

HOUSES OF WORSHIP: COVID-19 Best Practices for Phase 3

Key updates under Phase 3 -- 11/12/2020

PHASE 3 of RE-OPENING: (Guidelines: Office of the Governor & the LA Department of Health; CDC)

1. All vulnerable individuals (those over 65 years old and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions) should continue to stay at home, unless traveling for an essential activity.
2. All individuals should maximize physical distance (6 feet) from others.

GUIDELINES TO PREVENT SPREAD OF COVID-19

- Stay home when you are sick
- Wear a face mask
- Keep 6-feet distance from others
- Wash your hands often

GETTING READY TO RE-OPEN?

COVID-19 is a silent killer. Any of us can carry the virus before showing symptoms and without knowing it. Thus, houses of worship cannot be relaxed in developing and implementing a plan to re-open. Each congregation has a unique setting and will need to decide its own timeline and procedures appropriate for its own context.

COVID-19 guidelines created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) can be adapted and adopted by congregation leaders in order to create a safe space and experience for all who enter into a house of worship.

GATHERING IN YOUR HOUSE OF WORSHIP ... in Phase 3

Stay home when you are sick

CONGREGATION ACTIONS:

- In addition to those who are sick, older adults and those who have underlying medical conditions should continue to not attend during Phase 3. (If preacher/worship leader is in that category, restrict the amount of interaction with others.)
- Post signage prominently indicating no one should attend if they have experienced COVID-like symptoms or tested positive for COVID within the past 10 days OR have been in contact with anyone with a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis in the last 14 days

Wear a face mask

REMINDER: Face masks protect others from YOU! Each of us can carry COVID-19 without knowing it.

CONGREGATION ACTIONS:

- Provide a face mask for those who show up at your house of worship without a face covering.
- Encourage all to wear a face covering whenever in your house of worship.
- FOOD: Expect anyone who prepares and serves food (cookies, coffee, etc.) to wear a face mask and plastic gloves, maintaining same standards as restaurants. Set a policy that no one enters the kitchen without wearing a face mask.
- Position the pulpit in a location where it is at least 15 feet from audience. This will allow speakers the option to remove his/her face mask while talking.

Keep 6-feet distance from others

CONGREGATION ACTIONS:

- A. **Designate 75% occupancy** of worship space and other large rooms
 - Review Louisiana State Fire Marshal standards for worship and activities held outside

FOR MORE INFO: ifedgbr.com

Prepared by Interfaith Federation of Greater Baton Rouge in consultation with Dr. Dan Godbee, Medical Director, East Baton Rouge Parish Emergency Medical Services & updated with Office of LA State Fire Marshal guidelines

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- Review entrances/exits into buildings; if possible, dedicate doors for a single purpose (entering or exiting).
- Mark off pews/chairs not to be used
- Develop a plan if the count exceeds the 75% occupancy (Ex. People might move to an overflow room where 6 feet distancing could be maintained and worship might be streamed.)
- Arrange for those who share the same house to sit together since they need not comply with the physical distancing expectation.
- Avoid seating within 6 feet of the center of the main aisle to allow for circulation and egress
- Close lobbies or other areas where people may congregate
- Eliminate physical contact as part of services.
- Eliminate gatherings in the building while entering, exiting, or moving about.
- Use dividers in order to protect office staff, organist, musicians, etc.

B. Music: Vocal /Instrumentalists:

Recommend singing or wind instruments OUTSIDE ONLY; if inside then limit size of musical groups to spacing availability

- 15 feet between distance from performers to audience
- 6x6 feet – for all performers and 9x6 feet – for trombone players
- Straight rows between performers, rather than arch shape
- Mark spaces on floor where performers and stands will be place
- Create a procedure for performers to enter and exit while keeping social distance measures
- Consider rehearsal/performance to 30 minutes or less
- Performers must not share music stands, sheet music; sanitize stands after each use
- Microphones should be cleaned between use

C. Decide and train volunteers on NEW procedures for the following:

- Provide 1 usher for every 50 persons in attendance
- Train ushers on handling of emergency evacuation, enforce social distancing, assign seating, etc.
- Greeters: Welcome people without handshakes/contact, perhaps with one person opening door
- Programs/bulletins: Place a few in each of the designated seating areas.
- Collection of offering without passing a plate/basket, perhaps using a basket in the back or front with each person leaving financial gifts.
- Communion: Do NOT drink and eat from same vessels. (Specific denominations may have additional guidelines.)

Wash your hands often ... for 20 seconds

REMINDER: Expand personal prevention hygiene from washing hands (and wearing gloves) to include the cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces contacted by multiple persons in a public setting.

CONGREGATION ACTIONS:

- Provide sanitizers (with at least 60% alcohol) at entrance doors.
- Stock restroom with ample supply of plain soap in dispenser. Do NOT share the same bar of soap. (NOTE: CDC advises the best way to wash hands is still with plain soap and water.) Clean restroom often.
- Develop clear plan to clean and sanitize pews, interior/exterior door handles, etc. after each gathering

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- Provide protective supplies and procedures for those who are cleaning.

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