

# What the Gov: As Illinois Reopens, What Restrictions Remain for Weddings?

June 22, 2020



Illinois on Friday is entering phase four of the state's reopening plan following the coronavirus just as the summer's wedding season would typically be in full bloom.

Under the plans Gov. J.B. Pritzker laid out, marriage celebrations finally will be freed up to allow more than 10 attendees. But they will still be limited to no more than 50 people indoors — or fewer for smaller rooms.

Brides, grooms and their families are welcoming the looser guidelines. But they are still frustrated and disappointed hotels and other large venues are facing what they see as unfair rules compared to restaurants and gyms, for instance, which will be allowed to open for indoor use with restrictions based on capacity and not subject to the hard-50 limit.

---

[What the Gov](#)

# What The Gov: What Questions Do You Have About How Government in Illinois Is Responding to Coronavirus?

March 16, 2020



“The number one question that needs to be addressed is the capacity question on large venues,” said Debi Clark, whose daughter is planning on getting married in Naperville next month. “We are speaking on behalf of others who are in identical situations who have a large venue space and have no intention of overfilling that space.”

Clark recently reached out to the Better Government Association with questions about what Illinois’ phase four would look like for weddings as she helped plan the marriage celebration for her daughter, a neonatal intensive care unit nurse who has already been forced to reschedule her wedding once due to the pandemic.

The BGA in recent weeks has answered questions about local governments’ response to the coronavirus and the issue of weddings, [which we wrote about last month](#), has taken on a great deal of interest.

Pritzker’s office released the details of phase four on June 22, stating the limit for indoor gatherings will be increased to 50 from 10, and up to 100 for outdoor events. Dance floors will remain closed in phase four. In response to questions from the BGA, state health officials said these requirements may change in the future based on new data and guidance.

The differing rules from one type of business to the next has left the weddings industry confused about the restrictions, according to couples and event planners.

Michael Jacobson, president and CEO of the Illinois Hotel & Lodging Association,

said there is no reason hotels and other event spaces should be limited to the hard-50 threshold, pointing out the large size of some venues allows for safer social distancing protocols than those possible in small restaurants.

“We’re not arguing that a 50,000 person convention at McCormick Place should be allowed on June 26,” Jacobson said. “But there are weddings that are 100 to 150 people that can be held in these giant ballrooms throughout the state with plenty of social distancing and other safety precautions put in place.”

The IHLA released a proposal last week urging Pritzker to allow event and meeting facilities to operate with a 50% capacity even if that total is beyond the 50-person limit, which Jacobson said is a necessary measure to ensure the financial viability of many of these businesses.

“No one wants to be the site of the next COVID outbreak,” Jacobson said. “The steps we have offered up are a way that we can put people back to work but in a safe and responsible way.”

Compared to neighboring states, Illinois has the most restrictive limit on social gatherings. Indiana allows for groups of up to 250 people, and Wisconsin has no statewide restrictions in place after the state’s Supreme Court overturned the governor’s stay-at-home order last month, according to [National Public Radio](#).

Lori Stephenson, owner of Lola Event Productions, said beyond the state requirements, couples also must decide if a coronavirus-era wedding, and all the social distancing requirements that come with it, is really what they want.

“There are a lot of things for traditional weddings that aren’t going to happen,” Stephenson said. “If that is a wedding that you can be happy and excited about, then great. But if it’s not and you feel like you’re settling, you only get one chance to do this so let’s push it back until we can have the wedding that you want.”

Clark, whose daughter is still planning on moving forward with her Naperville wedding next month, said her family is committed to following social distancing protocols — she is even making monogrammed face masks for the celebration. But she still believes the ballroom, which can hold up to 300 people, can safely accommodate a much larger guest list than the current rules allow.

“We are going from a full-blown spectacular affair to a reduced version,” Clark

said. "My daughter is such a hard-working nurse and she deserves a wedding with fellow nurses and close friends instead of just immediate family."