - Government of Nova Scotia, Canada](#)

- The proof of full vaccination requirement for discretionary activities was lifted on February 28, 2022.
- As of March 21, the province has lifted gathering limits associated with COVID-19 outside of healthcare and long-term care centres.
- The requirement to wear a mask that covers the mouth and nose while in public indoor places, as defined in the Order, was also lifted on March 21, 2022. Event hosts are no longer required to ensure that patrons are seated when consuming food or beverages at events.

Businesses and organizations can set their own policies, but must consider the legal and ethical implications of those policies. We cannot give legal advice, but we encourage event organizers and venue operators to do their own research about the legal and ethical implications of any policies they wish to set.

Events Nova Scotia encourages event organizers and venue operators to observe the following as best practices to continue to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Food & Beverage Service

- All vendors must have a food permit, unless exempt. Information on food permits can be found at: <https://novascotia.ca/nse/food-protection/retailers.asp> or by calling 1-877-936-8476.
- Event hosts should provide hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol or hand washing facilities at all entrances and exits, each vending area, as well as near highly touched surfaces such as elevators and check-outs.

Ticketing & Crowd Management

- Communication on tickets or in pre-event communications should discourage attendees, volunteers and others from coming into the venue or facility when sick, and encourage them to get tested if they have [symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#) and to stay home if they are required to self-isolate under the Order.
- Communication in advance of an event encouraging attendees to socially distance as much as possible is recommended.

Venue/Facility Cleaning Practices

- Continue regular cleaning and disinfecting of all general surfaces that are frequently touched, such as doorknobs, handrails, equipment, etc. Increase the frequency of cleaning with increased use.
- High touch surfaces, like those found in a washroom, should be cleaned, and disinfected twice daily at a minimum and more often if necessary.
- Use a Health Canada-approved disinfectant, which is stored away from children.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizing stations (minimum 60%) should be located throughout the facility and at seating area entrance points with posted signage to support hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- If the event organizer is providing portable toilets (outdoor events), they must provide portable handwashing stations and ensure that they remain stocked throughout the duration of the event. If possible, they should also provide hand sanitizer stations, ideally ones that are touch-free.

Building Ventilation

- Building mechanical ventilation systems(s) should be checked before the event, and each day after, to ensure equipment is operating as intended.
- Ensure ventilation is adequate for the number of people attending, the size of the venue, and the nature of the event or activity.

Communications / Signage

- Consider communication prior to the event or activities taking place that outline preventive measures to attendees, suppliers, volunteers, and others who are attending the activities.
- Communicate to participants, workers, and volunteers in advance of the event, the importance of staying home if feeling sick and following rules regarding isolation.
- Post signage at the venue/facility entrances that discourages attendees, volunteers, and others from coming into the venue or facility when sick, encourage them to practice good hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette, to get tested when any COVID-19 symptoms develop, and to stay home until well.
- Keep signs visible (including in those areas of the establishment not open to the public) to remind employees, patrons, and participants to properly hand wash or sanitize and to use good respiratory hygiene practices.
- Use in-venue digital signage (if available), such as a video scoreboard or concourse signage, to reinforce both facility and personal hygiene protocols.
- Use facility social media channels and website to post the protocols.
- Consider post-event evaluations to survey attendees or others on measuring their level of comfort or facility cleanliness. This can provide important feedback and provide you an evaluation of your measures.

Healthy Workplace Policies

- Encourage your employees, participants, and volunteers to get tested if experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or are directed by Public Health to isolate and/or be tested.
- Discourage attendees, volunteers, and others from coming into the venue or facility when sick, to get tested if COVID-19 symptoms develop, and to stay home until well.
- Do not prevent or discourage employees or volunteers from wearing masks if they choose to do so.
- Good health and safety program is crucial for developing a sustainable workplace safety culture. Government has developed a set of guidelines that can be used by workplaces to incorporate into their operations where warranted: the Nova Scotia Government Protocols for Workplaces (<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/COVID-19-Protocols-for-workplaces.pdf>).

Process for illness and exposure

- Consider keeping an isolation space in the venue/facility that can be used should someone show signs of COVID symptoms that can be close to exits to encourage the individual to return home, isolate, and seek testing.
- Consider keeping non-medical masks on site should anyone develop symptoms. These could also be available at venue entrances for anyone who chooses to wear one.
- Advise attendees, volunteers, staff, and others to adhere to Public Health instructions regarding isolation should they test positive for COVID-19. <https://www.nshealth.ca/coronavirus>

Developing Your Plan

The following outlines a series of recommended protocols to ensure appropriate management of attendee safety, crowd and capacity management, flow of people, cleaning, concessions, staff, and suppliers. These protocols should be regularly monitored and adjusted based on evolving public health recommendations. Venues should do a risk assessment of potential hazards at their venue, which will inform what control measures are required.

