



Guidance for Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 During 12-Step Groups and Structured Support Groups

November 24, 2020

Effective November 30, 2020, through December 13, 2020, additional restrictions are in place that override information in this document, most notably the degree to which your industry may operate and at what capacity. Please refer to [Rhode Island on Pause](#) that is posted on Reopening RI's website for the most current information.

12-Step groups and other structured support groups are not social gatherings; they are meetings held at venues of assembly. These groups must adhere to all Executive Orders and regulations, [including limitations on the number of attendees permitted at meetings held at venues of assembly \(see Executive Order 20-67, sections 9 and 10\)](#). (Executive Orders are subject to change. [Updates are posted on the Governor's website.](#)) All attendees are required to wear a cloth face covering unless physical distancing of at least six feet can be maintained easily and continuously, to the extent feasible. When physical distancing is not feasible, attendees should minimize the amount of time they are exposed to other people, to the extent possible. In general, RIDOH requires that any time you're near people who don't live with you, wear a mask and watch your distance.

Cloth face coverings are not required for:

- Anyone for whom use of such face covering would damage their physical or mental health; or
- Anyone who is developmentally unable to use a cloth face covering, including young children who may not be able to effectively wear a cloth face covering; or
- When a face covering would directly inhibit an activity of daily living (e.g. eating); or
- When a face covering would itself negatively impact the safety of an individual or lead to an increased risk of harm to others (e.g. near open flames).

A designated member of the group must be responsible for ensuring compliance with screening all individuals who enter the venue of assembly to attend meetings. Such screening shall include, at a minimum:

- Visual assessment, self-screening, or a written questionnaire, or a combination of any of these screening methods regarding COVID-19 symptoms and contact in the last 14 days with other individuals who are COVID-19 positive or who have COVID-19 symptoms;
- At all entrances to the meeting venue, post a notice that all individuals entering must be screened or self-screened, and they should not enter if they are COVID-19 positive, have COVID-19 symptoms, or have had close contact in the last 14 days with an individual who, at the time of contact, had COVID-19. Samples of screening criteria for entrants can be found, in [English](#) and in [Spanish](#), on the Reopening RI website.

If an individual is identified as exhibiting multiple symptoms of COVID-19 or as COVID-19 positive, the individual cannot attend the meeting.

In addition, RIDOH recommends that the following measures be put in place for each meeting:

- Meetings should be held outside, as weather permits.
- When possible, windows should be kept open to promote air circulation during meetings held indoors. Fans can also be placed in open windows to blow air from the meeting space to outdoors. If the meeting space does not have exterior windows or doors, consider using a fan to blow air into another unoccupied space.
- Attendees should remain seated and limit movement during the meetings.
- Attendees should avoid communal coffee urns and sharing of snacks, books, pamphlets, materials, pens/pencils, etc.
- Hand sanitizer should be available at all times during the meeting.

- Attendees should sit or stand at least six feet apart from one another.