

GUIDANCE FOR SINGING & VOCAL PERFORMANCE

Overview

Under current Chief Medical Officer of Health Orders, businesses and entities are required to:

- Implement practices to minimize the risk of transmission of infection among attendees, performers, production crew, and front of house;
- Provide procedures for rapid response if an attendee develops symptoms of illness;
- Ensure that attendees and venues maintain high levels of sanitation and personal hygiene;
- Comply, to the extent possible, with the [COVID-19 General Relaunch Guidance](#), this guidance, and any other applicable Alberta Health guidance found at: <https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx>.

This document has been developed to support efforts in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among attendees of singing/vocal performances. The guidance provided outlines public health and infection prevention and control measures specific to this activity.

- “Attendees” refers to any individual involved in rehearsal, performance and instruction/practice related to singing/vocal performing including but not limited to vocalists, accompanying musicians, production crew, front of house and other support staff, volunteers, and audiences/spectators as well as instructors and students.
- “Singing” refers to vocal performances by soloists, vocal ensembles, rappers and beatboxers, and organized singing groups, such as choirs and vocal classes.

This guidance is subject to change and will be updated as needed. Current information related to COVID-19 can be found here: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-information.aspx>.

COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

General Guidance in All Settings	<p>COVID-19 can be transmitted through saliva or respiratory droplets while singing and must be carefully managed with appropriate physical distancing and other health precautions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informal group singing by the general public should not occur at this time, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Karaoke singing;○ Audience singing; and○ Singing in other informal contexts where there is not a recognized leader, such as a conductor or teacher.• Individuals at high risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 should carefully weigh the risks and benefits of participating in singing activities or attending singing performances and, if participating, should be particularly attentive to preventive measures.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wherever possible, instruction and practice sessions should be conducted remotely, via video conference or other means. • Notify singers and attendees of the steps being taken to prevent the risk of transmission, and the importance of their roles in these measures. • All Albertans must follow CMOH Order 05-2020, which establishes legal requirements for quarantine and isolation. <p>To support public health contact tracing efforts in the event that an attendee tests positive, organizers should consider keeping attendance rosters and collecting the names and contact information of attendees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing information is voluntary for patrons. Operators must obtain an individual’s consent and notify them about the purpose and legal authority for the collection. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Any personal information that is collected for COVID-19 contact tracing can only be used for this purpose.
<p>Audience Guidance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering restrictions apply and should be observed at all times for audiences/spectators. • Audiences should not sing along with performers • Seating should face the same direction and leave at least 2 metres between each person or household/cohort. • Audience members should remain seated in seats in outdoor and indoor events, except to access washroom or food/beverage services. • Open area standing or dancing areas like mosh pits or dance floors are not permitted for audiences. Fixtures where attendees are not seated (e.g., high tables, ledges) are not recommended.
<p>General Performance and Rehearsal Guidance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singers should be staggered so they are not directly behind one another. • Performers should not directly face other performers while singing. • Exercises such as lip and tongue rolls or trills should be avoided as they generate an increased volume of droplets. • Consider putting a disposable foam microphone windscreen over vocal microphones. • Wind instrument musicians must use a mask on their instrument’s bell. See the guidance for musical instruments found on Alberta Biz Connect. • Singers and wind instrument musicians should maintain a minimum of 2 metres distance from other performers at all times. • Non-singing, non-wind instrument musicians (e.g. drummer, bassist, keyboardist) may use physical barriers such as plexiglass between them if 2 metres distancing is not possible.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure 4 metres distance between the start of a performance area (e.g., stage) and the audience. Stay as far back from the front of the stage or performance area as possible. • Performers should not mingle with audience members, patrons, venue staff or volunteers before, during or after performances. • Performers and staff should remind audience members to not sing along. • Avoid sharing instruments, microphones, musical scores, and all other items. If items must be shared, they should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected between each use. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If sharing microphones between individuals is necessary, remove the grill from the body and clean and disinfect the body as well as both sides of the grill before reassembling. Consider using a new disposable microphone cover for each singer. • When setting up and tearing down, each individual should set up and tear down their own equipment. • Provide and encourage the use of hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for singers and attendees.
<p>Indoor Singing</p>	<p>Singing indoors is permitted, however because it is a higher risk activity, precautions should be taken to minimize the risk of transmission. In addition to the other guidance in this document, the following precautions should be observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that ventilation systems are operational and functioning optimally. Refer to the General Relaunch Guidance for more information on ventilation. • Singing should occur in a room with a high ceiling, where possible. Singing should be avoided in small, enclosed spaces that lack adequate ventilation, such as bedrooms, dressing rooms, hallways, or loading areas. • Limit vocal activity to 30 minutes, followed by a 10-minute break to allow for air exchange in the room. • Instructors, directors, conductors and all singers should wear masks, both when singing and when not singing. • In indoor spaces, barriers are not recommended in place of wearing masks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A solo singer/vocalist may perform without a mask if alone in a dedicated space or room (e.g., a constructed acrylic plastic room)
<p>Outdoor Singing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Including drive-in concert events</i> 	<p>In addition to the other guidance in this document, the following precautions should be observed for outdoor singing activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit vocal activity to 30 minutes, followed by a 5-minute break to allow aerosols to disperse.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is a lead vocal performer, all other performers should be behind a physical barrier such as a plexi-glass partition to separate each performer. Alternatively, all performers must maintain at least 2 metres distance and wear masks. • Refer to Guidance for drive-in events for more those events.
Choirs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to the guidance in this document, choirs, choral groups, and groups consisting primarily of singers or singers only should also observe the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rehearse in separate, smaller sub-groups wherever possible. ○ Adhere to gathering limits (e.g., indoor up to a maximum of 50 individuals; outdoor up to a maximum of 100 individuals) ○ Groups, especially large choirs, should rehearse outdoors whenever possible. • Limit the number of vocal groups in which you participate.
Singing in Care Facilities (e.g. long-term care and supportive living facilities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to the guidance in this document, long term care facilities and settings should also observe the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Group singing by residents, volunteers, and staff at the facility should not occur. ○ Vocal performance audiences should be limited only to residents, staff/volunteers, and authorized care persons or visitors. ○ Indoor and outdoor singing performances by external performers who are not residents, staff or volunteers may occur, ensuring the following precautions are taken: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limit singing to one soloist. ▪ Limit the number of non-vocal musicians and performers. ▪ Ensure a minimum distance of 4 metres between the nearest performer and the audience. ▪ Performers and staff should remind audience members to not sing along.
Singing in Schools, Camps, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to the guidance in this document, schools, classrooms, day camps, and similar settings should adhere to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Although local authorities may exempt certain children from masking during regular school activities, everyone participating in singing should wear a mask. ○ Singing activities should have a leader (such as a teacher or conductor) to ensure guidance and precautions like distancing and masking are consistently followed. ○ Performances (e.g., concerts) should adhere to the respective guidance on indoor and outdoor performances.
Recording Studios for Singing/Voice Performers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to the guidance in this document, the following additional precautions should be observed:

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage use of appointments and stagger appointment times to limit customer interaction. ○ Provide adequate time to clean and sanitize equipment and high-touch surfaces (e.g., microphone stands, door knobs). ○ Record in short segments (e.g. 30 minutes); taking breaks to allow the room to air out before beginning again. ○ Use a nylon mesh pop screen on all vocal microphones, and clean and disinfect between users. ○ Encourage performers to bring clean personal equipment (such as headphones) to the session. ○ Establish a maximum capacity limit for the studio based on space available and physical distancing. Have vocal performances conducted in an isolated room whenever possible.
<p>Music Venues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Venues that host music are expected to abide by applicable guidance documents to the extent possible, to keep staff, volunteers, performers, and patrons safe. ● Consider physical controls to support spacing of at least 4 metres to prevent direct contact between the start of the performance area (e.g., the stage) and the audience. ● Limit the length of sets involving singing and vocal activity to 30 minutes at a time, followed by a 10-minute break to allow for air exchange in the room. ● Organizers should carefully plan and consider how to manage backstage flow, set-up and tear down of equipment for the concert/event to reduce the risk of transmission. Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minimizing congregating back stage and maintaining 2 metres distance among crew and performers, unless they are in the same household or cohort. ○ Increasing cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and objects such as railings, stands, handles, light and sound consoles. ○ Using radios and headsets to reduce the need to shout or speak at a high volume backstage. ○ Designating stage and backstage entry and exit routes to ensure flow of movement in one direction. ○ Clean and disinfect the stage and any shared objects, including on stage and backstage equipment, between acts. ○ Enhance cleaning and disinfecting of all areas of the venue, including front of house, box office, technician booths, backstage or dressing rooms. ● Off stage, members of one act should be kept separate from members of other acts (e.g. they should not share dressing rooms, or mingle backstage). ● Consider adjusting publicly accessible spaces to support physical

