



# COVID-19 Checklist for Planning a Wedding

July 16, 2021 – Step 3

Owners, operators, organizers and attendees of events held in a Meeting or Event Space are responsible for complying with the provisions set out in the applicable Regulation(s) under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#).

Please note that all meetings or events in your space must also comply with the requirements set out by the Province in [O. Reg. 364/20](#) (the Rules for Step 3), and different events have different rules (i.e. sports and recreations, weddings, meetings, trade shows, etc.).

As well, the Ontario government has released the [Roadmap for Reopening](#) that has three steps of public health measures: **Step 1**, **Step 2**, and **Step 3**. This guidance document describes the Provincial requirements that all weddings must comply with, as well as local recommendations to reduce the risks of transmission in the area served by Peterborough Public Health (PPH).

This document does not constitute legal advice and does not replace the need for those attending weddings to follow all applicable requirements from the Province of Ontario. There may be situations where provincial rules and local public health rules vary in level of restriction. When this is the case, places of worship must ensure compliance with the measure that is most restrictive in terms of preventing the spread of COVID-19. It is important to recognize that the COVID-19 situation is evolving very quickly. As such, PPH’s guidance is subject to change as new information is received. Please visit the [PPH COVID-19 website](#) for up-to-date information, including the current status of enhanced measures in Peterborough.

Before any wedding occurs, a [safety plan](#) must be developed to ensure all relevant public health guidelines and requirements are in place to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. The guidance in this document will help with the creation of your safety plan. The final plan may be requested by any indoor/outdoor facility users, and should be shared with all relevant employees, volunteers, and participants (worshippers, congregants, staff, volunteers, etc.).

Owners, operators, organizers and attendees all have a responsibility to assess the risks associated with in-person services, and to develop plans to mitigate these risks.

Congratulations on your upcoming nuptials. When planning a wedding during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to stay informed. Having the facts will help you plan a safer gathering, for you and the people around you. This is a summary of important laws, recommendations, and other considerations to reduce the spread of COVID-19 when planning and hosting a wedding celebration. Work with your wedding vendors and/or wedding planner to ensure that you are making informed decisions and avoiding risks.

Your event must adhere to the current public health orders on gathering limits, with preference given to

outdoor events to minimize the risk. Having more guests, with closer interactions and longer time spent together, increases the risk of spreading COVID-19.

## A. Staying informed

- Ask questions of the service providers you hire (e.g. ceremony and reception venues, florist, and food service vendor): i.e. do they have limits to the number of people they can host in their store, are the delays on receiving certain products, what processes have they put in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their establishments, etc.
- Review your venue/vendor contracts and insurance policy.
- Check the Peterborough Public Health's [website](#) for current information and guidance about COVID-19.
- Review the [Province's Public Health Measures section on "Organized public events, social gatherings and wedding, funeral and religious services, rites and ceremonies"](#) and PPHs [COVID-19 Guidance for Places of Worship](#) for more information.

## B. Communicating with your partner and service providers

- Maintain open communication with your partner and wedding planning services; temper expectations and understand that while special, it likely won't be the same as a wedding planned pre-COVID; be honest with each other about [what you are feeling](#).
- Support each other and be flexible. Many businesses are impacted by the pandemic.
- Create a backup plan with a few alternative dates.
- For in-person events, limit attendance as per maximum capacities identified in the Regulations.
- Options to consider: a virtual ceremony, outdoor ceremony, tented reception, a smaller indoor wedding, or delaying the event until public health measures are less restrictive.
- Family and cultural expectations may need to be relaxed to protect the safety of participants.
- Some rituals and practices may also need to be modified.
- Adjust your wedding checklist to accommodate public health measures.
- Go digital to shop for venues, flowers, and other wedding necessities, and to schedule appointments.

## C. Selecting venues and limiting number of guests

The provincial government has set gathering limits, under the [Reopening Ontario Act](#), to support physical distancing measures. The regulations apply to both private and rented facilities.

### Capacity limits

Capacity limits for the **rite, ceremony or service** is based on the ability to permit physical distancing of 2 metres. Plainly, there are no capacity limits provided that there is space for everyone to physically distance from those not in their household. This applies to **weddings** indoors AND outdoors.

Please note, that depending on the size of your wedding venue, if the ceremony and reception are happening at the same place, this may mean you might not be able to have as many people attend the reception as the ceremony, as capacity limits do apply to wedding receptions.

Specific requirements for the Meeting or Event Space sector can be found in [O. Reg. 364/20, Schedule 1, Section 4](#) (Meeting or Event Spaces) and O. Reg. 364/20, Schedule 2, Section 2 (Restaurants, bars, food trucks, concession stands and other food or drink establishments):

**Indoor gathering limits at a meeting or event space WITHOUT dancing – UP TO 50% capacity of the room, to a maximum of 1,000, whichever is less** (i.e. a sit-down dinner in large ball room, or in a large conference room) [O. Reg. 364/20, Schedule 1, Section 4]

**Indoor food or drink establishments WITH dancing – UP To 25% capacity to a limit of 250.** (i.e. a traditional reception, with sit down dinner in large ball room, or in a large conference room. [O. Reg. 364/20, Schedule 2, Section 2]

*In the case of an indoor establishment, the total number of members of the public permitted to be in the establishment at any one time must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the establishment and in any event may not exceed 25 per cent capacity, as determined in accordance with subsection 3 (4) of Schedule 1, or 250 persons, whichever is less.*

**Outdoor food or drink establishments WITH dancing – UP to 75% capacity** [O. Reg. 364/20, Schedule 2, Section 2]

*In the case of an outdoor establishment, the total number of members of the public permitted to be at the establishment at any one time may not exceed 75 per cent capacity, as determined in accordance with subsection 3 (2) of Schedule 1, or 5,000 persons, whichever is less.*

## Outdoor events

Physical distancing is critical to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and at least 2 metres must be maintained between those not in the same household. Face coverings must be worn when physical distancing is hard to maintain. Plainly, people should only be unmasked around people from their own households.

