

Thank you for being part of the solution and changing the conversation to help get us back to normal! Here are some materials to help you talk to everyone you know about more than how annoying the pandemic is. Let's take charge instead of just complaining about it or ignoring it.

COVID cases locally and nationally are at a critical point. Local public health messaging efforts to date have helped some, but need to reach further. It is time for more of us to share the message and get word out to more people that we can either take charge and change the outcome of the current wave or we can suffer like the Dakotas have been. Let's work together to give our community a better 2021 instead!

The current emergency is post-Thanksgiving and pre-Christmas, but after the 25th, then there's New Year's... And looking further ahead, there will be expanded testing options and eventually vaccination to publicize. It is also vitally important to counterbalance vaccine disinformation.

Who do you know in these categories? These are who we need to be talking to:

- People who are interested but not yet clear on what the public health recommendations are
- People who have heard the public health recs but are unsure how to apply them
- People who have not paid attention so far but who would listen to familiar, trusted voices

What do people need to know? The short version:

Doctors and nurses who are dealing directly with COVID-19 here in the Valley are [alarmed, worried, and sad](#). People are in danger in our community and hospital capacity is threatened. We all need to recognize that normal activities with loved ones can be dangerous right now and that [people without symptoms who do not realize they are infected are most likely to spread the virus](#). In particular, [typical holiday activities are very risky](#). Fortunately we know [what we need to do to stop the spread](#) of the disease: wear masks (properly), practice distancing, increase hygiene, isolate if exposed or with any symptoms, and avoid indoor gatherings.

Toolkit -- What does all this mean for you, your family, and your community?

Basic ideas for coming up with [alternatives to risky indoor gatherings](#) right now. Either take it online or:

- Stay outside!
- Keep it brief.
- Wear masks (even around family, if they live in separate households).
- Keep your distance.
- Reduce the number of people gathering.
- Incorporate added hygiene.
- Don't attend if you've had any exposures (like other indoor gatherings).
- Don't attend if you have any symptoms (of any kind!).

More ideas to enable safer gathering from other sources:

- [garage retrofit](#),
- [park ideas](#), and
- [heated clothing](#).

Learn from a local example:

A local organization had been continuing to hold group meetings over a meal, sticking to a familiar calendar of events and providing some sense of normalcy and the benefit of interaction to their members. Through the summer and early fall they implemented mitigation measures parallel to what had been modeled by restaurants: having attendees distanced, minimizing shared surfaces, increasing hygiene, and having everyone masked until they were going to eat. However, given the White House Coronavirus Task Force recommendations immediately following Thanksgiving that people over 65 should not be indoors in any setting with people from other households who are not wearing masks and that people under 40 who gathered with others over the holiday should assume they had been infected but were asymptomatic and should isolate and if possible get tested, the organization realized they would need to make adjustments to their upcoming events.

Options they considered:

- holding the meeting in person and indoors but eliminating the food component so that everyone participating could remain masked (and distanced) the entire time;
- holding the meeting in person, but moving it outside (a challenge in winter of course!) with all the other mitigation still in place to a space like a tent, garage, or warehouse, so long as significant cross ventilation is provided; or
- shifting the event to virtual.

They also realized they would need to communicate to their members about the reasoning behind the change of plans and be sure they understood that even if the event does happen in some modified in-person format, individuals should consider their own vulnerability, level of exposure, and possible symptoms before deciding to attend.

Resources:

- White House Coronavirus Task Force PA Profile Reports from [Nov 29](#) and [Dec 6](#)
- GSV United Way [MaskUp campaign](#) and [Valley Health Forum](#) (forum starts at 19:30)
- PA Chamber of Business and Industry [Bringing PA Back and #WhyIWearIt Campaign](#)
- Department of Health [Coronavirus Information](#) page
- [Dear Pandemic](#) -- scientists and epidemiologists provide info and answer questions
- Spotlight: Orange [website](#) and [facebook page](#) -- messaging from and for the Valley
- Lewisburg Neighborhoods [News](#) compiling local data and [Radio Free Lewisburg](#) podcast