

Subject to change when further Government rules and regulations are released.

We are now seeing this pandemic flatten; the re-opening of cultural activities has begun slowly with some government restrictions. Begin preparing now. These guidelines are intended to help members of the choral community decide how to proceed with choral activities as safely as possible. Currently there is very little research into how group-singing affects the spread of COVID-19 and each choir or singing group must decide how best to proceed based on what we know and the comfort of their constituency. It will be up to each choir or singing group to make decisions using these guidelines to implement the best practices for your organization. Your safety and the safety of your singers, music staff and volunteers comes first and foremost when deciding on any new protocols. This is the “new normal”. We do not want to see a rebound of Covid-19 and an instant return to closure in Nova Scotia. Please do what you can to keep singers, music staff, volunteers and the public safe! Do not become lax when the pandemic has flattened, as there most likely will be a second and third wave. We all need to do our part to minimize the risk associated with returning to activities. All Members should be following the links provided herein for updates from the government and must also consider any recommendations or orders provided by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Robert Strang. Please visit <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus> and <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/working-during-covid-19/> and <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/COVID-19-Guidance-for-Vocalists-and-Instrumentalists.pdf>

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR CHORAL SINGING

The Nova Scotia Choral Federation and Nova Scotia Health strongly recommend that in order for group singing to occur at any gatherings, rehearsals, or performances, including religious services, all current protocols regarding hygiene, physical and social distancing and maximum gathering size be followed.

People and choirs who wish to sing together are strongly encouraged to explore alternatives to in-person singing, such as virtual training, recording sessions or a combination of virtual and live sessions. However, singers could assemble with the following precautions:

1. As singing is a considered a higher risk activity, the number of people singing together in the same space must be limited to a small group. Always consider the current maximum allowed gathering size. If the facilities are too small to accommodate adequate physical distancing, then the numbers allowed must be adjusted to the fewer participants. This number, set out in the Health Protection Act Order and in public health directives, will be updated on a regular basis.
2. Leaders of the singing group should institute practices such as:
 - Giving permission for any member who is feeling unwell to not attend rehearsal and/or providing both virtual and live practices
 - Encouraging that musical scores, pencils or other items not be shared between singers.
 - Practices only take place if a location does allow for 2 metre separation between singers and other attendees.
 - Staggering singers so no singer is directly in front of another, ensuring singers do not face each other while singing.
 - Not allowing food or beverages to be shared.
 - Encouraging that proper hygiene and health protocols are followed. Providing handwashing opportunity when entering and leaving activities.
 - Wearing non-medical masks to and from, and during activities.
 - Minimizing the amount of time spent singing (30 minutes or less)
3. The owner or manager of the rehearsal or performance facility should establish rules, procedures, and physical barriers to prevent the spread of disease, such as:
 - Encouraging attendees maintain a 2-metre physical distance from others by marking out seating/standing areas.
 - Cleaning and disinfecting washrooms and all frequently touched surfaces before and after the gatherings.
 - Providing directional signage for traffic flow and if possible single entry and exit points. Providing signage around handwashing procedure and symptoms COVID-19

Additional protective measures are outlined in [Preparing to Reopen Nova Scotia](#)

We recognize that it is necessary to continue to work toward finding ways to safely resume activities that are essential to the spirit of our communities, and choral singing is a vital part of the lives of so many Nova Scotians. Nova Scotia Choral Federation will remain in contact with Department of Communities, Culture, and Heritage and Nova Scotia Health and communicate changes to these guidelines as they become available.

Please follow the guidelines below and monitor the following sites for ongoing updates:

<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirusinfection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>

<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/staying-healthy/#hands-clean>

<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/occupational-health-and-safety/#hazards>

These guidelines were developed by the Nova Scotia Choral Federation and approved by the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage and Health Nova Scotia.

RELAUNCHING CHORAL ACTIVITIES IN NOVA SCOTIA — PREPARATION GUIDELINES

Rehearsal Space

- **Use Alternative opportunities to rehearse or perform virtually when possible.**
 - **Devise a plan for entering and leaving rehearsal spaces.** Allow for social distancing as required to enter building, hallways, stairwells, rehearsal space etc. Consider using a clean new non-medical mask for arrival and departure from rehearsal or performance space and for singing. There are many different types of masks. Please see this link for the appropriate use of non-medical mask or face covering. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novelcoronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-facecoverings.html# Appropriate non-medical mask>
 - **Provide hand-washing station.** Individuals should wash hands when entering and exiting rehearsal.
 - **Provide as much ventilation as possible in your rehearsal space.** Rehearse outside if possible, or open windows, doors, use portable air purifiers.
 - **Devise a seating plan.** Set up to allow for physical distancing as required (currently six feet or two metres between seats or individuals). Do not exceed the maximum number of persons allowed to meet. This number will change depending upon regulations as set by the province. Consider how singers can access seats safely and use one directional flow. A further distancing for conductor and accompanist should be used as they face the choir.
 - **Devise a set up cleaning plan for seating and equipment.** For each rehearsal have a small team wipe down and set up chairs/seating or mark distancing for fixed seating using physical distancing requirements and *have the same team* strike and wipe down chairs or fixed seating for each activity. Accompanist will be responsible for wipe down of piano, bench etc. Conductor(s) will be responsible for the wipe down and care of their music stand, stool and equipment.
 - **Advise singers that personal items must not be shared.** This includes uniforms pencils, nametags, music, folders, water bottles etc.
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Music Staff, Singers, Volunteers

