Guidance for Permissible Outdoor Private Gatherings

COVID-19 is a new infectious hazard that could spread rapidly through this community with associated overcrowding of hospitals and health care centers, mild and severe illness (short and long term), and deaths. The force of this new disease has led to increased testing and the unwelcomed closure of many business and schools, throwing many community members out of work, school and play, with significant unintended consequences. Public Health officials are learning more about this disease over time including the prevention and control of its spread. We now must learn to live safely with this disease, as prior generations have had to do with other diseases like diphtheria, polio and many others, before their safe vaccines were developed.

At this time, the scientific consensus is that all individuals need to stay in small, consistent groups (Cohorts, and family Household Support Groups) to create firewalls to prevent spread to the larger community. These are described in the current Shelter in Place order (https://www.mendocinocounty.org/home/showdocument?id=37424). Until recently, private gatherings involving more than one household have been prohibited by the State. Consistent with the State, the Health Officer believes that it is prudent to allow some controlled private gatherings as long as they are conducted safely. The State has released its updated Guidance (https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Guidance-for-the-Prevention-of-COVID-19-Transmission-for-Gatherings-November-2020.aspx) which residents of Mendocino County must follow. Any such gatherings must be outdoors while we are in the Purple Tier. The Health Officer issues two additional precautions, i.e., (1) that any outdoor private gatherings must be limited to 3 households up to a maximum of 12 people (see most recent SIP) and (2) it is recommended that all individuals obtain COVID-19 testing within a week prior to any private gathering, if possible.

Outdoor Private Gatherings of people from different households in the same place and time are now permitted with the following requirements:

1. No more than 3 household groups up to a maximum of 12 people (including hosts, all guests and participants) may gather. Remember there is LESS RISK WITH FEWER PEOPLE.
2. Keep the gatherings to 2 hours to reduce risk.
3. The households that gather should be stable over time. Do not change the households or household members more often than once per month. Members should not go to multiple gatherings of different household groups within the same month.
4. The Private Gathering HOST should keep a list (sign-in sheet) of those who attend, so if someone becomes sick, all contacts can be found quickly and easily and take steps to protect their health. The list should be kept for about a month and a new list made for any new gatherings.
5. To decrease transmission all gatherings at this time must be held outside with enough space for people from different households to keep at least 6 feet apart while seated or standing. Inside bathrooms may be used as long as they are frequently sanitized and measures are taken to avoid congestion in hallways.
6. If multiple gatherings happen at the same time in a very large space, there should be no mixing of the members of different gatherings. Multiple gatherings should not be coordinated as this would constitute a gathering larger than permitted.
7. Facial coverings must be worn and social distancing guidelines should be observed between members of different households. Facial coverings may be removed briefly for eating/drinking or for urgent medical needs, as long as 6 foot distance is maintained from others in different households.
8. A place to wash hands or hand sanitizer must be available for frequent washing.
9. **Avoid sharing** items such as utensils. Food should not be self-served. Preferably, **food and drinks** should be served in single-serve disposable containers. If it must be served, it should be done by a person who is wearing a facial covering, maintains 6 foot distance and washes or sanitizes hands frequently.

10. To **maximize circulation**, there must be no more than a roof or canopy with only one side covered.

11. **Singing, Chanting, and shouting** increase risk of transmission and should be discouraged. If necessary, do it softly, wear facial coverings, and stay more than 6 feet from others. Wind instruments are strongly discouraged.

12. **Test for COVID-19** within the week before the gathering, if possible. Most results are back within 2 days. If the test is positive, the individual(s) and their household must not attend the gathering (and must follow Isolation & Quarantine orders).

13. **People with high risk** (older adults, people with chronic diseases or immune-compromise) should not attend.

14. **People with COVID-19-like symptoms** (fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste/ smell, nausea, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, confusion, muscle, body aches or headaches) must stay home and not come in contact with people outside their household group.

15. **People who develop COVID-19-like symptoms** within 48 hours of attending a gathering should get tested and notify other attendees of the potential exposure. If test is positive for COVID-19, the individual should give the name of HOST (with sign-in list) to the Public Health contact investigator.