

Criteria to Assist Plato Board in Reopening In-Person Activities

June 30,2020

Introduction

In mid-March, Plato suspended in-person classes and events to protect the membership from Covid-19, in line with State Guidelines. Many learning events moved to virtual meetings; some using classroom applications, other using email, but each was considered successful. Since the suspension of events (including trips, Special Events, and meetings) all gatherings have ceased or held virtually. The Curriculum, Special Events, and Technology Committees have been working to develop virtual programming and have found many tools to continue to provide membership satisfactory learning opportunities.

Looking forward, the Plato Executive Committee believes that the decision of when to reopen in-person courses and events belongs to the Board and that their decision should be based on reliable scientific information. An advisory group of five Plato members, with backgrounds in public health, epidemiology, medicine and the law, was assembled to define and review the sources of information that should be used to provide the most reliable information and to prepare draft criteria for the Board's consideration to guide the reopening of Plato's learning opportunities.

Charge to Advisory Group

- To assist the Board and Officers in understanding which sources of information are reliable, how to interpret official guidance as it impacts a senior population, what standards need to be met to open an activity, and any other information that will be useful in protecting our members. And,
- The group will prepare draft criteria for the Board's consideration and will be a valuable resource as the Board deals with these important questions.

Methods Used to Create Criteria

The advisory group gathered pertinent data and documents, discussed the issues, and developed criteria to address reopening of in-person events. Material utilized in this effort are listed at the end of this document.

Discussion

The virus that causes Covid-19 is highly infectious, easily transmitted, and extremely virulent among seniors. CDC has found that 8 out of 10 US deaths have been in adults 65 years old and older with added risk to those already afflicted with common conditions of aging including obesity, diabetes, pulmonary, and coronary diseases. Currently, there is no vaccine or reliable prophylactic regimens to prevent the disease. Also, while treatment of severe illness may be improving, there are no widely accepted specific treatments or cures. Complicating prevention of Covid-19 is the shedding of virus and a large percentage of disease transmission (1/3 or even higher) attributable to people who are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic or are recovering from a prior infection. For these reasons, the work group wishes to emphasize the importance of the current advice to "Stay at Home", wear a mask in public, avoid gatherings, and exercise prudent cautions among friends and family.

Nationally, cases numbers have started to rise again, (increasing in some areas and decreasing in others) and there is no reason not to expect the virus to continue to circulate at varying levels for the foreseeable future as most people have not yet been infected. A fall surge is still a possibility as are virus mutations. Therefore, we consider Plato's customary activities, as practiced before the national 'State of Emergency' was issued, to be risky to our members. No in-person meetings for Plato seniors are recommended. We would entertain less stringent advice only after a potent vaccine is readily available to our members, and when incidence rates have decreased dramatically. At that time, Plato could consider some face to face events with prevention strategies that continue to minimize risk. At the same time, these types of events must also be virtual, to provide opportunities for all Plato members.

Every COVID guidance document, model, or chart has an asterisk that identifies vulnerable populations of special concern. That asterisk defines the entire Plato population. The older age group and underlying chronic conditions of aging, puts all of Plato in the vulnerable category. That should never be minimized, even if members feel they, as individuals, are not at high risk. Plato must develop all decisions based upon the fact that all of its members are vulnerable.

Because most, if not all, Plato members reside in and most venues are in Dane County, [Forward Dane](#) sets the minimum legal requirements for reopening decisions. This order is enforceable by any local law enforcement official. Most Plato classes and events are held at venues that will be impacted by those orders and possibly other guidelines and restrictions by individual facilities. As an example, a large percentage of classes are held at Oakwood West. Because that facility houses older and compromised individuals, they are currently restricting access to the campus. Once those stringent precautions are modified, they may still require precautions such as smaller numbers of attendees using their conference rooms, cleaning before and after a class, temperature checks upon arrival, and physical distancing. As a condition of access, Plato venues may also impose formal use agreements that require legal liability waivers, indemnification or insurance that must be considered.

