

BRINGING EVENTS BACK

AUSTIN-TRAVIS COUNTY
COVID-19 SAFETY GUIDE FOR
VENUES & SPECIAL EVENTS

PART III

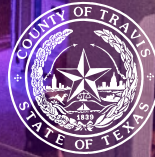


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Updated September 2, 2021



PURPOSE

The updated version (Part III) of Bringing Events Back: Austin-Travis County COVID-19 Safety Guide for Venues and Special Events outlines COVID-19 health and safety recommendations for event and venue organizers in Austin and Travis County. Local venues, live music and events are paramount to Austin's culture and economy. Austin-Travis County stands with the special events industry to support reopening when it is safe to do so.

The overwhelming majority of events and venues in Austin-Travis County are locally operated and have an immediate benefit to the Austin economy, community, and culture. In the wake of COVID-19 and the unprecedented impacts to the experience sector, the City's event partners, and the general industry need more information to plan for safely resuming their business operations. The industry has requested clear reopening guidelines from Austin-Travis County so that they may plan for reopening venues and holding events safely.

To ensure sustainability post-pandemic, we must consider both the public and economic health of Austin. Austin is a premiere destination for meetings and conventions, live music and special events. The local meetings and convention industry generated \$587 million in direct spending to our economy in 2019. Each year, close to 1.3 million people visit Austin's parks for festivals, outdoor weddings and other events. In 2019, SXSW alone generated an estimated \$355.9 million in economic impact. The total estimated economic impact of the special events industry in Austin and Travis County is over one billion dollars per year.

REGULAR UPDATES TO GUIDANCE & COMPLIANCE

Part III of Bringing Events Back: Austin-Travis County Safety Guide for Venues and Special Events is a reflection of updated health guidance, and the City's commitment to adjust these guidelines to match current health conditions.

These guidelines are reviewed and updated as health conditions change; and are based on the guidance of Austin Public Health along with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the City of Austin and Travis County. This local guidance is designed to help all venues and special events work from the same standards to ensure Austin-Travis County venues and events maximize safety protocols and help to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Updates to these guidelines took place in September, 2021 while the City of Austin remains in Stage 5 of the COVID-19 Risk Based Guidelines.

Please check austintexas.gov/eventreopeningguide for updates. More information can be found at austintexas.gov/ace. For specific questions, please contact us at specialevents@austintexas.gov.

PHOTOGRAPHY

The photos in this guide are from pre-COVID-19 events. We look forward to the time when these guidelines are no longer needed, and events can be held as they once were. Special thanks to Cody Cowan, Lisa Hause Photography and Robert Hein / Low Life Visuals for use of images.



BRINGING EVENTS BACK

AUSTIN-TRAVIS COUNTY COVID-19 SAFETY GUIDE FOR VENUES & SPECIAL EVENTS

PART III

Photo credit: Cody Cowan

1. COVID-19 HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN FOR SPECIAL EVENT APPLICANTS

Submitting a COVID-19 Health and Safety Plan is a requirement that began in April for events permitted by the Austin Center for Events. The COVID-19 Health and Safety Plan must be included with the special event permit application. Applicants submit the COVID-19 Health and Safety Plan by completing this [FORM](#). Completing the form is a requirement as part of the special event application process. Applications will not be considered complete, and will therefore not be reviewed until all required information is submitted.

Within the COVID-19 Health and Safety Form, event organizers will review a list of recommendations from Austin Public Health showing how to host safe events. Organizers will then have the opportunity to indicate how they intend to utilize those measures and detail their plans for incorporating them into their events. Austin Public Health staff will review these plans and be available to applicants if they would like to hear suggestions for modifications.

For indoor events under 1,000 attendees and outdoor events under 2,500 attendees venues and event organizers are not required to incorporate these recommendations, but are encouraged to do so. For all other events, ACE shall deny a special event application if the applicant fails to provide sufficient safety, health, or portable sanitation equipment, services, or facilities that are reasonably necessary to ensure the event will be conducted with due regard for safety.

ACE shall deny a special event application if it determines that the resources required to ensure public safety continue to strain local medical services, including hospital resources with Intensive Care Unit (ICU) capacities. These strains can impact the City's delivery of emergency-related services and the provision of City services required to support government functions.



Photo credit: Lisa Hause Photography

2. SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL VENUES & EVENTS IN AUSTIN-TRAVIS COUNTY

The COVID-19 Health and Safety recommendations for special events and venues are:

A. Preventing Disease Signage

The City of Austin requires organizers to post near each entrance and where information for workers is customarily posted, signage that explains the importance of wearing a face covering if unvaccinated and remaining at least Six feet apart.

Also, provide onsite signage and consider utilizing webpage, social media, and direct announcements before and during the event to continuously remind attendees, volunteers, and staff of important COVID-19 preventative measures such as face coverings, sanitization, and social distancing. Post signage in highly visible locations.

The City of Austin recommends at least one Austin Public Health “Help Prevent Disease” sign at each entrance and on each restroom door. A sign is also recommended in areas where information for workers is customarily posted.

This sign is available for download and print here: [Help Prevent Disease](#)

In addition to signage, the City of Austin also recommends organizers utilize webpage, social media, and direct announcements before and during the event to continuously remind attendees, volunteers, and staff of important COVID-19 preventative measures.

