



MEMO

TO: All City of Boston Employees

FROM: Mayor Martin J. Walsh

SUBJECT: Interim Guidance for Hosting City-Sponsored Meetings & Events in Boston

DATE: March 12, 2020

Interim Guidance for Hosting City-Sponsored Meetings & Events in Boston

Effective March 12, 2020 until further notice

If you are planning an event or meeting as a City of Boston employee or department, the City mandates the following guidelines related to number of people in attendance, event space, meeting activities, and populations attending, to prevent and reduce the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) at your event. City events include, but are not limited to, internal department meetings and community events. Please be advised that these guidelines are for City employees and City-sponsored events. Boston Public Schools will be issuing separate guidance for their employees which will mirror this guidance with a few adjustments, recognizing the unique character of the BPS community. Private events and private citizens are not subject to this guidance, but we encourage those organizing and attending private events and gatherings to consider CDC guidance, use common sense, and make decisions you are comfortable with for you, your event, and the health of those who might attend.

Exceptions to this guidance will be made for essential and critical services that impact the social needs and well being of Boston residents. In order to confirm that the delivery of a particular service qualifies for that exception, please contact Marta Rivera at marta.rivera@boston.gov or 617-635-1845. Additionally, public meetings and public hearings being held that are subject to the Open Meeting Law are currently exempted from this guidance. City staff who oversee such hearings and



meetings are being directed to immediately consider methods to make such meetings as consistent as possible with the “social distancing” goals outlined below. These might include taking steps such as moving hearings to larger rooms or setting up designated waiting areas so that people don’t have to wait in the hearing room or any other enclosed area. Additionally, City staff will work to insure that all public hearings and public meetings subject to the Open Meeting Law are televised, live-streamed, or recorded for posting on the City website. We will be sharing more information about our approach to public meetings and hearings very soon.

Please note that all events hosted by non-City organizations and agencies held within City buildings (libraries, community centers, schools, City Hall, etc.) will need to find new locations.

If a new location for these events cannot be secured, the event will need to be cancelled. Where a department determines that a non-City event is a critical service that impacts the social needs and well being of Boston residents, the department may seek an exception by contacting Marta Rivera at marta.rivera@boston.gov or 617-635-1845. Private rental events will be considered on a case-by-case basis and any prospective host must contact their City facility point of contact for further guidance.

With the COVID-19 situation evolving locally, guidance will be updated as necessary.

Number of people

The number of attendees at your event is an important indicator of whether you should postpone or cancel your event.

City Guidance is:

- Events with **more than 25 attendees** or where event attendance is unknown but could draw an attendance of 25 people or more should be postponed or cancelled. If having the event virtually is an option, it may be held through those means.
- Events with **fewer than 25 attendees may be held under certain parameters as outlined below.**

Parameters to be met:



Event Space

Group size is not the only factor to consider in planning an event. The size and configuration of the event or meeting space is an important consideration. Meeting with smaller groups of people in tight spaces or large meetings in spaces that do not meet “social distancing” guidelines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) can place attendees at risk. People should have the ability to engage in “social distancing,” which means that attendees are able to stay six feet from one another during the program/event and are not forced to be in close contact for a duration of more than 15 minutes.

City Guidance is:

- Events held in a space that CAN accommodate double the amount of expected people can be held as scheduled as long as it follows the risk management guidelines below. *For example, an event space with a maximum occupancy of 50 persons is necessary for a maximum of 25 attendees as this will enable attendees to engage in “social distancing.”* Again, the maximum allowed number of people at a City-sponsored event held in any City building or any external building is 25.
- Events to be held in a space that CANNOT accommodate double the amount of expected people should be postponed or cancelled if a larger space cannot be identified. If having the event virtually is an option, it may also be held through those means.

Event Activities

The type of meeting or event you are hosting may impact your participants by creating an environment where they must interact in close quarters. An example would be an event that centers around small group or individual discussions in small spaces (i.e. networking, hand shaking, and conversing less than six feet away from each other). In addition to the types of activities, events that are longer than one hour in duration should seek ways to limit physical closeness between attendees. In addition, events with buffets, snack bars, or other options where multiple persons are potentially in contact with the food being served, can place attendees at risk.

City Guidance is:

- A plan must detail clear strategies to allow for social distancing at the event and will limit the activities that will put people at risk.



- If a simple plan can be created to do that with approval from your department head/cabinet chief, the event can go on as scheduled.
- If a simple plan cannot be created, the event **MUST BE CANCELLED OR RESCHEDULED**.
- If having the event virtually is an option, it may be held through those means.

Populations Attending

Some attendees may be at greater risk of contracting COVID-19. People over sixty and those with underlying medical conditions are at greater risk of harm from contracting the virus.

City Guidance is:

- Events primarily geared towards those at-risk populations mentioned above, **MUST BE** postponed or cancelled.
- If having the event virtually is an option, it may be held through those means.

These infection control guidelines must be met to host an event of any size:

- [Arrange for enhanced cleaning of the event site, before and after.](#)
- **Provide hand sanitizer and tissues.**
- **Encourage hand washing and proper social etiquette (i.e. no hand shaking, respecting personal space, and no hugging)**
- Consider hosting your event virtually using teleconferencing platforms.
- Let your attendees know that you might need to postpone or cancel at the last minute and that they should make contingency plans just in case. Be clear about how last minute changes will be communicated.
- Educate attendees at the event about proper precautions.
- Urge anyone who feels unwell to stay home.
- For ticketed events, offer refunds for people who are part of at-risk populations.
- Provide boxed meals instead of hosting buffets or meals that would be handled by many people.

Please contact your cabinet chief about your specific event and get the appropriate sign off to either continue with the event or cancel it. This applies to all events scheduled to be held from March 12th until further notice.