

California Department of Public Health Safe and SMART Events Playbook



Staying Safe and Being SMART

Events that bring individuals from our communities together are integral to our shared experiences living in California. This Safe and SMART Events Playbook, based on the [California SMARTER Plan](#), recognizes that COVID-19 will remain with us for the foreseeable future and provides best practices and recommendations for event operators to produce safe and smart live events.

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) understands the importance of all Californians being able to organize and attend live events and gatherings. For many, events help us stay connected to one another. Events provide an opportunity for socialization and shared experiences which improve our mental health and wellbeing.

We have learned a lot over the last two years, and our recommendations have changed to reflect the new and updated knowledge. Many previous requirements and recommendations (put into place at the height of the COVID-19 surges) are no longer needed. California's path forward in creating healthier and safer neighborhoods and communities will depend on the collective actions of individuals and their informed actions.

As we move forward together, the focus is on flexibility and preparedness, as embodied in the spirit of the [California SMARTER Plan](#). The [SMART Steps](#) of the California SMARTER Plan are a simple and clear tool for Californians to use as they navigate the SMARTER Plan. Together, the preventative steps outlined in the California SMARTER Plan provide a wide range of choices for event operators and attendees. These choices can be used in ways that best fit event circumstances. The Safe and SMART Events Playbook informs and empowers individuals, businesses, and communities to make both safe and smart choices.



Scan the QR Code to access the handbook online and to get more information on how you can host Safe and SMART Events!



General Recommendations and Considerations for Live Events

Whether the event is a fair, convention, concert, sports game, wedding, marathon, music festival, graduation or any other planned gathering, all event operators and attendees can use the California SMARTER Plan and the [information about the conditions in their local community \(from their local health departments\)](#) or the [CDC's community level indicator](#) as a guide.

These general disease mitigation strategies should be collectively considered by event operators and not as individual approaches. Event operators should consider a layered approach because when combined these strategies have a greater ability to mitigate the dangers of disease transmission. These recommendations can be adopted to fit your target demographic as needed given the ongoing community transmission of COVID-19 and the presence of new and emerging variants in your area. Additionally, these measures provide a level of confidence for event attendees and workers that the event operator is focused on keeping the event environment safe and thriving.

For any event, operators should remember:

- **That outdoors is lower risk. Indoor gatherings are higher risk. If food is being served, consider serving outdoors, especially since masks can't be worn while eating or drinking.**
- **Events where attendees are vaccinated or tested negative for COVID-19 prior to entry are always safest. Events that have persons whose vaccine or testing status is unknown are higher risk.**
- **Train all vendors and staff working the event on protective measures and protocols in place, including how to properly wear well-fitting masks with good filtration.**
- **Encourage all persons (staff and attendees), to monitor their own health and stay home if sick or have symptoms.**

For more specific guidance on indoor, outdoor, mega and school events, please see the following sections.

Additionally, examples of customizable checklists that can be used by operators and venues are provided at the end. They contain sample language that can be customized for each event.

Putting these practices in place now can help prepare any event operator or host for the future.

How to stay safe and be SMART:

SHOTS

Vaccination continues to remain the ultimate exit strategy out of the COVID-19 pandemic and is the most powerful weapon against hospitalization and serious illness.

- Encourage event attendees to get vaccinated and boosted.
- Consider a vaccine verification program that requires all people entering the venue to show proof of vaccination or negative COVID-19 test prior to entry.
 - » A vaccine verification program should not include self-attestation.
 - » Event operators should consider appropriate timing of negative test results (2 days for PCR tests and 1 day for antigen tests are recommended).

Resources and Guidance

- [Vaccinate All 58 Partner Toolkits and Resources](#): communications toolkits and other assets to help spread the word about the importance of vaccines
- [Vaccine Record Guidelines & Standards](#): CDPH recommendations on options for proof of vaccination



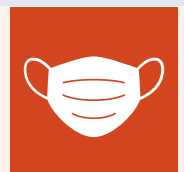
MASKS

Properly worn masks with good fit and filtration help slow the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses.

