



**National COVID19 Task Force**

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**Guidelines for Mass Gatherings**

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## **1. Preamble**

With the opening of our borders on October 31st, 2020 we knew there was great risk of reintroduction of the SARS COV-2 virus that causes COVID-19. Our fears were realized only one week later when cases 20, 21 and 22 were discovered within. While we have very stringent screening procedures at our ports of entry there is still a significant risk of the virus entering the federation undetected. We must therefore maintain our vigilance and continue using the known non pharmaceutical measures to contain the virus thus avoiding community spread with eventual overwhelming of our healthcare system and illness and death in the federation.

The WHO has advised that avoiding the three C's: crowds, close spaces and close contact settings can significantly reduce the risk of community spread. We therefore need to take proactive steps to prevent this occurrence. One such measures is the cancellation or limitation of mass events.

## **2. What is a Mass Gathering or Event?**

An event counts as a “mass event” if the number of people it brings together is so large that it has the potential to strain the planning and response resources of the health system in the community where it takes place. Consideration must be given to the location and duration of the event as well as the number of participants.

The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis took a proactive step to cancel our National Carnival while allowing certain virtual events. As a result, the usual street activities (grand parade, J’ouvert, and major shows) have been cancelled.

The Taskforce and the Commissioner of Police have however been inundated with requests for mass events over this Christmas and carnival season. It has become necessary for us to put tighter measures in place to guide the hosting of these events.

### 3. Guiding principles

1. Permission must be obtained from the Office of the Commissioner of Police in consultation with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer to host mass gatherings
2. Events should **NOT** be advertised until permission is obtained from the Office of the Commissioner of Police
3. A gathering refers to a planned or spontaneous event, indoors or outdoors, with a small number of people participating or a large number of people in attendance such as a community event or gathering, concert, festival, conference, parade, wedding, or sporting event.
4. The more people an individual interacts with at a gathering and the longer that interaction lasts, the higher the potential risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 and COVID-19 spreading.
5. The risk of Covid-19 spreading at events and gatherings increases as follows:
  1. **Lowest risk:** Virtual-only activities, events, and gatherings.
  2. **More risk:** Smaller outdoor and in-person gatherings in which individuals from different households remain spaced at least 6 feet apart, wear masks, do not share objects, and come from the same local area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).
  3. **Higher risk:** Medium-sized in-person gatherings that are adapted to allow individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart and with attendees coming from outside the local area.
  4. **Highest risk:** Large in-person gatherings where it is difficult for individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart and attendees travel from outside the local area.
6. There will now be a cap on the number of persons who can attend mass gatherings/social events.
7. In addition to the number of persons scheduled to attend, the Office of the Commissioner of Police will factor in music, dancing, use of alcohol and the duration of the event in making its decision
8. Consideration will also be given to whether the event is indoor or outdoor with a more favorable look on outdoor events

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9. Event sizes will fall into three (3) categories based on the number of patrons attending (not inclusive of staff)

No	Category	Number of Patrons
1	Small	12- 40
2	Medium	41 - 90
3	Large	91 - 150

10. The maximum cap on events until further notice is **150**.
11. Small family and friends’ gatherings under 25 do not require permission from the Commissioner of Police.
12. Permission will not be given for any indoor large event of over 100 as the risk of virus spread is greater in these situations.
13. The Taskforce will consider the square footage of the venue for small, medium, and large size indoor events.
14. A minimum of 30 square feet for indoor events venues will be required for adequate social distancing.
15. A visit will be made to the site to confirm the total square footage submitted on the request for a venue.
16. The outdoor event locations will be visited to determine if proper social distancing can be done to host the event.
17. The nature of the event will be a contributing factor when considering approval.

**4. Event Promoters / Entertainers / Organizers Requirements**

1. The event promoters/entertainers/organizers must submit a **Tax Clearance Certificate** and **a valid Business License** from the Inland Revenue Department with application.
2. The event promoters/entertainers/organizers are required to submit a written outline of the applicable protocols for hosting the event. This would include a layout of the venue and a security plan for the event.
3. The event promoters/entertainers/organizers will be required to submit their application online via the website provided by the Police.

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4. The event promoters/entertainers/organizers must submit their applications at least **15 days** prior to the event.
5. The commissioner of Police will advise on the security requirements for the events based on the nature and size of the event.
6. The applicable fees for the submission must be paid to the office of the Commissioner of Police at the time of application.
7. A response to the submission will be given within **3 to 4 days** of application.

**Please note that if the local COVID-19 Outbreak progresses with the occurrence of isolated clusters of cases and low community transmission – all social gatherings and events will be stopped until the COVID-19 outbreak is contained.**

**5. Promoting Healthy Behaviors that Reduce Spread**

- Event planners should consider implementing strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 among staff and attendees.

**6. Staying Home when Appropriate**

- Advise employees and attendees to remain in isolation/ quarantine if they tested positive or had recent close contact with a person who was positive.

**7. Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**

- Require frequent employee hand washing (e.g., before, during, and after taking tickets; after touching garbage) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and increase monitoring to ensure adherence.
- If soap and water are not readily available, employees can use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol and rub their hands until dry.
- Encourage staff to cover the mouth and nose with tissue when coughing and sneezing.
- Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Encourage attendees to wash hands often to and cover coughs and sneezes.

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- Attendees often exchange handshakes, fist bumps, and high-fives at meetings and sporting events. Display signs (physical and/or electronic) that discourage these actions during the event.

