
September 28, 2021

BULLETIN

GATHERING AND EVENTS COVID-19 ORDER FOR THE NORTHERN HEALTH REGION

On September 7, the Chief Medical Health Officer for the Northern Health Authority issued an Order under the Public Health Act of BC concerning Gatherings and Events in the Northern Health Authority (the “Northern Health Order”).

We previously published a client bulletin on the Provincial Health Officer’s Order regarding Gatherings and Events (the “Provincial Order”). Where the Northern Health Order and the Provincial Health Order conflict, the provisions of the Northern Health Order govern.

The Northern Health Order does not contain any requirements in relation to vaccine cards or proof of vaccination. The provisions for proof of vaccination in the Provincial Order will apply in the Northern Health Authority. However, the Northern Health Order sets out different capacity and event requirements than the Provincial Order.

The Order states that it does not apply to a council, board or trust committee of a local authority as defined in the *Community Charter*, the *Local Government Act* or the *Island Trusts Act* when holding a meeting or public hearing without members of the public attending in person. It does not apply to various listed activities, including the use of any place for local government, provincial, or federal election purposes; public pools and public skating rinks when not associated with an event; farmers markets; volunteer work party engaged in vegetation removal or trail building; or any rehabilitation or exercise therapy program. The Order also does not apply to workers at a workplace when engaged in work activities.

The Order includes the following parts:

1. Definitions
2. Private Residences and Vacation Accommodation
3. Inside Events
4. Outside Events
5. Flow Through Events
6. Sports

Definitions

An “event” is defined as an in-person gathering of people in any place whether public or private, inside or outside, organized or not, on a one-time, regular or irregular basis. A “place” includes

inside and outside areas. These definitions are extremely broad and would include any gathering of any sort that was not explicitly excluded in the preamble.

“Sport” includes individual or group sporting activity, training and practice, but does not include sport for children or youth, varsity sports, or high-performance athlete sport. “Sport for children or youth” means an activity which is delivered by a provincial or local sport organization and may include participants under 22 years of age.

A “lifecycle event” is a wedding, baptism, funeral, medical assistance in dying, or Jewish divorce court proceedings.

Private Residences and Vacation Accommodation

The Northern Health Order permits events to be held inside a private residence or vacation accommodation with only one other family, or a maximum of five guests including staff, present. Everyone must wear a mask and stay two meters apart.

It allows events to be held outside, on a deck or patio, for up to 50 people, including staff, if hand sanitizer is available; no one goes inside except to use the washroom; and everyone wears a mask or are protected by a physical barrier or stay two meters apart.

Owners are liable for ensuring tenants or guests comply with the Northern Health Order requirements.

Inside Events

For an inside event, including lifecycle events, the following restrictions apply:

- No more than 50% of the seated operating capacity can be present, excluding staff;
- There must be a COVID safety plan and an organizer;
- Measures must be in place to prevent congregating outside the event;
- Participants who are not seated are guided by physical devices to stay two meters apart;
- For snack or drink stations, there is hand washing or sanitizers and signs reminding participants to wash or sanitize their hands and stay two meters apart, and high touch surfaces are frequently cleaned and sanitized; and
- Hand sanitation supplies and washroom facilities with running water, soap and paper towels are available.

The organizer is responsible for calculating the capacity limit, including it in the safety plan, and monitoring guests to ensure it is not exceeded.

The organizer must collect contact information and retain it for 30 days, then destroy it.

Events can be held in more than one part of a place, if they are completely separated, and the total number of persons present does not exceed maximum allowed in the COVID safety plan. Each event must have separate entrances and exits, and participants cannot meet unless it is unavoidable to attend the washroom.

There can be no dance floors or dancing.

After an event, the place must be cleaned, sanitized and ventilated before another event starts.

Outside Events

An outside event, including a lifecycle event, can have up to 200 persons present, excluding staff, without meeting conditions.

If an outside event has more than 200 people present, then the following conditions must be met:

- There must be a COVID safety plan and an organizer;
- Measures must be in place to prevent congregating outside the event;
- Participants who are not seated must stay two meters apart unless they live together;
- For snack or drink stations, there is hand washing or sanitizers and signs reminding participants to wash or sanitize their hands and stay two meters apart, and high touch surfaces are frequently cleaned and sanitized;
- Participants don't congregate at food stations or washroom facilities; and
- Hand sanitation supplies are available.

Flow Through Events

Flow through events are events where patrons move continually through the event over a short period of time, only interacting with vendors, including markets, trade shows, or car shows.

Flow through events require a COVID safety plan, and are limited to 50% of the venue capacity, not including vendors or volunteers.

Vendors must sanitize their booth or display every two hours. Common surfaces must be sanitized every two hours.

Vendors and patrons must wear masks.

Sports

There are no capacity limits for the number of persons who may participate in a sports event for children or youth, varsity sports, or high-performance athletes' events.

For other sports, whether inside or outside, there can be no more than 50% capacity for spectators and there must be a COVID safety plan.

The most significant difference between the requirements for indoor and outdoor events is the capacity limit: 5000 people outdoors, or 50 people indoors (or 50% of seating capacity, whichever is greater). Capacity limits exclude staff.

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