

# GUIDE TO REOPENING THE ARTS

May 15, 2020

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

North Carolina's arts and cultural sector is a complex ecosystem with venues and spaces of various sizes, constructs, designs, and missions. We acknowledge that each arts organization has its unique circumstances while navigating these uncertain times. The purpose of this guide is to provide recommendations as you craft your organization's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and develop your plan for reopening to the public. We are all working toward the common goal to keep our patrons, workers, and artists as safe as possible.

Please note that we envision this as a living document. We will all learn a great deal in the coming weeks and months, and as further information becomes available, we will offer updates to share the most current, relevant information with you.

We realize that there is no easy way to mitigate this situation and no guarantee that we can completely eliminate risks. However, we believe that we can take collective action that will allow the arts sector to reopen to the public safely and responsibly. The guidance offered here will help you protect the well-being of those who organize events, programs, and performances across the great state of North Carolina and beyond and those who support and attend arts and cultural activities.

"A Guide to Reopening the Arts in North Carolina" was compiled by cultural leaders representing the North Carolina Theatre Conference, the North Carolina Presenters Consortium, Arts North Carolina, the North Carolina Arts Council, and independent arts organizations. The team borrowed substantially from the work of the Event Safety Alliance, and much of this document is excerpted from the "**Event Safety Alliance Reopening Guide**": <https://www.eventsafetyalliance.org/esa-reopening-guide>.

## Additional Reopening Resources

### State of North Carolina

<https://www.nc.gov/covid-19/staying-ahead-curve>

### American Alliance of Museums

<https://www.aam-us.org/programs/about-museums/preparing-to-reopen/>

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

# PATRON EDUCATION ABOUT THE NEW NORMAL

“We’re all in this together” describes the essential role that patrons play in allowing live events to resume safely. Because coronavirus is highly contagious, everyone — patrons as well as workers — must behave responsibly. This section focuses on ways to educate patrons to maximize health and safety compliance and minimize disruption of an event.

**Changing Expectations.** Consistent and widespread messaging by arts organizations can accomplish two essential goals: (1) it will teach patrons that the new rules are for their protection, which will eventually lead to greater compliance; and (2) showing new safety practices will coax nervous patrons back to public places. Arts organizations located in the same community may want to consider coordinating messaging to reinforce the “new normal.”

**What to Explain.** The concept of explaining rules to patrons is hardly new. Many events or venues already have codes of conduct with lists of prohibited items and behavior. Before reopening, they must add their new health procedures and expectations, such as longer wait times. There is no exact amount of information that is best. Rather, as with all safety messaging, the goal is to be positive, practical, and proportionate.

**Where to Message.** In a word, everywhere. The more prominently new rules and expectations are displayed, the more serious businesses appear to be about enforcing them, which will promote compliance. Here is a list of ways to reach patrons before they arrive:

- **Website** for the venue, event, or artist(s)
- **Social media channels** for the venue, event, or artist(s)
- **Ticket purchasing sites** should link to health and safety rules.
- **Emails** reminding patrons of health rules and expectations can be sent to patrons at regular intervals between the date of purchase/registration and the date of the event.
- **Signage** leading to and at the event site can be effective as a further reminder, especially if it is visually attractive and located where patrons are likely to be standing still or moving slowly.

**How to Message.** With a goal as broad as normalizing and gaining buy-in for new behavior, any method that works is good. Here are a few suggestions.

- **Marketing staff** can use their creative talent to promote good hygiene and health guidance without being intimidating.
- **Photos and videos** can show patrons having a good time even while following health rules.
- **Storyboards** can depict the process and schedule by which a venue is sanitized so patrons understand the measures and put a face on the workers keeping them safe.
- **Announcements** should be both audible and visual to accommodate people with sensory challenges and different language skills.
- **Artists and performers** can pre-record messages reminding patrons that only their full compliance with these health measures allows arts programming to happen.

# WORKER HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Because the novel coronavirus is highly contagious, testing is insufficient, and there is no vaccine, workers (both employees and contractors) and volunteers must address the health risks of working in the close confines of many arts facilities.

**Designated Point Person.** This guide recommends that a member of the arts organization's management team be designated as a point person responsible for overseeing the response to COVID-19. The point person will lead a process to develop and implement the agency's safety strategies, including appropriate training for staff and workers.