### **8. Wearing Face Masks**

- Require the use of face mask among staff.
- Masks are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult (e.g., when moving within a crowd or audience).
- **Advise staff that mask should not be placed on:**
  - Babies or children younger than 2 years old
  - Anyone who has trouble breathing
  - Anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance
- Encourage attendees ahead of the event to bring and use masks at the event. Masks are strongly encouraged in settings where individuals might raise their voice (e.g., shouting, chanting, singing)

### **9. Adequate Supplies**

- Ensure there are accessible sinks and enough supplies for people to clean their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes.
- Supplies include soap, water, a way to dry hands (e.g., disposable paper towels, tissues, hand sanitizer containing at least 60 percent alcohol, disinfectant wipes, masks (as feasible), and no-touch/foot pedal trash cans (preferably covered)

### **10. Maintaining Healthy Environments**

Event planners should consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy environments.

#### **Cleaning and Disinfection**

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces within the venue between uses as much as possible—for example, door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains, grab bars, hand railings, and cash registers.

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- Clean and disinfect shared objects between uses—for example, payment terminals, tables, countertops, bars, and condiment holders.
- Consider closing areas such as drinking fountains that cannot be adequately cleaned and disinfected during an event.
- Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection.
- If transport vehicles like buses are used by the event staff, drivers should practice all safety actions and protocols as indicated for other staff—for example, washing hands often and wearing masks and maintaining social distance of bus riders.
- Use disposable gloves when removing garbage bags or handling and disposing of trash.

### **Restrooms**

- Consider limiting the number of people who occupy the restroom at one time to allow for social distancing.
- Do not allow lines or crowds to form near the restroom without maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet from other people.
- It may be helpful to post signs or markers to help attendees maintain the appropriate social distance of at least 6 feet.
- Ensure that open restrooms are:
  - Operational with functional toilets.
  - Cleaned and disinfect regularly (at least every half – hour) , particularly high-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, stall doors, doorknobs, countertops, diaper changing tables, and light switches.
  - Stocked with enough supplies for handwashing, including soap and water, a way to dry hands (e.g., paper towels, hand dryer), tissues, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), tissues, and no-touch/foot pedal trash cans (preferably covered).
    - If you are providing portable toilets, also provide portable handwashing stations and ensure that they remain stocked throughout the duration of the event. If possible, provide hand sanitizer stations that are touch-free.

## **Ventilation**

- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example, by opening windows and doors.
- Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk to staff or attendees (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms).
- If portable ventilation equipment like fans are used, take steps to minimize air from them blowing from one person directly at another person to reduce the potential spread of any airborne or aerosolized viruses.

## **Modified Layouts**

- Limit attendance or seating capacity to allow for social distancing or host smaller events in larger rooms.
- Use multiple entrances and exits and discourage crowded waiting areas.
- Block off rows or sections of seating in order to space people at least 6 feet apart.
- Eliminate lines or queues if possible or encourage people to stay at least 6 feet apart by providing signs or other visual cues such as tape or chalk marks
- Prioritize outdoor activities where social distancing can be maintained as much as possible.

## **11. Physical Barriers and Guides**

- Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that individuals remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g., guides for creating one-way routes).
- Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart.
- Barriers can be useful at cash registers and other areas where maintaining physical distance of 6 feet is difficult.
- Change seating layout or availability of seating so that people can remain least 6 feet apart.

## **12. Food Service**

- There is no evidence that COVID-19 is spread by food. However, people sharing utensils and congregating around food service areas can pose a risk.
- Use touchless payment options as much as possible, if available.
- Ask customers and employees to exchange cash or card payments by placing them on a receipt tray or on the counter rather than by hand to avoid direct hand-to-hand contact.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as pens, counters, or hard surfaces between use and encourage patrons to use their own pens
- Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that individuals remain at least 6 feet apart when waiting in line to order or pick up.
- If a cafeteria or group dining room is used, serve individually plated meals or grab-and-go options, and hold activities in separate areas.
- Use disposable food service items including utensils and dishes.
- If disposable items are not feasible or desirable, ensure that all non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and 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
- Avoid offering any self-serve food or drink options, such as buffets, salad bars, and drink stations. Consider having pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee.

## **13. Shared Objects**

- Discourage people from sharing items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect.
- Limit any sharing of food, tools, equipment, or supplies by staff members.
- Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials to the extent possible

## **14. Maintaining Healthy Operations**

Event organizers and staff may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy operations.

## **15. Communication Systems**

Put systems in place to:

- Record contact of all persons attending the event
- Encourage staff and attendees to self-report if they develop symptoms within 14 days after attending the event
- Advise attendees prior to the event or gathering that they should not attend if they have symptoms of, a positive test for, or were recently exposed (within 14 days) to COVID-19.

## **16. Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick**

Event planners should consider several strategies to implement when someone gets sick.

- Immediately separate staff and attendees with COVID-19 symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath) at the event.
- Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility, depending on how severe their symptoms
- Individuals who have had close contact with a person who has symptoms should be separated, sent home, and advised to follow up with health officials
- Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone sick to their home or to a healthcare facility.
- If you are calling an ambulance or bringing someone to the hospital, call first to alert them that the person may have COVID-19.
- Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after cleaning and disinfecting them (for outdoor areas, this includes surfaces or shared objects in the area, if applicable)