

In order for an alert-level system to effectively limit both the economic and health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, each level must be linked to public health and social measures.

These public health and social measures (PHSMs) reduce the likelihood that COVID-19 cases will increase to a level at which additional mitigation strategies are needed. Public health and social measures are defined as actions taken by individuals, institutions, communities and governments to slow or stop the spread of COVID-19. Such measures will be necessary at least until effective COVID-19 vaccines are widely available and a significant proportion of the population has been vaccinated.

Our proposed alert-level system is grounded by a “new normal” (green) level at the base, in which there is a low level of disease transmission and society is maximally open. At the opposite end there is a “circuit breaker” (purple) level, in which hospital capacity is overwhelmed and the most stringent PHSMs are necessary to save lives. Within each alert level, we propose that officials implement sector-specific policies that open society to the maximum extent that is safe. These policies should:

1. Emphasize that any activity at any alert level is made safer by the implementation of a basic package of public health and social measures;
2. Prioritize activities associated with reduced disease risk when certain activities must be curtailed; and
3. Weigh the potential economic, social and health consequences of any decision that will close or limit any facet of society.

For example, there is now a wealth of evidence that when PHSMs are observed, in-person education, particularly for the youngest age groups, does not contribute significantly to community spread of COVID-19. It is also widely recognized that time out of school can have seriously detrimental effects on the health and wellbeing of children and communities.

We propose an approach that aligns PHSMs across alert levels and across sectors, so that disease risk and opportunity costs are balanced and equitable. Communicating these measures with a grid, such as the one proposed below, ensures that people are aware of individual- and community-level mitigation measures that may affect how people live, work and play in order to keep everyone safe.

The guidance offered in the grid below is built on a solid base of scientific evidence (see [Appendix 2](#)) on how the COVID-19 virus spreads and which mitigation measures effectively reduce transmission. **A number of PHSMs should be applied to the extent possible within every alert level. These measures include mask-wearing, physical distancing, hand hygiene, increasing ventilation, disinfection of high-touch surfaces as well as staying home and getting tested when sick.** These measures are particularly important for those at increased risk of severe COVID-19 and those who interact with people at increased risk. Layering multiple PHSMs at the same time is most effective, as their protective effects build on one another. Additional PHSMs that are specific to certain levels, activities or sectors are listed in the grid below.

The implementation of an alert-level system and associated PHSMs should be done under advisement of a multisectoral advisory group that takes the local context, including economic, social and political realities, into consideration. If implemented successfully, an alert-level system with associated PHSMs will facilitate the resumption and continuation of social and economic activities as soon and as safely as possible, limiting the economic and health damage from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Activity or sector	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Circuit
Preschool/daycare	All in-person. Capacity: Full.	All in-person. Capacity: Full.	All in-person. Capacity: Full.	All in-person. Capacity: Full with pods/ small groups of 10 or less.	All in-person. Capacity: Full with pods/ small groups of 6 or less.
School: K-8	All in-person. Capacity: Full.	All in-person. Capacity: Full.	All in-person. Capacity: Full. Students at desks to extent possible, meals in classrooms, recess in cohorts.	Staggered or hybrid. Capacity: Reduced so 6 feet between students. Students at desks, meals in classrooms, cohorting of students.	Staggered or hybrid. Capacity: Reduced so 6 feet between students. Students at desks, meals in classrooms, cohorting of students, no recess.
School: 9-12	All in-person. Capacity: Full.	All in-person. Capacity: Full. Students at desks and distanced to extent possible.	Staggered or hybrid. Capacity: Reduced so 6 feet between students. Students at desks, meals in classrooms, cohorting of students.	Remote. Functional needs excepted.	Remote. Functional needs excepted.
Higher education	All in-person. Capacity: Full.	All in-person, consider staggered or hybrid. Capacity: Reduced so 6 feet between students.	Staggered or hybrid. Capacity: Reduced so 6 feet between students. Students at desks. Study areas open with 6 feet of distancing, other public areas closed.	Remote. (In-person labs excepted.) Capacity: Reduced so 6 feet between students. Study areas open at 20% capacity, other public areas closed.	Remote.
Bars	Open. Capacity: Full.	Open. Capacity: Max 50% AND min 6 feet between parties. Seated only.	Outdoor open, indoor closed. Capacity: Max 50% outdoor AND min 6 feet between parties. Seated only.	Closed. Take out and delivery available.	Closed. Take out and delivery available.

