

## General Guidance for In-Person Music Conferences and Festivals

As students across the country have returned to in-person music learning, state music education associations (MEAs) and other music organizations are moving toward in-person music making through conferences and festivals. As COVID-19 evolves, conference administrators must continue to respond to the ever-evolving pandemic. It is imperative that conference administrators be aware of research and best practices in the area of safe music instruction, general public health, and legalities—all informed by local, state, and federal public health guidance. Below is general guidance for in-person music conferences and festivals, but it is important to consult legal counsel for information on any specific laws or policies.

### Vaccination and Health Screening Policies:

- Vaccination requirements must be in accordance with state and local laws and policies. School districts, by policy, may prohibit music instructors from talking to students about their vaccination status.
- For any vaccination policies, it is important to work with legal counsel to ensure that the policies are in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations including particularly laws related to mandates and accommodations. These policies also include recently FDA-approved vaccines for children ages 11 and under.
- If the facility you have rented to host your conference requires proof of vaccination or negative COVID-19 test, the obligation to implement the policy may be passed on to your organization contractually. It is helpful to have a conversation with the facility owners regarding what their policy requires, how it is to be enforced, and if they will offer any auxiliary support.
- Conferences may hold COVID-19 screenings on-site, or they may require a confirmation that conference participants have screened themselves prior to entering the conference venue. If after consultation with legal counsel, you choose to require vaccination for participants, you will need to alternatively allow for a negative COVID-19 test for anyone claiming a vaccine exemption.
- Conference administrators should prepare for possible exposure to the virus. Plans and procedures should be in place to prevent further exposure and possible transmission.
- You should consult legal counsel regarding any use of “assumption of risk” or “waiver” language on your registration website and other event notices that acknowledge that participants fully understand the nature and extent of the risks presented by COVID-19 due to their in-person attendance.

### Exhibitors and Audience:

- In areas where transmission rates are high, conference administrators may request that exhibitors and audience participants be masked at all times while on conference properties if in accordance with their state and local laws.
- Conference administrators may want to consider limited capacity to better comply with social distancing measures that have either been implemented by the state or that are in accordance with recommendations found in the Performing Arts Aerosol Research Study. Appropriate distancing should be maintained in all areas of your venue, including, but not limited to general areas, concessions, auditoriums, rehearsal areas, and bathrooms.
- All exhibitions should be sanitized frequently. To reduce physical contact, consider electronic options for handouts and promotional items.
- Consider electronic options for programs, ticketing, and food and beverage.

## Performers Making Music:

- All music making should be in accordance with mitigation strategies endorsed by state and local governments.
- Masking with a well-fitted 3-layer surgical style mask remains the best way of reducing potentially infected aerosol from circulating in an indoor space. Masks are recommended to be worn while singing and speaking. When performing with brass and woodwind instruments, the performer should wear a surgical style mask with a slit for the mouthpiece.
- Depending on your comfort level and transmission rates in your area, instrumentalists may be able to perform without masks, only wearing them when speaking, and slitted performance masks are optional. Please consult your state, local, and school rules and recommendations for further guidance.
- Bell covers made with a MERV-13 filter material, or a 3-layer surgical mask, remain the best way of reducing potential infected aerosol from circulating in an indoor space. Masks should meet the ASTM F2100 or GB/T32610 standard.
- In spaces with good ventilation rates and High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filtration, increased indoor rehearsal and performance times of 50 minutes may be considered. A minimum of 3 air exchanges per hour should be used. If there are spaces with higher air change rates, you may consider longer rehearsal times. When performing indoors, it is important to aim for elevated outdoor air exchange rate from heat, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC). If that is not possible, aim for typical outdoor air exchange rate from HVAC along with recirculation of air through MERV 13 filters or the addition of appropriately sized HEPA air cleaners.
- Social distancing should be no less than 3 feet, adjusting farther or closer depending on local conditions.
- Practice good hygiene by washing hands, using sanitizers, and preventing uncontrolled spit valve release.
- Plastic face shields are largely ineffective because they only stop large droplets, not aerosol. Room dividers inhibit the function of the HVAC system and are not recommended.
- Understand any state and local laws, as well as any liability associated with overnight stays. Work with hotel vendors to ensure state and local guidelines are upheld on their properties. Policies may include overnight stays to be limited to only family members per hotel room. Consider heightening policies for health screenings, negative COVID-19 tests, and vaccinations for overnight participants.

## References

Stockman, Teyha, et. Al. "Measurements and Simulations of Aerosol Released while Singing and Playing Wind Instruments". Retrieved from <https://utica.libguides.com/c.php?g=703243&p=4991633> .

Weaver, J. and Spaede (2021, November 8) *Unprecedented International Coalition led by Performing Arts Organizations to Commission COVID-19 Study*. <https://www.nfhs.org/articles/unprecedented-international-coalition-led-by-performing-arts-organizations-to-commission-covid-19-study/>

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