

World Health Organization Recognizes Importance of Mass Gatherings, Offers New Precautions for Reopening



The World Health Organization (WHO) has updated its stance on the reopening of large events, including sports, concerts, political rallies, religious events and other kinds of "mass gatherings," in the context of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

In a new document titled "Key planning recommendations for mass gatherings in the context of the current COVID-19 outbreak" published on May 29, the WHO has recognized that these types of events are important for not only employment, but also the "psychological well-being of large numbers of individuals." It also continues to recommend specific baseline precautions to limit the virus's spread.

"Since mass gatherings have substantial political, cultural, social, and economic implications, authorities should assess the importance and necessity of an event and consider the option that it may take place, provided all associated public health risks are adequately addressed and mitigated," the document reads.

The plan details a number of steps and precautions from the planning, operational and post-event phases that should help event organizers responsibly host large gatherings in the future.

Organizers are now being encouraged to plan for signs requiring PPE and hygiene practices, surveillance of participants, developing "isolation facilities" for symptomatic attendees, communication with health authorities

about possible new cases as a result of the event, limiting the duration of events, hosting events online where possible, adjusting venue capacity, hosting events outdoors instead of inside where possible and staggering attendee arrivals/departures, among many, many other precautions.

Aside from the baseline physical distancing, hand-washing and mask-wearing, the WHO recommends that immunocompromised individuals and other vulnerable populations continue to avoid attending large events.

Additionally, the WHO recommends that each event that garners a large gathering should act as a "legacy" account of the best practices to continue implementing, which practices to avoid, and how to enhance "ways of working" on a global scale.

The full document can be accessed at the WHO's publications website.

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