



COVID-19 PANDEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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Section 1: Introduction

Flexibility. Adaptation. Thinking outside the box.

Anyone who has participated in community theater understands these lessons well. We are constantly adapting, changing, and reinventing to work within the confines of restrictions presented through time, budgets, venues, technical malfunctions, and plain old bad luck. Now, we can add a global pandemic to this list.

The COVID-19 virus and subsequent safety measures put in place by local, state, and federal authorities to minimize its spread has truly devastated the performing arts world. The arts and cultural sector is a complex ecosystem with venues and spaces of various sizes, constructs, designs, and missions that create safety concerns with regard to the transmission of a potentially life-threatening virus. Reopening will prove difficult for many as they navigate the fine line between the financial health of the organization and public safety.

Community theater occupies a unique niche in the performing arts arena. We often work within smaller budgets and perform for smaller audiences. This allows for greater flexibility in implementing safety guidelines designed to comply with local, state, and federal mandates to keep our members, volunteers, and patrons safe and healthy.

Sterling Playmakers' Board of Directors realizes that there is no easy way to mitigate this situation and no guarantee that we can completely eliminate risks. However, we believe that we can take collective action that will allow us to reopen to the public safely and responsibly. The key to implementing successful safety guidelines is communication. It is especially important to be transparent about these health and safety measures and to clearly communicate expectations regarding member, volunteer, and patron behavior when present in the theater.

To that end, we will execute safe and responsible theater operations during the pandemic while supporting community efforts to reduce the spread and minimize risk of exposure to COVID-19. We will:

1. Thoughtfully and deliberately begin theater operations by following government and venue policies and regulations.
2. Define specific policies and procedures for members, volunteers, and patrons, and communicate guidelines in writing and through announcements and public relations.
3. Track ongoing changes in the COVID-19 landscape so we can adapt to surges in infections, adhere to new public guidelines, adjust as needed, and communicate any changes or cancellations of events.

The COVID-19 Safety Guidelines outlined below is a living document. Sterling Playmakers must be able to respond flexibly to changing circumstances as they arise, and for this reason, this plan does not promise specific treatment in specific situations. The guidelines contained in this plan are subject to changes and exceptions without prior notice at Sterling Playmakers discretion. All decisions regarding the application and interpretation of this plan are also in Sterling Playmakers discretion.

Section 2: Guiding Principles and General Policies

3.1 Guiding Principles

Understanding that each individual's health condition presents a specific and often unknown degree of risk to the effects of the virus, and acknowledging as such that individuals will act according to their own tolerance of that risk, Sterling Playmakers will take a cautious, holistic, and inclusive approach to the guidelines for our organization. For the safety of our volunteers, patrons, performers, and staff, we will also implement a zero-tolerance policy for blatant disregard toward these guidelines. We will dismiss any individual unwilling to abide.

The following principles will serve as our guide:

- **Safety first.** We will operate with the safety of our cast, crew members and staff, and patrons as our top priority.
- **Caution.** We will err on the side of caution and do our part to reduce the risk of infection and spread of the virus.
- **Adherence to public regulations.** We will respect and act in accordance with government policies, processes, and procedures.
- **Respect for the individual.** We will respect each person's individual needs regarding their ability or inability to volunteer or perform in our productions.
- **Respect for authority.** We will respect these guidelines and the people responsible for enforcing them. We expect our volunteers, patrons, performers, and staff to work together to assure a safe and respectful environment for the benefit of all.

3.2 General Policies

The following general policies apply to all stages of each production: audition, rehearsal, and performances. Stage-specific policies and procedures are defined in subsequent sections.

- The health and safety of members, volunteers, cast, crew, and the general public are the highest priority.
- All members of a production's cast and crew must be notified of the audition, rehearsal, and/or performance venue's safety guidelines and must comply with the guidelines at all times. Failure or refusal to comply with venue safety policies will result in immediate dismissal from the production.
- All members of a production's cast and crew must be provided with a copy of Sterling Playmakers' safety guidelines and must comply with the guidelines at all times. Failure or refusal to comply with Sterling Playmakers' safety policies will result in immediate dismissal from the production.
- All members of the cast and crew must immediately report any and all COVID-19-related concerns to the production's producer. Concerns include but are not limited to: a cast or crew members failure to comply with the venue or Sterling Playmakers' safety

guidelines, a cast or crew members own safety-related concerns, the development of any symptoms, and any potential exposure risks.

