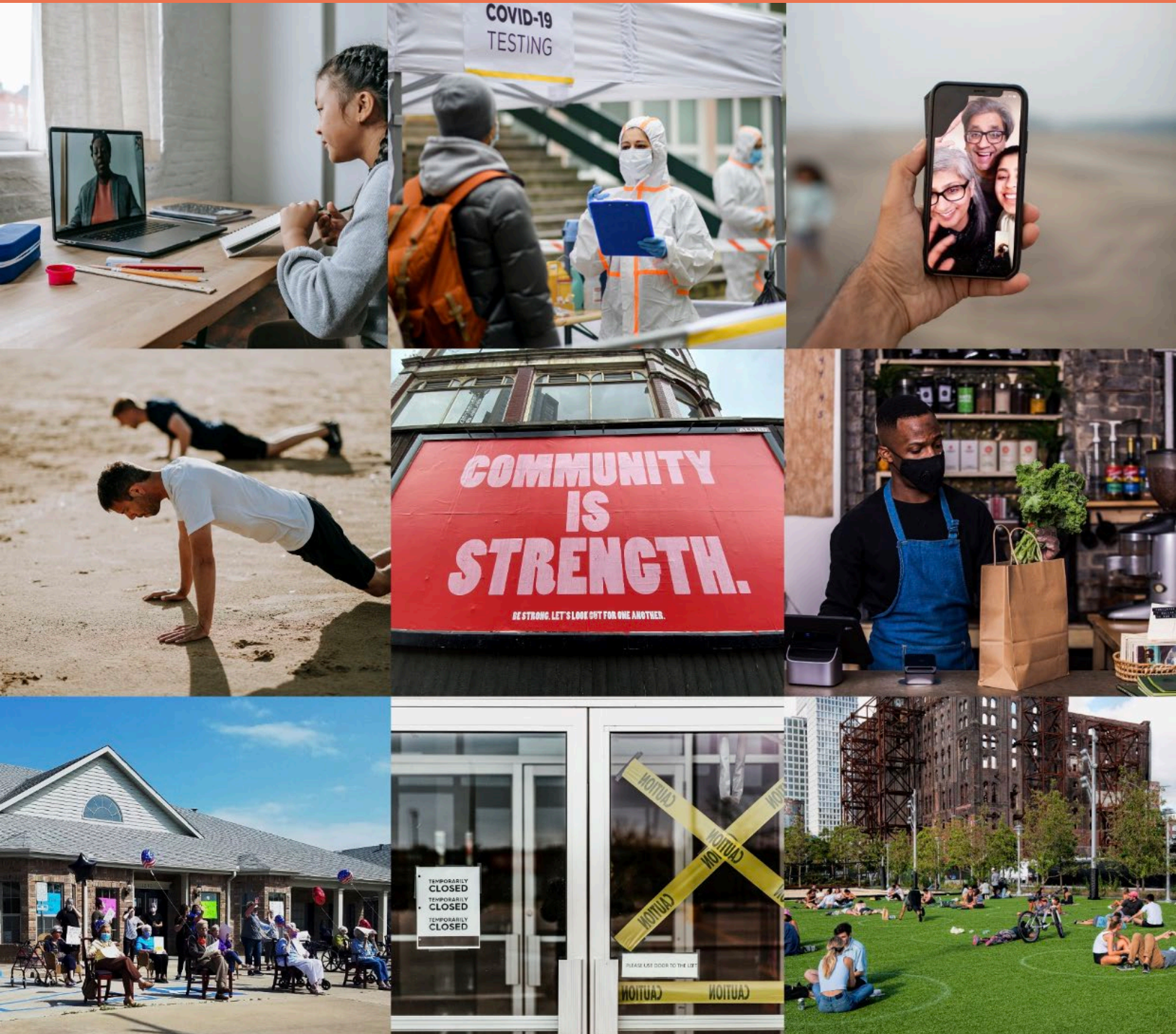


ACTIVE IOWA: Program Manual of Implementation COVID-19 Addendum



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the Addendum

This addendum to Active Iowa will provide guidance on conducting physical activity programs and offering safe in-person physical activity options during an infectious disease outbreak. This addendum complements the Active Iowa Manual of Implementation to guide Active Iowa programs while our communities navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. The information presented in this document describes the impact of COVID-19 on our communities, as well as key considerations for in-person activities that protect the safety of all participants. Although this addendum focuses on the COVID-19 pandemic, the guidelines provided can help protect people from other infectious diseases, such as the flu, seasonal cold, or any other upcoming diseases that may arise over time.



Flexibility & Safety During COVID-19

Due to the variable nature of COVID-19, it is important to be flexible and to prioritize safety. This document may be updated over time, and was last updated September 2023, to reflect CDC guidance as the COVID-19 situation continues to unfold. When in doubt, or if the information in this guide conflicts with CDC guidance, adhere to the most recent CDC recommendations. [Click on this sentence to view the CDC's COVID-19 landing page.](#)

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THE OVERALL IMPACT OF COVID-19

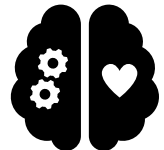
Impact of COVID-19 on Rural Communities

The COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis that has impacted and changed our lives in many ways—many of which we have never had to endure before. Along with this new recognition of public health’s role in our well-being, the disparities micropolitan Americans face in public health services and infrastructure have come to light. Micropolitan communities have unique characteristics that have placed residents at increased risk for severe morbidity and mortality associated with COVID-19.¹ For example, some more rural communities lack sufficient access to health care facilities that have intensive care capabilities, while also facing lower rates of health insurance coverage. Many communities have higher rates of residents living with comorbidities and disabilities, and higher rates of residents over 65 years old.¹ During the pandemic, micropolitan residents across the country have faced added challenges from the closure of nearby healthcare facilities, which can decrease access to healthcare and healthcare services in more rural communities.¹ For these reasons and more, many rural and micropolitan areas have been hit harder by COVID-19 than other more urban areas.²

