

Safer at Home

PERFORMING ARTS VENUES

DRAFT: COVID-19 REOPENING GUIDANCE

Arts Sector –Performing Arts Venues and Producing Organizations

The Performing Arts Work Group recommends that all venues and production companies review and adopt, as appropriate, the mitigations outlined in the Event Safety Alliance Reopening Guide and the Performing Arts Center Consortium Guide to Reopening Theatrical Venues.

General Guidance to Protect Employees and Customers:

1. Review and follow the [Universal Guidelines](#) for All New Hampshire Employers and Employees.
2. If serving food, provide [ServSafe COVID-19](#) training or similar training to all employees.
3. If serving retail (e.g., artist merchandise) follow NH [Retail Guidelines](#).
4. Review and follow CDC [guidance for businesses and employers](#).
5. Review and follow CDC [guidance for cleaning and disinfection](#).
6. Staff (including volunteers, contractors, and performers) should wear face coverings over their noses and mouths while at work within the facility, except during performances when cloth face coverings would be prohibitive for performers. This includes wearing cloth face coverings when in common areas, outdoors when others are in close proximity, and in shared staff areas (e.g. offices and break rooms).
 - a. Provide training on cloth face coverings based on CDC guidance for [Use of Cloth Face Coverings](#).
 - b. People wearing face coverings must not touch their eyes, noses, mouths, or faces, or adjust their face coverings without first sanitizing their hands. After touching faces or adjusting face coverings, their hands must be sanitized.
7. All customers should wear face coverings at all times when inside the facility except when actively eating or drinking.
8. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer must be made readily available and must be placed throughout the facility, including at entryways to the facility, at ticket counters, in food and beverage locations, outside of theaters, in hallways, and at exits. Hand sanitizer must also be provided in non-public settings such as work areas, offices, and break areas.
9. Commonly touched surfaces, work areas, restrooms, and public areas should be frequently cleaned and disinfected according to CDC guidance.
10. Processes should be built into operations that promote and maintain physical distancing between staff and customers, including at ticketing, food service areas, restrooms, waiting in lines, etc.
11. Assign dedicated staff (i.e. a safety officer) to monitor and ensure compliance with social distancing, hand hygiene, cloth face covering use, and other protective actions.

Employee, Volunteer, and Performer Guidance:

1. Staff, volunteers, and performers must be provided with education and training around safe practices as they relate to physical distancing, use of cloth face coverings, hand hygiene, sanitation (cleaning

and disinfection policies), and illness policies outlined in the [Universal Guidance](#) and this guidance document.

2. Staff, volunteers, and performers must be screened (questioned about) symptoms and risk factors for COVID-19 before each shift as outlined in the Universal Guidelines and the [COVID-19 employee travel, screening, and exclusion guidance](#). Staff with any symptoms or identified risk factors shall not be allowed to work, perform, or remain at the facility.
3. Require all staff, volunteers, and performers to report any symptoms of COVID-19 or close contact to a person with COVID-19 to a supervisor.
4. Shared equipment shall be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
5. Employees should frequently practice hand hygiene throughout the day, including upon arrival at the facility, before and after going to the bathroom, before and after touching their face masks or face coverings, before and after eating, before and after food service, and prior to leaving the facility for the day.

Consumer Guidance:

1. All facilities should have a communication plan to educate customers prior to their visits about the health and safety practices at the venue and what the customers need to be aware of when they arrive. Such communication plans shall include, but not be limited to, online methods (e.g., website, social media sites), email, other electronic communication, such as reservations or confirmations, and print mailings to the customers.
2. Customers shall be asked the following questions at check-in (verbally or by asking customer to review provided information/questions and attest that answers are “no”):
 - a. Have you been in close contact with someone who is suspected or confirmed to have had COVID-19 in the last 10 days? (NOTE: Healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients while wearing appropriate personal protective equipment should answer “no” to this question)
 - b. Have you had a fever or felt feverish in the last 24 hours?
 - c. Are you experiencing any respiratory symptoms, including a runny nose, sore throat, cough, or difficulty breathing?
 - d. Are you experiencing any new muscle aches, significant tiredness, or chills?
 - e. Have you had any new changes in your sense of taste or smell?
 - f. Have you traveled in the past 10 days either:
 - i. Internationally (outside the U.S.),
 - ii. By cruise ship, or
 - iii. Domestically (within the U.S.) outside of New England?
 - iv. NOTE: You do NOT need to quarantine for 10 days or get tested for COVID-19 if either of the following apply:
 1. You are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and more than 14 days have passed since you received the second dose of your COVID-19 vaccine.
 2. You have previously tested positive for active COVID-19 infection (by PCR or antigen testing) in the last 90 days (if you had a previous infection that was more than 90 days ago, you must still follow all quarantine requirements)
 - g. Customers shall be told: If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, please do not put our employees and other customers at risk and come back another day when you feel better.
3. Signage must be prominently posted at the entrance informing customers about the [symptoms of COVID-19](#) and customers should be reminded:

- a. Remain home if experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 (list common symptoms of COVID-19); and
- b. Keep a safe distance of at least 6 feet from other people visiting the facility at all times; and
- c. Practice frequent hand hygiene/washing; and
- d. Wear cloth face coverings over their mouths and nose to protect others when in public locations and social distancing is difficult to maintain.

