

College of the Environment COVID-19 Response Guidance: Hosting Events/Gatherings

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Relevant UW Guidance:

- [UW's Coronavirus Website: Operations](#)

Dear Chairs/Directors/Administrators:

Please read and disseminate the following information as appropriate within your units. We understand that this guidance may not cover all scenarios in your unit and are happy to discuss specific situations if you have questions.

The [UW's coronavirus webpage](#) is being updated constantly. The response to the FAQ "I'm hosting an event on campus. Should I cancel it?" has been updated to include the text below asking us to consider postponement or cancellation of large events/gatherings. In the context of this issue, "large groups" should be considered to be ~10 people.

["Public Health – Seattle & King County"](#) now recommends avoiding bringing large groups of people together for events and gatherings, if feasible. The University asks you to consider postponing or cancelling non-essential large events and gatherings and/or to offer remote participation. Below are some of the considerations to assist units in the decision to hold or cancel an event:

- If the event is not essential to University business, consider postponing or cancelling.
- The age and health of expected attendees should be considered, recognizing that evidence to date suggests greater impacts on vulnerable populations, including older individuals and those with underlying medical conditions.
- Additionally, Public Health – Seattle & King County recommends that people at higher risk of severe illness should stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible.
- Also note there may be staffing shortages to support the event as more people are staying home.

When holding an event, be sure to take additional precautions for infection prevention:

- Make remote participation available when possible.
- Ask attendees to practice good hygiene:
 - Stay home if you feel sick.
 - Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and immediately dispose of the tissue.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Make hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies available.

- Disinfect high touch surfaces more frequently. Standard cleaning products are effective against COVID-19.
- Follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC Guidance for Mass Gatherings or Large Community Events during COVID-19](#)).
- Try to find ways to give people more physical space.
- Encourage those who are at higher risk for coronavirus (see below) to not attend in person.

Public Health – Seattle & King County recommends that people at higher risk of severe illness should stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible. This includes public places with lots of people and large gatherings where there will be close contact with others. People at higher risk include:

- People over 60 years of age.
- People with underlying health conditions including include heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes.
- People with weakened immune systems.
- People who are pregnant.

Anyone who has questions about whether their condition puts them at risk for novel coronavirus should consult with their healthcare providers.”

We know that many of you will be making decisions about whether or not to go forward with specific events/gatherings and are happy to discuss the specifics of your situation if you have questions. If you are responsible for cancelling/postponing an event, we encourage you to use language that mirrors the template below. As long as your cancellation/postponement message does not deviate dramatically from what is below, please feel free to send without review by the Dean’s Office.

Dear xxxx,

It is with an abundance of caution that we have decided to [cancel/postpone] the [name of the event] at [location] on [date]. We were looking forward to [brief description of activity] with you, but we do not want to risk anyone’s health and wellness given the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus in our state.

[Comment about rescheduling at a later date if appropriate.]

For current information regarding the University’s communications and protocols regarding COVID-19, please see uw.edu/coronavirus.

Thank you for all that you do for the UW and the [unit name]. [or other appropriate thank you...]

Sincerely,
[Responsible party]

As always, if you have any questions on any of the above, please feel free to contact Stephanie Harrington or Megan Russell (for HR-specific issues).