

Some Covid-19 Reopening Guidance:

Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith

CDC offers the following general considerations to help communities of faith discern how best to practice their beliefs while keeping their staff and congregations safe. Millions of Americans embrace worship as an essential part of life. For many faith traditions, gathering together for worship is at the heart of what it means to be a community of faith. But as Americans are now aware, gatherings present a risk for increasing spread of COVID-19 during this Public Health Emergency. CDC offers these suggestions for faith communities to consider and accept, reject, or modify, consistent with their own faith traditions, in the course of preparing to reconvene for in-person gatherings while still working to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

This guidance is not intended to infringe on rights protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution or any other federal law, including the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA). The federal government may not prescribe standards for interactions of faith communities in houses of worship, and in accordance with the First Amendment, no faith community should be asked to adopt any mitigation strategies that are more stringent than the mitigation strategies asked of similarly situated entities or activities.

In addition, we note that while many types of gatherings are important for civic and economic well-being, religious worship has particularly profound significance to communities and individuals, including as a right protected by the First Amendment. State and local authorities are reminded to take this vital right into account when establishing their own re-opening plans.

Scaling Up Operations

- Establish and maintain communication with local and State authorities to determine current mitigation levels in your community.
- Provide protections for staff and congregants at [higher risk for severe illness](#) from COVID-19. Offer options for staff at [higher risk for severe illness](#) (including older adults and people of all ages with certain underlying medical conditions) that limit their exposure risk. Offer options for congregants at [higher risk of severe illness](#) that limit their exposure risk (e.g., remote participation in services).

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- Consistent with applicable federal and State laws and regulations, put in place policies that protect the privacy and confidentiality of people at [higher risk for severe illness](#) regarding underlying medical conditions.
- Encourage any organizations that share or use the facilities to also follow these considerations as applicable.
- If your community provides social services in the facility as part of its mission, consult CDC's information for [schools](#) and [businesses and workplaces](#), as relevant, for helpful information.

Promote [healthy hygiene practices](#)

- Encourage staff and congregants to maintain good hand hygiene, [washing hands](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for those who can safely use hand sanitizer), tissues, and no-touch trash cans.
- Encourage staff and congregants to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed.
- Whenever soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be used.
- Consider posting signs on how to [stop the spreadpdf icon](#) of COVID-19 and how to [promote everyday protective measurespdf icon](#), such as [washing hands](#), covering coughs and sneezes, and [properly wearing a face coveringimage icon](#).

Cloth face coverings

- Encourage use of [cloth face coverings](#) among staff and congregants. Face coverings are most essential when [social distancing](#) is difficult. Note: [Cloth face coverings](#) should not be placed on children younger than 2 years old, anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, and anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance. [Cloth face coverings](#) are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms.

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Intensify cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation

- [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects in between uses.
- Develop a schedule of increased, routine cleaning and disinfection.
- Avoid use of items that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected.
- Ensure [safe and correct application](#) of disinfectants and keep them away from children.
- Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.
- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, etc. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety risk to children using the facility.
- If your faith community offers multiple services, consider scheduling services far enough apart to allow time for cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces between services. [Take steps](#) to ensure that all water systems and features (for example, drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of [Legionnaires' disease](#) and other diseases associated with water.

Promote social distancing

- Take steps to limit the size of gatherings in accordance with the guidance and directives of state and local authorities and subject to the protections of the First Amendment and any other applicable federal law.
- Promote [social distancing](#) at services and other gatherings, ensuring that clergy, staff, choir, volunteers and attendees at the services follow social distancing, as circumstances and faith traditions allow, to lessen their risk.
- Consider holding services and gatherings in a large, well-ventilated area or outdoors, as circumstances and faith traditions allow.
- Consider appropriate mitigation measures, including taking steps to limit the size of gatherings maintaining [social distancing](#), at other gatherings such as funerals, weddings, religious education classes, youth events, support groups and any other programming, where consistent with the faith tradition.

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- Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or walkways and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and children remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating “one-way routes” in hallways).

Take steps to minimize community sharing of worship materials and other items

- Consistent with the community’s faith tradition, consider temporarily limiting the sharing of frequently touched objects, such as worship aids, prayer rugs, prayer books, hymnals, religious texts and other bulletins, books, or other items passed or shared among congregants, and encouraging congregants to bring their own such items, if possible, or photocopying or projecting prayers, songs, and texts using electronic means.
- Modify the methods used to receive financial contributions. Consider a stationary collection box, the main, or electronic methods of collection regular financial contributions instead of shared collection trays or baskets.
- Consider whether physical contact (e.g., shaking hands, hugging, or kissing) can be limited among members of the faith community.
- If food is offered at any event, consider pre-packaged options, and avoid buffet or family-style meals if possible.

Link to CDC for above:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fphp%2Ffaith-based.html

Yellow Phase Guidance for Pennsylvania Commonwealth:

Yellow Phase

Work & Congregate Setting Restrictions

- Telework Must Continue Where Feasible
- Businesses with In-Person Operations Must [Follow Business and Building Safety Orders](#)
- Child Care May Open Complying with Guidance
- Congregate Care and Prison Restrictions in Place
- Schools Remain Closed for In-Person Instruction

Social Restrictions

- Stay at Home Order Lifted for Aggressive Mitigation

Some Covid-19 Reopening Guidance:

- Large Gatherings of More Than 25 Prohibited
- In-Person Retail Allowable, Curbside and Delivery Preferable
- Indoor Recreation, Health and Wellness Facilities and Personal Care Services (such as gyms, spas, hair salons, massage therapy), and all Entertainment (such as casinos, theaters) Remain Closed
- Restaurants and Bars May Open Outdoor Dining, in Addition to Carry-Out and Delivery (effective 6/5/2020)
 - [All businesses must follow CDC](#) and DOH guidance for social distancing and cleaning
 - Monitor public health indicators, adjust orders and restrictions as necessary

After a county transitions to the yellow phase, we will closely monitor for increased risk, such as significant outbreaks. If overall risk remains mitigated for fourteen days, we will transition the county to the green phase.

The green phase eases most restrictions by lifting the stay at home and business closure orders to allow the economy to strategically reopen while continuing to prioritize public health.

While this phase will facilitate a return to a “new normal,” it will be equally important to continue to monitor public health indicators and adjust orders and restrictions as necessary to ensure the spread of disease remains at a minimum.

Also for your information, link to Church opening guidelines from the Philadelphia Archdiocese:

<http://archphila.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Directives-Restricted-Period-5-27.pdf>