

**Advocates for
North Texas
Event Industry Safety
COVID-19 Reopening Guide**

*Industry-specific Best Practice for Operation
Under Current Government Regulations*

(updated July 29, 2020)

North Texas Event Services Reopening Guide

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This guide is for informational purposes only. It does not and shall not be considered guidance on or an interpretation of past, present, or future rules, statutes, orders or regulation which are applicable, directly or indirectly, to our industry. Any use of any

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information provided in this guide is done at your own discretion and risk and any liability incurred by you is your sole responsibility.

For any legal questions or advice, you should consult your business attorney.

OUR MISSION

The North Texas event industry is uniting with the common goal of executing safe events through collaboration with, not opposition to, the Texas or local government. We recognize that the creation of realistic, practical policy requires first-hand experience in our field. We advocate for clarity on how current policy affects our ability to do business. We are will and able to comply with regulations and are equipped to develop targeted solutions to a safe reopening.

Mitigating the spread of COVID-19 is critical to the economic stability of small business. A challenge of this magnitude necessitates a collective response.

Collaboration is necessary to achieve the following:

1. Promote cohesion and efficiency

Standardizing base-level procedure will allow for greater inter-disciplinary cooperation, streamlining event production, and increasing profitability.

2. Rebuild consumer confidence

Normalizing compliant procedures promotes more realistic client expectations, reducing unfair comparison and undue confusion during the vendor hiring process.

3. Prevent a subsequent closure

Responsible, decisive action is required to minimize interruption to our business operations.

Our priority is, and always will be, creating a path forward that is

REALISTIC • SUSTAINABLE • SAFE.

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Inspired by a collective effort of hundreds of industry professionals across the North Texas (DFW) region, and following inspiration from the Ohio Event Services Reopening Guide created by Berlyn Events & Design, LTD., this guide was created to provide interpretation of the current state regulation through the lens of event production.

The recommendations provided are not one-size fits all. Implementation of any procedure will be influenced by a number of factors including type of facility, services provided, local Department of Health enforcement, number of cases currently in the county, and more.

The *NTX Event Services Reopening Guide* is specifically tailored to:

- Events hosted in Catering & Banquet Facilities, Hotels, or Private Venues which hold a license to run as a business.
- Private events with an emphasis on weddings and wedding receptions, corporate events, or non-profit association events.

At this time, these recommendations have not been endorsed by any local or state level code compliance official. They are presented to provide a snapshot of the industry's response of Best Practices.

Adherence to these recommendations cannot guarantee an illness-free event, nor assumed compliance with government mandates.

Always review current government orders and consult your local Department of Health for clarification.

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PUBLISHED ORDERS

Review all state and local resources to ensure compliance. Start here: <https://open.texas.gov/>

SUMMARY OF CURRENT STATE GUIDELINES

The following is a summary of current state guidelines based on published documents & correspondence with state officials. Please check with your local Department of Health for specifics as enforcement/interpretation may differ by municipality.

- **WEDDING CEREMONIES**
Unrestricted if performed within a church; 50% of capacity if performed within a private venue; Outdoor events restricted to 10 people unless approved by local mayor or country judge if venue is in unincorporated area
- **WEDDING RECEPTIONS/CORPORATE OR SOCIAL EVENTS**
Max 50% of venue fire occupancy; Outdoor events restricted to 10 people unless approved by local mayor or country judge if venue is in unincorporated area
- **CONGREGATION AREAS**
Permitted with masks, restrictions, and social distancing
- **FOOD & BEVERAGE**
Must be consumed while seated
- **DINING FLOOR PLAN**
Permitted with up to ten (10) guests per table and minimum six (6) foot distance from the outermost chair of one table to the nearest chair of the adjacent tables
- **BUFFETS**
Staff-served ONLY (maintain social distance)
- **DANCING**
Permitted with masks, restrictions, and social distancing
- **LIVE ENTERTAINMENT/DJs**
Permitted with social distancing or masks
- **GATHERINGS AT PRIVATE RESIDENCES**
Unrestricted
- **MASKS**
Masks/face coverings required to cover nose and mouth in public spaces in counties with 20 or more positive COVID-19 cases

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THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are a collection of procedures, crowd-sourced from professionals across the region as subjective interpretation of official mandates as they could be applied to event production. These suggestions do not fully encompass or replace government-issued regulations.

