

Advocates for
OHIO EVENT SAFETY

REOPENING GUIDE

**INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC BEST PRACTICES FOR OPERATION
UNDER CURRENT GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS**

OES REOPENING GUIDE

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This guide is for informational purposes only. It does not and shall not be considered guidance on or an interpretation of past, present or future rules, statutes, orders or regulations which are applicable, directly or indirectly, to our industry. Any use of any information provided in this guide is done at your own discretion and risk and any liability incurred by you is your sole responsibility.

OES REOPENING GUIDE

OUR MISSION

Berlyn Events & Design, Ltd. DBA **Ohio Event Safety** unites event professionals with the common goal of executing safe events through collaboration with, not opposition to, the Government. We recognize that the creation of realistic, practical policy requires first-hand experience in our field. We advocate for clarity on how current policy affects our ability to do business. We are willing and able to comply with regulations and are equipped to develop targeted solutions to a safe reopening.

Mitigating the spread of COVID-19 is critical to the economic stability of small business. A challenge of this magnitude necessitates a collective response.

Collaboration is necessary to achieve the following:

1. **Promote cohesion and efficiency**

Standardizing base-level procedure will allow for greater inter-disciplinary cooperation, streamlining event production, and increasing profitability.

2. **Rebuild consumer confidence**

Normalizing compliant procedures promotes more realistic client expectations, reducing unfair comparison and undue confusion during the vendor hiring process.

3. **Prevent a subsequent closure**

Responsible, decisive action is required to minimize interruption to our business operations.

Our priority is, and always will be, creating a path forward that is **REALISTIC • SUSTAINABLE • SAFE.**

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Inspired by the collective effort of hundreds of industry professionals across the state of Ohio, this guide was created to provide interpretation of the current state regulations through the lens of event production.

The recommendations provided are not one-size-fits all. Implementation of any procedure will be influenced by a number of factors including type of facility, services provided, local Department of Health enforcement, and more.

The *OES Reopening Guide* is specifically tailored to:

- Events hosted in Catering & Banquet Facilities as defined by the Dine Safe Ohio Order (*Revised June 1st, 2020*)
- Events serving 300 guests or fewer
- Private events with an emphasis on weddings and wedding receptions

At this time, these recommendations have not been endorsed by the Ohio Department of Health or the DeWine Administration. They are presented to provide a snapshot of the industry's response.

Adherence to these recommendations cannot guarantee an illness-free event, nor assumed compliance with government mandates.

Always review current government orders and consult your local Department of Health for clarification.

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PUBLISHED ORDERS

Review all state and local resources to ensure compliance.
Start here: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/>

SUMMARY OF CURRENT STATE GUIDELINES

The following is a summary of current state guidelines based on published documents & correspondence with state officials. Please check with your local Department of Health for specifics as enforcement/interpretation may differ by municipality.

- **WEDDING CEREMONIES**
Unrestricted
- **WEDDING RECEPTIONS**
Max. 300 guests
- **300-GUEST LIMIT IS PER VENUE, NOT PER EVENT** Venues may host a total of 300 guests - not separate events with up to 300 guests each
- **CONGREGATION AREAS**
Permitted with restrictions and social distancing
- **FOOD & BEVERAGE**
Must be consumed while seated
- **DINING FLOOR PLAN**
Permitted with up to ten (10) guests per table and minimum six (6) foot distance from the outermost chair of one table to the nearest chair of adjacent tables
- **BUFFETS**
Staff-served ONLY (maintain social distance)
- **DANCING**
Permitted with restrictions and social distancing
- **LIVE ENTERTAINMENT / DJs**
Permitted with social distancing
- **GATHERINGS AT PRIVATE RESIDENCES**
Unrestricted
- **MASKS MANDATORY**
For those over 10 years of age with no extenuating health concerns
- **ALCOHOL SALES PROHIBITED**
After 10 PM, with consumption prohibited after 11 PM.