- **All participants must be in good health in order to attend in person rehearsals and activities.** If anyone is feeling unwell or has symptoms of Covid-19 they must not attend a rehearsal, performance or other choir activity. Upon arrival, all participants should be asked if they are feeling well. If they are not, they must return home. They should proceed with completing the 811 [online self-assessment for symptoms of Covid-19](#).
 - **Wearing non-medical masks to and from, and during activities**
 - **Keep a record of all persons attending events.** Attendance for all music staff, singers and volunteers including name, phone number, address, date and time of activity, should be recorded and kept to facilitate any necessary tracing and contact by Public Health.
 - **Discourage physical contact** such as kisses on the cheek, handshakes etc.
 - **Avoid having a break or intermission.** Do not offer or share candy, mints, coffee, tea or other snacks or drinks etc.
 - **Consider the length of your activities.** A shorter rehearsal or activity (recommendation of 30 minutes) allows for air exchange to reduce risk.
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Performances and Public Engagement

- **Consider out of doors engagements.**
 - **Use alternative opportunities to perform virtually or a combination of virtual and live audience respecting gathering limits and social distances as well as use of masks.**
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Symptoms of COVID-19

- fever (chills, sweats)
- cough or worsening of a previous cough
- sore throat
- headache
- shortness of breath
- muscle aches
- sneezing
- nasal congestion or runny nose
- hoarse voice
- diarrhea
- unusual fatigue
- loss of sense of smell or taste
- red, purple or blueish lesions on the feet, toes or fingers without clear cause

The severity of COVID-19 symptoms can range from mild to severe, and in some cases, can lead to death. Current information suggests most people don't experience severe illness or need to be hospitalized.

Hygiene, Wash Your Hands!

Washing your hands with soap and water is best. Rubbing your hands together when you wash them removes visible dirt and germs. Disposable paper towels are best for drying your hands, if you have some. If not, use a reusable towel that is washed often.

If soap and water aren't available, and your hands aren't visibly dirty, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Use enough to cover the fronts and backs of both hands and between all your fingers. Rub your hands together until they feel dry.

Cough and sneeze etiquette

Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Throw the used tissue in the garbage and wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub immediately.

If you do not have a tissue, cough and sneeze into your elbow, not your hand.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. If you need to touch your face, wash your hands first.

PLANNING FOR YOUR CHOIR IN UNCERTAIN TIMES — A FRAMEWORK

STEP ONE — RECENTER YOURSELF

- If you're in panic mode, try to take a step back. Aim to make the shift from reacting to responding.
- Review your framework policies — your mission, core values, vision, and positioning statements.
- Review your strategic plan.
- Review your goals and plans for the season.
- Think through the kind of experience you want your stakeholders to have.

STEP TWO — TAKE INVENTORY

Make a list of your choir's assets, including such things as human resources (paid or unpaid), recordings (audio or video), photos, special skills within your choir's ranks, prospective funding, cash on hand, section leads, communication tools, and promotional items.

STEP THREE — ESTABLISH PRIORITIES

- Think short term — 6-7 week blocks of time are often effective.
- **Avoid getting too specific at this stage. Priorities might include such things as chorister engagement/retention, audience retention/development, fundraising, creating an artistic product, chorister skill development, building/strengthening community, or listening skills.**
- If you create a long-list of priorities, it is imperative that you narrow it down so as to not exceed resource availability (as established in your inventory).
- If you're struggling, consult other members of your team and/or some of your choristers.

STEP FOUR — SET YOUR EXPECTATIONS

- Keep in mind that, while valuable, many current activities are a temporary measure.
- **You may find that you're not feeling gratified by the experience with your choir the way you usually do, but that doesn't mean your singers aren't enjoying and thankful for what you're doing.**
- Not everyone will take part. There are many reasons for that, and it doesn't mean they won't return at some point.
- Recognize that choir in the context of COVID-19 is a learning experience for everyone.
- The bottom line is partially about essential things like preserving what you've built, continuing to nurture relationships, and giving people hope through music and their choir community.

STEP FIVE — CREATE A PLAN

- Set goals and indicators of success.
- Develop your strategy — take your inventory into account and put it to use (ex. can you leverage prospective funding for tech support and/or software upgrades?).
- Establish a timeline.
- Think outside the box, but remember you don't need to reinvent the wheel for everything you do — look to your colleagues for input and ideas!

STEP SIX — GO!

- Implement your plan.
- Utilize your team and lean on your support network as much as you need to.
- Strive to create the same calibre experience you would in rehearsal/performance, even though the experience itself will be very different.
- Evaluate the extent to which you've achieved your goals, making special note of things that worked particularly well.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- **Put a support group in place, and don't be afraid to ask for help.**
- Be continually mindful of your own mental health.
- Join a few groups on Facebook and use social media for ideas and inspiration.
- Remember that you won't be able to try every idea you'll think of!

PREPARING FOR RELAUNCH

The work of preparing for the relaunch of regular rehearsals and concerts is essential, and the time to do that work is now!

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Ensure the members of your artistic team are engaged and committed.
- Complete policy revisions pertaining to chorister and audience safety (ex. physical distancing, hand hygiene, attendance at rehearsal when sick, **PPE, facility cleaning, etc.**).
- Develop a plan that details the steps that will be taken should a choir member/an individual in the immediate circle of a choir member be diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Make relevant updates to volunteer training procedures.
- **Publicize the safety measures** you're adopting for choristers, audiences, and volunteers.
- Develop a number of prospective relaunch plans in the context of a variety of permissible scenarios (ex. groups of 50 are allowed but no singing, groups of 25 and singing are allowed, etc.).
- **Prepare chorister recruiting materials.**
- Develop concert programming ideas.
- Set aside or make a plan for **the funds required for your first post-COVID-19 concert.**
- Consider changes to fees/fee structures in the context of extremely challenging economic circumstances.
- **Prepare yourself emotionally** that not everyone will be back and that some singers might feel scared about returning to choir.

Prepared 20.05.20