Always review current government orders and consult your local Department of Health for clarification.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY

- Health checks may include temperature assessments, questionnaires, health waivers, employee self-checks, screening apps or other tools
 - Update files with log of health checks
 - Screen for temperature, history, exposure in accordance with CDC recommendations every work period
- If exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19, employees must stay home
- Maintain a list of back-up staff to provide coverage for sick employees
- Stagger shifts, breaks, and lunches to avoid mass entry/exit
- Practice social distancing in the back-house areas
 - Limit the number of staff in back-of-house at given time
 - Utilize prep tents where necessary and practical to expand back-of-house footprint
- Educate on proper use, disposal, and maintenance of face coverings
 - All employees must wear masks
- Educate on proper use, disposal, and maintenance of gloves, per code
 - All employees must wear gloves when appropriate
- Educate on proper cleaning and disinfection, hygiene, and respiratory etiquette
- Avoid switching tasks when possible to reduce cross contamination concerns. Increase handwashing if changing tasks is necessary.
- Do not allow employees, contractors/vendors, or volunteers with new or worsening signs or symptoms to return to work until:
 - In the case of an employee, contractor, or volunteer who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to work when all three of the following criteria are met: at least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications) and the individual has improvement in symptoms and at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared; or
 - In the case of an employee, contractor, or volunteer has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to work until the individual has completed the same three-step criteria listed above; or
 - If the employee, contractor, or volunteer has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis.

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- Do not allow an employee, contractor, or volunteer with known close contact to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 to return to work until the end of the 14-day self-quarantine period from the last date of exposure
- Employees, contractors/vendors should maintain 6 feet of separation from other individuals

REGARDING MASKS

The government has identified a few exceptions to the requirement of the masks (<https://tdem.texas.gov/ga29/>) Businesses must provide written justification when masks are not required.

A NOTE TO VENUES

If one does not already exist, immediately source/generate a comprehensive scale floor plan of your space (including back-of-house) to be used in the creation of mandatory COVID-19 compliant floor plans.

EQUIPMENT

- Equipment should be quarantined and/or sanitized between each use
- Dirty equipment should be stored away from sanitized equipment to prevent cross contamination
- Personnel handling plates, utensils, cups, etc., must wear gloves and facial covering
- Serving utensils, dishware, barware, flatware, and glassware should be washed and sanitized per Local/State Health Code then wrapped or sealed to ensure no cross contamination

FACILITIES: Pre-Function

- Clean and disinfect all surfaces and high-touch areas **regularly and frequently**
 - High touch areas including restrooms, door handles, countertops, bars, handrails must be cleaned/sanitized **every 30 minutes**. Consider having an employee/contractor dedicated to wiping down surfaces throughout the evening.
 - Disinfect seats before and after services
 - Disinfect any items that come in contact with attendees
- Consider professional sanitation weekly or before and after each event
- Sanitizing stations must be available in multiple areas throughout facility. Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available.
- Assign staff member to monitor cleaning and maintain supplies
- Place visible signage to remind everyone of best hygiene practices
- Consider air filtration improvements within HVAC
- Maintain a scale floor plan to be used in the creation of mandatory COVID-19 compliant floor plans
- For venues with more than 10 employees and/or contractors present at one time, consider having an individual wholly or partially dedicated to ensuring the health protocols adopted by the venue are being successfully implemented and followed

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LOAD-IN & DELIVERIES

- Staff must wear masks
- Staff must wear gloves when appropriate
- Post signage including expectations on delivery doors
- Stagger deliveries to avoid mass entry/exit
- Limit entrance and exit options when possible while still maintaining code regulations (e.g., building or fire code)
- Maintain at least six feet from other employees and staff unless installation makes it impractical to do so
- Encourage third party delivery staff to wait outside or in non-congested areas
- Allow outside drop-off deliveries where applicable