- Any member of a production's cast or crew who is experiencing any COVID-19-related symptoms must remain home and should not report for rehearsal or performances.
- Any production in violation of the Sterling Playmakers' COVID-19 safety plan is subject to cancellation.
- Any production facing a large-scale virus exposure problem is subject to cancellation.

3.3 Participation Waiver

Every cast and crew member must complete a one-time waiver at auditions and the first rehearsal.

- The Producer must collect the waivers from every cast and crew member.
- Anyone who does not fill out a waiver cannot participate in the audition or the production.
- The intent of the waiver is to ensure the individual participating in any Sterling Playmakers production is aware that they must adhere to the policies and procedures set by the Theatre Reopening Subcommittee, and that they participate in one of our productions at their own risk.

3.4 Vaccination

Sterling Playmakers does not require, but encourages all participants to be vaccinated against COVID-19. We will ask that all participants disclose their vaccination status on the production health form in case of health emergencies and venues requiring vaccination records. Sterling Playmakers encourages everyone to refer to the CDC website if they have questions in regards to the COVID-19 vaccine. Sterling Playmakers encourages members to get updated boosters against COVID-19 as each booster can aid in protection against new variants.

3.5 Face Coverings (Cast & Crew)

Face coverings are optional during rehearsals and performances. The production team can mandate when cast members need to wear masks during rehearsals (i.e. after a holiday weekend). Refusal or failure of any member of the cast and crew to wear proper face coverings during that time will result in immediate dismissal from the production.

Masks help prevent the disease from spreading from the person wearing the mask to those around them and may provide limited protection for the person wearing the mask. Masks **MUST** cover the nose and mouth and fit tightly and securely to the face. Face shields are not acceptable substitutes for masks as recently studies have shown that they are not as effective in reducing aerosolized spray.

When handling face coverings members, volunteers, cast, and crew should observe the following:

- Wash your hands before putting on a face covering
- Put the same side against your face each time to avoid wearing the “contaminated side” against your nose and mouth
- Remove your face covering using the straps to avoid touching the part that protects your face
- Wash face coverings frequently (preferably after each use)
- Personal face coverings should not be shared with others

Masks need to be worn if a cast or crew member has been exposed to COVID-19 for 5 days. Masks need to be worn by an individual returning from COVID-19 isolation, unless they have had two negative antigen tests 48 hours apart after symptoms have improved or subsided.

3.6 Hand Hygiene (Cast & Crew)

Hand hygiene is a key element of infection prevention and will need to be practiced widely. Given the concern that transmission of COVID-19 occurs both by air and by via contact, enhanced hand hygiene measures are critical. Hand washing with soap and water is considered more effective than use of hand sanitizer in preventing the spread of COVID-19. When a sink is available, individuals should wash their hands for twenty seconds at least every 60 minutes, and dry thoroughly with a disposable towel or dryer. As a backup, individuals may use sanitizer containing at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol when a sink is not available.

Section 4: Exposure and Confirmed Case Protocols

4.1 Responding to Confirmed COVID-19 cases

- All directors, producers, and for upcoming shows should plan for possible COVID exposure situations. This could mean performing onsite testing, having understudies, double casting, or a plan in place to replace a performer.
- All open communication should come from the individual to the COVID Officer and Producer of any possible exposure to COVID-19 especially outside of Sterling Playmakers rehearsals and performances.
- In the event of a cast or crew member being exposed to COVID-19, the Producer must alert the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors.
- The Producer sends an email notification to all cast or crew members that were with the exposed, or tested positive, individual.
 - This email must be sent within 24 hours of notice from the Producer.

4.2 Isolation and Exposure Guidelines

Whether the exposure happened at rehearsal or outside of rehearsal, all exposed and tested positive individuals must follow the following procedures in order to return to rehearsal outlined below. Any further questions, please refer to the CDC's Updated Respiratory Virus Guidance in Appendix C.

