

County Of Sonoma Faith-Based Organizations COVID-19 Best Practices Guide

During these challenging times, local government and faith communities throughout Sonoma County are working together to provide essential services to our community. We are committed to doing this in a manner that ensures the safety of our entire community and continues to slow the spread of the coronavirus. To facilitate this collaboration, this updated joint county and faith-based organization document serves as the guideline.

It is important to recognize that our faith-based community has been very active since the start of the pandemic and plays a vital role in the spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery of the entire community. We will continue to work in partnership with local governments and community based organizations to facilitate recovery and promote community health during each stage of the recovery process.

Phase 1-Mandatory stay at home order. Essential services only. Social distancing, facemasks required indoors, congregational worship closed. People over 65 and those with underlying health issues encouraged to self isolate.

During this phase, faith-based organizations will continue providing essential services to their congregations and the communities they serve in a manner that will promote safety and maintain public health. These essential services are geographically and demographically specific to each place of worship. Nothing in this document is intended to require services outside the current scope of services for any particular faith based organization. To the degree that it can be done safely and within current state and county guidelines places of worship will continue to provide the following services:

- Online and live streaming of church services with essential staff present to assist with such services within required safe hygiene and social distancing guidelines.
- Telephonic and video conferencing services for counseling and other social services.
- Outdoor site location services for food distribution programs and curbside pick up services to those in need.
- Food delivery and other support services to seniors and others in need within their communities.
- Homeless services such as shelter placement or providing food, working within the safety guidelines established by the county and state.
- Childcare for health care providers and essential workers.
- Distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE's) to health care workers in need.
- Direct support to our communities most vulnerable populations through CarePortal's work with Youth Family and Children's Services and Adult Protective Services.
- Direct and virtual services to those high risk populations that are most vulnerable to COVID-19.

During Phase 1, staff who are able to work from home will continue to do so. Those who are required to be on site for performing live stream services or curbside/drive through food distribution or direct food delivery will be required to meet all social distancing and hygiene requirements established by the county and the state. Anyone exhibiting symptoms of illness such as extreme fatigue, sore throat, cough, gastrointestinal illness, headache or fever and/or anyone who has been exposed to the coronavirus within a two week period shall stay at home and not report to work. Those who are at high risk should continue to stay at home.

Phase 2. During this phase some businesses that can accommodate social distancing, some retail establishments, outdoor services such as construction and landscaping businesses can re-open. Churches are to remain closed for indoor congregational services, however there will be some relaxing of restrictions on church activities. Examples of activities may include the following:

- All services allowed in Phase 1 will continue to be allowed.
- Essential staff for church operation will be allowed to meet at the church facility provided they can do so within social distancing and proper hygiene guidelines. Masks must be used indoors and outside in any setting when social distancing of at least 6 feet cannot be easily accomplished. Services may include office staff needed to pay bills, answer telephones, and process payroll etc if these services cannot be conducted from home.
- Small group meetings of 10 people or less, for board meetings, leadership team meetings, small prayer/study group meetings or worship team practices may be held.
- *For those churches with larger sanctuaries and meeting halls, limited gatherings may be accommodated if deemed permissible by health officials and their local governmental authorities. The size and frequency of these gatherings would be determined by agreement with local health officials. Should gatherings be allowed, strict social distancing must be in place and attendees would necessarily be restricted to those attendees who are not in high risk categories or those with underlying health conditions, regardless of age. Masking would be required for all attendees in larger settings in addition to social distancing since the virus can linger in the air in confined areas.*
- When onsite restrooms are utilized, hand washing instructions must be posted and proper sanitation must take place after each use either by staff or by the users of the facility.
- Hand sanitation stations must be provided on entry into the building and in all common use areas throughout the facility.
- Any area of common touch, such as door knobs, desk surfaces, and counter tops must be sanitized after each use (and supervised by Church staff SHH). To the degree possible sound boards, music stands,

microphones should be used by only one person and should be sanitized after each use.

