

Guiding Principles to Keep in Mind for Scouting Activities

The more people a participants or leader interacts with, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. The risk of COVID-19 spread increases during activities as follows:

Lowest Risk: Small groups of participants stay together. Participant remain at least 6 feet apart and do not share objects. Outdoor activities are prioritized. All participants are from the local geographic area (e.g., city, town, county, community).

More Risk: Participants mix between groups but remain at least 6 feet apart and do not share objects. Outdoor activities are prioritized. All participants are from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).

Even More Risk: Participants mix between groups and do not remain spaced apart. All participants are from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).

Highest Risk: Participants mix between groups and do not remain spaced apart. All participants are not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).

COVID-19 is mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, or sneeze. It is thought that the virus may spread to hands from a contaminated surface and then to the nose or mouth, causing infection. Therefore, personal prevention practices (such as handwashing, staying home when sick) and environmental cleaning and disinfection are important principles that are covered in this document. Fortunately, there are several actions activity leaders can take to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread during activities.

Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread

Activity leaders may consider implementing several strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Staying Home when Appropriate

Educate leaders, participants, and their families about when they should stay home and when they can return to camp.

Actively encourage leaders and participants who are sick or have recently had a close contact with a person with COVID-19 to stay home. Develop policies that encourage sick leaders and participants to stay at home without fear of reprisal, and ensure families are aware of these policies.

Leaders and participants should stay home if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 symptoms.

Leaders who have recently had a close contact with a person with COVID-19 should also stay home and monitor their health.

CDC's criteria can help inform when leaders should return to the activity:

If they have been sick with COVID-19

If they have recently had a close contact with a person with COVID-19

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and increase monitoring to ensure adherence among participants and leaders.

If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used (for leaders and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).

Encourage leaders and participants to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used (for leaders and older participant who can safely use hand sanitizer).

Masks

Teach and reinforce the use of masks. Masks may be challenging for participant (especially younger participants) to wear in all-day settings. Masks should be worn by leaders and participants (particularly older participants) as feasible and are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. Information should be provided to leaders and participants on proper use, removal, and washing of masks.

Note: masks should not be placed on:

Babies or children younger than 2 years old

Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious

Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without help

Masks are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms. Masks are not surgical masks, respirators, or other medical personal protective equipment.

Adequate Supplies

Support healthy hygiene by providing supplies including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for leaders and older participants who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, masks (as feasible), and no-touch/foot pedal trash cans.

Signs and Messages

Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., camp entrances, dining areas, restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs such as by properly washing hands and properly wearing a mask.

Make regular announcements on reducing the spread of COVID-19

Include messages (for example, videos) about behaviors that prevent spread of COVID-19 when communicating with leaders and families (such as on unit websites, in emails, and through social media accounts).

Maintaining Healthy Environments

Activity leaders may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy environments.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g., playground equipment, door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains) within the activity area and in any shared transportation vehicles at least daily or between use as much as possible. Use of shared objects (e.g., art supplies, nap mats, toys, games) should be limited when possible, or cleaned between use.

Develop a schedule for increased routine cleaning and disinfection.

If transport vehicles (e.g., buses) are used for the activity, drivers should practice all safety actions and protocols as indicated for other leaders (e.g., hand hygiene, masks). To clean and disinfect school buses or other transport vehicles, see guidance for bus transit.

Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaners and disinfectants, including storing products securely away from children. Use products that meet EPA disinfection criteria.

Cleaning products should not be used near children, and leaders should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.

Use gloves when removing garbage bags or handling and disposing of trash. Wash hands after removing gloves.

Shared Objects

Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect.

Keep each participant's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas.

Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials to the extent possible (e.g., assign art supplies or other equipment to a single participant), or limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of participants at a time and clean and disinfect between use.

Avoid sharing electronic devices, toys, books, and other games or learning aids.

Ventilation

Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms) to participants using the facility.

Water Systems

To minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease and other diseases associated with water, take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., sink faucets, drinking fountains, showers, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown. Drinking fountains should be cleaned and sanitized but encourage leaders and participant to bring their own water to minimize use and touching of water fountains.

Modified Layouts

Space seating at least 6 feet apart.

Prioritize outdoor activities where social distancing can be maintained as much as possible.

Create social distance between participants on school buses (e.g., seat children one child per row, skip rows) when possible.

Physical Barriers and Guides

Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart (e.g., reception desks).

Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that leaders and participants remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g., guides for creating “one way routes” in hallways).

Communal Spaces

Close shared spaces such as dining halls and playgrounds with shared playground equipment, if possible; otherwise stagger use and clean and disinfect between use.

