Tip Sheet: Safer Holiday Celebrations During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Updated March 19, 2021

This Tip Sheet was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) for local use. It will be posted at sfcdcp.org/safersocial.

Summary of Changes since the 1/6/2021 Version

- As COVID-19 transmission decreases, our economy will progressively re-open and permitted activities will expand. Please refer to the updated Business Capacity and Activities Table for “Gatherings” restrictions (www.sfcdcp.org/covid19).
- COVID-19 vaccines are available that are highly effective at preventing severe disease, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. We strongly encourage all persons to get vaccinated (find out how at www.sf.gov/covidvax).
- If you have received the COVID-19 vaccine, please read more about safer social interactions at www.sfcdcp.org/lifeaftervaccine and about whether you need to quarantine at www.sfcdcp.org/quarantineaftervaccination.

AUDIENCE: Members of the general public who celebrate holidays.

BACKGROUND: Individuals, families of various faiths and communities have long-standing and honored traditions for different holidays. Due to the communal nature of many holiday activities, the City of San Francisco wants to support residents in celebrating safer holidays in order to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 [see more at sfcdcp.org/safersocial]. This tips sheet provides information to help guide you to make informed choices.

Safer Holiday Celebrations During COVID-19 Pandemic

- Follow best practices on safe holiday celebrations outlined in the CDC’s Holiday Tips and CDPH guidelines at Holidays and COVID-19.
- Remember outdoors is much safer. The risk of spreading COVID-19 is much higher indoors.
- Avoid unauthorized street fairs, carnivals, festivals, or block parties. You can recognize authorized events by looking for postings of permits and Health & Safety Plans. Even for authorized events, social distancing and mask wearing rules apply.
- Mixing between gatherings. If there are several gatherings happening at once in an area, moving from group to group greatly increases the risk of infection.
- Childcare/Out of School Time Programs: Childcare and Out of School Time programs can host holiday-themed activities while youth are in their regularly scheduled programming with their stable cohort of 14 youth and 2 adults. Please check the current Childcare Guidance and Out of School Time guidance here: http://www.sfcdcp.org/covidschoolschildcare
Always Take Personal Protective Measures

Regardless of how you choose to celebrate a holiday season, it is important to keep the following in mind:

- **Check updated Business Capacity and Activities Table** for “Gatherings” restrictions (www.sfcdcp.org/covid19).
- **Face Coverings**: Wear a cloth face covering that securely covers nose and mouth to prevent disease spread when outside your home and around others that are not part of your household.
- **Practice Physical Distancing**: Stay at least 6 feet away (three or more adult steps) from all other people who are not part of your own household, especially when talking, eating, or drinking.
- **Outdoors is much safer**: Avoid confined spaces, especially indoors.
- **Good Hygiene**: Wash or sanitize your hands often. Clean high touch items regularly.
- **Minimize Mixing**: Strictly limit mixing between different households.
- **Stay Home If You Are Sick or You are in a High-Risk Group**: If you are sick, or you have been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or has symptoms of COVID-19 please get tested and stay home and away from others. People at higher risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 (such as older adults, people with chronic medical conditions) are strongly urged to stay home.

**Holiday Travel**

The safest way to celebrate holidays is to spend time with people in the same household or to celebrate virtually. Traveling increases the chance of getting and spreading COVID-19. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others.

If you must travel, be informed of the risks involved. Use information from the following webpages to decide whether to travel:

- **San Francisco: COVID Travel Advisory** including when to quarantine upon return from travel or after visitors have stayed with you
- **San Francisco: Guidance on Travel During the COVID-19 Pandemic** including tips for staying at lodging facilities
- **CDC Know Your Travel Risk**
- **CDC Know When to Delay Your Travel to Avoid Spreading COVID-19**
- If you have received the COVID-19 vaccine, please read more about whether you need to quarantine at www.sfcdcp.org/quarantineaftervaccination

**Religious & Ceremonial Gatherings for Holidays**

Check the **Business Capacity and Activities Table (BCAT) for current restrictions.**

Until more of us are vaccinated, the safest way to attend religious and cultural gatherings for holidays is to **celebrate virtually**. If you do decide to attend an outdoor or indoor religious ceremony, please **assess the risk** and follow the rules outlined in **the Gathering Document**.
Holiday Attractions: Photo events, Toy, Clothing, & Food Drives or Giveaways

If you are considering photo opportunities such as visiting Santa or the Easter Bunny in a setting like a mall or smaller setting, please consider the following:

- Face coverings over the mouth and nose are required for everyone 2 years of age or older, including the staff. If a child is unable to properly wear a face covering over the nose and mouth, the child should not participate in this activity.
  - Although it may be tempting to remove face coverings when taking a photo, face coverings must stay on at all times.
- Remain at least six feet apart from other visitors and staff.
- Plan for your visit; call ahead or make an appointment online to avoid crowding at the site.
- Arrive for your scheduled appointment and exit the area after your allotted visiting time; avoid unnecessary lingering.
- When deciding whether to attend a photo session indoors, consider the risk of being indoors or in enclosed spaces during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

If your organization is planning to host a toy, clothing, or food collection drive or giveaway to help individuals and families in need, you will need to organize your event differently to keep our community safe.

- All collection drives and giveaways should be hosted outdoors.
- Do not serve food or drinks to participants.
- If a line forms, ensure staff and attendees are 6 feet apart.
- Ensure people are wearing masks at all times.
- Discourage individuals and families from congregating after picking up their gifts. This can be done with gentle reminders to “go home and get cozy!”
- Families or individuals coming to pick up should be appointment-only, scheduling no more than 1 individual or family at a time to come and pick up their gifts or goods to avoid crowding.

Resources

- San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH)
  - sfcdcp.org/covid19
  - CA Notify –another way to stop the spread
  - sf.gov/covid-19-vaccine-san-francisco
  - http://www.sfcdcp.org/travel
  - www.sfcdcp.org/safersocial

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
  - Holiday celebrations and gatherings
  - Hosting Gatherings or Cook-Outs
  - When and how to wash your hands