



Serving Safely: Backpack Friends' Volunteer and Safety Protocols During Covid-19

As Backpack Friends begins to resume and/or increase our level of activities, we are offering the following considerations to help protect individuals and groups and slow the spread of COVID-19.

These considerations are meant to supplement—**not replace**—any state or local safety laws, rules, and regulations. Backpack Friends is committed to continually assess and address any changes in risk of exposure, and pivot in our practice to protect those in the community and the communities we serve. Our aim is to continually assess, based on current conditions, how to modify our operations and programming to both advance our mission and protect our staff and clients.

Promoting Healthy Behaviors that Reduce Spread of COVID-19

Backpack Friends will encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19. The following behaviors, adapted from the CDC, include:

Staying Home when Appropriate

- Educate and encourage volunteers to stay at home if they are experiencing symptoms, have been exposed to someone with coronavirus, have tested positive for COVID-19, or are in an at-risk demographic.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- Encourage frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and increase monitoring to ensure adherence.
- If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used; rub hands together until dry.
- Encourage volunteers to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

- Encourage alternate forms of greeting besides handshakes, hugs, and kissing.



Masks

- Encourage the use of masks among staff and volunteers, as feasible. Masks are **most** essential in times when social distancing is difficult. Education should be provided to all staff and volunteers on proper use, removal, and washing of masks.
 - Note: Masks should **not** be placed on:
 - Babies or children younger than 2 years old
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing
 - Anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance
 - Masks are meant to protect other people in case the wearer may have the virus and not know it. Masks are not meant to be a substitute for personal protective equipment such as surgical masks, respirators, or other medical personal protective equipment.
 - Encourage volunteers and others coming to our facility or attending events to bring and use masks.

Adequate Supplies

- Ensure adequate supplies at the facility check-in station. Supplies include soap, water, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol, paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, masks (as feasible), and no-touch trash cans.

Cleaning and Disinfection

- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g., door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains, grab bars, hand railings) at least daily or between use as much as possible.**
- Clean and disinfect shared objects (e.g., microphones, office equipment, payment devices) between each use.
- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning materials including storing products securely away from children and ensuring there is adequate ventilation when using these products.
- Use EPA-approved disinfectants. Always read and follow label instructions for each product.



Ventilation

- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms).

Shared Objects

- Discourage people from sharing items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect in between use, such as food containers, tools, equipment, or supplies.
- Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials to the extent possible; otherwise, limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of people at a time and clean and disinfect between use.

Maintaining Healthy Operations

Backpack Friends will implement strategies to maintain healthy operations.

Regulatory Awareness

- Be aware of local or state regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings to determine if events can be held.

Participation in Community Response Efforts

- Consider participating with local authorities in broader COVID-19 community response efforts (e.g., sitting on community response committees) and collaborating with other CBOs to coordinate activities or limit duplication of efforts, where possible.
- Inform local authorities about areas of concern or previously unknown issues as well as community or organizational resources that might be helpful in responding to changing circumstances in the community.

Flexible and Responsive Operations and Communication Plans



- Define roles, responsibilities, and decision-making protocols so that the organization can adjust operations, services, and programming in response to changing community conditions.
- Develop a communication plan to alert staff and volunteers to changes in operations and ensure that contact information is up to date.
- Develop information-sharing systems with partners, including local health officials.

Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact

- Designate a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All staff and stakeholders should know who this person is and how to contact them.

Protections for Staff and Others who are at Higher Risk of Severe Illness from COVID-19

- Offer options that limit exposure risk (e.g., telework, modified job responsibilities) for staff (including older adults and people of all ages with certain underlying medical conditions).
- As feasible, offer options that limit the COVID-19 exposure risk (e.g., virtual attendance) for volunteers. Replace in-person meetings with video- or tele-conference calls whenever possible.
- Limit event attendance to staff and attendees who live in the local geographic area (e.g., community, city, town, county) to reduce risk of spread from areas with higher levels of COVID-19.

Social Distancing and Modifying Layouts

- Reconfigure office spaces, waiting or meeting rooms, break rooms, conference rooms, or similar areas to allow for at least 6 feet between people.



- In situations where people will form lines, encourage people to stay at least 6 feet apart by providing [signs](#) or other visual cues such as tape or chalk marks.
- Limit attendance at events to allow for [social distancing](#), or host smaller events in larger rooms.
- Prioritize outdoor activities where attendees can remain at least 6 feet from others not living in their household.
- When distributing items like food or supplies, consider using drive-up distribution so that people can maintain distance from each other and to eliminate the need to touch doorknobs and other items and surfaces in a facility.

Meetings, Gatherings, and Performances

- Pursue virtual group events, gatherings, or meetings, if possible, and promote social distancing of at least 6 feet between people if in-person events are held. Limit group size to the extent possible
- Prioritize outdoor activities where attendees can remain at least 6 feet from others not living in their household.
- When planning events, consult CDC's Considerations for Gatherings and Community Events.
- Limit any nonessential visitors, spectators, and volunteers at events.
- Limit activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible – especially with individuals not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).

- **Childcare and Youth Programming**

- If providing a nursery or childcare during meetings or events, refer to CDC's information on preventing the spread of COVID-19 in childcare settings.
- If holding summer day camps, refer to CDC's information on youth and summer camps.

Staggered Scheduling

- Stagger arrival times or locations for meetings and events.
- Use flexible worksites (e.g., telework) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts) to help establish policies and practices for social distancing of at least 6 feet between employees, volunteers, and others.

Support Coping and Resilience

- Promote volunteers' ability to eat healthy foods, exercise, get enough sleep, and find time to unwind.
- Encourage employees and others to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.
- Communicate information for the national distress hotline: 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUsto 66746; the National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224; and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