While there is no formal approval requirement for event plans, we encourage you to observe the following as best practices to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Seating & Ticketing

A summary of COVID-19 safety requirements should be on all tickets and reinforced at the venue through signage and announcements, if possible. Venues are encouraged to make COVID-19 safety requirements available online via their website, social media and emails sent prior to the event.

Plans should include a seating map outlining locations of available seats for the event. Your plan must implement measures to encourage physical distancing across all facets of your facility and operation.

- Clear directional signage for entry and exit locations should be displayed to promote and ensure one-way traffic for entering and exiting the venue, as well as the flow of people to and from washrooms and concessions.
- Signage and/or colour coding system may be used to flow of attendees. Use visual cues such as drawing circles in the venue or on the grounds to encourage physical distancing.

Food & Beverage Service

- Place minimum 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers at booth for customer use.
- Use single-service condiments, dispensed by staff, to avoid contamination.
- Avoid contact and encourage physical distance from customers when providing food orders.

- All vendors must have a food permit, unless exempt. Information on food permits can be found at: <https://novascotia.ca/nse/food-protection/retailers.asp>
- Directional arrows and stanchions, ropes, or other form of physical crowd management may be in place at concessions areas to facilitate physical distancing in queues.
- Concessions service areas may use plexiglass screens to protect staff and attendees.
- Cashless payment options are encouraged in concession areas and bars, or else dedicating a staff person to handling money and another to food service if you unable to adequately wash hands between tasks.

Washrooms

- Limit the number of occupants in the restroom at a time to encourage physical distancing.
- Clearly post signs or markers to encourage attendees to maintain the physical distance of 2 metres (6 feet).
- Ensure open restrooms are:
 - Operational with functional toilets
 - Cleaned and disinfected regularly, particularly high-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, stall doors, doorknobs, countertops, dispensers, diaper changing tables, and light switches. High touch surfaces like those found in a washroom should be cleaned and disinfected twice daily at a minimum and more often if necessary.
 - Cleaned and disinfected with a [Health Canada-recommended disinfectant](#), which is stored away from children - Adequately stocked with supplies for handwashing, including soap and water or hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, and no-touch trash cans Portable washrooms for outdoor activities
- If you are providing portable toilets (outdoor events), you must also provide portable handwashing stations and ensure that they remain stocked throughout the duration of the event. If possible, also provide hand sanitizer stations, ideally ones that are touch-free.

- Organizers should develop a maintenance plan in place that outlines the number of washrooms and handwashing/sanitizing stations required, the frequency of cleaning, staffing requirements, etc.

Building Sanitization

Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects help prevent the spread of COVID-19. This will reduce the chance of people becoming ill after touching dirty surfaces. Cleaning does not kill germs but helps remove them from the surface. Disinfecting refers to using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This is most effective after surfaces are cleaned. Both steps are important to reduce the spread of infection.

- Alcohol-based hand sanitizing stations (minimum 60%) should be located throughout the venue and at seating area entrance points with posted signage to support hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Communicating your plan, ensuring attendees, clients and participants are properly informed and reminded about preventative measures is important to delivering a safe event and ensuring an enjoyable experience for all.
- Consider how the facility will communicate its COVID-19 protocols to stakeholders, ticket buyers, tenants, and regular users of the facility in advance of the event.
 - Use in-venue digital signage (if available), such as a video scoreboard or concourse signage, to reinforce both facility and personal hygiene protocols.
 - Make announcements throughout the event to remind attendees of the protocols.
 - Use facility social media channels and website to post the protocols.
 - Use signage throughout the facility and within back-of-house spaces to outline COVID-19 protocols, including reinforcement of the importance of monitoring for symptoms.

Volunteer, Employee & Supplier Protocols

- Recognize the importance of keeping your volunteers and staff safe and ensuring that they are properly informed and trained.
- Do not discourage or prevent volunteers, employees, or suppliers from wearing masks if they so choose.
- Provide advance communication on what to expect, including information about any new procedures.
- Conduct training with volunteers, facility staff and third-party suppliers to ensure they are aware of the protocols and their responsibilities.
- Implement a self-assessment tool to ensure a pre-screening prior to reporting to work. Volunteers and staff who feel unwell or are close contacts of someone who was should be asked to stay home.
- If a volunteer or employee begins showing signs or symptoms of COVID-19 once arriving to work, they must be isolated and sent home to complete the COVID-19 self-assessment tool for further guidance.
- Supplier access to the venue should be managed through a single-entry point and require sign-in.
- Provide cleaning stations in all common areas and staff areas, including disinfectant wipes and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Post proper handwashing guidelines in all staff areas to ensure frequent reminders.
- Consider the appointment of a facility safety lead by team and shift to ensure protocols are adhered to.
- Provide safety checklists by team and shift for clear monitoring of protocols and procedures.