## Practices for Healthy Workers and Volunteers.

- **Social distancing.** Public health guidance stresses that whenever possible, everyone should stay at least six feet from the person closest to them. Where a task cannot be accomplished by someone working alone, workers can limit their exposure by forming a "work pairing" in which two people routinely work together but keep their distance from everyone else.
- **Handwashing.** Frequent washing of hands with soap is vital to help combat the spread of any virus. When a sink is available, workers should wash their hands at least every 60 minutes for 20 seconds and dry them thoroughly with a disposable towel or dryer. As a backup, workers may use a hand sanitizer containing at least 60-percent alcohol or 70-percent isopropanol when a sink is not available. Workers should also wash their hands at the beginning and end of each shift and break and after using the restroom, sneezing, touching their face, blowing their nose, cleaning, sweeping, mopping, smoking, eating, or drinking.
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE).** Employers should ensure that their workers and volunteers have PPE appropriate for their work and that vendors and independent contractors provide and use their own.
- **Face coverings.** Physical respiratory protection such as a cloth face covering should be worn whenever people are within six feet of one another because coronavirus is spread through the air and a significant number of people infected with COVID-19 will show no outward symptoms of illness.
- **Gloves.** Gloves are not a substitute for regular handwashing. Gloves should be worn when conducting health checks on workers or patrons; when handling food, tickets, or any items on which infection can be transmitted; and when using cleaning or disinfecting products.
- **Touching your face.** Workers should avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth.
- **Cough and sneeze etiquette.** Workers should cover their cough or sneeze with a tissue, or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available, and follow up with thorough handwashing.

**Practices for Sick Workers and Volunteers.** The following recommended practices for sick workers presume a degree of supervisor oversight and control over employees that may be difficult with independent contractors. Where possible, companies should consider incorporating the following health and safety requirements in their independent contractor agreements.

Workers must notify their supervisor and stay home from work if they have symptoms of acute respiratory illness consistent with COVID-19 that are not explained by an underlying medical or allergic condition, such as fever, cough, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or shortness of breath. If workers exhibit symptoms of acute respiratory illness upon arrival at work or become sick during the day, their supervisor must separate them from other workers immediately. The process and location for isolating a symptomatic individual should be considered part of the overall safety plan.

**Responding to Confirmed Cases Of COVID-19.** If a worker is confirmed to be infected with COVID-19, their supervisor should notify the designated point person, who should immediately take the following actions:

- Determine and document the circumstances and what areas of the venue were visited, used, or impacted by the infected worker (the “impacted areas”).
- Assess whether the worker’s role put them in close contact (less than six feet/two meters) with other workers or patrons, and whether their duties created any specific transmission risks, such as handling currency or checking tickets.
- Work with the local health department to determine which other workers had close contact with the infected worker (the “impacted coworkers”).
- Notify the impacted workers that they may have had contact with an infected worker and encourage them to monitor their health and report any concerns to their healthcare provider.
- **Legal warning.** It may be illegal to provide the infected worker’s name or other identifying information that could be used to determine their identity. Consult your local health department regarding reporting protocols.
- Any worker who tests positive for COVID-19 should remain in home isolation for 10 days after symptoms begin or 72 hours after the fever is gone without fever-reducing medication, whichever is longer. These guidelines are from the CDC; local rules may vary.

**Paid Sick Leave.** Employees in the United States with COVID-19 should be paid sick leave by their employers under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). The U.S. Department of Labor poster regarding paid sick leave under the FFCRA should be posted for workers at the worksite. Here is a link to the poster: [dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHD/posters/FFCRA\\_Poster\\_WH1422\\_Non-Federal.pdf](https://dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHD/posters/FFCRA_Poster_WH1422_Non-Federal.pdf).

# SANITIZING THE VENUE

**Sanitizing “High Touch” Areas.** Areas of the facility that are frequently touched should be disinfected regularly using products approved by the applicable health authority.

## **Public areas (lobby, hallways, galleries, auditoriums)**

- ❖ Door handles, handrails, push plates
- ❖ Bike rack or other barricades
- ❖ Elevator buttons — inside and out
- ❖ Escalator railings
- ❖ Reception desks and ticket counters
- ❖ Telephones and other keypads
- ❖ Point of sale (POS) terminals
- ❖ Tables and chairs, including highchairs and booster seats
- ❖ Beverage stations and water fountains
- ❖ Vending and ice machines
- ❖ Trash receptacle touchpoints

## **Restrooms (front and back of house as well as portable units)**

- ❖ Door handles and push plates
- ❖ Sink faucets and counters
- ❖ Toilet handles
- ❖ Soap dispensers and towel dispenser handles
- ❖ Baby changing stations
- ❖ Trash receptacle touchpoints

## **Back of house offices, work rooms, dressing areas, green rooms**

- ❖ Individual office and other room furniture
- ❖ Door handles, push plates, doorways, railings
- ❖ Microphones, microphone stands, lecterns, cables
- ❖ Stage manager consoles, light and soundboards, spotlights
- ❖ Fly rail, instruments (piano, drum kits, etc.), crew headsets
- ❖ Light switches
- ❖ Cabinet handles
- ❖ Telephones, computers, other keypads, mouse
- ❖ Trash receptacle touchpoints

## Cleaning and Disinfecting.

- **Cleaning** removes dirt and impurities from surfaces and objects and may lower germ counts by removing but not necessarily killing them. Disinfecting reduces and kills germs on surfaces and objects. Because disinfecting does not necessarily clean the surface, both are essential.