If the individual tests positive for COVID-19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Stay home if you are sick, especially if you have a fever. The isolation period varies based on the severity of your illness.● You can stop isolation when you have been fever-free for 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication and your overall symptoms are improving.● You should continue to practice preventative strategies for the next 5 days when you come out of isolation.● Testing to come back to rehearsal is not necessary. <p>Example: You test positive, and have a fever on Thursday. Your fever is gone on Sunday, it remains gone without the aid of Ibuprofen on Monday and you are starting to feel better, you can return to rehearsal as early as Tuesday. You should use preventative measures when coming back to rehearsal.</p>
If you have been exposed to COVID-19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● You do not need to isolate if you are not experiencing symptoms.● You do not need to test unless you are showing symptoms.● If you are showing symptoms, take a test before coming to rehearsal. You should take a second one 48 hours apart from the first one.● You should wear a mask around others for 5 days post exposure. The day you were exposed is Day 0, which means Day 1 post exposure is the following day. <p>Example: You were exposed on a Thursday, your first day post exposure is Friday, and you must wear a mask at rehearsal until Wednesday (day 6).</p> <p><u>If you do test positive for COVID during those 5 days, please follow the guidelines for individuals that test positive.</u></p>

Few things to note:

1. If someone that has been exposed contracted COVID-19 within the last 90 days, please do not have them tested unless they are showing symptoms. If they are not showing symptoms, it is because they have antibodies from their previous infection. They should just mask up for 5 days with everyone exposed as a precaution.

2. The isolation period can vary, but the general rule of thumb is 3 - 5 days as the best bet. Most medical professionals are telling patients that after a 5 day isolation period, you are pretty much good to go back to normal activities.
3. According to the CDC, extra prevention strategies after isolation “may include taking more steps for cleaner air, enhancing your hygiene practices, wearing a well-fitting mask, keeping a distance from others, and/or getting tested for respiratory viruses. People can choose to use these prevention strategies at any time. Since some people remain contagious beyond the ‘stay-at-home’ period, taking added precautions can lower the chance of spreading respiratory viruses to others.” Use your best judgment, and what is comfortable for you to protect others after your isolation. If you want to mask day 6 and 7 after testing positive, and decide to test on day 8, and you are negative, you can use that as an indicator to take off the mask.
4. Be aware that antigen at-home COVID tests do expire after a certain amount of time. You can double check if the test’s expiration date is true with the Expiration Date Check in Appendix B. Please do not test with an expired test as they are no longer accurate.
5. There are some cases where individuals do not have a fever while being sick with COVID-19. They should monitor their other symptoms improving before they come out of isolation (mainly cough, sore throat, headache, runny nose/congestion). Loss of taste or smell will be a lingering symptom, as may coughing, which most medical journals have confirmed in studying recovery from COVID-19.
6. Fever-reducing medication includes ibuprofen, Tylenol, DayQuil and NyQuil. If someone is prescribed Paxlovid, that should not be taken into consideration for when coming out of isolation as it is an antiviral medication. If someone would like to be prescribed Paxlovid, they must take it within one to five days of symptom onset.
7. Rebound of COVID-19 is a possibility with or without Paxlovid. Please do not try to push yourself, take the time to heal.

Section 5: Rehearsal Procedures

All policies outlined in **General Policies** must be adhered in this stage of the production for actors and crew.

5.1 Backstage Disinfecting

5.1.1 Sound

Disinfecting sound equipment must be conducted after every rehearsal.

- The Technical Director assigns each disinfecting task to one of the sound crew members.
- Each member must follow the manufacturer’s instructions on disinfecting the equipment.
- For musicals, please ensure that the actor is wearing the same body mic or halo mic they received from the first rehearsal that mics were introduced.
- For musicals, actors must not share body microphones unless they are from the same household.

5.1.2 Props

Disinfecting props must be conducted after every use, especially those that touch lips.

- The Prop Master / Mistress can determine when a prop needs to be sanitized more or less (i.e. props used by multiple actors in a performance).
- The Prop Master / Mistress assigns each disinfecting task to one of the backstage running crew members.
- Each prop must be handled with the appropriate disinfectant based on the material of the prop

5.1.3 Set

Disinfecting the high touch points of the set (i.e. doorknobs and handrails) must be conducted after every rehearsal.

