

Considerations for cancelling or modifying an event in response to COVID-19 in Virginia

March 11, 2020

In conjunction with the Interim Guidance document provided for specific groups (available at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/surveillance-and-investigation/novel-coronavirus/>) and consultation with local health authorities, it is important to consider specific [vulnerable populations](#) and circumstances when considering altering or cancelling an event out of concern for the participants and COVID-19 infection. **The decision to cancel or modify an event such as a sports tournament, concert, festival, graduation ceremony or business conference is complex** and there is not a “one-size-fits-all” approach, even within prescribed levels of COVID-19 severity in Virginia generally or your community. Other factors such as the **demographics** of your participants, **event size**, expected **crowd density** and anticipated nature of contact among attendees as well as details of your event such as whether your event will be held in an **indoor or outdoor venue** and the **areas from which you anticipate your participants will be traveling from** to attend, must also be taken into consideration.

Vulnerable Populations

Populations especially vulnerable to developing serious illness from COVID-19 include:

- Older adults (>60 years) and/or
- People who have serious chronic medical conditions like
 - Heart disease
 - Diabetes
 - Lung disease
 - Weakened immune systems

It may be advisable to cancel a mass gathering targeting older audiences, or audiences likely to have these chronic conditions, compared to an event where the target audience is not in these categories.

Travelers from areas where COVID-19 is widespread

An additional consideration would be whether participants are travelling to your event from a location where COVID-19 is widespread in the community, as travel from these areas may increase spread of the disease. It may be advisable to ask event participants to review the status of COVID-19 in their communities before travel to the event and to discourage event attendance even by healthy individuals coming from areas with widespread COVID-19 infections in their home community.

Event-specific considerations

Indoor events where people must stay in closer proximity to each other are likely to foster the spread of COVID-19 more than outdoor events, where more distance between attendees may be possible. For outdoor events, consider whether adding frequent hand-washing stations throughout the venue would be possible. Consider whether it is possible to maintain an area separate from crowds where people who become sick can stay until decisions can be made about the best course of action.

General advice for participants

Encourage event participants and attendees to refrain from attending the event if they are sick and/or experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection regardless of their communities' COVID-19 status. In addition, event planners should have a plan in place to respond to ill individuals. This plan should be communicated to participants with the goal of identifying illness early and quickly assisting ill participants to move to a more isolated area while medical support needs are assessed.