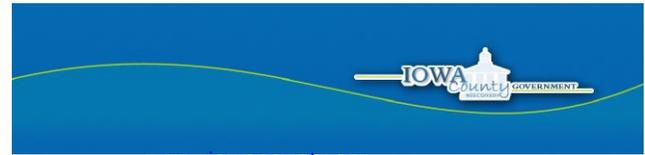


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Guidance on Mass Gatherings *June 17, 2020*

All social interaction has some level of risk for contracting COVID-19. The best way to protect yourself and others is to:

- Continue maintaining your physical distance from other people
- Stay away from large groups
- Stay home when you are sick
- Wash your hands, and
- Wear a cloth face covering

People need to know the risks and balance those with the benefits to make the best decision for their families. In all cases, however, people should understand their personal responsibility to not unknowingly spread infection to someone else.

We want to stress that the protective measures listed above remain important. “We know some people may think they are unnecessary but please understand that the virus is still in the community. We can and should move forward but must do so slowly and safely”, says Debbie Siegenthaler, Iowa County Health Department Director.

COVID-19 doesn't spread itself. People spread it. We do not have a cure or a vaccine yet. Our best tool is isolation for those we know are sick and physically distancing ourselves from others. Each of us represents an opportunity to interrupt the transmission of this virus. This week's COVID 19 Dashboard reveals that 100% of recent cases did not have direct exposure to a person known to have COVID 19. This means they are not sure how they became infected which means we are experiencing community spread or a wide circulation of the virus. This fact, coupled with significant increases in cases in neighboring counties, also means we need to be cautious.

A critical message to reinforce is that this virus is very efficient at finding people to infect. As a result, anytime people come together, the virus has a chance to find a new person to infect. A question we often receive is regarding planning for summer events, including large gatherings such as weddings, graduations, or community events such as fairs or festivals. **At this time, we advise against large gatherings.**

Public health experts agree that large gatherings of people in sustained, close contact greatly increases the risk for spread of the virus among those who attend the events and to the communities these individuals return to after the event. The communal nature of such events makes it especially challenging to accommodate the physical distancing and sanitation recommendations required to slow the spread of disease.

Current Recommendation 6/17/2020

The Iowa County Health Department currently recommends you not engage in public or private gatherings of people indoors of more than 10 people and outdoors of more than 25 people. This recommendation is based on State Department of Health Guidance (see below) and consideration of disease incidence locally and regionally. Since there are no public health orders in place, this is a recommendation not a requirement. At the center of all current guidance are the basic principles of social distancing, face coverings, hand sanitizing/hand washing, and surface sanitizing and limiting contact with others (including large gatherings of people).

Public gatherings, especially those that draw thousands from far and wide are those we consider the highest risk in promoting disease transmission and are not recommended by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Iowa County Health Department. With large gatherings, mitigation efforts such as social distancing and sanitizing are extraordinarily challenging to manage. We would ask our community to help in our public health efforts to reduce disease transmission and not hold these types of events. Wherever possible, we urge event organizers to host virtual or other non-contact events that can build the same sense of community and celebration.

At this time, DHS does not advise large gatherings, and there is no projected timeframe available as to when this advisory would change. This includes but is not limited to fairs, festivals, parades, and conferences.

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/protect.htm>

Recommendations will change in the future as we move forward and monitor the status of our dashboard metrics each week. Some of the key data we are monitoring includes:

- Positivity case rates
- Local health and response system capacity
- Community spread and
- Management of outbreaks.

See the full COVID 19 Dashboard at the Iowa County [website](#).

As we progress, the recommended maximum size of gatherings will also increase. The next phase of recommendations includes a recommendation of public or private gatherings indoors of no more than 50 people and outdoors of no more than 100 people (see details on page 3 of this document). All gathering recommendations include maintaining physical distancing and protective measures such as cleaning, sanitizing, wearing masks and handwashing (see protective measures page 3-4).

In terms of planning events for this summer or fall, the best guidance is to *proceed with caution*. Begin with asking how you will ensure physical distancing and sanitation and other protective measure recommendations required to slow the spread of disease. Also consider attendees who are high risk, such as grandparents or those with chronic medical conditions. They should not be asked to choose between putting their health at risk or missing an important memory.

