



GUIDANCE FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP

While Executive Order 2020-18 and 2020-33, did not require places of worship to stop holding services, they did require that such activities be conducted in a manner that provides appropriate physical distancing to the extent feasible. As some places of worship are considering beginning those activities again, the following guidance is intended to assist in limiting transmission of COVID-19.

General Guidelines Under [Executive Order 2020-18](#) and [Executive Order 2020-33](#):

- Attending places of worship is defined as an essential activity.
- When engaging in essential activities that are constitutionally protected, there is no mandated physical distancing requirement. However, such protected activities should be **conducted in a manner that provides appropriate physical distancing to the extent feasible**.
- All Arizonans should use their best judgment in suspending public activities that can be delayed for the purposes of protecting the individual and the public as well as preserving vital healthcare resources.

Following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, under all circumstances, the following precautions should be followed by people attending places of worship. To the extent possible, places of worship should take measures to ensure that attendees may follow these guidelines:

- Stay home if sick.
- Protect yourself while visiting places of worship:
 - Stay at least 6 feet away from other patrons.
 - If you are at [higher risk for](#) severe illness, you should avoid places of worship. People at higher risk [for severe illness](#) include adults 65 or older and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions.
 - Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
 - After leaving the place of worship, use hand sanitizer. When you get home, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

The Department of Health Services recommends the following additional steps be taken by places of worship:

- Consider spacing out seating for attendees who are not in the same party to at least six feet apart when possible; consider limiting seating to alternate rows.
- Consider adding additional services to the weekly schedule to enhance physical distancing and holding services and gatherings in a large, well-ventilated area or outdoors.
- Consider whether gatherings may need to have limited attendance, be held virtually, or suspended if physical distancing is difficult. This includes worship services, funerals, weddings, religious education classes, youth events, support groups, and any other programming.
- Encourage Arizonans that are most vulnerable (i.e. adults 65 and over and people of all ages with underlying medical conditions) and those with symptoms of illness to stay at home.
 - Consider continuing to live-stream worship services and providing drive-in services.
 - Consider posting signage at entrances advising those with symptoms of illness to not enter.
 - Consider separate services for vulnerable adults with added precautions.
- Provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol, disinfecting wipes, tissues, and no-touch trash cans.
- Encourage use of a cloth face covering at all gatherings and when in the building. Coverings should not be placed on children less than 2 years of age, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance.
- Restrict common areas where people are likely to congregate and interact.
- Distribute and post health messages and materials to staff, volunteers, and the community and educate about everyday preventive actions that includes respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene:
 - Staying home when sick.
 - Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or elbow.
 - Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid or consider suspending use of a choir or large musical ensemble during religious services or other programming, if appropriate within the faith tradition.
 - Consider having a soloist or strictly limiting the number of choir members and keep at least 6 feet between individuals.
- Consider having clergy hold virtual visits (by phone or online) instead of inside homes or at the hospital, except for compassionate care situations, such as end of life.
- Identify activities, rituals, and traditions (e.g., hand shaking/holding, sharing items, communion, etc.) that may need to be temporarily suspended or modified.
- Limit community sharing of worship materials and other items, such as worship aids, books, hymnals, bulletins, or other items passed or shared among congregants, and encourage congregants to bring their own. If possible, photocopy or project prayers, songs, and texts using electronic means.
- Modify the methods used to receive financial contributions. Consider a stationary collection box, the mail, or electronic methods of collecting regular financial contributions instead of shared collection trays or baskets.

Recommendations for Employees and Volunteers:

- Train all employees and volunteers on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette. Have employees or volunteers maintain at least 6 feet separation from other individuals and ensure the use of cloth face coverings when possible.
- Implement symptom screening for employees and volunteers prior to the start of their shift.
- Nurseries and childcare facilities within faith based organizations should comply with CDC guidelines for childcare facilities.
- Intensify cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and all areas after they are touched or used, such as seats, doorknobs, tables, restrooms, etc.
- If a place of worship provides food for employees, volunteers, or attendees, the food items should be individually packaged. Maintain rigorous sanitation practices like disinfection, handwashing, and cleanliness when preparing or serving anything edible. Avoid the use of buffets or family-style food services.

***Note that guidance continues to be updated and those complying with the guidance are encouraged to visit the websites provided frequently to ensure they are complying with the most up-to-date guidance.*

Websites for additional public health guidance: