

MOVING MKE FORWARD SAFELY

HEALTH & SAFETY CHECKLIST

Communities of Faith

The Health & Safety Checklist for Communities of Faith was developed based on national and local best practice guidelines. Review the below checklist to identify risks and implement health and safety procedures to prepare and protect your congregation, staff, and community.

OPENING

- ☐ Identify an Internal Health & Safety Champion
- ☐ Identify your Local Health Department Contact
- ☐ Introduce COVID-19 Disinfecting Practices
- ☐ Create Social/Physical Distancing Policies
- ☐ Implement PPE Protocols
- ☐ Communicate with your Staff
- ☐ Establish Protocols for Nursery/Childcare Services
- ☐ Develop a Response Plan



OPERATING

- ☐ Implement Screening Practices
- ☐ Communicate with your Congregation
- ☐ Establish Gathering Protocols
- ☐ Maintain Disinfecting and Social/Physical Distancing Practices

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OPENING

[Identify an Internal Health & Safety Champion](#)

Designate a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Staff, clergy, volunteers, and congregants should know who this person is and how to contact them if they become sick or are around others diagnosed with COVID-19. This person should also be aware of state or local regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings.

[Identify your Local Health Department Contact](#)

Your local health department protects and promotes the health of people where they live, work and play. Local health departments are important partners through COVID-19 to help respond to cases and outbreaks as well as provide information on signs and symptoms.

Visit the [Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#) to locate your local health department.

[Introduce COVID-19 Disinfecting/Sanitization Practices:](#)

Why Disinfect? Cleaning does not kill viruses. Disinfecting or sanitizing kills viruses on surfaces and reduces the risk of spreading COVID-19. If a surface was touched by a person with, or suspected to have, COVID-19, the surface should be cleaned and disinfected immediately.

- ☐ Refer to [guidelines](#) for cleaning/disinfecting surfaces, worship materials and spaces.
- ☐ Routinely clean and disinfect all areas. Give special attention to seating areas, chairs, restrooms, community spaces, offices, phones, computers, copy machines, shared printers, and other electronics. See a list of [EPA approved cleaning products](#).
- ☐ If your faith community offers multiple services, consider scheduling services far enough apart to allow time for cleaning and disinfecting.
- ☐ Use gloves and masks for cleaning and disinfecting.
- ☐ Increase ventilation and/or the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the building.
- ☐ Reduce the use of fabric seating (i.e., chairs, stools, sofas) to make disinfecting easy. If fabric seating is in place or required, consider removeable and washable seat covers that can be washed between services.
- ☐ Reduce the number of frequently touched objects in common areas including paper, pens, tables, etc.).
- ☐ Purchase tissues and no-touch garbage cans for the congregation and staff.

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- ☐ Place hand sanitizers or hand sanitizing stations in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.
- ☐ Use physical barriers, such as sneeze guards, extra tables or chairs, to protect staff who have direct interactions with the congregation and the community.

Create Social/Physical Distancing Policies:

Many people are anxious and fearful about their personal and their community's health. Providing and demonstrating safety measures such as those listed below will help to ease anxiety and provide a safer environment for your staff and congregation. Also, some people may not feel that they are at personal risk, so it is important to take steps to increase their awareness of protecting the health of others.

- ☐ Limit the size of gatherings in accordance with the guidance and directives of state and local authorities and subject to the protections of the First Amendment and any other applicable federal law.
- ☐ If size limitation is not possible, hold services and gatherings in large, well-ventilated areas or outdoors, if possible. If a large or outdoor space isn't available, offer virtual services for those considered at-risk including the elderly and those with underlying health conditions.
- ☐ Promote [social distancing](#) at services and other gatherings by seating individuals 6 feet apart or in alternating pews/rows. Ensure that clergy, staff, choir, volunteers and congregation members also follow social distancing as circumstances and tradition allow to reduce risk.
- ☐ Discourage office staff and volunteers from sharing phones, desks, offices and other work tools and equipment if possible. Instruct them to sanitize shared workplace items before and after each use.
- ☐ Evaluate traffic flow of clergy, staff, choir, volunteers and congregation members to avoid as much contact as possible and maintain social/physical distancing guidelines (e.g., one-way aisles, wider aisles, gathering areas, etc.).
- ☐ Mark six-foot distances with floor tape/signage in hallways, congregation space and common areas, or install plexiglass partitions or stanchions.
- ☐ Post safety signage to show [social/physical distancing policies](#).

