

Diocese of San Angelo
Phase Two
COVID-19 Gathering Protocols
April 29, 2021

The following Phase Two Gathering Protocols become effective in the Diocese of San Angelo on May 8, 2021. These protocols relate to the use of church facilities for gatherings such as receptions, family reunions, funeral meals, baby or wedding showers, choir practices, meetings of parish or outside organizations, parish festivals, etc.

1. Civil regulations:

Please follow state, county, and city regulations for gatherings.

2. If a gathering cannot maintain the safety requirements in this document, it may not take place. The person in charge of the facility (parish pastor, school principal, agency director) ultimately determines the practicability of any event in that facility.

Monitoring of these protocols is to be carried out by staff or trained volunteers.

3. Room capacity:

- a. When facilities are used for gatherings, groups may not exceed state, county, or city limits of the normal occupancy capacity for the room being used. Normal occupancy capacity of a room is determined in accordance with the latest version of the International Fire Code as adopted by the State of Texas and the respective local government. There are no current state occupancy limits; however, pastors or gathering leaders must check and comply with any county or city limits and comply with whichever limit is more conservative and restrictive.
- b. For ease and consistency, a standard method to calculate the temporary COVID-19 occupancy of a room is to take the number of net square feet [total square footage of room minus the square footage of unusable space (ex: stage, cabinets, etc.)] of usable space in the room, and divide it by 9. This should give you a safe and conservative occupancy number that provides a 3-foot distance between people.
- c. In the event that there is a conflict between government occupancy limits and the 3-foot social distance requirement calculation limit, the more conservative and restrictive number will prevail.
- d. Staff and volunteers assisting in these gatherings are counted toward any occupancy limitation.
- e. Doors should be monitored to assure that the crowd does not exceed the maximum number of people allowed, keeping in mind the social distance requirement of 3 feet between parties.

4. Outdoor Gatherings:

- a. Currently there are no state limits on outside gatherings. Pastors, staff, or trained volunteers must monitor and ensure compliance for any county and local limits.
- b. There are no facemask requirements on any outdoor activity.

5. Social distancing:

- a. All attendees, staff, and volunteers must maintain at least 3 feet of social distance between family groups. If the 3-foot social distance requirement cannot be maintained, any person who is within 3 feet of another person outside their family group must wear a facemask over the nose and mouth, unless they are actively eating or drinking.
- b. Seating and tables should be arranged in a manner conducive to maintaining the 3-foot social distance requirement between family groups.
- c. Dancing is allowed. If the dance partners are family members living in the same household, or if the dance partners are not family members of the same household but who are attending together, they are not required to wear a facemask. All other dance partners must wear a facemask over the nose and mouth as they will be within 3 feet of one another.

6. Attendees:

The following persons are encouraged to stay home:

- a. Those who have serious underlying medical conditions
- b. Those who are feeling sick or who have a cough of any sort
- c. Even more urgently, anyone who has any reason to believe they might have been exposed to COVID-19 should remain at home.

7. Facemasks:

- a. Facemasks are required any time the 3-foot social distance cannot be maintained between non-family groups. Any person who is within 3 feet of another person must wear a facemask over the nose and mouth unless they are actively eating or drinking.
- b. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the coronavirus is spread mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets. The face coverings act as a barrier to prevent the droplets from traveling.

- c. Facemasks are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms.
 - d. Messages or images on the face coverings must not be contrary to Catholic faith and morals.
 - e. Any persons driving or riding in a vehicle with others who are not part of the same household are encouraged to wear a facemask mask or cloth face in the vehicle. Even if 3 feet of distance can be adhered to, the enclosed and insulated interior of a vehicle makes the driver and riders more prone to the transmission of the coronavirus. Additionally, if driving conditions permit, there should be an exchange of air, by rolling down windows or stopping and opening doors periodically.
8. Health protocols for clergy, staff, contractors, and volunteers:
- a. All clergy, staff, contracted vendors, and those volunteers assisting in these gatherings must be trained on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.
 - b. All clergy, staff, contracted vendors, volunteers, and attendees are to be screened upon arrival and will be sent home if they have any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19:
 - 1) Cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste, loss of smell, diarrhea, feeling feverish, having a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit, or known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19.
 - 2) They are not to be allowed to return until they have met the criteria in the health protocols of the document from the State of Texas on Minimum Standard Health Protocols.
 - 3) Clergy, staff, contracted vendors, and volunteers are to wash or sanitize their hands upon arrival and upon departure.
9. Health protocols for the facilities where gatherings are held:
- a. The CDC has determined that the probability of coronavirus transmission from surfaces is extremely rare; therefore, parishes are no longer required to sanitize church building surfaces after each gathering. Gathering leaders may utilize a prudent cleaning and sanitization schedule appropriate to their needs.
 - b. Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available to staff, contractors, volunteers, and attendees. Encourage those entering or exiting to perform hand hygiene.

- c. Make hand sanitizer available to attendees near all entry points of the facility.
- d. Signs:
 - 1) Have readily available signage to remind everyone of the best hygiene practices, including at least the following items: hand washing, face covering, respiratory etiquette, refraining from shaking hands, and social distancing.
 - 2) Signs are to be posted in each classroom or meeting room of the parish, stating the temporary COVID-19 occupancy limit. For example, an appropriate sign would say this:

Temporary COVID-19
Occupancy Limit: ___ persons
3-foot distancing prevails

- e. Ventilation: When possible, the circulation of outside air into the room should be increased.

10. Food:

Those who are serving food and those who are going through self-serve buffet lines must wear facemasks.

11. Overnight stays:

- a. Overnight stays where people sleep in the same bedroom are allowed if roommates are family living in the same household; or if roommates are not family members of the same household but are attending together; or if roommates have documented proof of having been fully vaccinated. Otherwise, overnight stays must be one individual per room.
- b. For overnight stays where groups sleep in a large community setting (such as a gymnasium, classroom, or youth center) at least a 6-foot social distance is required. Attempts should be made to provide good ventilation.
- c. Outdoor camping is allowed. However, any activity that takes place in an enclosed area (eating halls, tents, etc.) must follow the same protocols listed for any other gathering.

12. Multiple-day events:

Multiple-day events are allowed under the same protocols listed for any other gatherings; however, all attendees, staff, volunteers, and clergy must be screened daily according to the criteria listed above (8.b.1&2).

13. Retreats and days of recollection:

Retreats and days of recollection are allowed under the same protocols listed for any other gatherings.

14. Factors to consider:

In deciding whether or not to allow a particular gathering, leaders should take into account the number of people, the size of the room, the amount of airflow, and the duration of interaction in that room.