



# Bringing Self-Help Groups Back Together In-Person

Society Policies and Safety Standards

Together We Are Stronger.

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**Before we begin...**

# 1

# Society Guiding Principles

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.

# 2

## Society Safety Protocol

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**Facial coverings:** If you are not vaccinated, facial coverings are required. If you are vaccinated, facial coverings are optional.

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**Screening:** all participants, volunteers, staff and attendees must agree to the Covid-19 Health Screening statements.

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**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.

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**Maintain clean spaces:** Follow CDC guidelines for routine cleaning and sanitizing of restrooms, shared spaces and high touch surfaces.

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**Handwashing:** Ensure adequate handwashing supplies and/or hand sanitizer with minimum 60% alcohol is available.

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**Communication, education and expectations:** participant, attendee and volunteer expectations and education will be distributed prior to and at the gathering.

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# 3 Health Screening Protocol

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If I am fully vaccinated by an FDA authorized COVID-19 vaccine, I understand wearing a mask is optional.

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If I am not fully vaccinated, I agree to wear a mask at all times during this event, except when eating or drinking.

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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.



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**Three requirements  
of leaders**

# If you would like to bring your group back together in-person.....



**AGREE TO FOLLOW THE MEETING GUIDELINES & IMPLEMENT SOCIETY'S SAFETY PROTOCOL**



**ATTEND OR LISTEN TO TRAINING AROUND SOCIETY SAFETY PROTOCOLS**



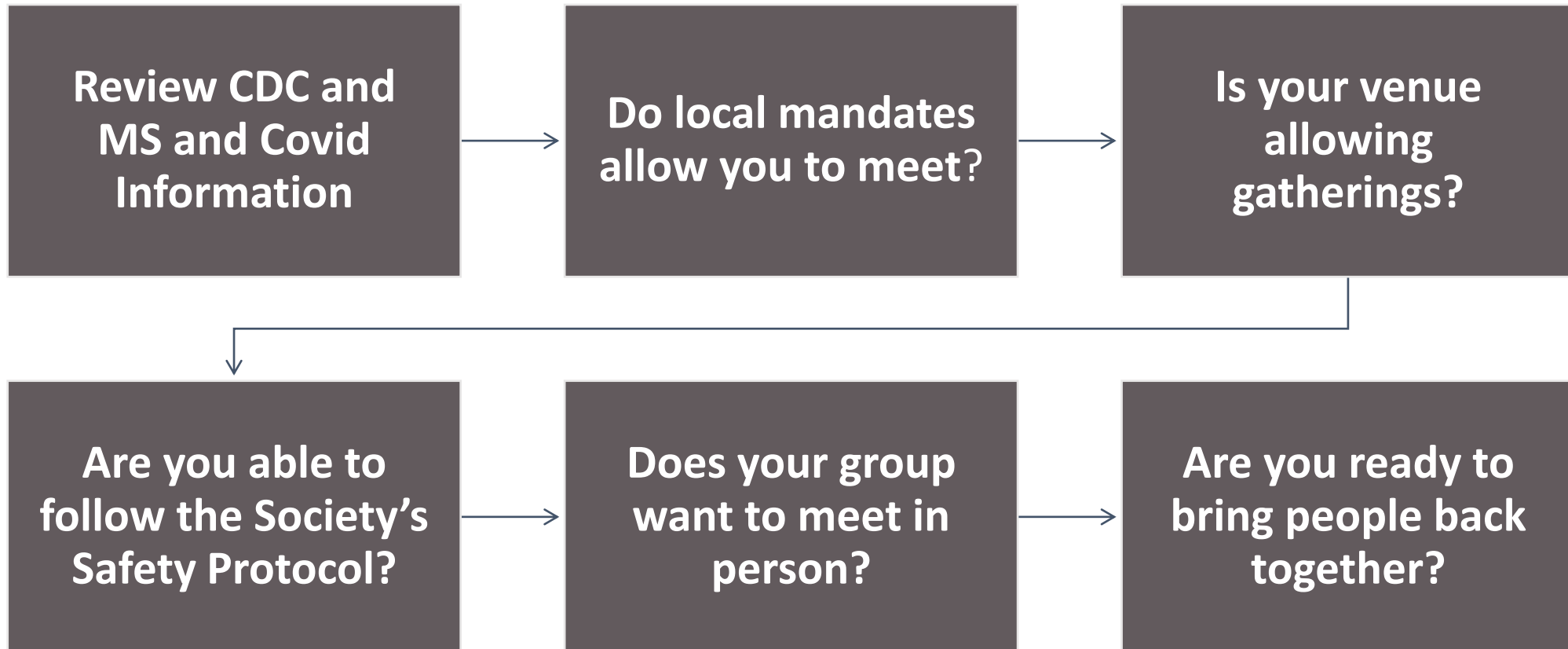
**COMMUNICATE WITH STAFF PARTNER AND AGREE TO SAFETY PROTOCOLS**

How do I  
know if it is  
time to bring  
my group  
back  
together?

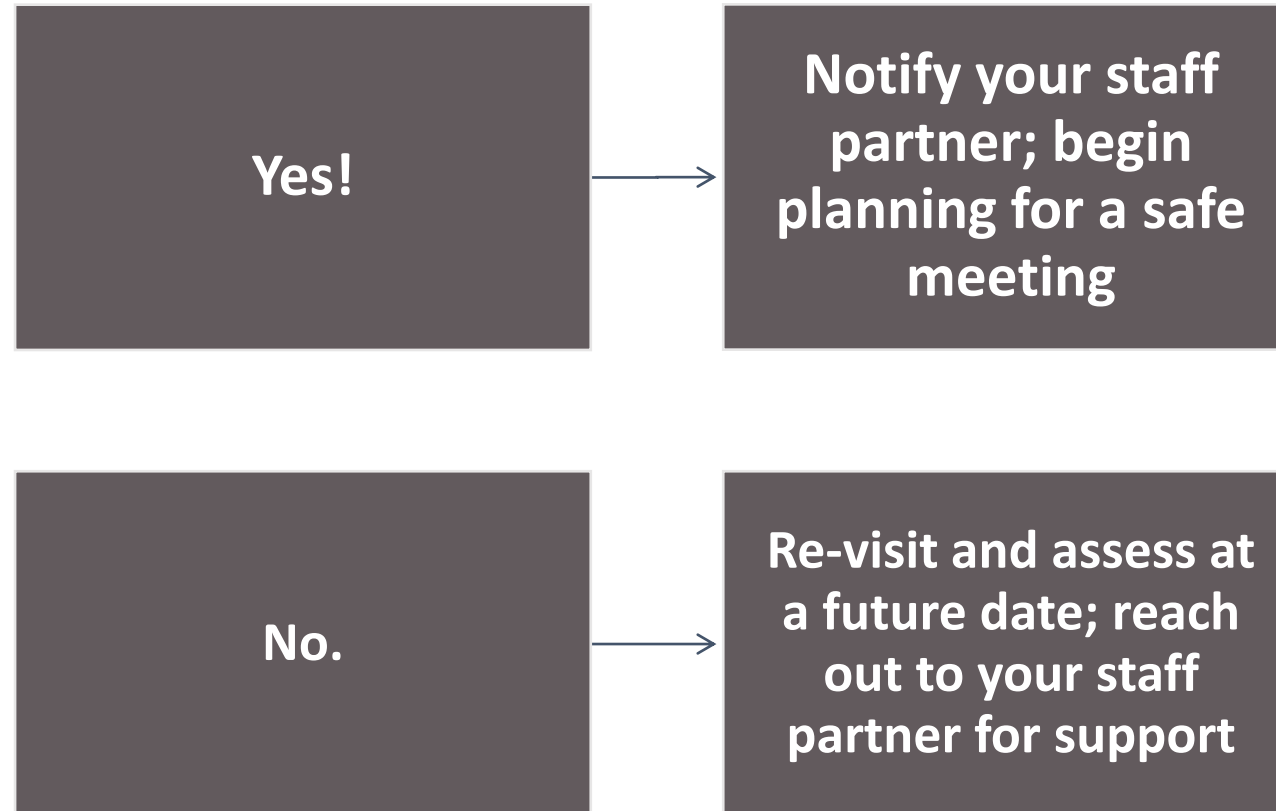




# Steps to evaluate whether its time for your group...



# Now what?



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**Plan: What to do before the meeting**

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**Prepare: What to do during the meeting**

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**Resources: Your staff partner**

# Three Steps to Success

# What to do before your meeting...

- ✓ Attend or listen to Society training
- Communicate with group members
- Prepare to follow safety protocol
- Confirm meeting logistics with staff partner

***If meeting requires an exception to a safety requirement the meeting should not be conducted.***

# What to communicate to group members...

- ❑ Use email language provided by your staff partner
- ❑ Customize message to include meeting date, time, etc.

