



RESTARTING MAINE'S ECONOMY

COVID-19 Prevention Checklist Organization Guidance

The State of Maine has adopted a staged approach, supported by science, public health expertise, and industry collaboration, to allow Maine organizations to safely open when the time is right. The plan is available at www.maine.gov/covid19/restartingmaine.

This is one of many industry guidance documents the State is preparing for organizations so they can be prepared to meet health guidelines and reopen safely. Please make sure you pair this document with the general guidance document that applies to all sectors, which is available on maine.gov/DECD.

Please note: This document may be updated as additional information and resources become available.

Phase 1: Religious Gatherings *Released May 22, 2020*

The best way to prevent spread of COVID-19 is to avoid exposure to this virus. The primary strategies for reducing risk are physical distancing, face coverings, hand hygiene, and the cleaning and disinfection of common touch surfaces. Religious organizations should continue to consider offering and promoting the use of online, recorded, drive-in and outdoor services in lieu of indoor in-person services. Additionally, religious organizations should consider strategies to reduce participant exposure to droplets and aerosolized particles that are emitted with forceful respiratory exhalations that commonly occur when singing, speaking loudly, and playing certain musical instruments.

To give religious institutions the adequate opportunity to prepare to implement this guidance, this guidance takes effect in one week on May 29, 2020.

Staff

- The following guidance refers to all staff types, both paid and volunteer.
- Require staff to wear cloth face coverings when physical distancing is not possible and to practice good hand hygiene with frequent handwashing, especially between contact with other individuals and contact with shared items.
- Where possible, stagger staff and meal breaks to avoid crowding.
- Ensure staff stay 6 feet apart whenever practical.
- Adjust seating in break rooms and other common areas to reflect physical distancing practices.

- Gatherings or meetings of staff must not exceed the limit established by the Governor’s Executive Order.
- Permit staff to take breaks and lunch outside, or in such other areas where physical distancing is attainable.
- Limit interaction between staff and outside visitors or delivery drivers; implement touchless receiving practices if possible.
- Adjust training/onboarding practices to limit the number of people involved and allow for 6 foot spacing; use virtual/video/audio training when possible.
- Discourage staff from using colleagues’ phones, desks, workstations, radios, handhelds/wearables, or other work equipment.
- Request that vendors accessing the premises direct their employees to follow all social distancing guidelines and health directives issued by the applicable public authorities.
- Provide staff training on:
 - physical distancing guidelines and expectations
 - monitoring personal health
 - proper wear, removal, disposal of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
 - laundering of face coverings and uniforms as listed below
 - cleaning protocols as listed below (or per CDC)
 - how to monitor personal health and body temperature at home.
 - guidance on how to launder cloth face coverings and uniforms: [see CDC, Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility, How to Disinfect: Laundry](#)
 - cleaning protocol, including how to safely and effectively use cleaning supplies.
- Consider staff training in safe de-escalation techniques.

Building and Operational Considerations

- The federal CDC has prepared the [Interim Guidance for Faith-Based Organizations](#) to assist with operational planning and preparation.
- Maintaining physical distancing of 6 feet and masking are the primary tools to avoid transmission of respiratory droplets between individuals. Gathering size must follow the Governor’s Executive Orders. If the indoor space cannot seat or otherwise accommodate the gathering limit in compliance with the six-foot distancing requirement, attendance must be limited to allow for such compliance.
- Limits on gathering size also apply to other ceremonies and rituals such as weddings and funerals. Additional guidance on funerals is available through the [CDC](#).