Restaurants	Open. Capacity: Full.	Open. Capacity: Full outdoor/75% indoor AND min 6 feet between parties.	Open. Capacity: Max 50% AND min 6 feet between parties.	Outdoor open, indoor closed. Capacity: Max 20% outdoors. Indoor closed. Take out and delivery available.	Closed. Take out and delivery available.
Offices	Remote where possible. Capacity: Full, as long as min 6 feet between people when seated.	Remote where possible. Capacity: Max 50% AND min 6 feet between people when seated.	Remote where possible, no in-person meetings. Capacity: Max 20% AND min 6 feet between people when seated.	Remote except essential work.	Remote except essential work.
Retail	Open. Capacity: Full, as long as 6 feet between customers.	Open. Capacity: Max 75% AND min 6 feet between customers.	Open. Capacity: Max 50% AND min 6 feet between customers.	Closed except essential. Curbside available for all. Capacity: Max 20% AND min 6 feet between customers.	Closed except essential. Curbside available for all. Capacity: Max 20% AND min 6 feet between customers.
Places of worship	Open. Capacity: Full, as long as 6 feet between households.	Open. Capacity: Full outdoors/75% indoors AND min 6 feet between households. Singing with masks.	Open. Capacity: Max 75% outdoors/50% indoors AND min 6 feet between households. No singing.	Outdoor open, indoor closed. Capacity: Max 20% outdoor AND min 6 feet between households. No singing Encourage remote services..	Remote services.
Factory	Open. Capacity: Full, as long as 6 feet between workers.	Open. Capacity: Stagger shifts AND 6 feet between workers.	Open. Capacity: Max 50% AND 6 feet between workers.	Open. Capacity: Max 20% (50% for essential) AND 6 feet between workers.	Only essential open. Capacity: Max 20% AND 6 feet between workers.

<p>Gyms/fitness</p>	<p>Open. Capacity: Full, as long as 6 feet distancing while exercising.</p>	<p>Open. Capacity: Max 75% AND min 12 feet distancing while exercising. Masks whenever possible.</p>	<p>Open. Capacity: Max 50% AND min 12 feet distancing while exercising. Masks must be worn. No indoor group classes. No locker rooms.</p>	<p>Outdoor open, indoor closed. Open for outdoor exercising with least 12 feet distancing. Masks must be worn.</p>	<p>Closed.</p>
<p>Events</p>	<p>Open. Capacity: Full, as long as 6 feet between households.</p>	<p>Large-capacity indoor venues closed, others open. Capacity: Max 75% AND 6 feet between households AND ≤ 200 people outdoor / ≤ 100 indoor. Seated only indoor.</p>	<p>Large-capacity indoor venues closed, others open. Capacity: Max 75% outdoor/50% indoor AND 6 feet between households AND ≤ 100 people outdoor/ ≤ 50 indoor. Seated only.</p>	<p>Indoor venues closed, outdoor open. Capacity: Max 20% AND 6 feet distancing between households AND ≤ 20 people. Seated only.</p>	<p>Closed.</p>
<p>Cultural institutions (e.g., museums, libraries, zoos, gardens)</p>	<p>Open. Capacity: Full, as long as 6 feet between visiting parties.</p>	<p>Open. Capacity: Max 75% AND 6 feet between visiting parties AND ≤ 200 people outdoor/ ≤ 100 indoor.</p>	<p>Open. Capacity: Max 75% outdoor / 50% indoor AND 6 feet between visiting parties AND ≤ 100 people outdoor/ ≤ 50 indoor.</p>	<p>Open. Capacity: Max 20% AND 6 feet between visiting parties AND ≤ 20 people. Seated only unless outdoors.</p>	<p>Closed.</p>
<p>Sports and recreation (includes players and spectators)</p>	<p>Open. Capacity: Full, with 6 feet between spectator parties.</p>	<p>Open. Capacity: Max 75% AND 6 feet between spectator parties. High-contact sports (wrestling, football, rugby) limited to professional and amateur (non-recreational) athletes.</p>	<p>Open. Capacity: Max 50% AND 6 feet between spectator parties. Recreational athletes: non-contact sports only, outdoor only and teams limited to 10 people max, no travel.</p>	<p>Open only to professional athletics. Capacity: Professional league play only. Closed to spectators. Encourage one-city or “bubbles.”</p>	<p>Closed.</p>

Personal care (e.g., salon, spa, barber, nails, massage)	Open. Capacity: Full, as long as 6 feet between patrons.	Open. Capacity: Max 75% AND 6 feet between patrons.	Open. Capacity: Max 50% AND 6 feet between patrons.	Indoor closed if 6 feet between patron and service provider not possible. Capacity: Max 20% AND 6 feet between patrons. Masks must be worn.	Closed.
Private social gatherings	Open. Capacity: Full, as long as 6 feet possible between households.	Open. Capacity: Max 50 people AND 6 feet between households, outdoors preferred.	Open. Capacity: Max 20 people AND 6 feet between households, outdoors preferred.	Open. Capacity: Max 2 households AND 6 feet between households, outdoors preferred.	Own household only.