- Event operators may consider requiring masking of all attendees if local conditions warrant.
- If masks are required or strongly recommended for your event, provide attendees information on the [most effective masks](#).
- Encourage attendees to consider use of respirators (like KN94s, KN95s and N95s) or surgical masks as the most effective mask option. Double masking is also an effective way to improve fit and filtration.
- If event attendees are at risk for severe illness, encourage them to wear a respirator that provides such attendees with greater protection.
- At no time can a person be prevented from wearing a mask as a condition of participation in an activity or entry into an event.
- In general, people do not need to wear [masks](#) when outdoors.

Resources and Guidance

- [Masking and COVID-19](#) – a toolkit to better understand how effective mask wearing helps reduce the spread of COVID-19
- [Guidance for the Use of Face Masks](#) – CDPH statewide guidance on masking in California
- [Face Coverings Q&A](#) – get answers to your Frequently Asked Questions
- [Get the Most out of Masking](#) – understand when wearing a mask is most important, how your mask should fit, and what are the most effective masks
- [Face Coverings Fact Sheet](#) – understand when is masking recommended and when is it required
- [Masks for Kids – Tips and Resources](#) – get information on how to ensure the best mask fit and filtration for children





AWARENESS

Continue to stay aware of how COVID-19, and evolving variants, are spreading in your community.

- Follow local and regional COVID-19 news to track the prevalence and severity of disease in your area. If the [COVID-19 Community Level](#) where your indoor event is held is:
 - » **Low** – Recommend attendees wear a mask indoors based on their personal preference, informed by their personal level of risk.
 - » **Medium** – Recommend attendees wear a mask indoors if they are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe illness, live with or will gather with someone at risk for severe illness.
 - » **High** – Strongly recommend (or require) all attendees wear a mask indoors, regardless of their vaccination status.
- Follow all federal, state, local, tribal or territorial laws, rules, and regulations wherever their events are organized.
- Follow current [local](#) and state public health requirements, and know how to seek information from your local health department for any questions about public health requirements and other resources.
- Encourage everyone to sign up for [CA Notify](#) as an added layer of protection for themselves and the community to receive alerts when they have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19. Also encourage those who test positive for COVID-19 to alert CA Notify to anonymously notify those who may have been exposed.
- Be aware of current [CDC domestic and international travel recommendations and requirements](#).

Resources and Guidance

- [CA Notify Partner Toolkit](#) – media and other communication toolkits that can be used by any venue or business.
- [CA COVID-19 Response Toolkits](#) – a hub to connect Californians to important resources.
- [CDC Activities and Gatherings Guidance](#) – steps everyone can make to protect yourself and your community
- [CDC Covid-19 Community Levels by County Map](#) – COVID-19 Community Levels are a new tool to help communities decide what prevention steps to take based on the latest data.



READINESS

COVID-19 isn't going away, and we need to be ready with the tools, resources and supplies we will need to quickly respond.

- If feasible, maintain a list with contact information for all attendees, vendors, and staff in case you need to notify others if someone at the event becomes sick after attending the event.
- Review the materials in this playbook and be ready to address the needs of vulnerable populations.
- Advise attendees about prevention strategies that will be in place at the event. This can build confidence that your event is a safe environment for all.
- Be aware of any reporting requirements and procedures in case there is an outbreak.
- Venues should consider making masks available to attendees upon request.
- Event venues should consider providing outdoor spaces for eating/drinking/ congregating to reduce the risk of transmission in indoor settings.
- Consider improving the indoor ventilation of your venue now as a long-term mitigation strategy for the future.
- Understand what to do if event attendees become sick after attending an event. The following links can be shared with or provided to event attendees:
 - » Attending a large gathering or event increases one's chance of being in [close contact](#) with people outside one's household and being exposed to COVID-19.
 - » If you come into [close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19:
 - [Understand COVID-19 symptoms and risks.](#)
 - [Know what to do if you test positive for COVID-19.](#)
 - Know when and how to properly [isolate and quarantine.](#)
 - Know [how to talk to your close contacts](#) from the gathering.