- The Stage Manager assigns the disinfecting tasks to one of the backstage running crew members.
- Each high touch set piece must be handled with the appropriate disinfectant based on the material of the set piece

5.1.4 Costumes

Disinfecting costumes must be conducted after every rehearsal.

- The Costume Designer or Costume Manager can determine which costumes the level of sanitization for each costume.
- The Costume Designer or Costume Manager assigns the disinfecting task to one of the dressers.
- Articles of clothing should be disinfected as follows:
 - Costumes - Costume cleaning solution
 - Shoes - aerosolized cleaning solution will be used on shoes not taken home by the actor
 - Undergarments - taken home and cleaned by the actor

5.1.5 Makeup

Disinfecting shared resources (i.e. table or makeup mirrors) must be conducted after every rehearsal.

- Actors should not share makeup.
- The Hair and Makeup Designer and Team assign the disinfecting to their team, or the actor using the resource.
- Bleach wipes are fine for disinfecting.

5.1.6 Hair

Disinfecting wigs and hair tools must be conducted after every rehearsal.

- The Hair and Makeup Designer and Team assign the disinfecting to their team, or the actor using the resource.
- Bleach wipes are fine for disinfecting hair tools (i.e. clips, brushes)
- Wig cleaning solution must be used for cleaning wigs.

Section 6: Performances

All policies outlined in **General Policies** must be adhered to in this stage of the production for actors and crew.

6.1 Audiences

Audience members will be required to adhere to local, school system, and facility policies while attending Sterling Playmakers productions.

6.2 House Management

As of July 2023, we no longer require signage for the lobby in regards to masking and social distancing. If the production team would like some audience members to mask, they can provide signs that encourage masking. Signs in regards to face coverings and social distancing must be printed from the CDC website.

6.3 Post Show Disinfecting

6.3.1 House

Disinfecting the house is provided by the custodial staff at LCPS.

6.3.2 Sound

Disinfecting sound equipment must be conducted after every performance.

- The Technical Director assigns each disinfecting task to one of the sound crew members.
- Each member must follow the manufacturer's instructions on disinfecting the equipment.
- For musicals, actors must not share body microphones unless they are from the same household.

6.3.3 Props

Disinfecting props must be conducted after every use.

- The Prop Master / Mistress can determine when a prop needs to be sanitized more or less (i.e. props used by multiple actors in a performance).

- The Prop Master / Mistress assigns each disinfecting task to one of the backstage running crew members.
- Each prop must be handled with the appropriate disinfectant based on the material of the prop

6.3.4 Set

Disinfecting the high touch points of the set (i.e. doorknobs and handrails) must be conducted after every performance.

- The Stage Manager assigns the disinfecting tasks to one of the backstage running crew members.
- Each high touch set piece must be handled with the appropriate disinfectant based on the material of the set piece

6.3.5 Costumes

Disinfecting costumes must be conducted after every performance.

- The Costume Designer or Costume Manager can determine which costumes the level of sanitization for each costume.
- The Costume Designer or Costume Manager assigns the disinfecting task to one of the dressers.
- Articles of clothing should be disinfected as follows:
 - Costumes - Costume cleaning solution
 - Shoes - aerosolized cleaning solution will be used on shoes not taken home by the actor
 - Undergarments - taken home and cleaned by the actor

6.3.6 Makeup

Disinfecting shared resources (i.e. table or makeup mirrors) must be conducted after every performance.

- Actors should not share makeup.
- The Hair and Makeup Designer and Team assign the disinfecting to their team, or the actor using the resource.
- Bleach wipes are fine for disinfecting.

6.3.7 Hair

Disinfecting wigs and hair tools must be conducted after every performance.

- The Hair and Makeup Designer and Team assign the disinfecting to their team, or the actor using the resource.
- Bleach wipes are fine for disinfecting hair tools (i.e. clips, brushes)
- Wig cleaning solution must be used for cleaning wigs.

Appendix A: About COVID-19

General Information

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. The virus is now known as the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The disease it causes is called coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December of 2019. In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19.

COVID-19 Symptoms

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported - ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or running nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Transmission

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person to person, mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).

