



**May 26, 2021**  
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The following guidance is from the Pandemic Response Team:

### **Phase 4 Reopening Guidance Parish Offices**

Governor Baker has announced that, effective May 29, 2021, all COVID-19-related occupancy restrictions on businesses will be lifted in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In addition, masking and distancing requirements for fully vaccinated individuals will be lifted, with certain exceptions. This document will provide recommended steps and considerations for parish office operations as they begin to return to more normal operating procedures.

In reviewing this guidance, there are several important factors parishes must keep in mind:

- Many individuals are still not fully vaccinated, including some that are unable to be vaccinated due to health issues, and children under the age of 12
- While we strongly recommend that our employees and volunteers get the vaccine, we do not require it
- While we can inquire as to an individual's vaccination status, we should avoid follow-up questions which might elicit medical information. Employees are not required to advise us of their status
- Many individuals, particularly those in a vulnerable category, will continue to have anxiety over being in close proximity to others, being unmasked, or in crowded settings, regardless of their vaccination status
- Having operated remotely, from home, for such a long period of time, employees may need additional time to make long-term arrangements for childcare, elder care, or other needs as they consider changes in their schedules and commutes
- Many of our operations and departments have been forced to "experiment" with remote workplaces. Technology has enabled our workforce and volunteers to

effectively conduct necessary business affairs and provide parish support remotely. In some cases, this has resulted in an increase in productivity, effectiveness and efficiency. Studies show that, due to the effectiveness of remote work structures and the potential benefits for employees, many employees will want to continue to work from home and many employers will offer full or partial remote work opportunities. This has, for many but not all, also provided some additional benefits, such as:

- a better work-life balance
- reduced commuting costs and vehicle operation (lower emissions)
- opportunities for office/parish campus space efficiencies

In accordance with these considerations, we are recommending that our parishes enter this phase of reopening (returning to full capacity) in a gradual manner.

- Parishes may wish to take advantage, where they deem it appropriate, of the period between now and August 1 to evaluate their alternative workplace schedules and structures. Such opportunities and considerations may include transitional “hybrid” structures that enable your parish office, staff and volunteers to increase, again as appropriate, their time in the office while continuing to exploit the opportunities and benefits of a partial remote workplace
- As we approach the end of that period, they may choose to consider retaining where possible alternative remote workplace structures or a hybrid model beyond August

## **Effective May 29, 2021**

### **General**

- Being mindful of safety concerns, the pastor may advise that unvaccinated staff and volunteers are expected to continue to wear masks and practice distancing
- At the pastor’s discretion, the parish may continue to require all visitors to wear a mask
- Mask requirements (unvaccinated or all visitors) should be posted and clearly visible at all entrances
- Staff and volunteers should be reminded that they should not come into the parish buildings if they are feeling sick
- Unvaccinated staff or volunteers who have been exposed to a COVID-positive individual are still required to notify their supervisor and quarantine in accordance with CDC guidance
- At the pastor’s discretion:
  - Use of parish facilities by non-parish groups may resume
  - The parish may allow the rental of parish premises for non-parish use

### **Cleaning**

- Facilities may return to pre-COVID protocols, with the exception of an occurrence of an individual being COVID-positive and having been in the facility. In such situations, the parish must still conduct a cleaning and disinfecting of the individual’s work area

## **If a staff member or volunteer is COVID positive or exhibits symptoms**

- The individual's work area must be cleaned and disinfected, as noted above
- If on parish premises, the individual should be taken to a designated isolation area while awaiting transport home
- Any unvaccinated close contacts of the individual must remain home and self-monitor until they have met the CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation. The CDC criteria can be found by clicking [here](#).

## **Domestic and International Travel**

- Unless fully vaccinated, domestic travel should be limited and carefully considered as many states continue to struggle with high infection rates and lower vaccination rates and may have restrictions in place
- Unless fully vaccinated, international travel is not recommended at this time as the U.S. Department of State continues to advise against international travel if unvaccinated

## **Resources**

As parish offices begin to return to more normal operations, questions may arise regarding employee concerns, requirements, as well as employee or employer rights and legal considerations. Employee/Employer related questions should be directed to the Human Resources Office at: 617-746-5825 or [HR@rcab.org](mailto:HR@rcab.org).

General COVID protocol questions should still be directed to [corona@rcab.org](mailto:corona@rcab.org).