- **Cleaning technique.** Clean high-touch areas by using water and soap or cleaning solution to remove dirt and impurities from surfaces and objects and reduce germ counts.
- **Disinfecting technique.** High-touch areas should be disinfected using materials effective against COVID-19. To quickly disinfect a seating area between events, electrostatic cleaning is a means of spraying a fine mist of positively charged particles that adhere to surfaces and objects. Where there is more time between events, a space will naturally become disinfected within 72 hours — the time for the virus to become nonviable. Always follow instructions regarding the minimum contact time a disinfectant must remain on a surface to be effective.
- **Disposal.** Place gloves and other disposable items used for cleaning and disinfecting in a bag that can be tied up before disposing of them with other waste.
- **Frequency.** The frequency of cleaning high-touch areas should be evaluated based on the event space and how it is used, applying guidance from local health authorities.
- **Documentation.** Keeping the venue clean and sanitary is important for health reasons. Documenting that all required steps were followed at the correct intervals can help the business show that it behaved reasonably under its circumstances, which would be a key issue in a lawsuit. A supervisor should ensure that a cleaning log is carefully maintained and preserved for posterity.

# BRINGING THE PUBLIC INTO OUR BUILDINGS

As with worker health, concerns for our patrons' safety should be addressed through hygiene and social distancing. Minimize the number of physical transactions that take place during an audience member's visit: fewer transactions mean fewer opportunities to spread contagions. It's also important to give patrons the resources and opportunities they need to promote safety.

**Handwashing Stations.** Stations with either soap and water or sanitizer containing at least 60-percent alcohol must be provided at all points of ingress and other well-marked and illuminated locations throughout the venue. These stations should allow no-touch activation, if possible. Supervisors must confirm regularly that supplies are adequate.

**Will Call and Box Office** windows are generally well-protected by glass partitions already. Social distancing can be preserved by opening fewer windows and marking appropriate queuing spaces.

**Space Requirements.** Additional space may be required to accommodate longer but less densely packed lines waiting to enter the venue. The line waiting to enter can be managed using common methods such as lines marked on the ground, rope and stanchions, fencing or bike rack, in combination with workers who provide information about the anticipated wait time and ingress procedure and also enforce social distancing. The area where patrons wait should have signage with the event's health rules, including social distancing guidelines and face-covering requirements.

**Disability Accommodations.** New health screening measures may require new accommodations for people with disabilities. For example, hearing-impaired patrons who read lips may require screening by a worker wearing a clear face covering or one with a see-through window over the wearer's mouth. An event space that reduces points of ingress or egress must ensure continued accessibility. Patrons whose disability makes them unable to wait in a long line may need a more expedited access procedure. In order to remain compliant with applicable disability laws and provide reasonably accessible events for all patrons, consult with a local advocate for people with disabilities.

**Restrooms.** Workers should limit occupancy of restrooms to ensure social distancing. Unless portable restroom facilities are added, this will likely result in patrons waiting outside the restroom doors. The area where they are waiting will require monitoring to preserve appropriate space between patrons and an easily discernible line marked by physical barriers to avoid confusion about where the line begins.

**Food and Beverage/Concessions Service.** Appetizers, hors d'oeuvres, other food, and/or all beverages, including water, tea, wine, beer, and/or adult beverages, should not be self-served (backstage or front of house). All food and beverages should be served by staff who are wearing appropriate PPE to reduce any contamination. Organizations should not provide any buffets, tables with appetizers, and/or any self-serve wine and/or beverages to staff and/or attendees. Pre-packaged foods are preferable and should only be served when concessions staff and patrons can conduct the transaction with social distancing and a minimum of touchpoints. Venues that operate a restaurant on their premises should follow reopening guidelines for restaurants.

# EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES

In a social distancing, reduced-capacity environment, organizations will have to examine their operational models to keep patrons, staff, and artists safe. Here are some ideas from the field.

Please note that these are only examples of strategies that could be employed by a venue, not a recommendation or endorsement. Each organization must determine the operational guidelines that work with its unique situation, space, and financial capacity and that meet prescribed health and safety requirements.

- ❖ Redesign seating charts to designate seating areas to accommodate patrons in family groups of two to four within a theater house, spaced according to social distancing guidelines.
- ❖ Require or highly recommend that all patrons and staff wear masks in the facility. Make disposable masks available to patrons.
- ❖ Time entry and exit to the venue and lobby to prevent crowding. Seat patrons in groups or zones.
- ❖ Limit restroom access to reduce capacity and station staff or volunteers to promote touch-free entry and safe spacing. Assign restrooms to patron zones for facilities with more than one restroom location.
- ❖ Limit performance length and provide intermission-free performances to reduce restroom traffic.
- ❖ Print labels for exhibited artwork in a larger font to allow patrons to see information from a distance rather than crowding to read.
- ❖ Limit concession sales to pre-packaged items or close concessions completely.
- ❖ Provide contact-free ticketing, playbills, and ticket scanning at the doors.
- ❖ Map paths of egress and spacing in the facility. Open entrance and exit doors and/or station a staff member or volunteer to manage each door to prevent multiple points of contamination.
- ❖ Create a one-way traffic flow in gallery spaces.
- ❖ Explore relocating programming to an outdoor or other nontraditional venue with increased spacing and airflow.
- ❖ Enforce new safety guidelines for all events in the venue, including presented and rental events. This may necessitate an increased work or volunteer force specially trained to manage the COVID-19 environment.