sonoma county
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION

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# Sonoma County Public Health Recommendations for Safely Holding Public Meetings

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Each local government agency is authorized to determine whether to hold public meetings in person, online (teleconferencing only), or via a combination of methods. The following are recommendations from Sonoma County Public Health to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission during a public meeting of a legislative body held in compliance with Government Code section 54953(e):

1. Online meetings (teleconferencing meetings) are strongly recommended as those meetings present the lowest risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

2. If a local agency determines to hold in-person meetings, offering the public the opportunity to attend via a call-in option or an internet-based service option is recommended, when possible, to give those at higher risk of and/or higher concern about COVID-19 an alternative to participating in person.

3. If a local agency holds in person meetings, a written safety protocol should be developed and followed. It is recommended that the protocol require social distancing – i.e., six feet of separation between attendees – and face masking of all attendees in compliance with Order of the Health Officer of the County of Sonoma C19-25.

4. If a local agency holds in person meetings, seating arrangements should allow for staff and members of the public to easily maintain at least six-foot distance from one another at all practicable times.

5. Consider holding public meetings outdoors. Increasing scientific consensus is that outdoor airflow reduces the risk of COVID-19 transmission compared to indoor spaces. Hosting events outdoors also may make it easier to space staff and members of the public at least six feet apart.

6. Current evidence is unclear as to the added benefit of temperature checks in addition to symptom checks. We encourage focus on symptom checks as they may screen out individuals with symptoms but no fever and help reinforce the message to not go out in public if you are not feeling well.

7. Consider a voluntary attendance sheet with names and contact information to assist in contact tracing of any cases linked to a public meeting.

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Health Officer of the County of Sonoma