



**Frequently Asked Questions  
Yellowstone County  
Health Officer Order  
November 9, 2020**

**This FAQ document helps explain the Yellowstone County Health Officer Order of November 9, 2020.**

**Why was the Health Officer Order issued and how long does it last?**

- A. The Order of November 9, 2020, extends the 25-person limit on indoor and outdoor gatherings from the October Health Officer Order through December 9. All the exceptions to the 25-person limit also are extended from the October Order. The Order is a serious effort to stop the steep rise in COVID-19 disease in Yellowstone County. Since the end of September, the average rate of new cases diagnosed daily in Yellowstone County has more than doubled. The pandemic is stressing our local healthcare and public health system. The Order calls on all Yellowstone County residents to do their part to reduce the virus spread by keeping their distance, washing their hands, wearing cloth face coverings, limiting their interactions with people outside their household, working from home when possible and staying home when they are ill.

**What does the order change about compassionate care visits to residents of senior living facilities?**

- A. Visits to long-term care, memory care, adult group homes and other assisted living facilities remain limited to compassionate care to prevent spread of the virus. The Order broadens the definition of “compassionate care” beyond end-of-life care to include certain other situations in which the resident is in need of seeing family, clergy or another individual who can meet the resident’s needs. These situations may include, but are not limited to: the resident suffering difficulty adjusting to the move into a care facility, grief from the recent death of a loved one, needing encouragement to eat or drink or suffering emotional distress. Compassionate care visits aren’t routine and must adhere to strict infection control standards as defined in the Order. Compassionate care visits are only possible when there are no active COVID-19 cases in the facility.

**How do I get health department approval for my event in Yellowstone County?**

- A. RiverStone Health does not give approval to events, but rather offers guidance to businesses and organizations to assist in compliance with local Health Officer Orders associated with COVID-19. The November 9 Order limits gatherings to no more than 25 people. If you cannot guarantee with 100% certainty that no more than 25 people will gather, you will need to make other arrangements to ensure compliance. Each of us needs to do all we can to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and that includes complying with Health Officer Orders.

**Are there restrictions on houses of worship?**

- A. Under the October 14 Health Officer Order, houses of worship may exceed group size of 25, subject to a limit of 75% of the facility’s capacity and continued compliance with physical distancing and masking requirements, as the Governor’s directive mandates.

**What can I do if I see that this Health Officer Order is violated?**

- A. Complaints about violations of the Order and complaints about violations of the statewide restrictions to slow the spread of COVID-19 can be made using a [complaint form](#) posted at RiverstoneHealth.org under COVID-19. Starting November 9, RiverStone Health is employing COVID-19 Education Liaisons who will investigate complaints. If the complaint is substantiated these liaisons will work to educate the individual, organization or business about how to comply with the governor’s emergency directive and the Yellowstone County Health Officer Order. In cases of repeated noncompliance, evidence will be gathered and presented to the Health Officer and the County Attorney.

**My sports team practices in groups of less than 25, but there are more than 25 people at games. Can we play games under the Health Officer Order?**

- A. Gatherings of more than 25 people indoors or outdoors are not permitted under the Order, so games would not be allowed because the two teams would intermix creating the potential for increased exposure. However, practices involving fewer than 25 people (including players, coaches, volunteers, etc.) are permitted. For purposes of this Order, a scrimmage between two different teams, even if held as part of a practice and not an “official” game, creates the same risk of increased exposure and is therefore prohibited.

**K-12 schools are allowed exemptions from the 25-person gathering limit. What about colleges and universities in Yellowstone County?**

- A. Colleges and universities are allowed to have classes, dining facility utilization, residence hall living, and other facets of college life that exceed 25 people, subject to compliance with the elements of their COVID-19 prevention and control plans. Colleges and universities are strongly encouraged to carefully consider the risks and benefits of activities that entail groups larger than 25 people before undertaking them.

**Why is it OK for restaurants and bars to have more than 25 people on the premises, but not theaters?**

- A. The Order limits gatherings to not more than 25 people. A theater audience is considered a gathering that must be limited to 25. The customers of a restaurant or bar are not considered a gathering if they come in smaller groups. A party or other group activity at a bar or restaurant that exceeds 25 people – including guests and staff – is considered a gathering and is therefore prohibited. Restaurants, bars and casinos must continue to follow all previous requirements for closing by 12:30 a.m., maximum occupancy load under the Governor’s Phase 2 reopening directive, enhanced sanitation, distancing customers and requiring both staff and customers to

wear cloth face coverings unless they are eating or drinking. In addition, any Yellowstone County food service establishment that was required to submit a dine-in reopening plan to RiverStone Health must comply with all the elements of that plan.

**Our organization has planned an outdoor event during which each family group would keep distance from others. Total attendance is expected to be more than 25. Can we proceed?**

- A. Any gathering of more than 25 people is prohibited under this Order. Regardless of whether the event is indoors or outdoors, during this period of surging COVID-19 infections, the Order is strict about the gathering size limit.

**My organization is holding a seminar for 50 people at a local hotel. If we split the attendees into two separate rooms, will that comply with the Order?**

- A. The seminar would be considered in compliance if each group is no more than 25 people and the groups are completely separated in different rooms with walls between the groups. All attendees would need to wear masks and be spaced six feet apart. Hotel and convention center gatherings are subject to the Order and the 25-person limit.