

REOPENING GUIDANCE

Religious Institutions

Limit attendance to 25 people including staff; no choirs or group singing; avoid eating or drinking together and avoid passing items from hand to hand or from hand to mouth during the Green Phase.

The following is intended as a plain language summary of rules for reopening in the Green Phase and does not replace the need to follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

For organizations that also maintain offices for operations, continue to adhere to the guidance for office settings in your offices.

See also:

Order of the Secretary of Health providing for building safety measures, issued April 5, 2020.

Order of the Secretary of Health providing for business safety measures (to keep employees and customers safe), issued April 15, 2020.

Protections Needed

Masks

- Provide masks for staff including the leader or celebrant and require them to mask when on site except only:
 - As necessary for the staff member to eat or drink during break times. The staff member should be seated at least 6 feet from others when taking off mask.
- Require all congregants to mask while on site, except for children under age 2. Face shields are an acceptable substitute for masks.



Barriers

- If it is your practice to have the service leader or celebrant sing, place a clear plastic shield/barrier that extends well above the service leader's head between the service leader and the congregation.



Isolate

- Screen every staff member for symptoms before every shift and prevent them from remaining on site if they have cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, muscle pain, or new loss of taste or smell.
- It is not necessary to conduct onsite temperature measurement. If you measure temperatures, use a no-touch thermometer, and do not allow anyone with a temperature of 100.4 or higher to remain onsite.
- Have sick leave policies in place so that staff members excluded from the workplace do not lose earnings.
- If a staff member or congregant who has been onsite develops COVID-19 infection or has a positive test, religious institutions must take additional precautions to stop the virus from spreading further, as described in [Guidance for Essential Businesses and Organizations During COVID-19](#). Required precautions include calling PDPH at 215-685-6741 to report positive cases.



Distance

- Use signage to encourage individuals/family groups to space themselves at least 6 feet from others.
- Use floor decals or other visual cues to encourage spacing of at least 6 feet between attendees.
- Use signage or floor markings to have one-way aisles or otherwise direct attendees to follow certain pathways for entering and exiting the service.
- Direct row by row exiting after the service.
- Rope off rows of chairs or pews so that congregants can only sit in every 3rd row.
- For gatherings where congregants pray on mats, separate mats by at least 6 feet or use other visual cues to congregants to separate.
- Congregants should be encouraged to proceed to their seats and remain there throughout the service.
- Consider using contactless door openers to avoid having each person touch door handles.
- Separate service leader from front row of congregants and from other service leaders by at least 20 feet (6 feet is likely to be inadequate because of vocal projection and/or singing).

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Reduce crowds

- **Limit attendance to 25 people including staff during the Green Phase.**
 - Consider having people sign up for in person services to prevent overcrowding or turning congregants away.
- Continue to offer remote service options even after in-person services resume to offer a safe option to those at high risk and to allow for greater physical distancing of in-person attendees.
- If possible, offer staggered service times to increase physical distancing.
- Avoid communal gatherings pre- or post-service.



Handwashing

- Place handwashing stations or hand sanitizer at entry and outside communal bathrooms for all staff and congregants with prominent signage promoting use.
- Give staff hourly handwashing breaks.



Clean

- Wipe down high-touch surfaces with disinfectant at least every 4 hours. See [CDC guidance](#) for details.
- Clean spaces and items used by staff or congregants between uses unless those items remain unused for at least 4 days between uses. Spaces that remain empty for at least 4 days do not require special cleaning.



Communicate

- Educate staff and congregants about symptoms and prevention of COVID-19.
- Post prominent signs at entrances and in staff break rooms (if applicable):
 - Asking people who are sick or who have had contact with someone with COVID-19 within the past 14 days not to enter.
 - Encouraging people to cover coughs or sneezes.
 - Mandating physical distancing of at least 6 feet.
 - Mandating that all staff and congregants wear masks.

Other

- **Do not allow choir practice or performance or any group singing until public health authorities have given guidance on the safety of group singing.**
- Ask that congregants NOT sing (see above). Humming (inside a mask) and clapping are safer ways for congregants to participate.
- Do not share items such as communion cups.
- Temporarily suspend practices that involve passing items from hand to hand or from hand to mouth.
- Consider alternatives to passing plate for donations (e.g. fixed donation box near entrance) to avoid passing items from hand to hand.
- Food and drink should not be served or consumed at services or gatherings until further notice.
- If the institution offers childcare during services, follow [guidance for childcare](#).