Planning Events & Meetings During COVID-19

A guide for planning safer social gatherings

Before event planning begins, please consider the following:

- Event planning is contingent upon current conditions of community virus transmission. If the number of COVID-19 cases increases, then event plans may need to be altered to reduce the risk that you or your guests will be exposed to COVID-19.
- Please communicate that all plans are tentative and may change. It is a good idea to have a Plan “A” and a Plan “B” to provide flexibility based upon potential changes in pandemic conditions. Plans may change based on Governor’s Executive Orders and/or the Texas State University Event Guidelines.
- Perform a Risk Assessment prior to each planned event. Create a plan to address how your organization will respond to activities and environments that may create increased risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- Each event may have a unique set of risks. Create specific plans for each event based on the four main risk factors.

Risk Assessment factors to consider when planning your event:

1. **Place** – indoor events may pose a higher risk than outdoor events, but current restrictions stated in the Governor’s Executive Orders require that no more than 10 people congregate in outdoor spaces. When selecting an indoor venue, you must consider the capacity of the space to allow for social distancing. A larger space may be needed to accommodate a group if participants are actively moving about, dancing, eating, or drinking. Please attempt to find a space that has good ventilation and air circulation. *(A large event that is very interactive may require a reduced space capacity as low as 25% of the maximum allowed space capacity whereas, a group seated listening to a presentation with face coverings may only require a space with 50% reduced space capacity.)*
2. **Time** – longer duration events may put participants at a higher risk of virus exposure and transmission. Consider reducing the time spent together or create a plan so that the larger group may be divided into smaller groups attending at different times or shifts.

3. **Number** – the more people participating in the event, the higher the risk of virus exposure and transmission. Consider events that have a lower number of attendees. Events with participants that come from areas outside our university community with a higher level of COVID-19 transmission may create a higher risk of virus exposure.

4. **Activity** – the higher the amount of movement and interaction required at the event, the higher the risk of virus exposure and transmission. Activities that involve less social distancing and require the removal of face coverings for eating and drinking increase the risk of virus exposure.

**Develop solutions to reduce risk at your event:**

**Travel** – consider how participants will get to the event. Risk increases when people crowd into vehicles with other people who do not reside in their personal household or who are not part of their “social bubble.” Traveling in personal vehicles with roommates or family members puts one at a lower risk than traveling in a packed bus or personal vehicle with people outside of your personal household.

**Face Coverings** – face coverings are the best defense against virus transmission, so requiring that your guests wear face coverings at all times except when consuming food/beverage should be monitored and enforced. Face covering are required inside all Texas State buildings.

**Hand Sanitizer** – providing hand sanitizer provides an additional layer of protection in helping fight virus transmission. Providing hand sanitizer stations at your event is a great strategy.

**Outdoor Events** – outdoor events may pose a lower risk than indoor events, but it is important to monitor group sizes to adhere to the Governor’s Executive Order of no more than 10 people based upon the current mandate. Small pods of 10 people outdoors must be distinctly separated and socially distanced to maintain compliance.

**Activity Type** – If the activity involves more close contact such as a “mixer”, dance, or games, then risk reduction strategies must be developed such as decreasing the time of the activity, using a space capacity lower than 50%, decreasing the number of participants, separating participants into smaller groups or “pods” during the activity or breaking the activity into multiple, smaller sessions occurring at different times or on different days. Activities that may include yelling or frequent outbursts such as spectators at a sporting event indoor or outdoor, especially if face masks may be removed at times, require greater social distancing (> 6 ft) and the use of a lower permitted capacity such as 25% of the maximum allowed space capacity for the space or venue.
**Food & Beverage** – eating and drinking requires people to take off their face coverings and people will typically stay longer and talk more in these situations. A risk reduction strategy is to require everyone to be seated while eating and drinking at larger tables to promote better social distancing. Food should be served or provided as pre-packaged items rather than as a self-serve buffet.

**Divide people into smaller pods/groups** – the risk of a larger event can be reduced by breaking the event into multiple sessions on the same day or over multiple days or creating “pods” of people who will socialize and participate in event activities together throughout the event and not mix with members of other pods. Creating smaller groups within an event reduces risk of exposure to COVID-19 and makes contact tracing easier should that be necessary after the event.

**Provide event monitors** – appointing event monitors to remind participants about health and safety measures required for the event and to ensure compliance with group sizes, pods and social distancing can help reduce risk.

**Event registration** – events should have a “check-in” point for documenting participants at the event. If participants will be grouped into smaller groups or “pods” during the activity, the participant list should indicate which group or pod. Maintaining an accurate participant list will assist with contact tracing after the event if that becomes necessary.

- **Fraternities and Sororities** should email this form to the Fraternity & Sorority Life Office (DOS-FSL@txstate.edu): [https://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/jcr:1d1c7c42-4e78-40ad-9515-63e7e2ce82d6/Non-Alcohol%20Event%20Registration%20Form%20Updated%2010.16.17.pdf](https://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/jcr:1d1c7c42-4e78-40ad-9515-63e7e2ce82d6/Non-Alcohol%20Event%20Registration%20Form%20Updated%2010.16.17.pdf)
- **Registered Student Organizations** can use this link for registration: [https://getinvolved.lbjsc.txstate.edu/Policy-and-Procedures/Event-Attendance-Tracking.html](https://getinvolved.lbjsc.txstate.edu/Policy-and-Procedures/Event-Attendance-Tracking.html)
- **University Departments**: To set up events for contact tracing, pre-registration, and attendance recording, department staff should visit the link for the Student Affairs Event Management System: [https://www.vpsa.txstate.edu/facstaff/staffresources.html](https://www.vpsa.txstate.edu/facstaff/staffresources.html)

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**When Planning Your Event Consider This Risk Assessment Process:**

- Identify the risks of the event – **Place, Time, Number & Activity**
- Assess the probability of adverse outcomes – Are you addressing all the identified risks?
- Identify and implement the controls needed to eliminate or reduce the risk
- Reassess the activity after the risks have been managed to make sure your event plan is solid
- Remember to consider how the activities you are planning relate to the mission and purpose of your organization