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- distancing among vocalists, other performers, staff, volunteers, and attendees who participate in these activities. This could include:
- Establishing different points of entry and exit from high traffic areas.
 - Controlling and staggering entry into, and exit from, the venue.
 - Hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol content is highly recommended at venue entrances and exits, and throughout the venue.
 - Extending the time between door opening and performance start to allow for staggered entry.
 - Arranging or marking seating to ensure a minimum 2 metre distance between individuals who are not members of the same household.
 - Identifying areas, such as lobbies or bathrooms, where crowding and bottlenecks are common, and using volunteers, staff, or barriers to redirect people who may gather in these areas.
 - Using floor markings to encourage physical distancing if attendees are required to wait in line.
- Take steps to ensure the safety of all patrons, including:
 - Using online ticketing, and cashless payment options, wherever possible.
 - Posting signage and making verbal announcements to encourage patrons to maintain physical distance from other people at all times and follow proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
 - Encouraging safer alternatives to cheering, such as clapping and noisemakers.
 - Where possible, offering alternatives to in-person attendance, such as live streaming music, dance, and theatrical performances or offering drive-in only venues.
 - COVID-19 signage should be posted in highly visible locations:
 - “Help prevent the spread” [posters](#) are available.
 - When possible, provide necessary information in languages that are preferred by attendees.
 - Consider refund, exchange, and event cancelation or postponement policies in the event that performers become ill or proper precautions cannot be observed.
 - Follow Alberta Health Services’ [Public Health Recommendations for Environmental Cleaning of Public Facilities](#).
 - Enhance cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch/shared surfaces such as doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, faucets and taps, elevator buttons, railings.
 - Venues that offer food or beverage services should adhere to the [Guidance for Restaurants, Cafes, Pubs, and Bars](#).
 - Ensure that ventilation systems are operational and functioning optimally. Refer to the [general relaunch guidance](#) for more information on ventilation.

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Non-traditional Venues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Pop-up” or street performance events that attract crowds of onlookers outside of a controlled area should be avoided due to the difficulty of maintaining appropriate distancing and managing the size of the gathering. Consider using reservations or ticketing to avoid this.• See the Drive In Event Guidance and Outdoor Event Guidance for more information on operating in these settings.
Screening & Response Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider implementing active screening of attendees (where applicable) and staff for symptoms of fever, sore throat, cough, runny nose or difficulty breathing.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Operators may choose to use the Alberta Health Daily Checklist.○ The Alberta Health Services COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool can be used by attendees.• A rapid response plan sets out a fast-action plan for operators when an attendee shows symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19.• Staff should be familiar with and follow the operator’s rapid response plan if an attendee starts feeling symptoms during a shift. This should include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Immediately isolating the attendee from others.○ Cleaning and disinfecting all surfaces that may have come into contact with the symptomatic attendee.○ Requiring hand hygiene and masking of the symptomatic attendee.• The attendee must isolate at home as soon as possible.

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Questions and Answers for singing during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Why can a choir of up to 50 individuals sing together, but not an audience?

- An organized group, like a choir, has:
- a finite number of individuals that are known, which enables contact tracing;
- the ability to be broken into smaller groups to practice;
- a responsible person in charge to ensure that public health measures are implemented and adhered to (e.g., physical distancing, masking, symptom and exposure screening, and ensuring accurate lists of individuals); and
- a consistent group of people who regularly come together.
- Audience or informal singing, including karaoke, occurs in social settings, which are less controlled.

Why is singing in a congregation still discouraged?

- A number of outbreaks internationally and in Alberta have been linked to congregational singing.
- Singing increases the risk to vulnerable populations, like seniors, which make up a significant demographic of many faith communities and congregations.
- Limiting singing in these settings ensures that all members of the community can participate fully in worship services without being at increased risk for transmission.
- Faith-based choirs are allowed if they follow the guidance within this document, which allows the congregation to enjoy singing performance in a risk-reduced manner.
- Often, congregations have more than 50 members in attendance.
- Congregations may be less likely to have a specific person in charge available to monitor for public health measures throughout the singing components of faith-based programming.
- With more people singing together, lapses in precautions like masks worn incorrectly, or distancing not being observed, can have a significant impact on transmission in this group if an infectious person is present.

Why are there more rigorous rules for singing indoors?

- Evidence has demonstrated that outdoor settings are lower risk for transmission than indoor settings.
- As such, ensuring appropriate ventilation and other risk mitigation measures is important to protect attendees in indoor settings.
- Refer to the General Relaunch Guidance and the Indoor singing section of this document for more information.
- Indoor settings may have less space to maintain physical distance, so maintaining cohorts and facilitating smaller practice groups is important to mitigate transmission.