

WPAFB COVID-19 Guidance for Community Events, Ceremonies, Gatherings, and Faith Based Organizations

WPAFB is following a phased approach to safely lift restrictions while combatting COVID-19 and protecting installation members. Currently, the previous gathering guidance was similar to the state of Ohio with a 10 person maximum. However, much of the country, the State of Ohio, WPAFB, and the local surrounding region is seeing a decline in cases, hospitalizations, and critical COVID-19 related resource utilization. For the time being, WPAFB will remain HPCON-Bravo and Phase II, but we are in a position to step forward with some COVID-19 related restriction adjustments as they relate to on-base gatherings and some services being offered. ***This is updated guidance to reflect the installation's current COVID-19 environment.***

As of 2 March 2021, the community areas surrounding Wright Patterson AFB show decreasing numbers of COVID-19 positive patients and overall decreasing positivity rates with testing per the Ohio Department of Health. Further, the rate of personnel receiving the COVID-19 vaccine continues to rise, providing an extra element of protection. These factors can and should be considered regarding the safety of gatherings, but they do not replace or undo the requirements for continued strict adherence to COVID-19 non-pharmaceutical interventions.

- **Limit On-Base Gatherings, Ceremonies, And Events of No More Than 50 Personnel:**
 - o On-Base gatherings of greater than 50 should be avoided based on DoD guidance and require review by 88 ABW leadership.
 - o Off-Base gatherings follow Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Regulations/mandates of no more than 10 people.
- **Critical To These Recommendations Are Continued Strict Adherence To COVID-19 Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs):**
 - o **Mask Wear:** Data from physical sciences research suggest that masks protect the wearer by filtering virus from external sources, and others by reducing expulsion of virus by the wearer.
 - o **Physical Distancing and Hygiene:** Physical distancing (6 feet), handwashing, and improved ventilation reduces the exposure amount of viral particles from an infectious source.
 - o **Vaccines:** Safe and effective vaccines are being rolled out and non-pharmaceutical interventions will continue to play an essential role in suppressing SARS-CoV-2 transmission until equitable and widespread vaccine administration has been completed.

The Public Health Team realizes gathering in our current COVID-19 environment can generate a tremendous number of questions. For this, specific recommendations have been made for various events:

- **Appendix A** provides specific recommendations for **Retirements and Promotions**
- **Appendix B** provides specific recommendations for **Offices Gatherings**

General Guidance for Places of Worship, Community Events, and Ceremonies: Locations where people gather together pose a risk for COVID-19 transmission. All entities that congregate people in an enclosed space should create and implement a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission. The guidance below will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their communities.

This Guidance Covers The Following Topics:

1. Physical Distancing and Minimizing Exposure
2. Cloth Face Coverings
3. Cleaning and Hygiene
4. Monitoring for Symptoms

5. Protecting Vulnerable Populations
6. Ventilation
7. Additional Resources
8. Appendix A – specific guidance for retirement/ promotion celebrations
9. Appendix B – specific guidance for small office gatherings

- 1. Physical Distancing and Minimizing Exposure:** Physical distancing is a key tool to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Physical distancing means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people, do not gather in groups, and stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings. **Considerations include:**
 - Space seating arrangements so there is 6 feet between personnel...small groups who live in the same household may sit closer than 6 feet apart.
 - Consider limiting seating to alternate rows.
 - Ensure members of a choir or music ensemble maintain a distance of 6 feet from each other.
 - Post signage reminding people about physical distancing, mask use, 6 foot physical distancing, and hand washing (with hand sanitizer available).
 - Provide floor markings at six-foot intervals to encourage physical distancing (in and out-doors).
 - Clearly mark designated entry and exit points...venues with only one entry/exit point, should try to stagger entry and exit times, if possible.
 - Consider an option for virtual viewing (encourage use by immune compromised or high risk individuals).
 - Encourage avoidance of physical contact among attendees as permissible within the community's tradition (e.g., avoid handshakes, high fives, hugs, etc.).

