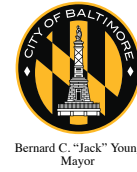# Baltimore City Health Department COVID-19 Guidance for Mass Gatherings

Bernard C. "Jack" Young
Mayor

Effective March 12, 2020

The Baltimore City Health Department offers this guidance to help people planning or attending large gatherings to make informed decisions. While we have not yet seen evidence of community transmission or confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Baltimore City, we offer the following guidance that balances the potential benefits to our community's health alongside the potential for disruptive impacts on event organizers and attendees.

The goals of this guidance are:

(1) to protect people attending and working at an event and the local community from the potential for COVID-19 infection; and

(2) to reduce the potential for community transmission, decrease the risk of introduction of COVID-19 into new communities, and slow and decrease the potential spread of the virus.

These recommendations are effective immediately and will be reassessed weekly.

We understand these recommendations will have a large impact on the lives of individuals in our City. The following recommendations were developed after significant deliberation. City officials weighed the potential benefits to our City's health with the significant disruptive effect that the recommendations could have.

Guidance for Persons at Higher Risk

Older people and people with certain underlying health conditions like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, for example, may be at greater risk of serious illness. Persons at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should stay home and away from crowded social gatherings as much as possible. These types of gatherings include, but are not limited to parades, conferences, sporting events, and concerts where large numbers of people are within arm's length of one another.

Those considered at higher risk include:

- People over 60 years of age. The risk of serious illness and complications increases significantly thereafter and escalates with age, with persons over age 80 in the highest risk category.

- People, regardless of age, with underlying health conditions including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, or chronic lung diseases like COPD, as well as those with severely weakened immune systems.

Guidance for Event Organizers

(see next page)

Guidance for Event Organizers

Large events
(events more than 250 people):

All large events (more than 250 people), permitted through the City of Baltimore, shall be cancelled or postponed that are scheduled to take place during the month of March, effective immediately.

At this time, we also recommend postponing or canceling:

- Non-essential mass gatherings and large community events where large numbers of people are within arm's length of one another;

- All events geared towards persons that are at increased risk of severe illness (older adults and those with chronic medical conditions); and,

- All Large Events (more than 250 people)

Medium Events
(events with 100-250 people):

Consider the following recommendations when determining event cancellation or postponement:

- **Size:** Smaller is better. Smaller events can limit the spread of illnesses through communities.

- **Density:** If the venue or setting doesn't enable people to keep social distance (more than arm's length of one another), the risk of spreading the virus increases. People should avoid crowded places where large numbers of people are within arm's length of one another.

Small Events
(events with fewer than 100 people):

- Urge anyone who is sick to not attend.

- Encourage those who are at higher risk for serious illness to not attend.

- Find ways to give people more physical space and reduce close contact as much as possible.

- Encourage attendees to follow increased hygiene, such as:

  - ✔ Washing their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds

  - ✔ If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used

  - ✔ Avoid close contact with other people

  - ✔ Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth

  - ✔ Cover their cough or sneeze with a tissue - if available - or into their elbow

- Clean surfaces as recommended by the CDC at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html.

- Provide alternative options for attending the event via phone, video, or web applications.

- Maintain a registration list of participants and staff; this will assist local public health officials in contact tracing in the event a COVID-19 case is later identified as having attended the event.

- Ensure that event venues are well ventilated.

- Use event messaging and communications to provide COVID-19 updates and promote everyday preventive health messages to your participants and staff.