CAPACITY

- Events may not exceed 50% of the venue's capacity per fire code (Employees and contractors of the venue are not counted towards the 50% occupancy limitation)
- Outdoor gatherings (excluding weddings) must not exceed 10 people on the same property
- Limit capacity based on ability to social distance with six feet between the outermost chair of each table to the nearest chair of an adjacent table
- No more than 10 guests per table
- Utilize smaller tables when available for defined social groups
- Remove excess seating throughout the facility to discourage congregating
- Reduce guest lists as necessary to accommodate the required social distancing

SIGNAGE

- Post signage at entry and elsewhere as appropriate regarding the following:
 - Social distancing
 - Recommending face coverings
 - Identifying COVID-19 symptoms
 - Frequent handwashing/sanitation
 - "Enter at own risk" signage
 - All other signage required by law
- Establish, using a scale floor plan, and post maximum dining area capacity using COVID-19 compliant floor plans with maximum party size per state guideline (currently 10)
- County officials (Particularly Dallas County) are requiring the following documents during inspection of any business:
 - County Order printed and posted
 - Business COVID-19 Health and Safety Plan Documented

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- COVID Liability Waiver to be signed by anyone entering the business
- Handwashing or Hand Sanitizing stations
- Have all vendors, contractors, clients and guests sign health liability waivers

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RESTROOMS

- Prop open restroom doors if appropriate to reduce touchpoints
- Block off intermittent sinks to maintain distance when possible
- Post signage to remind guests to maintain distance and proper handwashing techniques
- Mark floors for safely distanced lines

GUEST ARRIVAL

- Send guidelines to client in advance for distribution to guests/vendors, encourage questions to be asked and answered prior to event day
- Consider having an employee or contractor manage and control access to the venue, including opening doors to prevent attendees from touching door handles
- Provide masks and personal hand sanitizer for guests at the door of the ceremony and reception venues
- Guests encouraged to wear mask upon arrival
- Ensure a minimum of six feet between parties waiting to enter
- Provide staff to greet, facilitate health checks and direct guests to seats
- Health checks may include temperature assessments, self-checks, etc.
- Ask customers and guests not to enter if symptomatic or have been exposed to an infected individual within 3 weeks of the event
- Hand washing or sanitizing available upon entry to the facility
 - Use sanitizer products that meet CDC guidelines
- Distribute single-use copies of guidelines to establish expectations and provide protocol reminders
- Physical name badges should not be used. Consider electronic wristbands instead to share attendee information.
- Have guests sign liability waivers upon arrival

CEREMONY

Ceremonies remain unregulated if performed within a church or religious establishment. These are suggestions in the spirit of the law to facilitate a smooth transition between ceremony and reception.

- Outdoor venues should be used when possible
- Strongly encourage the at-risk population to watch or participate in the service remotely
- Designate an area inside the venue reserve for the at-risk population
- Seat guests with the same social group according to dining table assignments, with six (6) feet (at least 2 empty seats) of space between each group
- Space rows six (6) feet apart
- Guests should remain seated until staff leads them to their table for cocktail hour or dinner
- If ceremony is held in reception area with limited space, where a room flip would be difficult, California-style seating is the preferred option
- If chairs must be moved from one space to another:
 - Gloves should be worn by staff

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- Waiting areas should be configured to allow for social distancing. Creative solutions include designated tables or distanced markings for guests to stand on while waiting (masks recommended)
- Chairs should be cleaned/sanitized before allowing guests to be seated

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COCKTAIL HOUR

- Held in reception space or where enough extra seating is provided
 - Creative solutions include providing cocktail tables with stools and smaller tables and chairs for each guest (e.g., Swap 30" high tops to 30"/48" low tops and add standard chairs for cocktail seating or add barstools to 30" high tops to allow people to remain seated)
- Guests must remain seated when consuming food or drink
- Masks recommended when guests are not seated to eat or drink
- Serve drinks and food tableside to seated guests only to discourage consumption while standing and congregating
- When hors d'oeuvres are passed tableside, staff should place individual servings on guest plates with utensils or gloved hands
- If hors d'oeuvres need to be served from a buffet table and staff is not present to serve, the food items should be single serve, preferably in pre-packaged manner
- If self-serve is required, guests must wear masks and gloves to self-serve and a vendor should supervise the station
- Guests should maintain distance when associating with others outside of their social group (masks recommended)