## Indoor events

Face coverings must be worn at all times except when eating, and 2 metres must be maintained

## Limit the number of guests

The provincial government has set gathering limits, under the Reopening Ontario Act, to support physical distancing measures. The regulations apply to both private and rented facilities.

- The number of guests permitted is based on the venue type and location; you will need to comply with provincial Regulations and consult with your venue operator to ensure compliance
  - Outdoor spaces (i.e. tents, pagodas, and gazebos, etc.) must have at least two full sides open to the outdoors and not be substantially blocked in any way to be granted 'outdoor' capacity limits
  - Weddings taking place in barns and other rural outbuildings are considered INDOOR events
  - Indoor and outdoor capacity limits cannot be combined to achieve higher limits/more guests
- Consider adding a virtual component to allow additional friends and family to participate. This may also benefit guests who cannot be there in person due to distance/ travel restrictions or are at higher risk for illness due to age and health conditions.
- For in-person events, arrange seating by households

## D. Communicating with guests before the event

- Use technology to keep guests informed, such as a wedding website or social media.
- Inform your guests about the precautions you are taking to keep everyone safe, and to help them prepare for the wedding ceremony and/or reception.
- If hosting a virtual service, post instructions on how to access it online.
- Ask guests to [self-screen](#) for symptoms of COVID-19 before they arrive. For guests who are self-isolating, for the reasons listed below, ask them to stay home and participate online:
  - returning from travels outside of Canada in the past 14 days;

- feeling unwell, or have symptoms of COVID-19; or
- have been in close contact with someone who is sick or has COVID-19.
- Remind guests to bring their own mask or face covering. Plan to have some extra face coverings available as a backup.
- Ask guests to smile, wave, or send virtual hugs/wishes in lieu of physical hugs, kisses and handshakes.

## E. Prevention measures to keep everyone safe

- Tape off or space seats to maintain a two metre/six feet distance for people not in the same household.
- Use floor markers by the receiving line for guests to stand two metres/six feet apart.
- Avoid touching face with unwashed hands.
- Have hand sanitizer available by the entrance and in high traffic areas. Approved hand sanitizer must comply with [Health Canada](#) standards
- Ensure your venue(s) posts signs encouraging guests to practice safety measures:
  - [Physical distancing](#), frequent [handwashing](#) and [respiratory etiquette](#)
  - When you do go out, [you must use a face covering \(non-medical mask\) in public indoor spaces; how to wear a face covering](#)

## F. Ontario's [Face Covering Law](#)

- A face covering must be worn at all times when indoors, except when eating or drinking.
- Personal protective equipment, including eye protection, required when a worker must come within 2 metres of another person who is not wearing a face covering (i.e. servers serving unmasked patrons)
- Avoid adjusting your face covering when in use.
- The couple must keep their face coverings on during the wedding ceremony.
- The person leading the ceremony may remove their face covering if they are in an area not accessible by the public, and can maintain at least 6' distance from others.
- Children under two years of age, people with health issues that make wearing a face covering difficult, and those who are unable to put on a face covering without assistance, are exempted from wearing a face covering. More information on face covering exemptions can be found [here](#).

## G. Modify the wedding service and reception

- Where appropriate, consider using outdoor spaces.
- Understand the requirements in each [Step](#) to seat patrons safely:
  - [Guidance for meeting and event facilities during COVID-19](#)
  - [Restaurant and food services health and safety during COVID-19](#)
- Avoid close contact or sharing of ceremonial objects or personal items between members of different households.
- Avoid activities that encourage guests to congregate or share items (e.g. photo booths).
- If hiring performers, they must maintain a two metre/six foot distance from each other and from guests
- Performers or officiant should have their own microphone. Do not share microphones.
- Keep music volume low, so the officiants, guests and staff do not need to speak loudly or lean closer to communicate.
- Create an online registration book for guests.
- Consider individual hand sanitizer and personalized face coverings as party favours or gift bags.
- Place gift bags at each seat for guests.
- Photographers / videographers must a keep two metre/six-foot distance from others and wear a face covering.
- Ensure close group photos are only of people in the same household and have guests wear a face covering, even when outdoors.

- Consider limiting alcohol service to prevent guests from 'forgetting' about the necessary COVID-19 precautions
- Guests must remain seated at all times, including during the couple's dances, performances and speeches.
- Dancing among guests is considered a high-risk activity

## H. Food at the reception

- Do not share items such as utensils, salt/pepper shakers, water pitchers, or wine bottles.
- Assign seating, keeping family households together.
- Tables must be spaced 2 metres apart
- Guests may remove their face covering when eating, but should put the face covering back on when going to the washroom or when leaving.

## I. Attendance list for contact tracing and guest management

- Encourage your guests to download the [COVID Alert app](#).
- Booking multiple rooms for the same event not permitted
- If a guest becomes ill during the service/reception, ask them to go home and [self-isolate](#), and call Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000 or their health care provider for further direction.
- Require contact information for all seated patrons. Information collected can only be used by public health for COVID-19 contact tracing. The attendance list can be deleted after 30 days.