

## Considerations and Guidance on Library Programming Building Space, Physical Distancing, Masks and Ventilation

Before returning to in-person programming, the Maine State Library urges libraries to consider multiple factors before making final decisions. Guidance on holding in-person library programming in Maine is based on CDC, Maine Executive orders and state and federal safety organizations.

### State of Maine Guidelines

In Maine's Opening Phases, we are in Phase 3 (July and August) and a Phase 4 timeline has yet to be determined by the Governor. Read all [Executive Orders](#).

#### Building/Physical Space:

Guidance from the Governor's most recent [Executive Order dated August 1, 2020](#) continues to set limits to 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors **and fewer if the space cannot accommodate 5 people per 1,000 feet** of visitor-accessible space.

**Outdoor Gatherings:** The limit on the number of persons for outdoor gatherings is 5 people per 1,000 sq. ft of occupiable outdoor space or not more than 100 persons **whichever is less**.

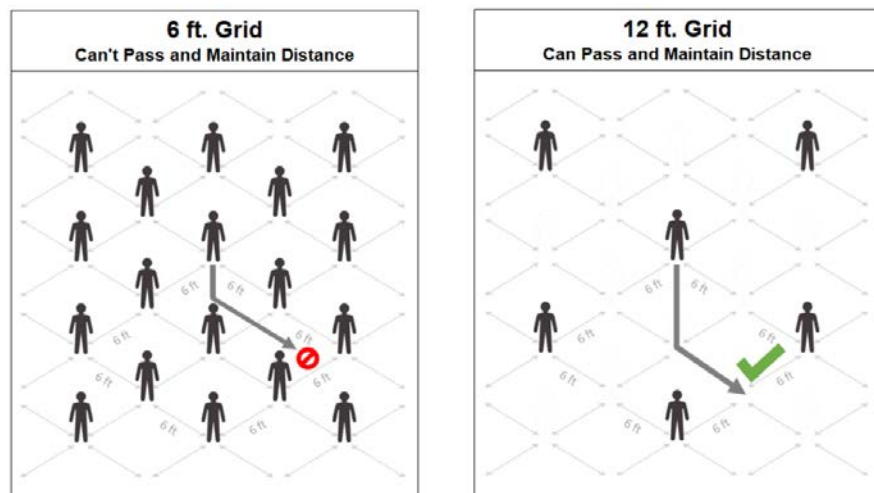
**Indoor Gatherings:** The limit on the number of persons for indoor gatherings **remains at 50 persons and fewer if the space cannot accommodate 5 people per 1,000 sq. ft.** feet of visitor-accessible space.

Before scheduling programming, measure space and determine what programming, if any, can be held safely and in compliance with the 6 foot physical distancing minimum. Maintaining physical distancing of **6 feet and wearing face coverings are the primary tools to avoid transmission of respiratory droplets between individuals**. If a space cannot accommodate the gathering limit without complying with the six-foot distancing requirement, attendance must be limited to allow for such compliance or program should not be held.

Use tools so you have the square footage of spaces in your library.

How big is 1,000 square feet? [Square footage calculator](#)

[Colorado Social distancing space calculator](#). In order to maintain at least 6 feet of separation from each other when taking into account the unpredictable dynamics of each person's movement, this calculator uses a 12-foot grid distribution. [Calculator by Calconic](#).



While 5 visitors per 1,000 square feet is the maximum number at this time, libraries should consider the following factors that can increase transmission risk in their building and may decide to set a lower capacity limit, such as 3 per 1,000 square feet, if present:

- Poor ventilation, i.e. little outside air circulating in (more on ventilation below)
- Confined spaces that make physical distancing difficult

For reference and additional information, this is from Maine DOE/CDC for schools:

[Maine DOE Framework for Returning to Classroom Instruction: Physical Distancing and Facilities](#)

Six requirements must be met before schools may offer in-person classes. One requirement is Physical Distancing and Facilities:

**“Adequate ventilation is required** for classrooms, with schools having flexibility in implementation such as using properly working ventilation systems or outdoor air exchange using fans in open windows or doors. Groups in any one area, room, or classroom must not exceed the Governor’s gathering size limits.”

The Maine DECD checklist for museums features [Special Considerations for Children’s Programming](#) that will be helpful for libraries.

There are numerous agencies and organizations presenting information about COVID, airflow and ventilation. As we approach fall and winter, libraries should assess the ventilation and possible impact on staff and patrons in the building. We have assembled a list of resources to allow you to take a deeper dive in environmental controls, HVAC and COVID.

[COVID-19 Environmental Controls Resources](#) – Prepared by MSL Library development staff. Resources are from CDC, EPA, ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-conditioning Engineers and OSHA.

## Federal CDC Guidelines

Community, Work & School: [Considerations for Events and Gatherings](#)

Youth librarians may glean further insight into best practices by looking CDC [Guidance for childcare Programs](#).

This [CDC Planner](#) can help you think through questions you may or may not be thinking about.

## Masks and Face Coverings

The Governor has repealed previous Exec Orders regarding face coverings for children.

“Exceptions to Face Coverings for Children. The exceptions provided in section V.B. of Executive Order 49 FY 19/20 for "children under age 2" and "a child in a child-care setting" **are repealed and replaced by the following:**

"Face coverings are **recommended** for children ages 2 to 4 unless deemed developmentally inappropriate. Face coverings are **required** for all children age 5 and older in public settings, including school and child care settings."

- By definition, public libraries are [public settings](#).
- [Cloth face coverings are not a replacement](#) for adhering to social distancing protocols.

[Keep it Maine](#): Downloadable posters for face coverings, hand washing, physical distancing.



Physical distancing and size of space, face coverings, audience/participants and length of programs should all be examined closely.

1. Is your children's room large enough to hold 5 kids? (1000 sq. ft. of occupiable space)
2. Is your library meeting space large enough to hold the number of people for the program you want to do?
3. Will attendees be older and likely to have underlying conditions?
4. Is teen space large enough for teens to socially distance?
5. Will local governance and the community support face coverings requirements?

The realities of room size currently used for programming, children's rooms for storytimes in Maine libraries is a huge obstacle. Fifty (50) may be the magic indoor number but the 6 foot physical distancing must also be observed.

**Example:**

A library would like to start hosting storytimes at the library again. According to Maine's current guidance, gatherings of up to 50 people indoors are allowed right now but only if 6 foot physical distancing is met. Storytime at the library would be in the [CDC's "more risk" category](#). Using the room space calculator, if you have a room that measures 400 square (approximately 20 x 20 ft. space) and for everyone to be 6 feet apart, you can only allow 2 people in the space at once, including yourself.

Please make plans accordingly, which may include only allowing 1 family unit at a time and no singing!