- Place signage at entrances and throughout the facility alerting staff and members to the required occupancy limits, 6 feet of physical distance, and policy on cloth face covering. Face coverings are recommended by the CDC and currently required in public places where physical distancing is difficult to maintain, per the Governor's Executive Order.
- Ensure adequate supplies (e.g., soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer, tissue) to support healthy hygiene practices, including increased cleaning and disinfection procedures.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched. This may include cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, classroom sink handles, countertops). Provide EPA-registered disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (e.g., keyboards, desks, remote controls) can be wiped down.
- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, other methods. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk to employees or members.
- Take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (for example, drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease and other diseases associated with water.
- Ensure that staffing of facilities is sufficient to enable enhanced cleaning and disinfection measures.
- Any other individuals or entities that use a faith-based organization's facilities, such as renters or community organizations, must follow the same gathering size limit, physical distancing, and cleaning and disinfection protocols outlined in this document.
- Playgrounds should remain closed at this time.
- Parents are encouraged to bring children with them to regular services. Operating nursery services is discouraged at this time because infants less than age 1 are at higher risk. Classes for children, such as Sunday schools, should only operate if physical distancing and masking ([when age and developmentally appropriate](#)) can be maintained.
 - Church school leaders may refer to [guidance for schools](#).
- Refer to the [Day Camps and Summer Recreation Programs checklist](#) for guidance concerning summer programs such as Vacation Bible School.
- For public health purposes, faith-based organizations should maintain a list of all attendees and visitors to its services and activities, if possible. If a place of worship learns that an attendee or worker has tested positive for COVID-19, they should promptly notify Maine DHHS, CDC, or a local public health official and assist all such officials as reasonably requested to trace likely contacts and advise contacts to isolate and self-quarantine.
 - For purposes of this guidance and based on current knowledge, a close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before illness onset until the time the patient is isolated. They should stay home, maintain social distancing, and self-monitor until 14 days from the last date of exposure.
- Whenever possible, minimize the duration of activities to decrease the risk of transmission.

- Mission trips, group travel, and non-essential out-of-state travel are not recommended at this time.
- Develop a process to receive and disinfect donated items from the community.

Worship Service Guidance

- Communicate with members and visitors about new protocols and the importance of face coverings, physical distancing, and hand hygiene.
- Gatherings at in-person services must not exceed the limit established by the Governor's Executive Order. The current limit is 10 and that limit will increase to 50 for religious institutions on May 29, 2020.
- Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Know what to do if staff or members become symptomatic on premises.
- Attendees should be advised on the symptoms of COVID-19. Religious leaders are encouraged to determine a method, such as prominent signage, for reminding them of these symptoms.
- Persons at high-risk for COVID-19 are encouraged to use online or other remote options to attend services, meetings, and other religious gatherings at this time. High-risk individuals include:
 - People 65 or older
 - People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled including:
 - People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
 - People who have serious heart conditions
 - People who are immunocompromised: Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune system weakening medications
 - People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
 - People with diabetes
 - People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
 - People with liver disease
- Cloth face coverings must be worn by all attendees when physical distancing is difficult to maintain, such as when coming and going, except for children under the age of 2. Please review [AAP Guidelines](#) for face coverings for children.
- Outdoor services are encouraged. Both indoor and outdoor religious gatherings require adherence to physical distancing guidelines.

- Those living in the same household may sit together without distancing between each other.
- Seating between households must be at least 6 feet apart. Consider alternating rows of pews or seating.
- Choirs have been associated with COVID-19 outbreaks. Therefore, choirs are strongly discouraged at this time. There is a significant risk to participants through the increase in aerosolized droplets during singing.
 - Communal singing also increases risk of respiratory transmission of COVID-19 and is not recommended at this time. Humming is not known to increase COVID transmission risks and could provide an alternative to communal singing.
- In addition to physical distancing, consider the use of plexiglass barriers to reduce the additional risk of projected respiratory droplets from clergy, cantors, readers, woodwind instruments, and vocal soloists, etc.
- Consider dismissing worship attendees one row at a time to avoid congestion at exits.
- Post-service refreshments, meals, and fellowship activities increase possible transmission risk and are not recommended at this time.
- Places of worship are encouraged to modify communal rituals, like taking communion or passing of the peace, so as to limit contact with others. Consider distributing, where applicable, prepackaged communion or sacraments.
- Avoid physical contact between attendees, including greeting by shaking hands and hugging.
- Collection containers, microphones, paper bulletins, attendance forms, etc., should not be passed from person to person.
- Avoid sharing items. Consider removing common touch items from seating and common areas such as envelopes, pens, texts, etc., as these items are challenging to keep clean between uses.
- Plan ahead for strategies to minimize and limit individuals in small, shared common spaces.
- Prop open doors before and after services to reduce common contact surfaces and increase airflow in the building.
- All common spaces must be cleaned and disinfected between multiple session services.