Any entity that is organizing these types of events should check with their legal counsel and insurance company to be sure they are operating on a firm understanding of their liabilities. Likewise, any municipality that is issuing a license or permit for these types of events should check with their legal counsel and insurance company to be sure they are operating on a firm understanding of their liabilities. If an entity makes the determination to not follow current recommendations, that is their prerogative, but an outbreak attributed to that event may be the burden of the promoters. Furthermore, if an entity does decide to proceed with an event, how will the safety of participants be planned for, managed, enforced and assured?

A COVID-19 Safety Plan should indicate:

- **Social Distancing:** How will social distancing be done? Will capacity be limited? What if larger than expected crowds occur, how will this be managed?
- **Face Coverings/Masks:** Forcing the public to wear face coverings is not possible for public entities but can be suggested. Private entities can require them.
- **Hand Washing and Hand Sanitizing:** It should include hand sanitizing stations or hand washing stations generously distributed throughout the event area.

- **Surface Sanitizing:** Sanitizing frequently touched surfaces. Sanitizing portable toilets and sitting areas and tables should be frequent. The plan should indicate how they will assure sanitizing will occur.
- **Food:** Buffet type food serving systems should not be allowed.

Limits on Gatherings*

*Individuals who are at higher risk should consider taking additional precautions

Guidance to follow:

DHS Interim guidance: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/protect.htm>

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/index.html>

CDC: https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/topic_files/WIDHS/WIDHS_172/2020/05/15/file_attachments/1452257/CDC-reopen-decision-trees_1452257.pdf

Iowa County is currently in Phase I: Recommendations will change in the future as we move forward and monitor the status of our dashboard metrics each week. Some of the key data we are monitoring includes positivity case rates, local health and response system capacity, community spread and management of outbreaks. See the full COVID 19 Dashboard at the Iowa County [website](#).

Recommendations for Indoor gatherings; public or private:

Phase 1 guidance: (current phase 6/17/2020)

10 people maximum (not including employees); must maintain physical distancing and protective measures

Phase 2 guidance: 50 people maximum; physical distancing and protective measures must be maintained

Phase 3 guidance: 100 people maximum; physical distancing and protective measures must be maintained

Recommendations for Outdoor gatherings; public or private:

Phase 1 guidance: (current phase 6/17/2020)

25 people maximum (not including employees); must maintain physical distancing and protective measures

Phase 2 guidance: 100 people maximum; physical distancing and protective measures must be maintained

Phase 3 guidance: 250 people maximum; physical distancing and protective measures must be maintained

General guidance for all residents:

Physical Distancing and Protective Measures*

*Individuals who are at higher risk (those over 60 and/or with underlying medical conditions) should consider taking additional precautions; telework & tele-education, limiting time outside their home, avoiding crowds of people is encouraged

Guidance to follow:

WEDC: <https://wedc.org/reopen-guidelines/>

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

DHS: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/protect.htm>

Maintain physical distancing and protective measures in all phases

Wash hands often
Cover coughs

Don't go out if ill, contact provider about being tested for COVID-19
Use of mask or cloth face covering
Surface and object cleaning
Isolation of positive cases
Quarantine of contacts of positive cases
Voluntary quarantine of travelers from high-risk areas
Physical distancing to 6 feet

COVID 19 resources...

What is COVID 19? How it Spreads and Who's at Risk?

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-covid-spreads.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

Coronavirus is a novel (New) virus so the majority of us have no protection. The tools we currently have to reduce spread are social distancing and additional protective measures of handwashing, wearing cloth masks and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. They are the only tools we have until we get more treatments and a vaccine.

How can I protect myself and others around me?

Does a mask protect me? Do I need to wash my groceries?

What about gatherings of people?

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/protect.htm>

Staying safe at work and taking care of yourself

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/employers.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>

Travel

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/travel.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

Monitor the following Social Media sites:

Iowa County Public Health on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/iowacountyhealthdepartment/>

Upland Hills Health on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/UplandHillsHealthHospital/>

Iowa County Emergency Management on Twitter - <https://twitter.com/ICEMWI>

Iowa County Emergency Management on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/icemwi/>

Monitor the following websites:

Iowa County COVID 19 <https://www.iowacounty.org/>

Upland Hills Health <https://www.uplandhillshealth.org/patient-visitors/covid-19/>

WI Department of Health Services (DHS) <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/outbreaks/index.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>