



COVID-19 Safety at Retreats, Conferences, and Large Business Meetings

Retreats, conferences, large business meetings, and other shared workplace experiences can be beneficial on both personal and professional levels. These events can support connectivity to others, to personal/professional empowerment, to knowledge production, to information sharing, to a nurturing setting, to a sense of peacefulness, to perspective transformation, to reflection and revitalization, to skills building, and to visioning processes. The following reflects ways to enjoy the benefits of retreats, conferences, and large business meetings while protecting others from COVID-19.

Vaccination Protection – [Vaccination for COVID-19](#) remains a vital aspect of individual and group protection against this disease. IDPH recommends all eligible individuals participating in retreats, conferences, and large business meetings receive the COVID-19 vaccine as well as [third doses](#) and [boosters](#) as appropriate. Annual [flu vaccination](#) is also an important added protection.

Testing Considerations – Larger retreats and other shared workplace events will be much safer when organizers require proof or assurance of negative [viral tests](#) for COVID-19 1-3 days before the event for those who are unvaccinated. Retreat/meeting organizers should prohibit attendance to individuals that have tested positive or do not present negative test results.

Communicate Expectations – As a part of the [planning process, expectations for safety](#) should be communicated to event participants in advance. This is a considerate way to place participants at ease and to assist all in being poised to support the safety of others.

Face Coverings – Indoor participation must include wearing [well-fitted face coverings](#) at times in which participants are not eating and drinking. Speakers may choose to temporarily remove a face covering while at a podium or physically distanced from participants.

Physical Distancing – Safe indoor workplace experiences can be readily supported by planning in advance for the placement of chairs, tables, and spacing that does not crowd participants. Physical distancing at a recommended distance of at least 6 feet from others should be supported to the extent possible.

Symptoms of Sickness – Persons experiencing [symptoms](#) of sickness should not join events in person and should stay home, away from others.

Ventilated Space – Good ventilation contributes to a more pleasant experience for event participants and can contribute to a safer experience for event participants. Among other recommendations, hosts can [improve ventilation](#) by increasing introduction of outdoor air, using fans to increase effectiveness of open windows, adjusting HVAC systems to increase total airflow, and using [air cleaners or HVAC filtration systems](#). Again, any aspects of the workplace event that can be conducted outdoors (weather permitting) will offer the best natural ventilation.

Lunch Considerations – There are diverse ways of making lunch time enjoyable and safe for participants. If the food is served buffet style, having masked participants come forward in smaller groups will prevent crowding. Food from the buffet can also be served pre-plated directly at table. Box lunches that can readily be eaten indoors or taken outdoors is another popular option.

Outdoors Planning – Outdoor events are safest, and it is important for participants to be invited to dress comfortably for the weather. It should also be considered that aspects of workplace events that had been planned for outdoor spaces may have to be brought indoors due to inclement weather. Therefore, all aspects of events planned for outdoors should have an indoor back-up plan that includes the safety elements discussed here.

Prepare in advance for your retreat experience by getting a COVID-19 [vaccination/booster](#) and taking care of yourself and others.