



## GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNITIES OF WORSHIP

Consistent with recommendations from the Governor's Council of Faith-Based Partnerships, communities of worship (CW) should continue to offer online telecommunication tools to conduct services or other operations and are discouraged from congregating in person. This guidance does not account for every scenario. Religious leaders should adapt the principles that underpin this guidance to the rites and ceremonies specific to their religion.

### **If a Community of Worship elects to conduct in-person services, the following rules must be followed.**

- Each CW must post signage at each public entrance which states all of the following:
  - Do not enter if: you are at high-risk for contracting COVID-19 (65 and older or have underlying health conditions identified by the CDC as higher risk); have a cough, high fever, shortness of breath; or have been exposed to anyone who has tested positive with COVID-19 in the past 14 days;
  - Individuals age 13 and up are required to wear a cloth face covering to enter and remain inside (cloth face covering is recommended but not required for children ages 2-12);
  - Social distancing of 6 feet or more is required to remain inside – no handshaking, hugging, or kissing is allowed (however, families and members of the same household may remain together).
- Length of service: Religious leaders are encouraged to be brief, ideally less than 1 hour.
- Each CW is permitted to conduct a service/gathering that shall be restricted in size to no more than 30% of stated fire occupancy requirements, so long as CDC social distancing requirements can be followed.
  - Service/gathering times must be staggered to permit cleaning the public spaces before the next service/gathering begins according to CDC guidelines.
- Except for members of the same household, adhere to 6 feet social distancing (measured in circumference) at all times between staff, volunteers, members, the people served and visitors both inside and outside, while seated and standing. Children must remain with their parent/guardian at all times.

## In-Person Service Guidance (continued)

- CWs shall restrict seating (in fixed pews/benches or other seating) to comply with the 6 feet social distancing requirements, except for members of the same household may sit more closely together. Restrict seating options to avoid attendees sitting within 6 feet of others who may be next to them, in front of them or behind them.
- Signage and physical indicators (e.g. tape, runners, ropes or ribbon) shall be used, if necessary, to ensure social distancing rules are followed, with distances measured in 6 feet increments and marked accordingly at each entrance and throughout the publicly used spaces within the building.
- CWs shall stagger arrival times for attendees, which may include but are not limited to the following methods: alphabetical order of members; entry by neighborhoods; permitting those who need assistance or special seating to enter at a designated time prior to the start of the service.
- While singing during services is permitted, choirs are not to be utilized for singing during services. CWs should utilize single singers or duos as long as social distancing of 10 feet between the singers can be observed.

## Cleaning and Sanitizing Requirements

- Surfaces touched in non-public spaces (offices, hallways and stairwells not used by members served or visitors), such as desks, phones, light switches, and faucets should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily during use.
- Surfaces in public spaces touched by people during the service (including doorknobs, walls, railings and seating) shall be disinfected, according to CDC standards, between each service/gathering. Cleaning requirements of public spaces, including products used, surfaces to be cleaned, and length of time needed to clean, shall follow CDC guidelines.
- Hand sanitizing stations must be supplied at all entrances, including those used by staff only. Hand sanitizer must be composed of at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol. Hand sanitizer must be used by the CW leaders at frequent intervals during the service/gathering, including at a minimum before contact with surfaces that will be touched by others.

## Cloth Face Coverings

Cloth face coverings must be worn at all times except under the following limited circumstances:

- A reader or song leader may remove a face covering to address the audience from a podium, but must remain at least 10 feet from all staff, volunteers, members, the people served and visitors. The speaker must put the face covering back on and use hand sanitizer immediately after speaking.
- A presider/religious leader who remains 10 feet away from all other individuals at all times during the service is not required to wear a mask.
- CW staff who sing during the service/gathering may remove their mask while singing, must be at least 10 feet apart from all staff, volunteers, members, the people served and visitors at all times and replace the face covering immediately thereafter, and use hand sanitizer after replacing the face covering. No attendees shall remove their cloth face covering during the singing of music.
- Holding microphones is prohibited – they must be self-standing in holders or lapel style and sanitized after each use.

## Exchange of materials of any kind is strongly discouraged

- To the extent practicable, programs, hymnals, and prayer books for services should be provided in format other than paper – either projected on a wall, and/or offered online for attendees to view from their personal handheld devices. Alternatively, single-use paper documents may be picked up from tables or baskets, but may not be handed out or re-used.
- Use of a stationary collection box, the mail, or electronic methods shall be used instead of passing a collection tray or using ushers to collect contributions.
- Modify practices that are specific to particular faith traditions that cause close contact. For congregations that practice the sharing of consecrated or blessed food or drink (e.g., Communion, Parshad and others):

### Preparation of materials:

- Those preparing such materials should wash hands prior to beginning, any time they change tasks or after taking a break and returning to work.
- Such materials should be placed on single-use articles (i.e. napkin, cups, etc.) or single-use articles provided for recipients to receive materials.
- Those preparing such materials must wear a face covering and gloves. Gloves should be put on after washing hands and replaced anytime they touch surface other than such materials or receptacles.
- Communion materials and receptacles should not be touched with bare hands once they are prepared for distribution.

### Distribution of materials:

- Religious leaders and others involved in distribution must wash their hands prior to conducting the service and sanitize their hands prior to distributing consecrated or blessed food or drink.
  - Those distributing such materials must wear a face covering if they will be within 6 feet of any recipients.
  - Consecrated or blessed food or drink elements may be distributed via trays with each element in a single-use, disposable container (i.e. cup, napkin, etc.).
  - Such materials may also be placed into a receptacle (i.e. using tongs or other barrier to bare hand contact).
  - If Communion is distributed via person-to-person contact, the religious leader or lay minister must use hand sanitizer any time he or she believes incidental contact has been made with the communicant.
  - The recipients may remove a mask in order to accept consecrated or blessed food or drink only if they are not within 6 feet of any non-household members.
- No communal receptacles for congregants to bless themselves with holy water may be offered.

## Special Services

Baptisms, initiations, weddings and funerals are permitted if the services can be performed following the guidelines above. The officiant shall use hand sanitizer before beginning the baptism, and before and after anointing the candidate for baptism, and the officiant shall not hold a candidate for baptism. The officiant must wear a mask while within six feet of any other individuals during the ceremony.

- While wedding ceremonies are permissible, wedding receptions are not permissible unless they follow guidelines for other social gatherings provided in the State of Emergency. The officiant must wear a mask while within six feet of any other individuals during the ceremony.
- Youth events, education and support groups shall continue through online telecommunication tools only.

## Drive-in religious services:

A CW gathering of people inside parked cars, trucks, or other enclosed motor vehicles – set up as a drive in service/gathering - shall not constitute a gathering that must adhere to the rules above so long as the following conditions are met:

- All people remain inside the vehicle at all times (no outdoor seating of any kind including the back of a pickup truck),
- An empty parking space remains between each parked car, and
- No exchange of materials takes place between leaders and attendees.

**If you have questions about this guidance, contact the Division of Public Health at 1-866-408-1899 or email [DPHCall@delaware.gov](mailto:DPHCall@delaware.gov).**