- 2. Cloth Face Coverings:** It is strongly recommended that all staff and participants wear a cloth face covering per the direction of the 88 ABW Commander.

- 3. Cleaning and Hygiene:** Although recent data have shown that SARS CoV-2 has a very low surface and fomite longevity, COVID-19 can still be transmitted via contact. **Considerations include:**
 - Perform ongoing and routine environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas (e.g., doors, doorknobs, rails) with an EPA approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), and increase disinfection during peak times or high density times.
 - Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers and assure soap and hand drying materials are available at sinks.
 - Prominently provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) at entrances and exits and near high-touch areas.
 - Promote frequent use of hand washing and hand sanitizer for staff and attendees. Require handwashing of staff immediately upon reporting to work, after contact with individuals, after performing cleaning and disinfecting activities, and frequently throughout the day.
 - To the extent possible, do not use items that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected.
 - All shared religious objects should be properly disinfected between uses as possible. Provide adequate contact time for disinfectant as required by the manufacturer before shared equipment is used by another person.
 - Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety risk.

- 4. Monitoring for Symptoms:** Conducting regular screening for symptoms can help reduce exposure. Staff should be encouraged to self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath. If they develop symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and return home. This can be done with verbal reminders and signage. **Considerations include:**
 - Have a plan in place for immediately removing employees from work if symptoms develop.
 - Attendees who have symptoms when they arrive at work or become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home.

- 5. Protecting Vulnerable Populations:** Certain populations are significantly more susceptible to potential severe COVID-19 complications and disease. Information on who is at higher risk for severe disease is available from the CDC and ODH. **Considerations include:**
- Encourage the use of virtual services or designate exclusive times to access services for seniors and other at-risk groups as defined by the CDC.
 - Offer provisions for persons at higher risk such as how to minimize interaction with patrons, physical distancing and spacing reminders, and recommending wearing a cloth face covering.
- 6. Ventilation:** The risk of COVID-19 transmission is greatly reduced in outdoor settings or highly ventilated settings with plenty of fresh air. **Considerations include:**
- If the option exists, and weather permitting, try to have the event outdoors to allow for open airflow.
 - If the gathering needs to happen inside, weather permitting, try to open windows and door to ensure that fresh air flow is maximized.
- 7. Additional Resources:**
- **CDC:** Interim Guidance for Administrators and Leaders of Community- and Faith-Based Organizations to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019
 - **CDC:** Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers
 - **CDC:** Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility
 - **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):** Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2
 - **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA):** Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
 - **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA):** Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19
 - **U.S. Department of Homeland Security:** Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce

Appendix A

Retirement and Promotion Celebrations

WPAFB is recommending gatherings be limited to 50 people or less. This includes, attendees, guests of honor, and staff required to support the event.

Guidance for Safe Celebrations:

- **Attendee Numbers:**
 - Limit gathering to 50 people or less...this includes the guests as well as support staff required for the function or gathering
 - However, given the venue or room size, 6 feet of physical distancing may be impossible to accomplish. In these situations the number of attendees needs to be reduced in to accommodate 6 feet of physical distancing
 - Gathering of greater than 50 people requires PH risk assessment and 88 ABW review
 - As an option for events scheduled to host greater than 50 people, stagger the attendees over several time periods to keep the total number on each of the shifts less than 50

- **Location:**
 - Ensure the location allows for 6 foot physical distancing among the attendees present.
 - Consider locations with adequate air flow or outdoors, if possible and as weather permits.

- **Food/Drink:**
 - Food and drink should be consumed while stationary.
 - Only be consumed within 6 feet of others when **tablemates are from the same home dwelling bubble** (eating and drinking around others outside of their household remains one of the highest risk activities when it comes to COVID-19 transmission).
 - Consider food and drink pick up stations where attendees can order or grab food and drink, while wearing their mask.
 - Encourage attendees to remain in a stationary location while consuming their food and drink
 - Suggest tables 6 feet apart where signage says your mask may be removed here, if you are eating/drinking with members of your own household.
 - Signage must also state that mask must be placed on before leaving the table, and before mingling with other guests.
 - Mingling within 6 feet of others should be avoided, if it is required, then keep it to less than 15 minutes to prevent a “close contact” situation.