Food Service

Have participant bring their own meals as feasible and eat in separate areas or with their smaller group, instead of in a communal dining hall or cafeteria. Ensure the safety of children with food allergies.

Use disposable food service items (utensils, dishes). If disposable items are not feasible or desirable, ensure that all non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher. Individuals should wash their hands after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items.

If food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee instead of a buffet or family-style meal. Avoid sharing of foods and utensils and ensure the safety of children with food allergies.

Maintaining Healthy Operations

Activities Leaders may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy operations.

Protections for Leaders and Participants who are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness from COVID-19

Offer options for leaders at higher risk for severe illness that limit exposure risk.

Offer options for participant at higher risk for severe illness that limit exposure risk (e.g., virtual learning opportunities).

For leaders and participants: Limit activity attendance to leaders and participants who live in the local geographic area (e.g., community, city, town, or county) to reduce risk of spread from areas with higher levels of COVID-19.

Put in place policies that protect the privacy of people at higher risk for severe illness regarding underlying medical conditions.

Regulatory Awareness

Be aware of local or state regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings to determine if events can be held.

Identifying Small Groups and Keeping Them Together (Cohorting)

Keep participant together in small groups with dedicated leaders and make sure they remain with the same group throughout the day, every day.

Limit mixing between groups if possible.

Staggered Scheduling

Stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations by cohort (group) or put in place other protocols to limit contact between cohorts and with other participants' guardians as much as possible.

When possible, use flexible activity sites and flexible hours to help establish policies and practices for social distancing (maintaining distance of approximately 6 feet) between leaders and others, especially if social distancing is recommended by state and local health authorities.

Gatherings, Visitors, and Field Trips

Avoid group events, gatherings, or meetings where social distancing of at least 6 feet between people cannot be maintained. Limit group size to the extent possible.

Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible – especially with individuals not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).

Avoid activities and events such as field trips and special performances.

Pursue options to convene sporting events and participation in sports activities in ways that minimize transmission of COVID-19 to players, families, coaches, and communities.

Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact

Designate a lead person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All leaders and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.

Communication Systems

Put systems in place for:

Consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, having leaders and families self-report to the Activity leader if they have symptoms of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days in accordance with health information sharing regulations for COVID-19 and other applicable privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations.

Notifying leaders and families of activity closures and restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure (e.g., limited hours of operation).

Leaders Training

Train leaders on all safety protocols.

Conduct training virtually or ensure that social distancing is maintained during training.

Recognize Signs and Symptoms

If feasible, conduct daily health checks (e.g., temperature screening and/or symptom checking) of leaders and participants (if feasible) safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.

Activity leaders may use examples of screening methods in CDC's supplemental Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open as a guide for screening participant and CDC's General Business FAQs for screening leaders.

Sharing Facilities

Encourage any organizations that share or use the activity facilities to also follow these considerations. and limit shared use, if feasible.

Support Coping and Resilience

Encourage leaders and participants to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.

Promote leaders and participants eating healthy, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.

Encourage leaders and participants to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.

Consider posting signs for the national distress hotline: 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746

Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick

Activity leaders may consider implementing several strategies to prepare for when someone gets sick.

Advise Sick Individuals of Home Isolation Criteria

Sick leaders or participants should not return to the activity until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation.

Isolate and Transport Those Who are Sick

Make sure that leaders and families know that they (leaders) or their children (families) should not come to an activity, and that they should notify activity officials (e.g., the designated COVID-19 point of contact) if they (leaders) or their child (families) become sick with COVID-19 symptoms, test positive for COVID-19, or have been exposed to someone with symptoms or a confirmed or suspected case.

Immediately separate leaders and participants with COVID-19 symptoms (such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath) at the activity. Individuals who are sick should be cared for following CDC guidance for caring for yourself or others who are sick.

Work with activity leaders, nurses, and other healthcare providers to identify an isolation room or area to separate anyone who has COVID-19 symptoms or who has tested positive but does not have symptoms. If the activity has a nurse or other healthcare provider, they should use Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions when caring for sick people. See: [What Healthcare Personnel Should Know About Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Possible COVID-19 Infection](#).

If a person becomes sick and needs to be transported, establish procedures for safely transporting them. If you are calling an ambulance or bringing someone to a healthcare facility, try to call first to alert them that the person may have COVID-19.

Clean and Disinfect

Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after cleaning and disinfecting them (for outdoor areas, this includes surfaces or shared objects in the area, if applicable).

Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible. Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing them securely away from children.

Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts

In accordance with state and local laws and regulations, activity leaders should notify local health officials, leaders, and families immediately of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)[external icon](#).

Advise those who have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to separate themselves, self-monitor for symptoms, and follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop.