

# **Texas Master Naturalist Program's COVID Safety and Response Guidelines**

## **May 21, 2021**

Safety is our guiding principle for operations. The Texas Master Naturalist™ Program has a responsibility for creating a safe and friendly space for all members, attendees, local partners and the public and communities we serve. The TMN Program will operate under the following guidelines for engaging with peers and the public through TMN Training, outreach and service projects.

When representing themselves as Texas Master Naturalist volunteers, and at all Texas Master Naturalist events, meetings, service projects, etc. volunteers must comply with all federal, state, county and local public health proclamations and ordinances. Be mindful of and follow local individual partners' and project locations' health and safety policies. They may require more than what other state and local authorities do.

Texas Master Naturalist volunteers are further encouraged to evaluate their own comfort, risk, health, and safety when considering meetings and volunteer service opportunities. If you are a volunteer in a vulnerable or 'high risk' category, please continue to consider remote service opportunities where possible. If your TMN chapter is in — or serves — a vulnerable community, please continue to consider all health and safety precautions or remote and socially distanced opportunities where applicable.

**The following considerations should direct how the Texas Master Naturalist Program will operate for the foreseeable future.**

### **Considerations for all TMN Activities:**

It is very important to know and follow all federal, state, county and local COVID guidelines/restrictions before conducting TMN Activities. Beyond these, please consider the following in planning gatherings:

1. Virtual meeting platform tools are useful and should remain an important consideration for planning meetings and events.
2. For any indoor or outdoor activities that do occur in-person, masks and social distancing considerations are encouraged.

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**Please note regarding vaccines:** Our program and agencies currently have no legal authority to develop policy based on private health information (HIPAA laws) at this time and we don't anticipate the program drafting its own policy or allowances, etc. addressing whether individuals (members or the public) with vaccines can/cannot participate in any TMN activities and where, when and how.

**Texas Master Naturalist members or members of the public should not be asked about their vaccination status.** Chapters may encourage persons in program settings to continuing following CDC guidance.

**There shall be NO EFFORT (including casual comments made publicly or privately) to DISCOURAGE the use of face coverings or any COVID related safety precaution.** Those who wish to wear masks and practice COVID protocols should be respected and their wishes supported.