*Questions or challenges should be directed to your staff partner  
or [peerconnections@nmss.org](mailto:peerconnections@nmss.org)*

## What to do at your meeting...

- ❑ Hang a sign on the door that outlines the Safety Protocol
- ❑ Read the Society's updated self-help group disclaimer
- ❑ Follow the Society's Safety Standards

*Questions or challenges should be directed to your staff partner  
or [peerconnections@nmss.org](mailto:peerconnections@nmss.org)*

# What to read before the meeting...

*The National MS Society respects the rights of people with MS to obtain any and all information they want related to MS including information on wellness, medical treatments or complementary therapies, products and services. The information presented at this meeting does not necessarily reflect the views or official position of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, nor carry the endorsement or support of the Society. To protect your privacy and the privacy of other members, please do not share information about other members of this group outside of this meeting. For specific medical advice, contact your physician.*

*For the opinion of the National Medical Advisory Committee of the National MS Society on any therapy, treatment or product, please contact the Society at 1-800-344-4867 (1-800-FIGHT-MS), or visit our website at [nationalMSSociety.org](http://nationalMSSociety.org).*

*As a participant in this meeting, you've agreed to follow our safety protocols and understand that if not fully vaccinated, wearing a mask is required. As a participant, you are also agreeing that you understand the contagious nature of COVID-19 and assume all risk associated with attending meeting, including being exposed to COVID-19, and, as a participant, waive the National Multiple Sclerosis Society from all liability therewith.*

## What can I expect from my staff partner...

- ✓ Access to In-Person Meeting Guidelines that include communication templates and links to this training
- ✓ Confirmation that you have received and understand the safety standards and that your group intends to meet in-person
- ✓ Support and answers to your questions
- ✓ Changes/updates to the website

*Questions or challenges can also be directed to or*  
**[peerconnections@nmss.org](mailto:peerconnections@nmss.org)**



# Frequently Asked Questions



# FAQ's

## Do I have to bring my group back together in-person?

Absolutely not! If your group is not comfortable coming back together in-person, you do not need to do so. You are welcome to remain a virtual group as long as you wish.

## FAQ's cont.

### Can my group meet in-person and online?

Sure! Groups can meet in-person, virtually or both. Work with your staff partner to talk about what is best for your group.

## FAQ's cont.

**My group location/venue is no longer available for meetings. What other types of venues should we be looking at?**

Many of our groups are held in public use rooms that are located in medical offices, community centers, or office buildings. Some are held at libraries, churches, or restaurants. Meeting spaces need to be accessible, and your staff partner can help you determine if the space meets accessibility standards.

## FAQ's cont.

**Can I require participants to be vaccinated to attend a group meeting?**

No, groups are open to all constituents regardless of vaccination status. If vaccination status is an uncomfortable topic in your group and you anticipate challenges following the safety protocol, you do not need to come back together in person.

## FAQ's cont.

**Can I ask members of the group to prove that they are vaccinated if they are not wearing a mask?**

We will not be requiring proof of vaccination. If members of the group state that they are not vaccinated but refuse to wear facial covering, you should ask that they not attend the meeting.

## FAQ's cont.

**Can we have food and drinks during our meeting?**

If the Society Safety Standards can be met, you may have food at your meeting. We also recommend individual, pre-packaged food to the extent possible.

## FAQ's cont.

### Can I submit reimbursement for meeting supplies?

Yes! Your venue may already have sufficient cleaning protocols in place but if you need to purchase supplies to supplement cleaning in order to follow the safety protocol and conduct a safe meeting, work with your staff partner to be reimbursed.



# Questions???



**WHAT ADDITIONAL  
QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE?**



**WHAT QUESTIONS ARE YOU  
GROUP MEMBERS ASKING?**



**WHAT ELSE DO WE NEED  
TO BE THINKING ABOUT?**