Implement Personal Protective Protocols

Why be so diligent about personal protective protocols? COVID-19 is spread mainly through close contact between people. It can be transmitted through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. COVID-19 spreads more quickly than the flu, so the best way to stay safe is to cover your mouth and nose with a mask and to implement personal protective protocols.

- ☐ Source and provide proper CDC-approved PPE materials for your clergy, staff and volunteers. Visit WEDC's [WISCONSIN SUPPLIER NETWORK](#) to source PPE materials.

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- ☐ Establish an appropriate policy requiring congregation members to [wear face coverings or masks](#) to prevent the spread of the COVID-19.
- ☐ Develop language and literacy appropriate training materials for staff and volunteers and train on proper use.

[Communicate with Staff and Volunteers](#)

Why is effective communication about COVID-19 important? In order to safeguard clergy, staff, volunteers and congregation members, you must ensure everyone is receiving consistent, accurate and actionable information. Your faith community will be looking to you for ongoing guidance and regular communications. [Preparedness and planning](#) are key to ensuring your community is safe, connected and engaged.

- ☐ Identify and address potential language, cultural, and disability barriers associated with communicating COVID-19 information. There are resources available in multiple [languages from both the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County](#).
- ☐ Training materials should be easy to understand and cover these topics:
 - Social/physical distancing measures that will be in place
 - How to protect yourself and others through hygiene, PPE and sanitation
 - The importance of not going to public places if you are feeling ill
- ☐ Place posters/signs that encourage proper hand hygiene and social/physical distancing at the entrance of your building and in other high-traffic areas.

[Establish Protocols for Nursery/Childcare Services](#)

- ☐ If a nursery or childcare will be provided during services and events, refer to CDC's information on preventing the spread of COVID-19 in [childcare settings](#) and adapt as needed for your setting.
- ☐ If holding summer day camps, refer to CDC's information on [youth and summer camps](#) and adapt as needed.

[Develop a Response Plan for Sick Staff Members and Volunteers](#)

An outbreak could severely affect your community, as well as create additional distress for staff, volunteers and congregants. By developing a plan for addressing a symptomatic individual within your community, you will be prepared to avoid additional exposure.

- ☐ Identify a place where sick staff members or volunteers can be safely isolated.
- ☐ Allocate safe transportation to get them home or to a healthcare facility.
- ☐ Have the appropriate materials on hand to disinfect the area and any worship materials handled by a sick employee.
- ☐ Draft language to inform potentially exposed individuals while maintaining confidentiality as required by [privacy policies, reporting and regulatory guidelines](#). The employer should instruct exposed individuals how to proceed based on the [CDC Local health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](#).
- ☐ Include your [Local Health Department](#) information in your plan.

OPERATING

Implement Screening Practices for Staff Members and Volunteers

Screening staff members and volunteers for COVID-19 symptoms is another strategy to prevent the infection and spread of the virus. It is important to use accurate and reliable testing methods to promptly identify a sick individual so they can be immediately removed from the environment and quarantined for 14 days, reducing the risk of exposure and preventing the disease from spreading.

- ☐ Ask staff and volunteers by phone or in-person if they have had a fever/chills, coughing, or difficulty breathing in the past 24 hours.
- ☐ Check temperatures at the start of each service to identify anyone with a fever of 100.4°F or greater. No one should enter the building if they have a fever of 100.4°F or greater (or reported symptoms of fever) and should self-isolate and contact a healthcare provider.
- ☐ If screening upon entry, ensure that screeners are trained, wearing PPE and maintaining 6 ft distance when possible.
- ☐ Individuals who begin to show signs of illness should leave immediately and contact their healthcare provider for further assistance.
- ☐ If you have a potential case of COVID-19, contact your Local Health Department.

Communicate with your Congregation

Why are strategies to communicate with your congregation important? Individuals want reliable information that provides them with instructions on how to protect themselves while still attending a place of worship. In addition, they want information on the steps being taken to protect them and their community.