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THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are a collection of procedures, crowd-sourced from professionals across the state as subjective interpretation of official mandates as they could be applied to event production. These suggestions do not fully encompass or replace government-issued regulations.

Always review current government orders and consult your local Department of Health for clarification.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY

- Health checks may include temperature assessments, questionnaires, employee self-checks, screening apps or other tools
 - Update files with log of health checks
 - Screen for temperature, history, exposure in accordance with CDC recommendations every work period
- If exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19, employees must stay home
- Maintain a list of back-up staff to provide coverage for sick employees
- Stagger shifts, breaks, and lunches to avoid mass entry/exit
- Practice social distancing in the back-of-house areas
 - Limit the number of staff in back-of-house at any given time
 - Utilize prep tents where necessary and practical to expand back-of-house footprint
- Educate on proper use, disposal, and maintenance of face coverings
 - All employees must wear masks
- Educate on proper use, disposal, and maintenance of gloves, per code
 - All employees must wear gloves when appropriate
- Avoid switching tasks when possible to reduce cross contamination concerns. Increase handwashing if changing tasks is necessary.

REGARDING MASKS

The Government has identified a few exceptions to the requirement of masks (see Sector Specific Operating Requirements for a full list of reasons). Businesses must provide written justification when masks are not required.

EQUIPMENT

- Equipment should be quarantined and/or sanitized between each use
- Dirty equipment should be stored away from sanitized equipment to prevent cross contamination
- Personnel handling plates, utensils, cups, etc. must wear gloves and facial covering

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FACILITIES: Pre-Function

- Clean and disinfect all surfaces and high-touch areas **daily**
 - High touch areas including restrooms, door handles, countertops, bars, handrails must be sanitized **every two hours**
- Consider professional sanitation weekly or before and after each event
- Sanitizing stations must be available in multiple areas throughout facility
- Assign staff member to monitor cleaning and maintain supplies
- Consider air filtration improvements within HVAC system
- **Maintain a scale floor plan** to be used in the creation of mandatory COVID-19 compliant floor plans

LOAD-IN & DELIVERIES

- Staff must wear masks
- Staff must wear gloves when appropriate
- Post signage including expectations on delivery doors
- Stagger deliveries to avoid mass entry/exit
- Limit entrance and exit options when possible while still maintaining code regulations (e.g., building or fire code)
- Maintain at least six feet from other employees and staff unless installation makes it impractical to do so
- Encourage third party delivery staff to wait outside or in non-congested areas
- Allow outside drop-off deliveries where applicable

CAPACITY

- Events may not exceed 300 guests, but actual capacity is determined by the ability to maintain social distancing
- Venues may host a **total** of 300 guests - not separate events with up to 300 guests each
- Limit capacity based on ability to social distance with six feet between the outermost chair of each table to the nearest chair of an adjacent table
- No more than 10 guests per table
- Utilize smaller tables when available for defined social groups
- Remove excess seating throughout the facility to discourage congregating
- Reduce guest lists as necessary to accommodate the required social distancing

A NOTE TO VENUES

If one does not already exist, immediately source/generate a comprehensive, scale floor plan of your space (including back-of-house) to be used in the creation of mandatory COVID-19 compliant floor plans.

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SIGNAGE

- Post signage at entry and elsewhere as appropriate regarding the following:
 - Social distancing
 - Recommending face coverings
 - Identifying COVID-19 symptoms
 - Frequent handwashing/sanitation
 - All other signage required by law
- Establish, using a scale floor plan, and post maximum dining area capacity using COVID-19 compliant floor plans with maximum party size per state guideline (currently 10).

