

The Diocese of Southern Ohio Updated Guidelines for Public Worship

April 2021

The diocesan COVID-19 Medical Task Force has recommended the following updated guidelines for congregations in the Diocese of Southern Ohio based on the most recent guidelines from the Ohio Department of Health Responsible Restart Ohio, issued 4/16/21.

These guidelines for social distancing, masking and congregating are included here and serve as the basis for guidelines responding to the pandemic still among us. Much of what is contained is a continuation of previous guidelines requiring masking, social distancing and sanitization.

- The CDC has relaxed some of their warnings regarding the transmission of COVID-19 from surfaces, such as the Book of Common Prayer and bulletins. Since congregational singing is still prohibited, hymnals should not be accessible at this time.
- Communion is still restricted to bread only and no common cup is permitted at this time.
- The Ohio Public Health Advisory System is still in effect and the color designations are still applicable to our diocese. However, it remains up to the clergy, with consultation of the congregational leadership, as to where and how to conduct worship. If in-person worship is determined safe, all of the recommended guidelines should be followed. Outdoor worship is preferable at this time. If you do hold services inside, adhere to the filter requirements set out in the Ohio document.
- Vaccination is strongly encouraged and has been shown to have a very valuable effect in mitigating the COVID-19 virus. However, even those who have been vaccinated must still wear masks and social distance in congregate settings, both inside and outside, to help mitigate spread of the disease.
- Vacation Bible School and summer camps may proceed with all the proper mitigation techniques and if held outdoors as much as possible. Indoor activities should be restricted in length and frequency, and ventilation must follow the Ohio guidelines.

Please continue to pray for the safety and healing of those struggling physically and mentally with this pandemic. It appears that with the weather improving we will be able to be outside more and with increased vaccination continue to make slow but steady progress in the fight against this disease.



Useful links

Our [COVID-19 Resources page](#) includes links to

- [Phased Return to Increasing Parish Life](#)
- [Guidelines for Holy Communion, Confirmation and Reception](#)
- [Guidelines for singing during COVID.](#)
- [Ohio Public Health Advisory System](#)
- [Search for COVID-19 cases by zip code](#)
- [Ventilation resources](#) from the CDC, EPA and others

Questions regarding the diocesan guidelines for in-person worship during COVID-19 may be directed to the Rev. Canon John R. Johanssen, Canon to the Ordinary (jjohanssen@diosohio.org), or Carine de Lange, Operations Executive (cdelange@diosohio.org).

Responsible RestartOhio

Social Distancing, Masking, and Congregating



Mandatory

Masking

Requirements

Masks made of a material that covers the nose, mouth, and chin are required:

- In any indoor location that is not a residence.
- Outdoors, when it is not possible to consistently maintain a distance of 6 feet or more between people who live in different homes/households.
- For anyone riding, driving, or operating public transportation, or a taxi, car service, or ride sharing vehicle.
 - This does not apply to members of a household sharing a private or rental vehicle.

Exemptions

The requirement does not apply where **prohibited by law or regulation**, in **violation of documented industry standards**, or in **violation of a business's documented safety policies**.

Exempted from the requirement is anyone who is:

- **Younger than 10.**
- Living with a **medical condition** that makes it unsafe to wear a mask. This includes respiratory conditions that restrict breathing, mental health conditions, or disabilities.
- **Communicating** or seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired or has a disability that makes it difficult to communicate if the mouth is covered.
- Alone in an **enclosed space**, such as an office; or in open space in which people are **separated by at least 6 feet**.
 - This exemption does not apply in spaces intended to be used or accessed by the public.
- Actively engaged in **exercise** in a gym or indoor facility where people are at least 6 feet apart.
- Actively participating in permitted athletic **practice, scrimmage, or competition**.
- Actively engaged in a **public safety** capacity, including but not limited to, law enforcement, firefighting, or emergency medical service.
- Seated and **actively consuming food or beverage** in a restaurant or bar.
- Actively participating in **broadcast communications**.
- An **officiant** of a religious service.

Also exempt are:

- **Industrial or manufacturing facilities** where employees are separated by at least 6 feet or by a barrier in a manufacturing line or work area.
- **K-12 schools** offering instruction (or some portion of it), if complying with the related Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Department of Health guidance.
- **State-licensed child care centers**, family child care services, in-home aids, day camps, and after school programs, if complying with Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the Ohio Department of Health guidelines.

