



## GUIDELINES FOR HOSTING IN-PERSON SELF-HELP GROUP MEETINGS

Rev. 8/31/21

### PURPOSE OF GUIDELINES

Like the rest of the world, we are navigating how best to ramp back up and move through our transition to normalcy. This document is intended to provide information and protocols to support those who want to meet in person to advance Society business. The health and safety of staff, volunteers, and the MS community is our top priority. By implementing these guidelines consistently across the country, we hope to advance Society priorities, increase connection opportunities and bring groups back together safely.

### EXPECTATIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS

- Agree to follow the meeting guidelines outlined in this document
- Agree to implement the Society's Safety Protocol (below)
- Communicate with your meeting attendees ahead of the gathering to share expectations
- Confirm with your staff partner that meeting guidelines are understood and will be followed

### PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING IF IN PERSON GATHERING CAN BE CONDUCTED

Please follow these steps, in collaboration with your staff partner, to determine if it is time to bring your group back together in person:

- Review [CDC prevention recommendations](#) and MS Society guidance related to [MS and Covid](#)
- Review local mandates to decide if you are able to gather in person
- If regular meeting location is identified, reach out to venue to see if you are allowed to meet; if not determine if there's another accessible location where you can meet
- Determine if you are able to meet the Safety Protocol and health screening protocol (see below)
- Determine if the majority of your meeting attendees are interested in meeting in person
- Communicate with staff partner that you are interested in meeting in person

### BEFORE YOU MEET

- Send below communication to your meeting attendees (sample communication below)
- Prepare to follow safety requirements and screening protocol
- Confirm with your staff partner that your meeting will take place and confirm any meeting logistics that need to be changed on the Society website
- If meeting requires an exception to a safety requirement the meeting should not be conducted
- If you have any questions, please contact your staff partner

## SOCIETY GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO RAMPING UP

- Convening and connecting people in person is important to our effectiveness.
- Health and safety of people with MS and everyone in the MS movement is our top priority.
- We are all responsible for mitigating the spread of COVID-19.
- The best way to prevent the spread of Covid-19 is for everyone to get vaccinated.
- We follow the guidance of government authorities. When guidance is in conflict or ambiguous, we use our best judgment keeping in mind our top priority.
- We make decisions centrally as one national organization, however, ramping up may look different across the country.

## SOCIETY SAFETY PROTOCOL

1. **Face coverings:** Masks required of all attendees at all Society gatherings, both indoor and outdoor, regardless of vaccination status. Anyone accessing a Society office is required to wear a mask.
2. **Screening:** all participants, volunteers, staff, and attendees must agree to the COVID-19 Health Screening statements below.
3. **Physical distancing and person-to-person contact:** events and gatherings will continue to be planned to allow for distance between staff, volunteers, and participants whenever possible. Subject to local and site requirements.
4. **Maintain clean spaces:** follow CDC guidelines for routine cleaning and sanitizing of restrooms, shared spaces, and high-touch surfaces.
5. **Handwashing:** ensure adequate handwashing supplies and/or hand sanitizer with minimum 60% alcohol is available.
6. **Communication, education and expectations:** participant, attendee and volunteer expectations and education will be distributed prior to and at the gathering.

## COVID-19 SCREENING PROTOCOL

The following are **screening questions** for you and all meeting participants. We are asking all meeting attendees to verify they have read, understand and agree to adhere to the below guidelines. If you or any meeting participant answers NO to any of the statements below, they should not attend the meeting.

- I will adhere to all Society Safety Protocol.
- I understand the contagious nature of COVID-19 and I assume all risk associated with attending this event, including being exposed to COVID-19, and I waive the National Multiple Sclerosis Society from all liability therewith.

## WHAT TO COMMUNICATE TO MEETING ATTENDEES (PRIOR TO GATHERING)

This communication must be sent to all meeting attendees via email prior to the meeting. You should also post a sign on the door with the health screening questions for those who may have received prior notification.

### EMAIL TEMPLATE TO SEND TO ANY POTENTIAL ATTENDEES PRIOR TO THE MEETING

Dear <<Meeting Attendee>>,

We're happy to announce that <<INSERT GROUP/COMMITTEE NAME>> is ready to come back together in person. <<INSERT MEETING DETAILS>>.

The health and safety of staff, volunteers, and our communities is our top priority as we move through the Covid pandemic together and we would like you to be aware of the following safety guidelines and agreements prior to our meeting.

#### **As an attendee, what am I required to be aware of and prepared to follow?**

- Review [CDC prevention recommendations](#) and Society guidance related to [MS and Covid](#).
- Monitor my own health. If I am not feeling well, I will stay home.
- A facial covering is required (except when I'm eating or drinking).
- Wash your hands routinely and use hand sanitizer when available.

#### **As an attendee, I verify the following:**

- I will adhere to all Society Safety Protocol.
  
- I understand the contagious nature of COVID-19 and I assume all risk associated with attending this event, including being exposed to COVID-19, and I waive the National Multiple Sclerosis Society from all liability therewith.

If you plan to attend the meeting, please reply to this email that you understand our requirements for a safe meeting. If you are uncomfortable coming together in person, there are many groups that are meeting virtually. Please visit the [National MS Society's group locator](#) to find a group that meets your needs.

Thank you,

<YOUR NAME HERE>