Business Process Guidance:

1. Seating capacity should be limited to either 75% occupancy or to the number of people where at least 3 feet of physical distancing is maintained between associated groups of individuals; whichever number is lower. This is conditional as long as mask use is applied and venues do not seat audience members facing one another.
2. Customers should be encouraged to pre-purchase admission tickets prior to arrival. It is recommended that customers be given a timeframe to enter the venue and go through ticketing to be seated in order to avoid congregating and waiting.
3. Venues will develop entrance/exit plans to mitigate safety concerns and shall allow enough time between performances for all customers to exit without congregation in hallways or at exits, enhanced cleaning and disinfection to occur, and new customers to arrive.
4. Venues must develop a process for seating customers in auditoriums so that customers not part of the same household group are seated at least THREE feet apart from others. This includes maintaining at least THREE feet of distance side-to-side and front-to-back in the auditorium.
5. Facilities should develop a seating plan for which customers can reserve spots ahead of time and which is adjustable to the size of the booking party allowing couples and small groups to sit together while maintaining at least THREE feet of distance from other individuals/groups.
6. Each performance should have attendants monitor seating to ensure appropriate physical spacing and mask usage between groups or individuals.
7. Intermissions should be avoided to prevent congregating and close contact with others. When food and beverage are served, follow food service guidance. Individually wrapped or grab and go concessions are allowed, follow applicable retail guidance.
8. Physical barriers (e.g., plastic or acrylic shields) should be placed between staff and customers at ticketing and food service counters.
9. Separate and clearly designated entrances and exits should be established when possible to facilitate physical distancing between arriving/exiting customers.
10. Congregating in the lobby and waiting lines should be avoided or minimized. Facilities must ensure all areas that create waiting lines have clear demarcations that space customers at least 6 feet apart.
11. Lobby tables and seating should be removed, except as needed for ADA compliance
12. Facilities should evaluate their buildings' ventilation systems to increase auditorium and overall building ventilation, increase the number of air exchanges, increase outdoor air ventilation, limit internal air circulation, improve central air filtration or other upgrades to HVAC systems. CDC guidance should be reviewed and used in evaluating building ventilation.

Operations Guidance for Venues and Performers

1. Producing organizations that employ staff and independent contractors should abide by current New Hampshire [guidance](#) on quarantine for those coming to the state to stay for a period of time.
2. In backstage areas, post clear signage to promote physical distancing and hygiene protocols.

3. Organizations that have the flexibility to rehearse and perform in outdoor spaces are encouraged to do so, following all appropriate guidance (see Streaming Media Guidelines for performing arts for additional pertinent details - CONSIDER DISCARDING STREAMING MEDIA GUIDELINES?).
4. Auditions and rehearsals should be kept to a minimum and held with only necessary staff and artists.
5. Performances incorporating singing, the playing of wind instruments, or significant physical exertion (any practice that increases respiration/exhalation) the following applies:
 - a. Practices and performances should be conducted outdoors whenever possible.
 - b. Review ventilation quality when determining location of practices and performances. Facilities should pay particular attention to ensuring that building ventilation is increased, air exchanges with outdoor air are maximized, internal air recirculation is minimized, or other upgrades to HVAC systems.
 - c. Performance group sizes should be limited to the number of performers that the venue can accommodate with a reasonable buffer (min. 6 foot physical distance), physical barrier, or other specific mitigation.
 - d. Additionally, a buffer between the front row of audience seating should be established with consideration for all mitigations (indoors/outdoors, mask use, barriers, size of performance group, etc.) with a minimum of a 6 foot buffer outdoors, or an 8 foot buffer between the performers and the audience indoors.
 - e. Performers playing an instrument that releases spit/saliva must collect those secretions on a personal cloth that is either then discarded, or taken home by the performer to be laundered. Saliva may not be deposited on the floor. After handling the cloth, performers must perform hand hygiene.
6. If a performance/show is conducted that require close or physical contact between performers:
 - a. Performances should be adjusted to minimize close or physical contact between performers.
 - b. Performers should wear cloth face coverings or face masks during rehearsals and performances if possible.
 - c. Hand hygiene with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be performed frequently before the start of the show and every time performers leave and come back on stage.
 - d. Activities that involve direct contact with respiratory or mouth secretions are not allowed unless the individuals are isolated together.
 - e. Consider testing of all performers in the 7 days before a performance using a PCR-based test to detect COVID-19 (Note: a negative test does not ensure a person is free of COVID-19 so the above recommendations still need to be followed).
7. Performers must not interact directly with the audience or go off-stage unless a 3 foot distance can be maintained from audience members.
8. Performers must not have unmasked contact with audiences outside of the performance (i.e., back-stage or after-performance meetings/greetings are not allowed).

Touring Venues

1. At least two weeks prior to, and again upon arrival, local staff shall inform tour personnel of local policies and protocols to protect the health and safety of venue staff, guests, and customers. Standard screening questions shall be asked to ensure touring personnel coming into the local venue are healthy and have adopted health and safety protocols that conform to local ones.
2. Touring personnel (artists and support crew) shall limit interactions with local staff and customers. Guidance on appropriate physical distancing and use of cloth face coverings must be followed.

3. Touring personnel shall be restricted to the backstage and onstage areas to the greatest extent possible. Contact with customers shall be avoided.