- ☐ Share any changes in your services and events with your congregation in worship materials, on your website, by email and in social media channels, and with posted signs at your place of worship.
- ☐ Post signs about COVID-19 symptoms at entrances with recommendations to postpone entering if experiencing symptoms.
- ☐ Consider limiting service attendance and ask congregants to make a reservation to participate in-person.
- ☐ Encourage seniors or individuals with underlying health conditions to remain at home.
- ☐ Arrange special service times or virtual services for at-risk congregants.

Establish Gathering Protocols

There is a risk that congregation members might unwittingly bring COVID-19 into the worship environment exposing others and increasing the opportunity for transmission. While COVID-

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19 is a mild disease for most people, it can make some very ill. Around 1 in every 5 people who catch COVID-19 needs hospital treatment.

- ☐ Depending on the size of your congregation, consider having individuals self-screen prior to each service using the screening questionnaire at the end of this toolkit.
- ☐ If possible, retain the names and contact details of congregation members for at least one month from the date the service was held. This will help your Local Health Department trace people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 if one or more participants become ill shortly after a service or event.
- ☐ If someone from your congregation was isolated as a suspected COVID-19 case, the rest of the congregation should be notified.

[Maintain Disinfecting and Social/Physical Distancing Practices](#)

Why continue preventative measures? As the places of worship reopen, staff, volunteers and congregation members will be sharing the same space and interacting more often. COVID-19 exposure is more likely in cases where interaction is high. By maintaining social/physical distancing and regular disinfecting practices, you reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure and transmission.

- ☐ Make sure disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizing stations are available to your community and make sure your staff and volunteers are using them in front of others.
- ☐ Leave doors open to reduce the number of people touching door handles.
- ☐ Consider limiting the sharing of worship materials such as prayer rugs, prayer books, hymnals, religious texts and other bulletins, or other items passed or shared among congregation members. Encourage them bring their own worship materials, if possible, or photocopy or project materials using electronic methods.
- ☐ Avoid/discourage physical contact such as shaking hands and hugging.
- ☐ Encourage staff, volunteers and congregation members to report any safety and health concerns immediately.
- ☐ Modify the ways you receive financial contributions. Consider a stationary collection box or electronic methods of collection instead of shared collection trays or baskets.
- ☐ If food is offered before or after your service or an event, consider pre-packaged options, and avoid potlucks, buffets or family-style meals if possible.
- ☐ Continue to clean and disinfect all areas. Give special attention to tools, workstations, restrooms, food service areas, phones, computers, copy machines, shared printers, and other electronics.
- ☐ Use gloves and masks for cleaning and disinfecting.

COVID-19 SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

We take the responsibility of keeping our staff, volunteers and congregants safe very seriously. We are asking everyone to provide information regarding any symptoms of, or exposure to COVID-19, with this simple screening questionnaire.

Do you have any of the following symptoms? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Fever or chills
- ☐ Cough
- ☐ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Muscle or body aches
- ☐ Headache
- ☐ New loss of taste or smell
- ☐ Sore throat
- ☐ Congestion or runny nose
- ☐ Nausea or vomiting
- ☐ Diarrhea

Have you had any signs or symptoms of a fever in the past 24 hours such as chills, sweats, felt feverish or had a temperature that is elevated for you/100.4F or greater?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Are you living with, or caring for someone who has symptoms of COVID-19?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Are you living with, or caring for someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 14 days?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If you are experiencing symptoms or answer YES to any of the questions above, please return home and contact your doctor for direction. If you are a staff member or volunteer, please notify your supervisor.

Thank you for helping us keep everyone in our environment safe and healthy.

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SPECIFIC FAITH-BASED REFERENCES

Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fphp%2Ffaith-based.html

CDC Checklist:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/checklist.html>

Considerations for Community-Based Organizations:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/community-based.html>

Community & Faith-based FAQs:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/community-faith-based/faq.html>

Department of Health & Human Services

The Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives (Partnership Center):

<https://www.hhs.gov/about/agencies/iea/partnerships/index.html>

Humanitarian Disaster Institute

Guide to Reopening Church Services:

<https://www.wheaton.edu/academics/academic-centers/humanitarian-disaster-institute/covid-19/>

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