

# New guidelines for meetings and gatherings

What's new – Nov 3 2021

[Public Health restrictions](#) on meetings and gatherings continue to evolve in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are now able to restore full capacity for some meeting rooms in some circumstances across Hamilton Health Sciences. The following guidelines should be followed for planning all meetings and gatherings of HHS staff and physicians.

NOTE: events such as outbreaks, as well as variations in the trajectory of the pandemic, may require changes to these guidelines during the coming weeks or months.

## Capacity limits and use of HHS meeting rooms

Because the vast majority of staff, physicians and learners are now vaccinated, we can safely begin to restore full capacity for HHS meeting rooms where it was reduced in response to the pandemic.

The following measures must be followed to ensure teams can meet in-person in a safe manner:

- Observe the assigned meeting room capacity and limit meeting attendees accordingly.
- Wear a mask for the duration of the meeting, and when exiting or entering the meeting room, and in accordance with HHS masking policy.
- Use designated seating; do not move furniture from its designated location within meeting rooms and do not bring-in additional seating.
- Food and beverages are not permitted in meeting rooms, and should only be consumed in designated break spaces/rooms that have reduced capacity limits.
- Tidy up the space after use.

NOTE: the restoration of full capacity in meeting rooms does not yet apply to patient and visitor settings (e.g. waiting rooms, sun rooms) or designated staff break rooms/lounges.

NOTE: For meetings involving only HHS staff and physicians, the meeting invite and/or agenda can serve as an attendance list. For meetings that involve learners or external stakeholders, meeting organizers will be required to keep a list of attendees to help contact tracing if an outbreak should occur.

## Capacity limits and use of HHS break rooms

At this time, capacity in any room used for staff breaks, eating meals, etc., will continue to be set at 50 per cent of its normal limit. This is because people who gather there are intermittently unmasked when eating or drinking.

The following measures must be followed in break rooms:

- Observe the posted capacity of each break room.
- Wear a mask when getting up from a break spot to go to a common space, even within a break room (e.g. using the toaster, sink or refrigerator, or when entering or exiting the room).

- Observe physical distancing to the extent possible when eating or drinking in designated break rooms – avoid gathering in one part of the room.
- Use designated seating and do not move furniture from its designated location within meeting rooms or break rooms; do not bring-in additional seating.
- Tidy up the space after use.

## **Use of HHS rooms for celebrations and social gatherings**

Leaders should exercise caution in approving small celebrations or gatherings among individuals in their units or teams.

**If units choose to hold such events**, the following measures must be followed to ensure teams can enjoy gatherings in a safe manner:

- Observe the posted capacity limits for all meeting rooms or break rooms.
- Arrange for small groups to gather at different times, and avoid entire teams meeting at the same time to reduce the impact of any potential outbreak on HHS operations.
- Use designated seating and do not move furniture in meeting rooms or break rooms; do not bring-in additional seating.
- Observe the guidelines for consuming food and beverage in break rooms; food and beverage is not permitted in a meeting rooms.
- If consuming food and beverage in a break room, wear a mask when getting up from designated seating to go to a common space, even within a break room (e.g. using the toaster, sink or refrigerator, or when entering and exiting the room).
- Only consume food or beverages that are individually packaged or prepared; wear a mask when picking up individual food or beverages, and then move to a safe distance from others before unmasking to eat.
- Tidy up the space after use.

## **Social gatherings among HHS staff & physicians held outside HHS**

**If teams choose to hold such events**, celebrations and gatherings among HHS staff and physicians that are held outside HHS sites must follow all [applicable public health measures and restrictions](#) for gatherings, including those [held in private homes](#).

Given the additional oversight and rules in place at event spaces and restaurants, these venues are preferred over gatherings in private homes for any type of social gathering.

We expect HHS leaders, physicians and staff, organizing a gathering with co-workers to confirm that facility operators are respecting all applicable public health measures, such as requiring proof of full vaccination, maintaining appropriate capacities, and obtaining contact information of all guests.

HHS staff and physicians who organize a gathering among co-workers held outside HHS should keep a record of all attendees, including contact information, to help Employee Health Services get rapid access to this information in the event an outbreak occurs that impacts HHS.

Some additional measures to help ensure the safety of people attending these gatherings include:

- Self-screening by all guests.
- Masking indoors when not drinking or eating.
- Physical distancing to the extent possible.
- Form eating/drinking “bubbles” by restricting the number of people who are sharing a space when masks are removed for eating and drinking.
- Not engaging in high-risk activities/events, such as singing indoors.

A cautious approach is needed from everyone at HHS who is planning gatherings of any sort. We have to avoid occasions where a team, unit or program could see its workforce depleted because of an outbreak or any COVID-19 infections.

We thank everyone for their continued efforts to ensure their safety and the wellbeing of colleagues, patients and the communities we serve.

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