Resources and Guidance

- [Tips for Reducing COVID-19 Risk Indoors](#) – practical steps venue operators can take to promote better ventilation, filtration, and air quality in indoor environments to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- [Outreach Toolkit | Safer At Work \(ca.gov\)](#) – keep your employees and workplaces safe.
- [Find your local health department](#) – know more about the requirements, recommendations, and resources from your local health department.
- [People with Certain Medical Conditions](#) – If you or your family member are at high risk for severe illness, wear a respirator or surgical mask to offer greater protection in public indoor spaces.

TESTING

Testing will help California minimize the spread of COVID-19.

- Encourage attendees to get tested immediately prior to or the same day of attending any event, or provide pre-entry testing on site, to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in your settings.
- Continue to reinforce to all staff, vendors and attendees the importance of staying home if they are sick or experiencing [symptoms of COVID-19](#).
- Individuals who test positive and are at higher risk of serious disease should seek treatment.

Resources and Guidance

- [COVIDtests.gov - Free at-home COVID-19 tests](#) - every home in the U.S. is eligible to order 2 sets of 4 free at-home tests.
- [CA Testing Task Force](#) – learn about testing and testing resources in the state.
- [Testing Fact Sheet](#) – quick tip sheet to know when and where to get tested.
- [Antigen Tests Fact Sheet](#) – learn more about antigen tests.
- [Antigen, PCR, and Serology Tests Fact Sheet](#) – learn more about the different types of tests available, and what may work best for your event.
- [Over The Counter Testing](#) – how to use over-the-counter (at-home tests) for your event.
- [Get the Facts on COVID-19 Treatment](#) – learn more about treatment options.

People considered at high risk of developing serious illness from COVID-19 may benefit from medications that prevent COVID-19 before an exposure, prevent COVID-19 after an exposure, or treat COVID-19 symptoms to prevent further complications and death.



Specific Settings

Some event settings may have specific or additional considerations which event operators should consider beyond the above general recommendations.

OUTDOOR EVENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOURCES

- In general, people do not need to wear [masks](#) when outdoors.
- Attendees should follow [CDPH Guidance for Face Coverings](#). Consistent with that guidance, attendees are strongly recommended to also wear masks at outdoor events when they enter indoor areas, such as restrooms, restaurants, retail shops, concourses, or concession stands.

MEGA EVENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOURCES

- [Mega Events Guidance](#)

SCHOOL EVENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOURCES

- [K-12 Schools Guidance 2021-2022 Questions & Answers](#): School dances, large assemblies, and other school-based crowded events, all have the potential to cause substantial spread of COVID-19 within and beyond the school community. Therefore, schools are encouraged to:
 - » Host such events outdoors whenever possible.
 - » Separate the event into smaller cohorts (by grade, for example) whenever possible.
 - » Promote vaccines for all eligible attendees (students and adults). Consider pre-entry testing for all unvaccinated attendees at or just prior to the event.
 - » Plan in advance how to identify close contacts or exposed groups if it is later discovered that someone with COVID-19 attended the event. Encourage pre-registration with [CA Notify](#) and maintaining a log of all attendees (even those arriving pre-event) at the door/entrance to the event.
 - » Consider requiring the use of masks at school-based large, crowded indoor events.
 - » If food or drinks are to be served, serve them outdoors whenever possible and/or place them away from other areas to clearly designate spaces where masks should be worn.

Appendix A: Checklist for Event Operators – Communication to attendees

WHAT ARE WE DOING TO CREATE A SAFE AND SMART EVENT?

(for event operators to let their attendees know the strategies they have put in place for this event)

To create a Safe and SMART environment for all, this event will have the following in place (the checklist is customizable for each event operator to reflect the strategies they have adopted):

The event:

- This event is in full compliance with all current local and state public health recommendations and requirements.
- This event is utilizing strategies to improve ventilation, filtration and air quality indoors.
- This event will make outdoor spaces available for attendees.
- This event is following safe food and drink preparation and consumption practices.
- This event is encouraging all attendees to sign up for [CA Notify](#) as an added layer of protection for themselves and the community to receive alerts when they have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19.
- This event will not prevent anyone who chooses to mask from entry into the event.