RECEPTION

- Wedding receptions held in a restaurant should follow the restaurant protocols
- Outdoor venues should be used when possible
- Guest seating must be assigned
- Wedding parties should be divided to separate tables if they exceed the 10 guest per table maximum
 - Creative solutions include sweetheart table and seating wedding party at standard tables
- Guests should be assigned seating with their families or groupings that travel together (aka. defined social group) when possible
- Guests must remain seated and can remove masks when consuming food or drink
- Guest should maintain distance when associating with others outside of their social group (masks recommended)
- Consider a virtual (QR code) guestbook option instead of a traditional guest book to reduce contact
- Consider eliminating the formal exit if the six-foot distancing is not possible

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FOOD SERVICE

BUFFET

- Buffets must be staff served (no self-service)
- Staff must wear gloves and face coverings
- Utilize signage or mark the floor with appropriate distance for buffet line
- Double tables or utilize barriers to ensure guests maintain distance between themselves and the buffet
- Guests should wear masks when going through the buffet
- Utilize double tables or plexi-glass barriers to ensure guests maintain safety distance from the buffet
- Do not leave condiments, silverware, flatware, glassware, or other traditional table top items on an unoccupied table. Silverware should be rolled in a napkin.
- No pre-set salads, food, glassware, plates, or communal items (e.g. water carafes or salt & pepper)
- Family style is not recommended (check with your municipal health department for specifics regarding execution of family style dining)

PLATED

- Service must wear gloves and face coverings
- Consider covering plated meals (not required)
- Utensils must be rolled in napkins at each setting if pre-set at tables
- No pre-set salads, food, glassware, plates, or communal items (e.g. water carafes or salt & pepper)
- Condiments and seasonings available upon request in single-serve containers
- Use disposable or electronic (QR Code) menus for each patron (where applicable)

CAKE DISPLAY/SERVICE

- Wedding Cakes may be displays where a minimum six-foot physical distance is observed or barriers are used
- Appropriate PPE should be worn at all times when handing cake
- Cake cut by the couple, if not wearing PPE, should not be served to guests.
- Cake must be sliced and plated in back of house and served tableside.
- Candles must not be used on the cake in the case of birthdays or other celebrations. In that instance, an individual cake should be given to the birthday boy/girl to blow out the candles.

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BEVERAGE/BAR SERVICE

- Bartenders must wear gloves and facial coverings
- Consider adding plexi-glass barriers to the front of bars, coffee stations, etc.
- Single serve condiments, stir sticks, straws, etc. should be available for distribution upon request, but not placed on a counter for self-serve
- Preferably, have additional staff available to take orders and deliver beverages tableside (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic)
- Consider rolling carts to serve beverages tableside and single-use cans for beer and non-alcoholic beverages
- Eliminate bars in the event space where practical to reduce congregation
 - If bar is included in the space, establish designated ordering areas and waiting areas
 - Clearly mark safe distancing and separations per individual/social group for bar service
- Self-serve beverages are permitted but not preferred
 - Increase sanitation on these stations and consider keeping glassware/plastic ware behind the bar to be distributed individually
 - Guests must return to their seat immediately upon receipt of drinks
- Coffee should be offered tableside upon request
- Recommended signage at the bar encouraging guests to enjoy their beverage while seated
- Batch drinks where possible to expedite service

ENTERTAINMENT/DJs

- Clean/sterilize all microphones between each use. Lavalier (body) and toss box mics should not be used.
- The sponge covers for lavalier and hand-held mics should be changed after each use. DJ should wash hands after handling sponge covers/microphones.
- Performers must wear masks and maintain distance between individuals
- Mark distance where guests/clients can stand to view live band. Singers/Performers do not need to wear masks.
- Guests should not approach DJ stand. Song requests should be given by app, text, or iPad which can be frequently sanitized.
- Consider utilizing a plexi-glass barrier in front of the DJ stand
- Post signage requesting guests only approach performers while wearing a face covering
- Music volume should allow for communication while maintaining social distance and wearing masks.