Congregating

- Avoid gathering in groups.
- If gathered, maintain groups of no more than 10 people, separated from other groups by at least 6 feet.
- Perform a daily health assessment and stay home if experiencing fever, cough, or other signs of COVID-19.
- At **organized events**, organizers and managers should also:
 - At indoor events with fixed seating, limit the number of spectators to 25% of the capacity of the facility, ensure no more than 10 people sit together, and seat groups 6 feet apart.
 - Conduct the event in a manner that discourages individuals from standing or sitting close together in buildings or other parts of the grounds or premises.
 - Where possible, provide one-way traffic in buildings or other areas, where doing so will help people maintain social distancing.
 - Make hand sanitizer and sanitizing products readily available throughout the site for employees and patrons.
 - Where possible, post clearly visible signage at all entrances, with text that indicates everyone is required to wear a mask and practice social distancing at all times in or on the grounds or premises. Signage is available for download on the [Posters and Signs](#) page at coronavirus.ohio.gov. If printing assistance is required, contact the Ohio Department of Health Call Center at 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

Mandatory

Social Distancing and Sanitizing

- Maintain least 6 feet of distancing from others.
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer, when entering a facility, and as frequently as possible. Use sanitizer products that meet Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines.
 - Guidelines are available on the CDC's COVID-19 "[How to Select and Use Hand Sanitizer](#)" page, and under "When cleaning" on its COVID-19 "[Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)" page.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with sleeve or elbow, not hands.
- Regularly clean high-touch surfaces.
- Routinely disinfect high-contact surfaces, desk workstations, restrooms, and equipment.
- Businesses should also:
 - Designate with signage, tape, or other means 6-foot spacing for employees and customers in line to maintain appropriate distance.
 - Make hand sanitizer and sanitizing products readily available throughout the site for employees and customers.
 - Where possible, post clearly visible signage at all entrances, with text that indicates everyone is required to wear a mask and practice social distancing at all times in or on the grounds or premises. Signage is available for download on the [Posters and Signs page](#) at coronavirus.ohio.gov. If printing assistance is required, contact the Ohio Department of Health Call Center at 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

Buildings

- Buildings accessible to the public must strive to maximize ventilation, including opening doors and windows.
- Indoor facilities are expected to employ filtration of MERV 13 or higher at soon as practicably possible.

Food and Beverages

- Restaurants, drinking establishments, and banquet facilities:
 - Require patrons to be seated while actively eating or drinking.
 - Seat no more than 10 people per table, and ensure tables are 6 feet apart unless there is a physical barrier between tables.
 - Ensure masks are worn by anyone who is not seated.
- If food and beverages are served at other organized gatherings:
 - Designate areas for tables and seating for food and drink consumption. (Recommended.)
 - Seat no more than 10 people per table, and ensure tables are 6 feet apart. (Recommended.)
 - Ensure attendees are seated when food and drink is consumed. (Recommended.)

Exhibitions, Competitions, and Auctions

- When possible, participants, spectators, and judges should maintain a distance of 6 feet from one another.
- Family members of participants have priority in viewing areas.
- Families should group together in the viewing area, with 6 feet between families.
- Microphones must be sanitized after each speaker/user.
- Organizers should consider the use of virtual exhibitions, competitions, and auctions.

Confirmed Cases

- Immediately isolate and seek medical care for anyone who develops symptoms.
- Contact the local health district about suspected cases or exposure.
- At events, organizers must maintain a complete list of coaches, players, and employees present (name, address, and phone number) with the date and beginning and ending time of the event. This list must be made available upon request by the local health district.
- If possible, work with the local health department to identify potentially infected or exposed individuals to help facilitate effective contact tracing/notifications. (Recommended.)
- If possible, test anyone suspected to have been infected or exposed. (Recommended.)
- If possible, following testing, contact the local health department to initiate appropriate care and tracing. (Recommended.)

Student Quarantine

- For asymptomatic players, coaches, officials, or other individuals who had close contact (within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes) with an infected person or who had direct physical contact with the person (e.g., coughed on or sneezed on by the infected person) and who remain asymptomatic:
 - Quarantine may end after day 10 (since exposure) without testing.
 - Quarantine may end after day seven, if receiving a negative test result. (Test must occur on day five or later.)
- Youth who are not required to quarantine after exposure occurring in a classroom setting are permitted to participate in organized sports activities and extracurricular activities if they remain symptom free and follow applicable guidance. For school-based exposure guidance, see "[Guidelines for Quarantine After Exposure in a K-12 School Setting](#)."

Note: The CDC continues to endorse quarantine for 14 days for athletes and students involved in extracurricular activities if they were exposed to possible COVID-19 outside classroom setting.