



ORDER OF THE HEALTH OFFICER OF THE COUNTY OF CONTRA COSTA
AMENDMENTS TO THE SOCIAL DISTANCING ORDER TO AUTHORIZE
SPECIFIED SOCIAL GATHERINGS OF UP TO THREE HOUSEHOLDS AND A
MAXIMUM OF 25 PERSONS AND ELIMINATE THE PREVIOUS AUTHORIZATION
FOR GATHERINGS OF SOCIAL BUBBLES

ORDER NO. HO-COVID19-33

DATE OF ORDER: OCTOBER 27, 2020

Summary of the Order

This Order of the County of Contra Costa Health Officer modifies previous restrictions on private social gatherings that were imposed in response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic by authorizing specified social gatherings of up to three households and a maximum of 25 persons, and eliminating the previous authorization for gatherings of Social Bubbles.

Based on our current understanding of transmission of the COVID-19 virus, local case investigations, and knowledge gained from case investigations and outbreaks across the region and the state, there is a heightened concern about settings where people from multiple households gather. Gatherings where people are together for a prolonged period of time, especially indoors, and settings where people remove their masks to eat and drink, appear to pose the highest risk for transmission at this time. In a scientific brief issued on July 9, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) advises that based on what is currently known, transmission of COVID-19 is primarily occurring when people are in close proximity to each other for prolonged periods of time. While the virus appears to spread primarily through contact and respiratory droplets, WHO reports that airborne transmission may also be occurring, particularly in indoor settings with poor ventilation, via aerosols exhaled by infected persons. For the above reasons, to slow the spread of COVID-19, gatherings of persons have been prohibited under Health Officer Order No. HO-COVID19-28 (the "Prior Order") unless a specific exception applies.

On October 9, 2020, the State of California issued a revised guidance document pertaining to private gatherings (see <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/CDPH-Guidance-for-the-Prevention-of-COVID-19-Transmission-for-Gatherings-10-09.aspx>) The guidance document, entitled "Guidance for Private Gatherings" (the "State Gathering Guidance") provides that social situations that bring together people from different households at



the same time in a single space or place are prohibited if they include more than three households. The State Gathering Guidance also sets forth requirements that apply to private gatherings of three households or less. It is necessary at this time to amend the Prior Order to conform to the State Gathering Guidance by eliminating an exception that allowed certain types of gatherings notwithstanding the number of households participating.

At the same time, there has been an improvement in COVID-19 testing positivity rates in Contra Costa County. At the time of issuance of the Prior Order on September 14, 2020, the seven-day average of new positive tests for COVID-19 in the County was 3.7 percent, and the County was in the most restrictive tier (widespread) of the State's Blueprint for a Safer Economy. As of October 17, 2020, the testing positivity rate was 1.9 percent, and the County has moved into the moderate tier. The daily case rate in Contra Costa County has also declined, from 7.5 per 100,000 persons on September 14, 2020, to 4.2 per 100,000 persons as of October 17, 2020. This progress in combatting the spread of COVID-19 justifies easing local restrictions on the number and relationship of persons who may participate in a private gathering.

For the above reasons, this Order modifies the Prior Order to do the following:

- Eliminate the Social Bubble exception to the gathering prohibition.
- Create a new exception to the gathering prohibition to allow private social gatherings of up to 25 persons, provided that the gatherings conform to the State Gathering Guidance.

UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE SECTIONS 101040 and 120175, THE HEALTH OFFICER OF THE COUNTY OF CONTRA COSTA ("HEALTH OFFICER") ORDERS:

1. **Amendment.** Subsection 8.a. of Health Officer Order No. HO-COVID19-28 is hereby amended to read as follows:

- a. **Prohibition on Gatherings; Exceptions.** Individuals may not participate in public or private gatherings of any size, except as otherwise set forth in this Order or other order of the Health Officer. For purposes of this Order, a gathering is defined as a meeting or other event that brings together persons from multiple households or living units at the same time for a shared or group experience in a single room, space, or place such as, by way of example and without limitation, an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, or other indoor or outdoor space.

(1) This Order does not prohibit participation in any of the following:

- (a) Religious services or cultural ceremonies that conform to limitations set forth by the State; and
- (b) Protests protected by the First Amendment that conform to limitations set forth by the State.



It is strongly recommended that individuals wear face coverings while participating in religious services, cultural ceremonies or protests, even if they can maintain a 6 foot distance from persons not in their household. Face coverings are also strongly recommended while engaged in activities such as singing and chanting. Because in-person events can involve extended periods of close contact, increasing the risk of transmission of COVID-19, it is recommended that event organizers consider maintaining contact information of attendees and that this information be kept for at least 14 days after the event. The purpose of this recommendation is to assist Contra Costa Health Services with effective contact tracing in case of an outbreak that may have affected attendees.

- (2) Private social gatherings of no more than 25 persons may take place subject to all requirements set forth in the Guidance for Private Gatherings issued on October 9, 2020, by the State of California (see <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/CDPH-Guidance-for-the-Prevention-of-COVID-19-Transmission-for-Gatherings-10-09.aspx>).
- (3) Gatherings of stable groups of no more than 14 children or youth and no more than two supervising adults may take place in accordance with guidance issued by the State of California on August 25, 2020 (see <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/small-groups-child-youth.aspx>), as may be amended from time to time.
- (4) Highly-regulated vehicle-based gatherings, as defined in the Health Officer's May 15, 2020, Order ([No. HO-COVID19-13](#)) (the "Vehicle Gatherings Order"), are permitted if they adhere to the requirements set forth in Subsection 8.b. of the Vehicle Gatherings Order.
- (5) This Order does not prohibit normal interactions among individuals in the course of work or other activities not prohibited by this Order or the State Orders, to the extent the interactions are consistent with any applicable guidance or other directives issued by the State.

2. **Effective Date and Time:** This order takes effect at 8:00 a.m. on October 29, 2020.

IT IS SO ORDERED:



Chris Farnitano, M.D.
Health Officer of the County of Contra Costa

October 27, 2020

