



## Alexandria Health Department Meeting and Gathering Guidance to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 | March 15, 2020

The general public is currently at low risk for COVID-19 because we are not yet seeing transmission between people where the source is unknown. At the same time, there are best practices we can implement to lower risk further. This is a rapidly and continuously evolving situation and this guidance may change as a result. Our priority is to ensure that all who live, work, play, pray and learn in Alexandria are healthy and safe. There are steps that everyone can take.

### **As of March 15, Governor Northam has banned all public or mass gatherings of 100 or more people.**

Examples of gatherings include religious services, board meetings, commission meetings, community forums, festivals, special events, open houses, presentations, and other targeted group programs. This guidance is for community and faith-based organizations, event planners, and other groups hosting public events and meetings of less than 100 people.

### **Should we Cancel this Event?**

There are a number of factors to consider when deciding if you should cancel, postpone, or modify a meeting or gathering. Most decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis depending on whether this is an essential event or gathering, if the event can be modified, and if there are high-risk individuals involved. Use the below questions to help guide your decision-making.

### **Is the Meeting Essential?**

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- **Is the work of the group required for business continuity?**
- Example: A group needs to act on time-sensitive agenda items coming before City Council in the near future.
- **Would not having the event cause undue hardship?**
- Examples: Meal or critical health programs/services

### **Is the Meeting Not Essential OR Does it Pose a Risk to Likely Attendees?**

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- **Can the gathering be rescheduled, in whole or in part?**
- Example: An activity, celebration or meeting that is not time sensitive and could take place later.
- **Can the experience be offered in a virtual format?**
- Example: Religious services offered through online tools and resources such as Skype or Google Hangouts.
- **Does the event's target population include people in the high-risk categories?**
- Example: Older adults, persons with heart disease, lung disease or diabetes.

## Are there Accommodations That Can Effectively Reduce Risk?

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- **Is it possible to change meeting setup and design to reduce risk?**
- Example: Available space can be configured in a way that provides six feet of distancing between participants

### **Event Checklist for Meetings and Gatherings, Including Religious Services**

For all meetings and gatherings that will take place, take the steps below to ensure that when we do meet, we do so safely.

- **Venue Setup: Reducing Germ Spread**
  - Increasing physical distance between attendees
  - Identifying sick attendees
  - Hand sanitizer, tissues, trash baskets positioned throughout event space
  - Increasing ventilation
  - Provide [cleaning agents](#) for frequently touched surfaces, and assign staff to regularly clean surfaces
  - Post “How to protect yourself and others” signs
- **Attendee Education**
  - Pre-event meeting messaging: Stay home if sick
  - Event intro: Convey current County/region status
  - Reiterate safety steps, safety messages, process changes
- **Cancel or Minimize Non-Essential Components**
  - Consider eliminating fellowship situations with shared food, especially if many people will be touching the same coffee servers, condiment containers, etc.
- **Adapt Your Procedures**
  - Wash hands, cover coughs and sneezes, maintain six-foot distance; don’t attend if sick
  - Temporarily stop hugging and handshaking as part of normal fellowship and at the sign/exchange of the Peace. Other options include bowing to each other, waving, or using elbow or foot bumps
  - Consider other ways to collect offering than passing a plate around that everyone touches, and consider the same for communion
  - Shared ritual garments should be washed after use
- **Consider the Following for Communion**
  - Distribution of ritual breads could be by a single asymptomatic person, rather than each participant individually
  - If receipt of the host or a blessing may be sufficient, limit Communion to one of these during times of community-wide germ spread
  - Communion servers should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before serving or blessing
  - Wipe the interior and exterior rim between parishioners and rotate the cloth during use
  - Use a clean cloth for each service
  - Intinction by parishioners could be temporarily stopped