

# Information for Community Organizations and Faith Communities: **Limitations on Gatherings to Minimize COVID-19**

Updated 03-13-20

On March 11, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee and Public Health issued emergency orders designed to minimize the health impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19). These orders:

- Prohibit **all large gatherings** of more than 250 people.
- Prohibit gatherings of less than 250 people, **unless measures are taken by event organizers to minimize risk.**

**If your gathering, event or service will have MORE than 250 people, it may not proceed. If it has LESS than 250 people, you MUST take all the following steps to minimize risk. If you cannot take the following steps, then the event is prohibited by the Health Order.**

## **1) Precautions for older adults and those with underlying health conditions:**

Health Officer Order: Older adults and individuals with underlying medical conditions that are at increased risk of serious COVID-19 are encouraged not to attend (including employees);

### Suggestions to community:

- Take specific steps to encourage older adults age 60 and above and those with underlying health conditions not to attend event. Note that [CDC recommends](#) that individuals at risk of severe illness should stay at home, avoiding gatherings or other situations of potential exposures, including travel, church attendance, and social events with 10 or more people.
- Make sure your gathering, event or service is not dependent on leaders/organizers who are vulnerable individuals or adults over 60 years of age. Have extra leaders/volunteers prepared so that no leader feels pressured to attend or lead if they have any symptoms.

## **2) Social distancing to prevent prolonged close contact.**

Health Officer Order: Social distancing recommendations must be met (i.e., limit contact of people within 6 feet from each other for 10 minutes or longer);

### Suggestions to community:

- Event organizers should ask themselves; how close will people be and for how long? Ensure that your event is organized in such way to avoid close contact between people.
- [Washington Department of Health](#) advises that “being within 6 feet of a sick person with COVID-19 for about 10 minutes” constitutes close contact which could result in exposure.

- Encourage greetings that don't involve close contact (don't shake hands or hug)
- Minimize activities that require close contact for more than a very brief duration, e.g., prayer next to each other, reading from a religious text together, sharing communion, etc.

**3) Health screening for event organizers including employees and volunteers at event.**

Health Officer Order: Employees must be screened for coronavirus symptoms each day and excluded if symptomatic;

Suggestions to Community:

- Have a plan to screen event organizers (employees or volunteers) who will be at the event just prior to participating in the event. [CDC guidelines](#) identify the key symptoms to watch for as fever, cough and shortness of breath.
- In advance, organizers should discourage attendance for any person who has these symptoms.
- Throughout event, event organizers should require anyone who has the symptoms to leave.

**4) Enable strict adherence to hygiene and sanitation protocols at all events.**

Health Officer Order: Proper hand hygiene and sanitation must be readily available to all attendees and employees.

Suggestions to Community:

- Provide easy access to soap and water or hand sanitizer and hand sanitizer stations and actively request participants to abide by personal hygiene recommendations. [CDC recommends](#) that people wash their hands often, and if soap and water is not readily available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, and to avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

**5) Clean and disinfect setting for the event.**

Health Officer Order: Environmental cleaning guidelines from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are followed (e.g., clean and disinfect high touch surfaces daily or more frequently)

Suggestions to Community:

- Ensure a clean and sanitary environment for the event. Have employees or volunteers ready to disinfect frequently-touched surfaces such as doorknobs, tables, desks, and handrails.
- Clean surfaces that people touch frequently (such as doorknobs, tables, and handrails) after each gathering, event or service
  - Spray surfaces with disinfectant and leave it on for 5 minutes.
  - Wipe and then spray again. Let the surface air dry.
- [CDC](#) provides detailed environmental and disinfection recommendations.

Public Health will not actively search for violations, but if they receive reports of events that do not comply with the Health Officer Order, they will reach out to the organizer to educate and provide guidance. Public Health's focus is on helping people understand the importance of these guidelines rather than issue citations.

### Community and faith-based organizations can help prevent illness

These actions are needed to minimize illness and deaths from COVID-19 and to reduce the enormous strain on the healthcare system. We ask all organizations, including faith-based ones, to please comply.

We understand that cancelling religious services in particular have a significant impact on communities, congregations and organizations – religiously, spiritually, morally, and emotionally. We encourage gatherings that are done remotely by webinar, teleconference, social media, and telephone.

This our best chance to save lives. Our actions can support the most vulnerable in our community and protects everyone. The more united we can be in preventing the spread, the greater the benefit for the whole community, and the sooner we can end the restrictive measures.

Your compliance is critical to save lives and assist Public Health officials in doing their job. If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact [PHpartnerships@kingcounty.gov](mailto:PHpartnerships@kingcounty.gov) or email [coronavirus@kingcounty.gov](mailto:coronavirus@kingcounty.gov).