Impact of COVID-19 on Public Health

Increasing Focus on Mental Health

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, more people are experiencing mental health crises.³ People with pre-existing psychological symptoms may have found their mental health conditions worsening. Those who did not experience serious mental illness before the pandemic may have started to feel overwhelmed from social distancing, changing working environments, quarantine, and isolation.⁴ Furthermore, counseling services and clinic accessibility for mental health support were already limited before the pandemic in many rural areas. Rising mental health needs during COVID-19 only put more strain on an already strained system. To help reduce this strain, an emphasis on self-care strategies, such as connecting safely with others, making time to unwind, and taking care of your body have been suggested.⁴ These self-care, or healthy coping strategies, can be beneficial to care for both mental and physical health needs. Physical activity is an especially important coping strategy. Maintaining or improving physical activity can lessen the symptoms of depression and anxiety while also replacing negative thoughts and emotions with a more positive mindset and feedback system. Physical activity can also increase confidence due to bodily changes from exercise, such as weight loss and toned muscles.⁵ Healthy coping strategies can be especially helpful in rural areas, where access to mental health care is scarce.⁶ [Click this sentence to visit a page on healthy coping during the pandemic.](#)



Rebuilding Social Infrastructures and Social Connections

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to physically distance ourselves from each other, but now is the time to rebuild the social infrastructure and social connections that we once had and make them stronger. Social infrastructures are the physical places that allow bonds to develop, such as parks, schools, libraries, and other public facilities.⁷ Social connections are the relationships we have with friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, and anyone around us who may help support our well-being. As vaccination rates increase alongside preventative measures, there is a greater opportunity to begin rebuilding social infrastructure that may have been weakened earlier in the pandemic. It is important that efforts continue to follow current CDC guidelines to ensure safety of participants.



