

COVID-19 Guidance for Recovery Support Groups

Purpose

This document provides guidance to recovery support groups for reducing the potential spread of COVID-19 while enabling these essential groups to continue meeting. Recovery support groups refer to those that help individuals and families maintain recovery and reduce relapse through support from peers who are also in recovery, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, and Al-Anon Family Groups. This guidance also applies to support groups that address eating disorders, interpersonal violence, and similar challenges.

Requirements

To reduce risk of COVID-19 infection when convening recovery support groups, the group facilitator/lead should:

- Conduct support group meetings virtually whenever possible, this is the safest option for preventing the spread of COVID-19.
- Limit in-person meetings to no more than 10 people when gathering indoors, including the facilitator/lead. All participants should be required to wear a face covering.
- [Screen](#) all participants for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) before allowing them to join in-person meetings. Participants or facilitators with symptoms should not attend in-person meetings.
- If feasible and allowed by the program, document to the best degree possible, the following information on in-person meeting participants: meeting date, time in, time out, name (or pseudonym), and contact information (phone number and email address, if available).
 - This documentation enables the facilitator/lead to notify participants should the group be identified as potential close contacts of a COVID-19 positive participant.
 - Retain documentation for 30 days.
- Reference [CDC's Events Gatherings: Readiness and Planning Tool](#) for more information and a checklist on planning the meetings.
- Educate participants on not attending in-person meetings if they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19, are sick, or are experiencing [COVID-19 symptoms](#). Participants can attend meetings virtually instead, if available.
- Plan for how to maintain social distancing between all participants as much as possible, while also wearing a face covering and increasing ventilation (such as opening windows and making sure HVAC systems are bringing in outside air to the extent possible).
 - Place chairs at least 6 feet apart in meeting space. Participants should maintain physical social distancing when arriving, during meetings, and when leaving.
 - To the extent possible, groups should be scheduled at staggered times to avoid crowding as participants arrive and leave meeting area.
- Encourage frequent handwashing. Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol* for use when soap and water isn't available. (*Support groups for which

alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not appropriate should emphasize handwashing with soap and water before or upon arrival and onsite, if at all possible. If handwashing is not feasible, a non-alcohol based hand sanitizer may be used.)

- Require that face coverings be worn in accordance with the Secretary of Health [Face Coverings Order](#).
- Prohibit serving food or drink within the meeting. Sharing of food/drink/cigarettes/etc. is not permitted.
- Ask participants to arrive and leave the facility/group immediately before and after the meeting to eliminate congestion and gatherings on the property or in the parking lot.
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs and chairs, according to [CDC guidelines](#) and instructions for use with a disinfectant listed on [EPA's list N](#). Ensure restrooms are cleaned frequently.
- Follow current [DOH guidelines](#) regarding hygiene, cleaning, ventilation, transportation, and records and contact tracing.
- Ensure operations follow the Labor & Industries [COVID-19 workplace and safety requirements](#) to protect workers.

To reduce risk of COVID-19 infection when attending recovery support groups, participants should:

- Consult their healthcare provider for any recommended special precautions if at [higher risk for severe COVID-19](#).
- Wear cloth face coverings or face masks for all in-person meetings in accordance with the Secretary of Health [Face Coverings Order](#), unless medically or behaviorally contraindicated.
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Refrain from sharing food/drink/cigarettes/etc. at meetings.

Resources:

[CDC's Events Gatherings: Readiness and Planning Tool](#)

[ASAM Promoting Support Group Attendance](#)