B. Screening

Prescreening measures help to ensure participants are not infected with COVID-19. These measure may include:

Sending an email screening questionnaire prior to the event and requesting a timely answer. Repeating questions upon entry to event and adding prescreening messages to tickets and websites. Ask event staff, volunteers, and attendees to stay home when appropriate: if they have tested positive, recently had close contact, or are showing symptoms for COVID-19.

In addition, the following are requirements for screening:

- Develop and implement a “send-home” policy and return to work criteria if a staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19 or has symptoms.
- Conduct screening of all staff and employees at the start of each daily shift, including for COVID symptoms, recent COVID exposure, or a current positive COVID test result within 72 hours of entry.
- Conduct COVID screening of all attendees including but not limited to: proof of a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours of entry.

C. Masks and Personal Protective Equipment

The City of Austin strongly encourages those who are unvaccinated to wear a mask that covers both mouth and nose.

Consider requiring all attendees over the age of two years old to always wear a mask that covers both mouth and nose unless eating or drinking. Mask use is mandatory for events on City of Austin, Travis County, school and college properties.

For outdoor events, include areas in your plan designated as “mask zones” where social distancing is not possible. Event participants in this area must meet have undergone screening at the event entrance.

Ensure a supply of personal protective equipment stock sufficient for all staff, volunteers, and clients (as applicable) throughout the event.

D. Social Distancing

It is recommended that individuals social distance at least Six feet, except for households and groups of 10 or fewer persons attending the event together. Staff and volunteers are encouraged to work in their assigned pods of less than 10 persons. Here are some other ideas organizers can incorporate into their planning to encourage distancing throughout their entire site.

Encourage social distancing. Configure event layout and facilities to avoid queueing.

- Where lines form, use signage and floor decals to maintain social distancing.
- For densely attended events, strive to incorporate a minimum of 6 feet wide one way or 12 feet wide two-way traffic patterns to minimize personal interactions.

Strive to limit number of people at a table to 10.

Keep all tables at least six feet apart, or use a solid barrier between tables.

Avoid grouping; stagger break times and start and end times.

Use staggered scheduling approach to mass entry or departure.

E. Sanitization, Hygiene & Worker Safety

Proper sanitization and hygiene practices are necessary for any event to be successful but also help to minimize the probability of COVID-19 transmission. Considerations include:

Ensure regular frequent sanitization of all commonly touched surfaces. Equipment should be sanitized before and after use.

Keep toilets clean, sanitary, and operational always and ensure proper disposal of waste from these facilities.

Provide hand washing stations and posting hand washing protocols: Wash hands upon entering; wash frequently while touching food or objects; was after touching face or mask.

Try to use contactless transactions and exchanges as much as possible.

Provide hand sanitizer dispensers and stations throughout the event, especially near points of ingress-egress, food stations and near restrooms.

It is recommended that all vendors providing any service, delivery or function to an event should consider additional sanitization measures including:

- o All equipment, décor, cables, crates, etc. should be cleaned and sanitized prior to entering the venue.
- o Technician workspaces should be no less than 6' apart, side to side and front to back.
- o All shared equipment or physical elements on stage should be cleaned and sanitized before and between each use.

F. Safety Planning for COVID-19

Collaboration with Austin Public Health is essential to identifying instances of COVID-19 in our community and mitigating further spread as early as possible. If there is a positive case at your event, having plans in place will help you to react quickly and appropriately. This helps protect your staff, attendees, and the city.

Establish notification process for reporting of a disease outbreak before, during, or after the event.

This type of information should be reported to the Austin Public Health's Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Unit at (512) 972-5555, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

A Safety Coordinator is suggested for all indoor venues and outdoor events permitted by Austin Center for Events. The purpose of a Safety Coordinator is to ensure compliance and oversee enforcement of the venue's COVID-19 health and safety plan. The Safety Coordinator should be trained in COVID-19 safety protocols and able to ensure the elements of the health and safety plan are upheld during the event.

G. Safety for Food & Beverage Service Providers

All food and beverage service providers including but not limited to in house dining, caterers, and food trucks servicing an event must be properly permitted and ensure they are following the minimum recommended health protocols and checklists from the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS).

The Environmental Health Services Division (EHSD) of Austin Public Health ensures food safety at all events and may also issue compliance orders. The following guidance is recommended.

Recommendations for Food and Beverage Service

Require at least Six feet between tables unless the tables are separated by a solid barrier; and

Limit the number of individuals who gather, stand, or sit together to ten or less.

3. CONTRIBUTORS & SUPPORT

To provide the special event industry with information to plan for reopening, these guidelines were thoughtfully developed by an interdepartmental team at the City of Austin and Travis County Special Events. Contributors consist of the agencies who make up the Austin Center for Events which include special event representatives from Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services, Travis County Fire Marshall's Office, Austin Police Department, Austin Fire Department, Austin Resource Recovery's Music and Entertainment Division, Development Services Department, Austin Law Department, Austin Public Library Department, Austin Parks and Recreation Department, Austin Transportation Department, Communications and Public Information Office, Austin Code Department, Austin Convention Center and Austin Public Health.

Input was gathered and applied from the Experience Sector COVID-19 Economic Recovery Working Group and a group of over 40 Austin event and venue industry leaders along with Visit Austin. These guidelines were also reviewed by Reopening Every Venue Safely (REVS) a 10-city pilot of Music Cities Together for input by the industry across multiple jurisdictions.

Thank you to each business and industry leader who aided in the creation of these guidelines.

Visit austintexas.gov/ace. For specific questions, Please contact us at specialevents@austintexas.gov