People can become infected by touching contaminated objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.

Prevention

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends the following guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- ***Understand and Know How the Virus is Spread*** - respiratory droplets inhaled via close contact with an infected person or touching eyes, nose, or mouth after touching a contaminated surface
- ***Frequent Hand Washing*** - use soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol
- ***Avoid Close Contact*** - put at least 6 feet of distance between yourself and a person who does not live in your household
- ***Cover Your Mouth and Nose with a Mask When Others are Around*** - everyone should wear a mask in public settings and when around people who do not live in your household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain
- ***Cover Coughs and Sneezes*** - always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow and do not spit; immediately throw tissue away and sanitize hands
- ***Clean and Disinfect*** - clean and disinfection frequently touched surfaces
- ***Monitor Your Health Daily*** - be alert for symptoms and take your temperature if symptoms develop

Increased Exposure Risk with Singing, Shouting, & Live Orchestras

Please refer to these articles from the [National Association of Teachers of Singing](#) about singing and performing while dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appendix B: Resources

CDC's Updated Respiratory Virus Guidance: What to Do When You Are Sick

- <https://www.cdc.gov/ncird/whats-new/updated-respiratory-virus-guidance.html>

Commonwealth of Virginia

- <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/>
- <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/>

Expiration Date Check

- <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/NewDate>

Appendix C: Email Templates for COVID Exposure or Positive COVID Case

Production Wide Email Template for Positive COVID Case

Dear {show title} Cast and Crew,

This email is to notify you that we have learned that an individual in our production has tested positive for COVID-19. Assuring everyone's safety is our top priority. Sterling Playmakers identifies and communicates with individuals who have been within 6 feet of a person who tests positive for the virus, for 15 minutes or more, starting from 48 hours before symptom onset. The facility will be thoroughly cleaned according to CDC guidelines by LCPS.

If you:

- Are identified to be a "community or close contact", you will be notified separately from this letter, and advised to actively monitor for fever, cough and other COVID-19 symptoms. Close contacts will be advised to take specific precautions. Close contacts are advised to seek testing immediately if they begin to develop symptoms.
- Are not identified as a close contact, you will not receive additional communication.

You should continue to practice the following routine preventive measures daily to protect your household and others around you:

1. Monitor your health by remaining alert for fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.
2. Notify your primary care provider immediately if you develop a fever (or feel feverish), cough, or difficulty breathing or develop any signs or symptoms of COVID-19. Call ahead when seeking medical care.
3. Practice safety precautions, such as maintaining physical distance (6 feet or more), wearing a face covering when going out in public, frequent handwashing, and staying home when ill.

Remember, people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. If you are at higher risk for severe illness, please advise your production staff.

We want to assure you that your health, and the health of our production cast and crew, are a top priority for Sterling Playmakers.

{Signed}

Individual Template Email for Positive COVID Case Exposure:

Dear {name or 'Crew Member'},

You have been identified as someone who has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. Assuring your safety and health as well as our other cast and crew is our top priority. At this time we ask that you follow the guidelines located on page 8 of

the Theater Reopening Policies and Procedures. We ask that you test if you are developing symptoms.

Please keep us updated, and we hope you stay well and safe during this turbulent time.

{ Signed }

Appendix D: Participation Waiver



Participation Waiver

I have received and read the policies and procedures instituted by Sterling Playmakers to ensure I can participate in this production in a safe capacity.

I agree to follow the policies and procedures instituted by Sterling Playmakers at all times.

I agree that by participating in this production I am doing so at my own health risk.

If I become ill during this production, I will neither hold accountable nor pursue legal action against Sterling Playmakers.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Appendix E: Audience Waiver



Audience Waiver

I am aware of all the policies and procedures instituted by Sterling Playmakers to ensure I am able to attend this performance in a safe capacity.

I agree to follow the policies and procedures instituted by Sterling Playmakers at all times, and

I agree that by attending this performance I am doing it at my own health risk.

If I become ill during or after this performance, I will neither hold accountable nor pursue legal action against Sterling Playmakers.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

*Please note that as of December 2021, the audience does not need to sign a waiver to see our productions. Producers should only issue these if they deem it necessary.