Changing Physical Activity Habits

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought times of uncertainty, grief, and stress, and coping with those emotions looks different for everyone. Some people coped by incorporating more physical activity, but most experienced less inclination to engage in physical activity than before the pandemic. Staying physically active is one of the best ways to keep your mind and body healthy. Physically active individuals are more likely to have a strong immune system that will lessen the risk and intensity of infection.⁸ In many areas, people can visit parks, trails, and open spaces as a physically distant way to relieve stress, get some fresh air, and stay active.



PARTICIPANT SAFETY

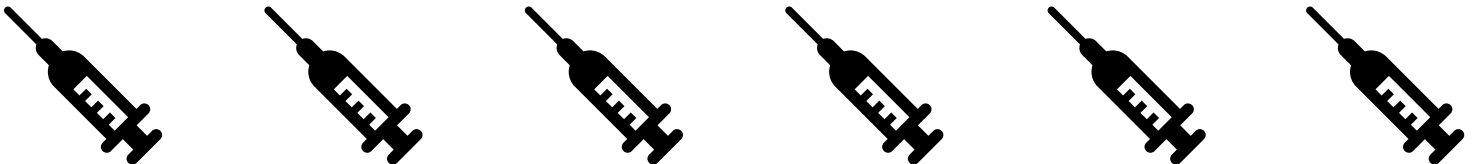
COVID-19 Safety Mitigations

The purpose of Active Iowa is to encourage and support healthy living through physical activity. Therefore, we must ensure that participants of any Active Iowa program are safe. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccination is key to personal safety, community resilience, and a return to in-person programming opportunities. The following guidelines are based on the most recent CDC guidelines available at the time of addendum creation (September 2023). Please stay up to date with the CDC and/or your local public health officials to ensure your programming is following the latest safety protocols to keep your participants and community safe.

COVID-19 Vaccination

Vaccine Effectiveness^{9, 10}

- All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States are effective at protecting against COVID-19.
- The COVID-19 vaccines create more effective and longer-lasting immunity than natural immunity obtained through infection.
- Vaccination is an important tool to help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- COVID-19 vaccination helps protect people from getting sick.
- Though some people may still get sick, the risk of severe illness and hospitalization is greatly reduced.
- To receive the most protection, people should receive all recommended doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, varying in which brand is chosen, including booster doses.
- Some people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 will still get sick because no vaccine is 100% effective. Experts continue to monitor and evaluate how often this occurs, how severe their illness is, and how likely a vaccinated person is to spread COVID-19 to others.
- It is recommended that you get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you are able.



No vaccine is 100% effective, but the general benefits of the available COVID-19 vaccines include...

- Protecting yourself from COVID-19.
- Protecting yourself from spreading COVID-19 to others, especially those who are unable to get vaccinated.
- Reducing the length and severity of illness if you do get COVID-19.
- Serving as an important tool to stop the pandemic, including reducing the spread and development of virus variants.

[Find COVID-19 vaccination sites in your Iowa community](#)



Please refer to CDC guidelines for best practices in determining when someone is fully vaccinated and additional recommendations for keeping yourself and your community safe.



Staying up-to-date:

- Changing guidelines for best practices may seem confusing. This confusion is normal and understandable. As health officials learn more about the virus and as the situation changes, recommendations may change to ensure people are kept as healthy as possible.
- Frequently check the [CDC website](#) to stay up-to-date on the most recent recommendations to reduce and prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Following the recommendations for unvaccinated individuals may also help reduce the spread of COVID-19
- [For more information on staying up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccines, click here.](#)

Other recommendations to reduce the spread of COVID-19, as COVID-19 continues to negatively impact communities, it is important to continue following CDC guidelines for limiting the spread of COVID-19 (this is particularly important for unvaccinated individuals):

