

Recommendations for safely holding public meetings

Each local government agency is authorized to determine whether to hold public meetings in person, on-line (teleconferencing only), or via a combination of methods. The following are recommendations from the Contra Costa County Health Officer to minimize the risk of COVID 19 transmission during a public meeting.

1. Online meetings (i.e. teleconferencing meetings) are encouraged, where practical, as these meetings present the lowest risk of transmission of SARS CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID 19. This is particularly important when community prevalence rates are high. Our current trends as of February 1, 2023 in Covid-19 case rate, test positivity, Covid-19 hospitalizations, and Covid-19 wastewater surveillance are decreasing, but there continues to be COVID-19 in the community and changes in case rate, test positivity, COVID-19 hospitalization and wastewater surveillance may change or increase rapidly. In addition to this, the predominant variant of Covid-19 being identified continues to be the Omicron variant and it's subvariants the impact of which on the spread of Covid-19 has shown to dramatically increase COVID-19 transmission.
2. If a local agency determines to hold in-person meetings, offering the public the opportunity to attend via a call-in option or an internet-based service option is recommended, when possible, to give those at higher risk of and/or higher concern about COVID-19 an alternative to participating in person.
3. A written safety protocol should be developed and followed. It is recommended that the protocol require social distancing, where feasible – i.e. six feet of separation between attendees; and consider requiring or strongly encouraging face masking of all attendees and encouraging attendees to be up-to-date on their COVID-19 vaccine.
4. Seating arrangements should allow for staff and members of the public to easily maintain at least six-foot distance from one another at all practicable times.
5. Consider holding public meetings outdoors. Increasing scientific consensus is that outdoor airflow reduces the risk of COVID-19 transmission compared to indoor spaces. Hosting events outdoors also may make it easier to space staff and members of the public at least 6 feet apart. If unable to host outdoors, consider ways to [increase ventilation and flow](#) of the indoor space to reduce the risk of COVID-19 while indoors.
6. Current evidence is unclear as to the added benefit of temperature checks in addition to symptom checks. We encourage focus on symptom checks as they may screen out individuals with other Covid-19 symptoms besides fever and help reinforce the message to not go out in public if you are not feeling well.
7. Consider a voluntary attendance sheet with names and contact information to assist in contact tracing of any cases linked to a public meeting.

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