

WTA County Unit Policies during COVID-19

(updated June 18, 2020)

Unit meetings are critical to WTA. It is where we network, learn, and develop political capacity with state Representatives and Senators. All town elected and appointed officials are encouraged to attend county unit meetings.

Without effective unit meetings, town government would be much different. WTA is committed to working with unit leadership to continue this winning strategy. We aim to make lemonade out of lemons with all that we do. In fact, WTA is already stronger because of things we've learned during COVID-19. If we collaborate to take the right steps, we think your county unit can be too!

Based on recommendations made by county unit chairs, vice chairs, secretaries, and treasurers during unit leadership meetings in May and June, 2020, as well as considerations for WTA liability, insurance coverage, and public health, the WTA Board of Directors has adopted the following guidelines for holding unit meetings.

- The perspectives and pre-existing health of the 7,000 plus town officials vary widely. So, does access to adequate physical facilities and technology. Thus, it is necessary to provide for “both” in-person and “virtual” unit meeting options. This “both-and” strategy will become familiar throughout WTA’s approach during COVID-19.
- We strongly encourage every county unit to hold a minimum of 4 unit meetings per year. Many units meet more frequently. For those units that hold the recommended 4 or more unit meetings per year, 2 or more should be virtual only. Any in person unit meetings can certainly incorporate a virtual format; however, this comes with many technology and participation challenges that everyone should be aware of and attempt to overcome to the best of their ability.
- WTA will coordinate the virtual component of up to 4 unit meetings per year and provide for the educational program for 2 of those virtual unit meetings. The program will be 20 minutes plus 10 minutes for Q & A.
- In order to achieve the best learning and communication environment, virtual meetings should be concise, lasting 60 minutes (recommended) and 75 minutes (maximum).
- Due to WTA staffing and technology limitations (2 virtual meetings per county is 142 unit meetings per year), we encourage county units to consider combining counties when meetings are conducted virtually. To make sure staffing is available, we will be limiting the number of virtual unit meetings per district per quarter. WTA will work with unit leadership to deploy a scheduling system. This will likely result in virtual unit meetings not always being held on a county unit’s standard date (e.g., 3rd Tuesday).
- If there are no state or local public health orders in place restricting gatherings in a county and unit leadership decides it is safe enough in your area to proceed with in-person county unit meetings, you must take steps to limit any potential liability for yourselves and the hosting location by ensuring that CDC and WEDC guidelines for social distancing, sanitization, and food service are followed. For example, this at least means finding a facility (inside or outside) that allows for six foot distancing and has hand washing capacity. Hand hygiene is important and sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol should be available if a supply can be obtained. Summer picnics and food are popular and frequent. If unit leadership makes a choice to serve food, they should follow both CDC and WEDC guidelines. Another example of a necessary strategy is to forego self-service and open coolers. Servers should wear appropriate gloves and face coverings when serving food. Please visit the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>) and WEDC (<https://wedc.org/reopen-guidelines/>) websites for more information.