- Wear a mask
- Stay 6 feet away from others
- Wash hands with soap often for at least 20 seconds. (If you don't have soap, use hand sanitizer that is 60% or more alcohol)
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces
- Monitor health daily (be alert for symptoms or changes in your health)
- Get vaccinated

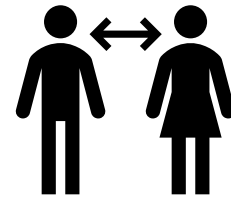
SAFE ACTIVITY FACILITATION

Leading Safe Activities

When planning safe activities, information such as transmission rates in your area and vaccination status of your participants can help inform your planning decisions. If transmission rates are high in your community, follow the steps below to host safe activities.

Planning & Modification Guide

- Highly encourage mask wearing among participants
- Prioritize space that allows for social distancing
- Require participants to sign in
- Increase sanitation regimen
- Refer to CDC guidelines before planning events, as guidelines are updated frequently as COVID-19 circumstances change
- Host programming outdoors where risk of transmission is lower
- Use fans and open windows for indoor sessions to improve air ventilation
- Provide COVID-19 related resources to individuals after activities to ensure awareness of preventative measures and health safety



Additional Safety Consideration

- Social distancing
 - Avoid crowded areas and stay at least 6 feet away from others¹¹
- Sanitation
 - Wash your hands often, with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - If soap and water aren't available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol¹²
- Masks
 - Wearing a properly fitted mask can help prevent you from breathing in the COVID-19 virus or spreading the virus to others^{11, 13}
- Ventilation
 - Improving ventilation and filtration indoors can help protect you from COVID-19 and minimize the spread of COVID-19¹¹
 - Whenever possible, leading activities outside can help¹¹
- Choosing safer activities
 - Whenever possible, lead activities outdoors
 - Focus on activities that are non-contact and allow people to spread out

Signage

When hosting physical activities, signage is important to make sure everyone can keep themselves safe. Signs can help direct traffic and give helpful safety reminders. Signs can also be used to show your support for vaccinations and encourage your community to get vaccinated. Check out some examples in Appendix 1.

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APPENDIX 1

Physical Activity Signage

For outdoor signage options, see the Outdoor Social Distancing Messaging Implementation Guide [linked here](#).

See below for several signage options promoting masking. [Click on this sentence to download a .zip folder with these signage options.](#)

PLEASE KEEP YOUR MASK ON

BE STRONGER TOGETHER BY STAYING APART

PLEASE KEEP MASKS ON

#StopTheSpread
How to use a mask?
Source: World Health Organization

Before Putting on a Mask:
 Clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

While Wearing a Mask:

1. **Cover your mouth and nose.** Make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask.
2. **Avoid touching the mask.** If you do, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
3. **Replace the mask with a new one as soon as it is damp. Do not re-use single-use masks.**

To dispose of the mask:

1. Remove the mask from behind using the strings. **Do not touch the front of the mask.**
2. Discard the mask **immediately** in a closed bin.
3. Clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

Let's keep Active Iowa CLEAN, SAFE & GERM-FREE!

- Keep a safe distance from each other at all times.
- Do not come to class if you are not feeling well.
- Wash your hands frequently, and scrub with soap for at least 20 seconds.

DO YOUR PART TO #STOPHESPREAD

WEAR A MASK TO KEEP YOURSELF AND OTHERS SAFE

Your Safety is our Priority!

See below for several signage options promoting vaccination. [Click on this sentence to download a .zip folder with these signage options.](#)

PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR COMMUNITY



**STAY
UP-TO-DATE
ON
COVID-19
VACCINATIONS**

**Do your part to help keep
Active Iowa safe!**



Do your part to help keep Active Iowa safe!

**GET YOUR
FLU VACCINE
TODAY!**



Active Iowa



**Don't let getting sick
slow you down!**



**GET
VACCINATED
FOR
COVID-19
AND
THE FLU**

**Do your part to keep
Active Iowa safe!**