RESTROOMS

- Prop open restroom doors if appropriate to reduce touchpoints
- Block off intermittent sinks to maintain distance when possible
- Post signage to remind guests to maintain distance and proper handwashing technique
- Mark floors for safely distanced lines

GUEST ARRIVAL

- Send guidelines to client in advance for distribution to guests, encourage questions to be asked and answered prior to event day
- Guests encouraged to wear mask upon arrival
- Ensure a minimum of six feet between parties waiting to enter
- Provide staff to greet, facilitate health checks and direct guests to seats
- Health checks may include temperature assessments, self-checks, etc.
- Ask customers and guests not to enter if symptomatic
- Hand washing or sanitizing available upon entry to the facility
 - Use sanitizer products that meet the CDC guidelines
- Distribute single-use copies of guidelines to establish expectations and provide protocol reminders

GROUP PHOTOS / FAMILY PHOTOS

- Keep groupings under 10 participants wherever possible and practical
- Avoid prolonged direct exposure between guests
- Use best judgement with elderly/at-risk populations

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CEREMONY

Ceremonies remain unregulated. These are suggestions in the spirit of the law to facilitate a smooth transition between ceremony and reception.

- Seat guests with the same social group according to dining table assignments, with space between each group
- Space rows six feet apart
- Guests should remain seated until staff leads them to their table for cocktail hour or dinner
- If ceremony is held in reception area with limited space, where a room flip would be difficult, California-style seating is the preferred option
- If chairs must be moved from one space to another:
 - Gloves should be worn by staff
 - Waiting areas should be configured to allow for social distancing. Creative solutions include designated tables or distanced markings for guests to stand on while waiting (masks recommended)

COCKTAIL HOUR

- Held in reception space or where enough extra seating is provided
 - Creative solutions include providing cocktail tables with stools and smaller tables and chairs for each guest; (e.g., Swap 30" high tops to 30"/48" low tops and add standard chairs for cocktail seating or add barstools to 30" high tops to allow people to remain seated)
- Guests must remain seated when consuming food or drink
- Masks recommended when guests are not seated to eat or drink
- Serve drinks and food tableside to seated guests only to discourage consumption while standing & congregating
- When hors d'oeuvres are passed tableside, staff should place individual servings on guest plates with utensils or gloved hands
- Guests should maintain distance when associating with others outside of their social group (masks recommended)

RECEPTION

- Guest seating must be assigned
- Wedding parties should be divided to separate tables if they exceed the 10 guest per table maximum
 - Creative solutions include sweetheart table and seating wedding party at standard guest tables
- Guests should be assigned seating with their own families or groupings that travel together (a.k.a. "defined social group") when possible
- Guests must remain seated when consuming food or drink
- Guest should maintain distance when associating with others outside of their social group (masks recommended)

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FOOD SERVICE

BUFFET

- Buffets must be staff served (no self-service)
- Staff must wear gloves and face coverings
- Utilize signage or mark the floor with appropriate distance for buffet line
- Double tables or utilize barriers to ensure guests maintain distance between themselves and the buffet
- Guests should wear masks when going through the buffet
- Utensils must be pre-set at tables and/or rolled in napkins at each setting
- Pre-set water and glassware are permitted
- No pre-set salads, food, or communal items (e.g., water carafes or S+P)
- Family style is not recommended (check with your municipal health department for specifics regarding execution of family style dining)

PLATED

- Service staff must wear gloves and face coverings
- Consider covering plated meals (not required)
- Utensils must be pre-set at tables and/or rolled in napkins at each setting
- Pre-set water and glassware are permitted
 - Consider coasters or covers of some kind
- No pre-set salads, food, or communal items (e.g., water carafes)
- Condiments and seasonings available upon request in single-serve containers

CAKE DISPLAY / SERVICE

- Wedding cakes may be displayed where a minimum six-foot physical distance is observed or barriers are used
- Appropriate PPE should be worn at all time when handling cake
- Cake cut by the couple, if not wearing PPE, should not be served to guests
- Cake must be sliced and plated in back of house and served tableside