[Forward Dane](#) uses [phased metrics approach](#). Currently, Dane County is under [Phase 2](#) for guidelines that impact businesses, workplaces and activities. Indoor gatherings of 50 people are less are allowed (100 or less outdoors) if they can maintain at least six-foot physical distancing. This rules out most classrooms and small meeting type settings. The County could move to [Phase 3](#) when certain metrics are met, but for our purposes this phase mainly introduces increased venue capacity limits and maintains physical distancing guidelines. [Phase 3](#) remains in effect (unless lowered) until a vaccine is available. There is no [Phase 4](#).

Plato has found great success in holding virtual meetings, events, and classes using platforms such as Google Meeting, Blackboard Collaborate, Zoom, Email and Teleconferencing. These tools have allowed membership to keep engaged and learning. Any decisions made about classes, meetings, events, tours, etc. should begin with making them as inclusive as possible. That would allow members who feel they must stay at home for whatever reason, stay engaged in the very reason Plato exists - Adult Learning. It also offers new participation opportunities to people who might otherwise have been excluded in the past due to disability, distance, or transportation challenges.



















Criteria Guidelines

1. Be inclusive, promote virtual classes, events, or gatherings where possible.
2. The guidelines in Forward Dane are the minimal guidelines that must be met, but that does not mean that Plato cannot be stricter.
3. A protective vaccine in conjunction with effective treatment therapies (no vaccine is 100% effective) are the only true guideposts for safely opening to all in-person activities again.

Additional Considerations

At some point in the future, Plato classes and events will reopen. Plato will be required to meet the criteria of the meeting venues. This may lead, on a case by case basis, to additional cleaning costs, smaller groups, larger spaces, and expanded use of microphones and virtual meeting connections and some legal considerations. If the meeting venue allows an event to be held, assure that those who cannot attend in-person can still attend virtually. As Plato begins to reopen, special guidance must be developed for transportation issues. How many people should be on trips involving buses? How would a venue in a different city or a different state provide for social distance, if that was still in place? What about meals? These are all questions that will need to be addressed as Plato moves forward. It is important to begin that dialogue.

Table of Allowable In-Person Plato Activities

Plato Activity	Current	Next Step	Normal
In-person Classes			
Plato Open House			
Annual Meeting			
Board & Committee Meetings			
Field Trips			
Museums and Performances			

*Virtual meeting opportunities are encouraged whenever and wherever feasible, and as an extension of in-person meetings when normality returns. This table reflects the Phase 2 and Phase 3 categories found in Forward Dane.

Until fully implemented primary prevention allows unrestricted activities, in-person gatherings of any sort, should not be sanctioned by the organization. Plato cannot guarantee or enforce individual compliance that all members will adhere to safety practices such as face masks, social distancing, hand sanitizers, etc. Thus, virtual participation should be maintained. The Plato Board should review this guidance every six months to see if it should be updated. The work group can reconvene upon request of the Plato Board.

Resources and References

The following documents, articles and websites were reviewed:

- [The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, COVID-19 Guidance for Older Adults](#)
 - [Deciding to Go Out](#)
- [Badger Bounce Back Guidelines](#)
- [Forward Dane, Phased Reopening Plan](#)
- [Wisconsin Department of Health Services COVID Website](#)
- [Letter from Greg Gelembiuk, PhD, UW Madison](#) (Critique of Dane County Forward Dane Plan)
- [Dane County COVID-19 Dashboard](#)
- [COVID Act Now- COVID data and risk level for Dane County.](#)
- [US COVID Atlas](#)

- [COVID-19 Impact Analysis Platform](#)
- [COVID-19 Hospitalization Tracking Project](#)
- [COVID-19 Situational Awareness Update \(WHA WI Hospitalization Data\)](#)
- [State-level multi-model forecast, REICH Lab](#)
- [IHME State Level Social Distancing and COVID Projections](#)
- [Rt Covid-1](#)
- [Population-Based Estimates of Chronic Conditions Affecting Risk for Complication from Cononavirus Disease, US. Mary L. Adams, et.al.](#)
- [Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Reopening Guidelines](#)
- [STAT Tracker . www.statnews.com](#)
- [AARP documents](#)

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