Staff:

- Event staff are vaccinated, or have tested negative prior to working this event.
- Event staff will be wearing masks throughout the entire event when indoors and have been properly trained on how to wear a well-fitting mask.
- Event staff, prior to leaving home, have been informed to monitor their own health and stay home if sick or have symptoms.
- All staff have been encouraged to sign up for [CA Notify](#) as an added layer of protection for themselves and the community to receive alerts when they have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19.
- Event staff are fully trained on all protective measures that are in place for this event.

Attendees:

- This event will require all attendees to verify their vaccine status or show proof of a negative test result prior to attending.
- Event attendees will be masked during the entirety of the event when indoors, unless actively eating or drinking.
- The host will be providing masks for all attendees that don't have one.
- The host will be providing on-site testing for all attendees.

Appendix B: Checklist for Attendees

AS AN ATTENDEE, WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER BEFORE I ATTEND AN EVENT?

(for use by consumers if they are considering attending an event)

Before attending any event, consumers may want to consider the following in order to make informed decisions:

Considerations about an event:

- Is the event in full compliance with all current local and state public health recommendations and requirements?
- Is the event outdoors (low risk) or indoors (higher risk)?
- Is the event/host requiring all staff and attendees to verify their vaccine status or show proof of a negative test prior to the event?
- Is the event/host requiring all staff and attendees to wear masks when indoors?
- Is the event/host offering other options for participation or attendance (virtual options, reserved hours, etc.)?
- Is the event communicating all the protective measures they are putting into place for this event?

My own considerations:

- Am I [vaccinated or boosted](#)?
- Am I [sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19](#) (I shouldn't attend the event)?
- Am I at risk of severe illness or disease if I get COVID-19?
- Do I live with someone who may be at risk of severe illness or disease if they get COVID-19 (are they unvaccinated or immunocompromised)?
- Do I know [how to access treatments](#) that may be available to prevent or treat COVID-19 if I am at risk for serious disease and eligible for treatment?

Appendix C:

SAFE AND SMART QUICK REFERENCE EVENT CHECKLIST FOR OPERATORS:

(the internal checklist is customizable for each event operator to track implementation of the strategies they have adopted)

Before the Event:

- Location
 - » Host events outdoors wherever possible or provide outdoor space for eating and drinking when possible.
 - » If indoors, improve the ventilation, filtration and overall air quality.
- Local Considerations
 - » Follow local and regional COVID-19 news to track the prevalence and severity of disease in your area. Check your [local health department websites](#) for the most current information about your community or the [COVID-19 Community Levels by County Map](#).
 - » Ensure compliance with local and state guidance or requirements.
- Attendee Considerations
 - » Plan options for those attendees who are at high risk of severe disease, such as the elderly and immunocompromised (for example, virtual event options, reserved hours, etc.).
 - » Consider mechanisms to collect contact information and notify attendees and staff if someone at the event becomes sick or was exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Communication to Staff and Attendees.
 - » Encourage all staff and attendees, prior to leaving home, to monitor their own health and stay home if sick or have symptoms.
 - » Encourage event attendees to get vaccinated and boosted.
 - » Inform all about prevention strategies that will be in place at the event, including any vaccine, testing or masking requirements or recommendations for attendees.
 - » Inform all about tools for safety promotion such as masks, vaccination, test checks and [CA Notify](#).
 - » Inform all about what to do in case of exposure to COVID-19 at the event.
 - » Information being provided is accessible to all persons who may want to attend my event (different languages and formats)

During the Event:

- Encourage masking of attendees and staff (per [current CDPH mask guidance](#)) while indoors.
- Supply masks upon request to attendees.
- Ensure attendees and staff are following COVID-19 protective practices established by the venue.
- Post signage to communicate COVID-19 policies or Consider posting Appendix A checklist

After the Event:

- Report to attendees, employees and local health authorities in case of an outbreak.