



**Public Health Department
of Mendocino County**

Healthy People, Healthy Communities

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County Health Officer




**Recommendations for Safely Holding Public Meetings
from the Mendocino County Public Health Officer**

March 9, 2022

Each local governmental body is authorized to determine whether to hold public meetings in person, online (teleconferencing by electronic means, through either audio or video, or both), or via a combination of methods. The following are my recommendations as the County Health Officer, to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission during a public meeting.

1. I continue to strongly recommend online public meetings (i.e., teleconferencing meetings) to the extent possible, as these meetings present the lowest risk of transmission of SARS CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. This recommendation is made due to the current community prevalence rates. While the winter surge has declined and the availability of hospital beds has improved, the County continues to be an area, defined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), with "High Community Transmission" risk. In addition, rates remain high with the Omicron variant of COVID-19 being the predominant variant, the impact of which on the spread of COVID-19 has shown to dramatically increase the transmission of COVID-19. Additionally, I make this recommendation based on the unique characteristics of public governmental meetings (such as the increased mixing associated with bringing people together from across the community, the need to enable those who are immunocompromised or unvaccinated to be able to safely continue to fully participate in such governmental meetings, and the challenges with fully ascertaining and ensuring compliance with vaccination and other safety recommendations at such meetings), and the continued increased safety protection that physical/social distancing provides as one means by which to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
2. If a local agency determines to hold in-person meetings, offering the opportunity to attend via a call-in option or an internet-based service option is recommended, when possible to give those at higher risk of and/or higher concern about COVID-19 an alternative to participating in person.
3. A written safety protocol should be developed and followed. This protocol need not be pre-approved by the Health Officer/County Public Health. It is strongly recommended that any safety protocol require the following:

- a. social distancing, i.e., six feet of separation between attendees and seating arrangements should allow for staff and members of the public to easily maintain at least six-foot distance from one another at all practicable times;
- b. face masks for all attendees;
- c. upgraded ventilation systems and/or opening door(s) and window(s) if available for improved optimum ventilation;
- d. attendees should be screened for COVID-19 symptoms;
- e. voluntary sign-in sheets with names and contact information to assist in contact tracing in the event any cases might be linked to that public meeting; and
- f. it is recommended that local agencies consider limiting in-person attendance to those attendees (1) who have current COVID-19 vaccination status (received all boosters for which they are eligible) or (2) who have proof of negative COVID-19 antigen test within the last 48 hours prior to the meeting or are within 90 days of recent COVID-19 infection.



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Mendocino County Health Officer

Dated: March 9, 2022