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- MCs should make an announcement at least once per hour reminding guests to wash hands
- MCs should make announcement periodically reminding guests to wear masks when not eating/drinking

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PHOTO BOOTHS

- Photo booths are not advisable due to concerns with congregation, proximity and high touch points, if continued observe the following:
 - Format should be open air
 - Eliminate props
 - Designate an attendant (masked and gloved) to handle and sanitize all equipment regularly
 - Limit frequent and prolonged exposure and congregation
 - Establish designated waiting areas to manage congregation
 - Clearly mark safe distancing and separations per individual/social group
 - Encourage guests to choose print-free digital delivery of photos. Attendant should control the iPad to text or email photos or clean/sanitize iPad screen between each use.
 - All guests should wash hands and/or utilize sanitizer before and after engaging in the photo booth

DANCING

- All guests should wash hands and/or utilize sanitizer before and after engaging in social activities such as dancing
 - Consider free-standing stations or bottles of sanitizer per table
- Guests should dance only with their “defined social group” (those with whom they are related or have quarantined/dining table)
 - Maximum to be current group size per state guidelines (current 10)
 - Creative solutions include marking floors with individual dance areas or designating floor plan to leave room between for each table to have personal dancing space (i.e. checkerboard floor plan)
- Reinforce spacing through training employees and with guests/attendees through regular public announcements
- Masks recommended
- Open doors/windows when possible and practical to increase air flow
- Encourage frequent breaks from activity to prevent overexertion and heavy breathing
- Incorporate games (e.g., Shoe Game) for supplementary entertainment

TRANSPORTATION

- Masks recommended for passengers
- Maintain distance where possible

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- Creative solutions include seating according to social group with space between or block off alternating seats
- Handrails and surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized between each trip, within the same reservation
- Consider offering sanitizer upon disembarking

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VALET

- Vendor should wear mask and maintain six-foot safety distance whenever possible
- Vendor should frequently utilize hand sanitizer throughout service and thoroughly wash hands at least once per hour.
- Vendors should maintain at least six-feet of separation from other individuals.
- Employees of vendor should be trained on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette
- Vehicle door handles, ignition switch, steering wheels, keys/key fob, and shift knob should be wiped with disinfectant as the valet employee enters and exits the vehicle
- All workstations and work equipment should be cleaned/sanitized at the start and end of each shift, as well as every hour during the shift. These workstations include the valet podium, key storage locker, tablets, fee computers, receipt printers, etc.
- Valet operators should employ contactless payment whenever possible
- For high volume operators, appropriate physical distancing indicators should be established to ensure customers maintain at least six feet of distance as they wait for their vehicle
- Where possible, alternative parking options should be provided for customers who are uncomfortable with valet parking
- Wash/disinfect hands upon entering a business and after any interaction with employees, contractors, and customers

MAKEUP/HAIR

- Vendor should wear mask/face covering and protective eye wear.
- Vendor should frequently utilize hand sanitizer throughout service and thoroughly wash hands between services.
- Disposable, single-use supplies should be used when possible and discarded immediately after use. Multi-use supplies must be sanitized between clients.
- Services should be performed in a room that allows for six-foot social distancing between work stations. Guests, observers or other wedding vendors should maintain six-foot distancing from the artists and should not congregate in the artists' work space. Anyone that must enter the artists' work space should wear a mask or face covering. If a person is not receiving service, it is recommended that they do not congregate in the room.
- Consider staging hair/makeup prep photos following service completion to reduce room crowding

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- Clients should verify that they do not possess any symptoms of COVID-19 nor have they been exposed to anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 within the previous 14 days. Clients' temperature should be taken prior to the start of the beauty service and should wear a mask or face covering until it is necessary to be removed for the completion of their service.

