

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Requirements for Faith-based Communities, Places of Worship, Weddings, and Funerals

5/6/2021

This guidance applies to all business and places of public accommodation (“businesses”)—as defined by Executive Order 21-11, as amended by Executive Order 21-21 (“EO”)—that offer wedding, funeral, and faith-based services and ceremonies from Friday, May 7, 2021, at 12:00 p.m. (noon) through May 27, 2021. Businesses must continue to follow all other applicable [Stay Safe Industry Guidance \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp). The EO requires all businesses to have and implement a written COVID-19 Preparedness Plan that addresses EO requirements and applicable Stay Safe Industry Guidance. For more information about plan requirements, refer to applicable [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp).

Recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19

COVID-19 is primarily spread through respiratory droplets, so the risk of COVID-19 transmission increases when people gather with other households. Several key strategies can reduce the risk of getting sick or transmitting COVID-19:

- Wear a well-fitting face covering. Visit [Frequently Asked Questions About the Requirement to Wear Face Coverings \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html).
- Keep at least 6 feet of physical distance from other households and wash hands often.
- Get tested. Visit [COVID-19 Testing \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html) for information about who should get tested and how to get a test.
- Stay home if you are sick or were exposed to COVID-19. Visit [If You Are Sick: COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html) and [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf).

- Get vaccinated. Visit [COVID-19 Vaccine \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/index.html).
- Work from home. Working from home is strongly recommended and businesses are strongly encouraged to allow employees to work from home when possible. Employers must provide reasonable accommodations as required under existing federal and state law. Employers are strongly encouraged to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with one or more members of their household who have underlying medical conditions and who are unable to be vaccinated.

Key requirements for services and ceremonies

- These requirements apply to **services** and **ceremonies** connected to faith-based gatherings, weddings, and funerals.
 - Venues that host a reception, luncheon, gathering, or other similar activity before or after a service or ceremony must follow the applicable [Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp). When indoors, these gatherings may have occupancy limits and additional requirements to minimize spread of COVID-19.
- Social distancing is required indoors.
 - Limit indoor occupancy to allow for 6 feet of distance between people from different households or groups at all times. Implement and maintain social distancing between households or groups in all indoor settings.
 - Members of the same household (regardless of household size) are not required to maintain social distance from members of their household.
 - Attendees or visitors may also choose to attend a ceremony with a group of a maximum of 10 people (which may include members of different households) and are not required to maintain social distance from members of their group.
- Staff and workers are required to stay home if they have COVID-19 symptoms or have tested positive. Visit [If You Are Sick: COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html) for more information. Staff or workers who have been exposed to COVID-19 should follow the [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf).
- Music is an integral part of many faith-based services, weddings, and funerals. Singing and instrumental music produced by woodwind or brass instruments are higher-risk activities for COVID-19 spread due to the aggressive expelling of respiratory droplets. If choosing to provide live music of any kind, follow the requirements (and consider the recommendations) for [Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf).
 - Live music performances are allowed but, when indoors, performers must maintain physical distancing of 6 feet between other performers and 12 feet from the audience.
 - Congregational singing may occur if all participants wear face coverings while indoors.

Preparedness plan guidance for services and ceremonies

Follow the **requirements** below and in the Universal Plan Guidance for COVID-19 Preparedness Plans found at [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp) and consider the additional **recommendations** below.

1. [Use of face coverings](#)
2. [Maintain 6 feet of social distance between households or groups in indoor settings](#)
3. [Training and communication](#)
4. [General considerations](#)

1. Use of face coverings

Requirements

- Executive Order 20-81 requires all people to wear face coverings while indoors. In addition, workers and volunteers must wear face coverings when outdoors in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained. For more information about face covering requirements, recommendations, and exceptions, refer to [Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html).
- Ensure all members of the congregation wear face coverings when participating in congregational singing indoors.

Recommendations

- Ensure that all people, including staff, members, and visitors bring their own face coverings, or be prepared to offer face coverings for use.
- Encourage members and visitors to wear face coverings outdoors, particularly when it is difficult or impossible to maintain 6 feet of distance from members of other households.

2. Maintain 6 feet of social distance between households or groups in indoor settings

Requirements

- For **indoor** services or ceremonies, ensure that social distancing of at least 6 feet is maintained between members of different households or groups of up to 10 people who attend together.
 - Establish seating arrangements and establish other controls (floor markings, marked queues, etc.) to ensure these requirements are met.

3. Training and communication

Recommendations

- Advise people who are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 infection to strongly consider not attending services or events. People over 65 and people of any age with certain underlying medical conditions who have not been vaccinated are at higher risk.
- Encourage members and participants to consider vaccination for their protection from COVID-19. For more information, visit [About COVID-19 Vaccine: For fully vaccinated people \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/basics.html#recs\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/basics.html#recs).
- Communicate with members and participants the health screening and masking requirements.
- Use websites, social media, pre-appointment phone calls, and other outlets to inform members of the steps being taken for their protection and the protection of staff.
- Use posters and signs to guide participants about how to comply with requirements and recommendations. Visit [Materials and Resources for COVID-19 Response \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/index.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/index.html).
- If your faith-based organization is contacted by local public health or the Minnesota Department of Health regarding COVID-19 cases at your facility, it is strongly recommended that you inform your membership that there have been COVID-19 cases in attendance.
 - Ensure you maintain privacy and do not disclose information (particularly information relating to specific people) that is considered private or confidential under state or federal law.
 - Informing members of positive participants will alert them to get tested and stay home should they develop symptoms. For close contacts of someone with COVID-19, follow [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf).

4. General considerations

Recommendations

- As requirements are set by Executive Orders for the faith-based organization sector, your community may choose to implement more restrictive practices regarding gathering size and limiting the types of gatherings offered, based on the risk tolerance of your community.
- Continue on-line services, phone contact, and other outreach to vulnerable community members, even as other members engage in person. Due to their risk level, some of your members and staff may not feel comfortable resuming in-person contact for a longer period of time.

Related guidance documents

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Guidance: Requirements for All Indoor Businesses and Other Entities found on [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp)

Guidance for Caring for People in Their Homes – for non-medical visits found on [Stay Safe in Social Gatherings \(staysafe.mn.gov/individuals-families/social-gatherings.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/individuals-families/social-gatherings.jsp)

[Planning Funeral and Memorial Services during COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/providers/mortsci/docs/planduringcovid.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/providers/mortsci/docs/planduringcovid.pdf)

[Guidance for Hmong Funerals during COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hmongfuneral.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hmongfuneral.pdf)

[Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf)

Gatherings, receptions, and celebrations must follow [Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp)

Sunday School or other youth programs that are not classroom style, seated events should follow COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth and Student Programs found on [Stay Safe Guidance for Schools, Colleges, and Universities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/schools.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/schools.jsp).

Child care, youth programs, and camps must follow [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Certified Child Care, Youth Programs, and Camps \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/youthguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/youthguide.pdf).