- **Caterers Guidance Must be in Alignment with CDC/Ohio Department of Health Guidance:**
 - WPAFB Public Health recommends employees or caterers distribute the food rather than self-serve.

- **Buffet Style Guidance for Self-Serve (Ohio Department of Health Guidance Feb 11):**
 - Attendees must wear facial coverings while using self-service food stations or in line for self-service food stations. Those unable to wear a facial covering must be served by an employee.
 - Buffet tables/salad bars must be spaced a minimum of 6 feet away from customer seating/tables, and lines must not extend into seating areas.
 - Attendees flow at buffet tables/salad bars must move in one direction with a beginning point and ending point, and customers must maintain at least 6 feet of physical distancing while in line. Directional signage must be posted indicating where the customer line begins.
 - Hand sanitizer must be placed at self-serve food stations, including at the front of the line and end of the line of buffet tables/salad bars, and used by attendees prior to, and after, serving themselves.
 - At least 6 feet of physical distancing must be maintained between seated attendees and customers in line for a buffet/salad bar and monitored by employees.

- Utensils must be replaced or cleaned and sanitized at least hourly. It is recommended that attendees use disposable napkins, tissues, wax paper, etc., when handling serving utensils, and operators of self-service food stations are encouraged to make them available. A trash receptacle should be conveniently located.
- Use of individually packaged condiments is recommended instead of shared or bulk condiment dispensers.
- Commonly touched surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized frequently.
- While in operation, self-serve areas must be continually monitored by staff or the function organizers, including monitoring customer hand sanitizing practices at the self-service food station.
- Signage must be placed at self-service food stations requiring customers to use hand sanitizer before and after serving themselves, and to maintain at least 6 feet of physical distancing while in line. The signage should recommend that customers use disposable napkins, tissues, wax paper, etc., when handling serving utensils. [A sample sign is available on Ohio's coronavirus website](#) (food service operations and retail food establishments may choose to develop their own signage).

- **Hygiene/Physical Distancing:**

- No handshaking/hugging, etc. during gatherings.
- Handwashing/hand sanitizer should be used before and after consuming food.

Appendix B

Recommendations for Small Office Gathering or Celebrations

Gatherings in conference rooms to celebrate colleagues' successes, birthdays, and next adventures are very important for morale. We know this, and want to safely support these festivities understanding key elements to a safe celebration.

- **Attendees:**

- The capacity for a room is difficult to assess when it comes to conference rooms, offices, hallway locations, etc.
- Masks must be worn at all times.
- Honor 6 feet of physical distancing.
- If physical distancing is not possible, keep the celebration to less than 15 minutes, with no food or drink to be consumed while all are congregated.

- **Food, drink, and snacks:**

- Food, drink, and snacks can be present with adequate public health food safety mitigation including safe covering, eating non-temperature labile food items, adequate hand sanitizer.
- Food, drink, and snacks must be taken out of the room and consumed in private rooms or offices where people can safely be greater than 6 feet apart with their masks off. (e.g., a cupcake tray with a plastic cover can be in the room while we say closing/celebratory remarks to our colleagues...then individuals can take a cupcake and exit the room to consume their cupcake privately).
- Pot Luck:
 - General public health safety requirements should be adhered to when making and storing food items (see CDC guidance).
 - Members cannot congregate within 6 feet of the pot luck items.
 - Members must wear their mask while acquiring their food from the serving area.
 - Hand sanitizer must be used before and after handling high touch surfaces such as serving spoons.
 - Members must acquire their food while masked and consume the food in private or greater than 6 feet from others.