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PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEOGRAPHY

- Vendor should wear mask and maintain six-foot safety distance whenever possible
- Vendor should frequently utilize hand sanitizer throughout service and thoroughly wash hands at least once per hour.
- Vendor should clean/sanitize equipment between events
- Vendor should avoid touching equipment to face when possible
- Microphones used for video sound should be cleaned/sanitized between use
- Prep photos should be limited to four (4) people in the room at a time if six-foot distancing or open air is not possible
- Styling of personal belongings will be limited to those items placed for the imaging team in advance
- Vendor should not touch guests or clients, but should vocally direct them
- Vendor should request open air (outdoor) formal photos when possible
- Keep groupings under 10 participants wherever possible and practical
- Avoid prolonged direct exposure between guests
- Use best judgement with elderly/at-risk populations
- Use zoom lens whenever possible to maintain distance from client/guests
- Ceremony aisles should be twelve (12) feet wide to allow vendor to maintain six-foot distance to the guest seated near the aisle
- Reception/Dance floor photos should be taken from a safe distance if guests are not masked
- Table grouping photos should only be taken if tables are spaced for vendor to move throughout the room while maintaining the six-foot distance

RECORD KEEPING

- Maintain a comprehensive guest list and corresponding seating chart
- Maintain list of on-site vendors for each event
- Maintain at least two (2) forms of contact for each guest should they need to be notified of COVID cases following the event (e.g. phone number, email, mailing address)

SECURITY

- Consider security for all events to assist staff with new requirement and enforcement
- Request client delegates 1-2 guests (and ask for introduction) who will be present for the duration of the event and are unlikely to become intoxicated, that can help facilitate guidelines and mediate guest interactions when necessary

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- Consider using local law enforcement instead of private security to confirm local code compliance is being followed

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MISC: Centerpieces, Escort Displays, etc.

- Centerpieces are permitted if they are for decorative purposes only, not consumable and/or taken home by guests at the conclusion of the event
- Self-serve escort card displays are inadvisable
 - Creative solutions include swapping escort cards for a chart, verbally communicating table assignments upon guest entry, or designation of a staff member to distribute escort card to guests
- Place card pre-set at tables are acceptable
- All rental items should be cleaned/sanitized between uses
- Have extra masks and sanitizer available
- Consider encouraging clients to provide sanitizer and/or masks as favors

CONFIRMED CASES

- Immediately isolate and seek medical care for any individual who develops symptoms while at the facility
- Contact client and vendors regarding confirmed case so that they may take personal action to get tested
- Shutdown space for deep sanitation, if possible
- Contact local Department of Health

SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

Employees, contractors/vendors, volunteers, clients, or guests should self-screen before going into the venue for any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea
- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit

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- Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19

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UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

The *North Texas Event Services Reopening Guide* is not a comprehensive overview of all mandates and state-issued guidelines. There are nuances to our industry and you may encounter circumstance not addressed here. Please contact your attorney, local government officials, code enforcement, or Department of Health to get specific details about the mandates in your area.

Please review the following resources regarding the most up to date information regarding mandates, testing, and COVID-19 recommendations:

- <https://open.texas.gov/>
- <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- <https://www.adasoutheast.org/ada/publications/legal/ada-and-face-mask-policies.php>

Always review current government orders and consult your local Department of Health for clarification regarding implementation.

Adherence to these recommendations cannot guarantee an illness-free event, nor assumed compliance with government mandates.

THIS GUIDE IS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY. IT DOES NOT SHALL NOT BE CONSIDERED GUIDANCE ON OR AN INTERPRETATION OF PAST, PRESENT, OR FUTURE RULES, STATUTES, ORDERS OR REGULATIONS WHICH ARE APPLICABLE, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, TO OUR INDSTRY. ANY USE OF ANY INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THIS GUIDE IS DONE AT YOUR OWN DISCRETION AND RISK AND ANY LIABILITY INCUREED BY YOU IS YOUR SOLE RESPONSIBILITY.

