

BRINGING EVENTS BACK

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

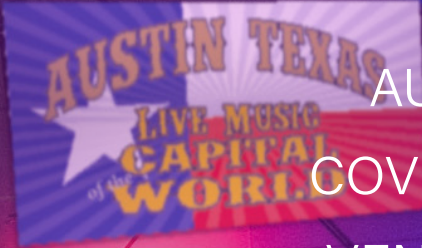


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Updated January 2022	



PURPOSE

The updated version 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.

To ensure sustainability post-pandemic, we must consider both the public and economic health of Austin. 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 to be able to safely resume their business operations. Austin-Travis County stands with the special events industry to support safe events as we continue to navigate the pandemic.

REGULAR UPDATES TO GUIDANCE & COMPLIANCE

Bringing Events Back: Austin-Travis County Safety Guide for Venues and Special Events reflects 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.

Updates to these guidelines took place in January 2022 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. Special thanks to Cody Cowan, Lisa Hause Photography and Robert Hein of Low Life Visuals for use of images.



BRINGING EVENTS BACK

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

Photo credit: Cody Cowan

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

As of April 2021, submission of a COVID-19 Health & Safety Plan is a requirement for events permitted by the Austin Center for Events. A COVID-19 Health & Safety Plan must be included with the special event permit application.

A. SUBMITTING THE COVID-19 HEALTH & SAFETY PLAN

Special event permit applicants submit the [COVID-19 Health & Safety Plan by completing an on-line form](#). Applications will not be considered complete until all required information is submitted. First time users must register a new account.

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 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 is available to consult with applicants.

For indoor events over 1,000 attendees, and outdoor events over 2,500 attendees, a COVID-19 Health & Safety Plan submission and APH approval is required. Events under these attendance thresholds are required to submit the plan; compliance is voluntary but strongly encouraged.



Photo credit: Lisa Hause Photography

Depending on which COVID-19 stage is assessed based on the [risk guidelines](#), the requirements listed in this form may be modified based on current COVID conditions at the time of the event. Regardless of the current permitting guidelines, every event is encouraged to submit an application to start the review process and allow for the acceptance of modifications.

B. HEALTH & SAFETY PLAN DENIALS

ACE is dedicated to working with applicants to help ensure safe events can occur. Due to health conditions, ACE may deny a special event application if the applicant fails to provide sufficient safety, health, services, or facilities that are reasonably necessary to ensure the event will be conducted with due regard for safety.

ACE may 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.

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

The COVID-19 Health and Safety recommendations for special events and venues are outlined within this document.

A. Screening

Prescreening measures help to ensure participants are not infected with COVID-19. The following are requirements for screening:

- Conduct COVID screening of all attendees including but not limited to proof of a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours of entry.
- 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.

Additional screening measures may include:

- 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.

B. 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.

- Masking recommendations should follow the guidelines as shown in the latest [Health Authority Rules](#). Mask use is mandatory for events on City of Austin property.
- Ensure a supply of personal protective equipment stock sufficient for all staff, volunteers, and clients (as applicable) throughout the event.

C. Social Distancing

It is recommended that individuals social distance, except for households and groups of 10 or fewer persons attending the event together. Other ideas organizers can incorporate into their planning to encourage distancing throughout their entire site include:

- Configure event layout and facilities to encourage social distancing and avoid queueing.
- Where lines form, use signage and floor decals to maintain social distancing.
- For densely attended events, strive to incorporate a minimum of six 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.

D. 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.

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

E. 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 & 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.
- Use signage to help prevent disease. 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.
 - 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](#)

F. 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.

Recommendations for Food and Beverage Service:

- Require at least six feet between tables unless the tables are separated by a solid barrier
- Limit the number of individuals who gather, stand, or sit together to ten or less.

3. CONTRIBUTORS & SUPPORT

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 contact us at specialevents@austintexas.gov