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BEVERAGE / BAR SERVICE

- Bartenders must wear gloves and facial coverings
- Preferably, have additional staff available to take orders and deliver beverages tableside (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic)
- Consider rolling carts to serve beverages tableside and single-use cans for beer and non-alcoholic beverages
- Eliminate bars in the event space where practical to reduce congregation
 - If a bar is included in the space, establish designated ordering areas and waiting areas
 - Clearly mark safe distancing and separations per individual/social group for bar service
- Self-serve beverages are permitted but not preferred
 - Increase sanitation on these stations and consider keeping glassware/plasticware behind the bar to be distributed individually
 - Guests must return to their seat immediately upon receipt of drinks
- Coffee should be offered tableside upon request
- Recommend signage at the bar encouraging guests to enjoy their beverage while seated
- Batch drinks where possible to expedite service

ENTERTAINMENT

- Sterilize all microphones between each use
- Performers must wear masks and maintain distance between individuals
- Mark distance where guests/clients can stand to speak with performer
- Post signage requesting guests only approach wearing a face covering
- Music volume should be such to allow for communication while maintaining social distance and wearing masks

PHOTO BOOTHS

- Photobooths are not advisable due to concerns with congregation, proximity and high touch points, if continued observe the following:
 - Format should be open-air
 - Eliminate props
 - Designate an attendant (masked and gloved) to handle and sanitize all equipment regularly
 - Limit frequent and prolonged exposure and congregation
 - Establish designated waiting areas to manage congregation
 - Clearly mark safe distancing and separations per individual/social group
 - All guests should wash hands and/or utilize sanitizer before and after engaging in the photo booth

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DANCING

- All guests should wash hands and/or utilize sanitizer before and after engaging in social activities such as dancing
 - Consider free-standing stations or bottles of sanitizer per table
- Guests should dance only with their “defined social group” (those with whom they are related or have quarantined / dining table)
 - Maximum to be current group size per state guidelines (current 10)
 - Creative solutions include, marking floors with individual dance areas -or- designing floor plan to leave room between for each table to have personal dancing space (i.e., “checkerboard floor plan”)
- Reinforce spacing through training employees and with guests/attendees through regular public announcements
- Masks recommended
- Open doors/windows when possible and practical to increase air flow
- Encourage frequent breaks from activity to prevent overexertion and heavy breathing
- Incorporate games (e.g., Shoe Game) for supplementary entertainment

TRANSPORTATION

- Masks recommended for passengers
- Maintain distance where possible
 - Creative solutions include, seating according to social group with space between -or- block off alternating seats
- Handrails and surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized between each trip, within the same reservation
- Consider offering sanitizer upon disembarking

RECORD KEEPING

- Maintain a comprehensive guest list and corresponding seating chart
- Maintain list of on-site vendors for each event

SECURITY

- Consider security for all events to assist staff with new requirements and enforcement
- Request client delegates 1-2 guests (and ask for an introduction) who will be present for the duration of the event, and are unlikely to become intoxicated, that can help facilitate guidelines and mediate guest interactions when necessary

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CONFIRMED CASES

- Immediately isolate and seek medical care for any individual who develops symptoms while at the facility
- Shutdown space for deep sanitation, if possible
- Contact local Department of Health

MISC: Centerpieces, Escort Displays, etc.

- Centerpieces are permitted if they are for decorative purposes only, not consumable, and/or not taken home by guests at the conclusion of the event
- Self-serve escort card displays are inadvisable
 - Creative solutions include swapping escort cards for a chart, verbally communicating table assignments upon guest entry, or designation of a staff member to distribute escort cards to guests
- Place cards pre-set at tables are acceptable
- Have extra masks and sanitizer available
- Consider encouraging clients to provide sanitizer and/or masks as favors

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

The *OES Reopening Guide* is not a comprehensive overview of all mandates and state-issued guidelines. There are nuances to our industry and you may encounter circumstances not addressed here. Suggestions for inclusions to this guide may be emailed to: info@ohioeventsafety.com

Always review current government orders and consult your local Department of Health for clarification regarding implementation.

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