



Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Asa Hutchinson
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Effective: August 5, 2020
Amended August 14, 2020
Amended October 5, 2020: Allowance for outdoor emptying of water from wind instruments
Changed February 26, 2021 from Directive to Guidance
Revision converting mask requirement to guidance, effective April 1, 2021

Guidance for Community and School Sponsored Music and Theater

The Secretary of Health, in consultation with the Governor, has sole authority over all instances of quarantine, isolation, and restrictions on commerce and travel throughout Arkansas, as necessary and appropriate to control disease in the state of Arkansas as authorized by Ark. Code Ann. §20-7-109--110. **Community spread of COVID-19 remains active within the State. Therefore, the Arkansas Department of Health makes the following recommendations for how to best prevent transmission of COVID-19 at community and school sponsored music and theater events.**

This guidance provides recommendations for lifting limitations to community and school-based music practicing and performing. The medical and scientific evidence concerning these recommendations is incomplete. Accordingly, this recommendation may require revision as scientific and medical evidence evolves. We refer school district and school leaders to The Performing Arts Aerosol Study, first, second and third preliminary reports^{1,2,3} for specific guidelines on how to limit spread.

Face coverings should be worn in accordance with the [Face Coverings Guidance](#). Face coverings that completely cover the nose and mouth are recommended for everyone 2 years of age or older per [CDC guidance on face coverings](#).

School and community theater groups should follow the choral recommendations.

General Recommendations

- The more people in a group who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, the less likely it will be for a large outbreak to occur. ADH strongly recommends music and theater groups encourage all eligible participants to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as possible. Currently, vaccination is available to all those aged 16 years and older.
- Maintain minimum physical distancing of six (6) feet between participants at all times.

- Musicians, Directors and all Staff should be screened prior to any activity by asking the following questions and excluded if the answer is “yes”.
 - Have had a fever of 100.4°F in the last 2 days.
 - Have a cough, difficulty breathing, chills, muscle aches (myalgias), sore throat, headache, recent loss of taste or smell, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
 - Had contact with a person known to be infected with COVID-19 within the previous 14 days and they themselves are not fully vaccinated.
- In addition, Directors and all Staff should have temperature checked by digital thermometer prior to entry, and those whose temperature is 100.4°F or greater must be excluded.
- Face coverings (masks) that completely cover the nose and mouth are recommended for everyone 2 years of age or older (see ADH guidance [here](#)).
 - Mask fit is important. The mask should have no gaps on the sides, the nose should be covered and there should be a reasonably good fit around the edges.²
 - Musicians, singers, and all participating students should wear a face covering at all times. All participants should maintain appropriate 6-foot distancing.
 - Directors and Staff should wear a face covering. Appropriate six (6)-foot distancing should be maintained.
 - Neck gaiters, a form of mask usually made out of a stretchy and moisture-wicking fabric that can be pulled down over your head and worn over your nose and mouth as a face covering, are not recommended, unless they are made of at least 2 layers of material.⁷
 - Masks with exhalation valves as well as bandana-type masks that are not fitted around the chin also are not recommended.⁷
- Storage rooms should only be used for storage of personal items. Physical distancing of six (6) feet should be maintained in the storage rooms.
- Individual practice participants should use their own equipment if possible. School instruments may be assigned to a single student.
- Participants should arrive dressed for rehearsal with their equipment and water for their personal hydration. Participants should leave as soon as the rehearsals are complete. Directors and staff may meet before and after rehearsals to appropriately plan. Appropriate distance should be maintained.
- An alcohol-based hand sanitizer or adequate handwashing facilities should be provided for use by all attendees.
- Equipment, restrooms, storage rooms, water fountains and other high touch surfaces should be sanitized frequently during each event and between each use. For a list of cleaning products that will eliminate the COVID-19 virus, visit <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>.
- Avoid personal contact at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, high-fives, hand shaking, and fist bumping.
- For performances, competitions, and other music events held in a facility, the facility hosting the event should follow the current guidance for [Large Outdoor Venues](#) or [Large Indoor Venues](#). Spectators are covered under these guidance documents.
- Concession Stands may operate but should follow all applicable sections of the guidance on [Restaurant Dine-in Operations](#).
- Group size should be sufficiently limited to maintain six (6) feet between each person, including staff.
- Practice and performance is allowed for participants of any age. However, participants should consider refraining if:

- They are 65 years of age or older.
- They have underlying health conditions including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, severe obesity, asthma or weakened immunity
- Woodwinds and Brass should use a mask while playing which includes a small straight slit in a surgical style mask.² Do not use the woodwind/brass mask with a slit outside of rehearsal or performance.² Flutists and piccoloists can slide the instrument in the side of the mask.
- Bell covers are recommended as "masks" for wind instruments. Bell covers can be made of multi-layered high denier nylon material and provide a barrier for aerosols.^{1,2,6}
- Choral musicians should be arranged in straight formations rather than curved and keep their face coverings on at all times.
- Theater should follow the choral requirements except alignment of performers does not have to be in a straight formation.
- Practice and performance including woodwind and brass instruments and choirs are preferred to be held outdoors at this time.
 - Outdoor practicing and playing should cease after 30 minutes for approximately five minutes to allow aerosols to disperse.
 - Swabbing and removal of water from wind instruments should use a disposable product (such as paper towels or puppy pad) which is placed in a plastic bag and thrown away. If, while outdoors, it is not possible to use a disposable absorbent product, spit valves should only be emptied if twelve (12) feet away from others *and* emptied in an area where others will not be walking.
 - Masks may be removed when outdoors while actively marching and the mask is inhibitory to practice and performing. Distancing of six (6) feet should be maintained at all times.
- Practice and performance may be held indoors with the following recommendations:
 - A six (6)-foot by six (6)-foot area maintained around all.
 - Teachers are recommended to use a portable amplifier to keep their voices at a low conversational volume.
 - Swabbing and removal of water from wind instruments should use a disposable product (such as paper towels or puppy pad) which is placed in a plastic bag and thrown away.
 - Indoor rehearsal and playing times should be limited to 30 minutes, with a minimum of 20-minute break before that room is used again. A minimum of one air exchange (which 20 minutes will generally achieve) prior to the next use of the room should be required, with three air exchanges preferable.
 - HEPA filters appropriate for the size of the room are strongly recommended.
- This guidance will continue to be updated as new information is released and it becomes necessary.

References:

1. [Performing Arts Aerosol Study Preliminary Report Round One](#)
2. [Performing Arts Aerosol Study Preliminary Report Round Two](#)
3. [Performing Arts Aerosol Study Preliminary Report Round Three](#)
4. [Singing demonstration with mask](#)
5. [Face mask with flap for wind instrument](#)
6. [Bell covers](#)
7. [Facemask Efficacy Study](#)