- Outdoor services or drive in services can be conducted provided there is no close contact interaction between congregants and social distancing can be adequately maintained.
- Those staff providing online or outdoor services must adhere to social distancing and hygiene guidelines.
- During outdoor services, families sharing the same household will be allowed to sit together.
- Those participating in outdoor services will be required to wear masks as an extra layer of protection. Masks will be provided if participants leave theirs at home.
- Prior to outdoor services clear instruction will be provided on social distancing verbally and through postings in writing. Customary greetings such as hugging, handshakes and other methods of contact greeting will be prohibited.
- During outdoor services bulletins will not be distributed. Collections will be accomplished by a means that does not involve passing a collection container. Communion, if served, must be through a means that allows for individual service of the elements through a non contact method of service.
- **For further instructions on the preparation and presentation of outdoor services please review the document “Sonoma County Church Gathering Return Proposal.”**
- Child care services. Those churches that provide child care and pre-school services to their communities or to healthcare workers etc.. may either begin or resume these services within the best practices guidelines for providers of childcare services. (we can attach those guidelines. I am guessing that either the county health care officers or the state will provide the guidelines.)
- Those individuals at high risk of infection and those with underlying health conditions will continue to be encouraged to attend services online from home.

During this phase, emphasis will be on slowly making modifications in services and evaluating the effectiveness of measures put into place. The health and safety of our congregations and the community will continue to be the top priority.

Phase 3. Higher risk businesses, restaurants, gymnasiums and other businesses, including indoor church services allowed to open with certain restrictions and limitations. During this time, churches will be allowed to open for indoor services provided that social distancing can be achieved inside the facility. Examples of service formats that will be allowed include the following.

- All services allowed in Phase 1 and 2 will continue.
- In house worship and congregational meetings may resume provided these can be accomplished within social distancing guidelines.

- Seating arrangements, pulpit placement and worship services must be set up to facilitate social distancing of at least 6 ft. Families and those sharing the same household will be allowed to sit together. Larger prayer meetings and elder meetings allowed with proper social distancing.
- Use of masks will conform with requirements of the county health officer and or state officials for the protection of those indoors that are in place at the time.
- Continue online services for those over 65 and those with significant health risks who may be at risk by attending in person services.
- Community interaction and outreach outside the church will continue within proper social distancing as may be required by county and or state health officials.
- Churches must be ready and willing to return to phase 1 or 2 if community health data shows this is necessary.
- Hand sanitizing stations must be provided in all common areas and appropriate hygiene methods posted in all restrooms as outlined in phase 2.
- Churches will consider the age and general health of their service populations as they make decisions regarding services and delivery methods. Separate senior services, multiple smaller services and weekday services are all options to be considered, provided that sanitation can take place between services.
- Deep cleaning must be achieved on a weekly basis or more frequently as may be required, with special attention to common use areas.
- Any person exhibiting any sign of illness including fatigue, cough, sore throat, runny nose, fever, gastrointestinal illness, headache, loss of smell or any other sign of a virus must not attend. Those who have been exposed to anyone known to have been diagnosed with the coronavirus within the past two weeks must not attend.
- Those with pre-existing health conditions and those who are at high risk of contracting the coronavirus should continue to worship online from home.
- Other restrictions on communion, bulletins, greetings, and collections will be the same as or similar to those for outdoor services outlined. These restrictions may be modified or enhanced based on experience and information gathered during phase 2.

During phase 3, church and community leaders will continue to work cooperatively to evaluate the spread of the virus and community health. Churches must be willing to adapt and modify service delivery as needed to ensure community and congregational safety.

Phase 4. Return to pre-virus conditions. Churches to operate unrestricted but to continue to work closely with community health and government officials to monitor the health of their congregations and the community. In all circumstances churches must be ready and willing to return to more restrictive measures as may be required for public safety.

