

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Requirements for Faith-based Communities, Places of Worship, Weddings, and Funerals

5/18/2021

This guidance applies to all business and places of public accommodation (“businesses”)—as defined by Executive Order 21-11, as amended by Executive Order 21-21 and EO 21-23 (“EO”)—that offer wedding, funeral, and faith-based services and ceremonies from Friday, May 7, 2021, at 12:00 p.m. (noon) through May 27, 2021. Businesses must continue to follow all other applicable [Stay Safe Industry Guidance \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp). The EO requires all businesses to have and implement a written COVID-19 Preparedness Plan that addresses EO requirements and applicable Stay Safe Industry Guidance. For more information about plan requirements, refer to applicable [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp).

This guidance has been updated to align with EO 21-11, 21-21, and 21-23, a CDC transmission of COVID-19 update (5/13/2021), and removal of face covering EO requirements (5/14/2021).

Recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19

COVID-19 spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets and very small particles that contain the virus. These droplets and particles can be breathed in by other people; land in their eyes, nose, or mouth; or land on surfaces that people touch. The risk of COVID-19 transmission increases when people gather with other households. Several key strategies can reduce the risk of getting sick or transmitting COVID-19:

- Get vaccinated. Vaccination is one of the best things you can do to prevent getting or spreading COVID-19. Visit [COVID-19 Vaccine \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/index.html).
- Wear a face covering when recommended by MDH or CDC.

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- There is no longer a statewide requirement to wear face coverings in most settings. However, other federal, state, and/or local laws may require face coverings in some settings, and businesses may set their own requirements. Additionally, Minnesota's Safe Learning Plan, along with the existing face covering guidance for schools and childcare settings, remains in effect.
- For more information about face covering recommendations, refer to [Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html).
- If you are not vaccinated:
 - Keep at least 6 feet of physical distance from other households and follow the face covering recommendations in the above MDH resources.
- Vaccinated or not vaccinated, MDH strongly recommends that everyone:
 - Wash their hands often.
 - Follow guidance on staying home (quarantine) if you were exposed to someone who has COVID-19. People who are fully vaccinated may not need to quarantine in many situations. Refer to [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf) for more details.
 - Stay home if they are sick. Visit [If You Are Sick: COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html).
 - Follow testing recommendations for when they travel, have COVID-19 symptoms, or are exposed to COVID-19. Visit [COVID-19 Testing \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html) for information about who should get tested and how to get a test.
 - Work from home if possible. Employers must provide reasonable accommodations as required under existing federal and state law. Employers are strongly encouraged to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with one or more members of their household who have underlying medical conditions and who are unable to be vaccinated.

Key requirements for services and ceremonies

- These requirements apply to **services** and **ceremonies** connected to faith-based gatherings, weddings, and funerals.
 - Venues that host a reception, luncheon, gathering, or other similar activity before or after a service or ceremony must follow the applicable [Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp\)](http://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp). When indoors, these gatherings may have occupancy limits and additional requirements to minimize spread of COVID-19.
- Social distancing is required indoors.
 - Limit indoor occupancy to allow for 6 feet of distance between people from different households or groups at all times. Implement and maintain social distancing between households or groups in all indoor settings.

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- Members of the same household (regardless of household size) are not required to maintain social distance from members of their household.
- Attendees or visitors may also choose to attend a ceremony with a group of a maximum of 10 people (which may include members of different households) and are not required to maintain social distance from members of their group.
- Staff and workers are required to stay home if they have COVID-19 symptoms or have tested positive. Visit [If You Are Sick: COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html) for more information. Staff or workers who have been exposed to COVID-19 should follow the [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf).
- Music is an integral part of many faith-based services, weddings, and funerals. Singing and instrumental music produced by woodwind or brass instruments are higher-risk activities for COVID-19 spread due to the aggressive expelling of respiratory droplets. If choosing to provide live music of any kind, follow the requirements (and consider the recommendations) for [Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf).
 - Live music performances are allowed but, when indoors, performers must maintain physical distancing of 6 feet between other performers and 12 feet from the audience.

Congregational singing is allowed. Preparedness plan guidance for services and ceremonies

Follow the **requirements** below and in the Universal Plan Guidance for COVID-19 Preparedness Plans found at [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](http://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp) and consider the additional **recommendations** below.

1. [Maintain 6 feet of social distance between households or groups in indoor settings](#)
2. [Training and communication](#)
3. [General considerations](#)

1. Maintain 6 feet of social distance between households or groups in indoor settings

Requirements

- For **indoor** services or ceremonies, ensure that social distancing of at least 6 feet is maintained between members of different households or groups of up to 10 people who attend together.
 - Establish seating arrangements and establish other controls (floor markings, marked queues, etc.) to ensure these requirements are met.

2. Training and communication

Recommendations

- Advise people who are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 infection to strongly consider not attending services or events. People over 65 and people of any age with certain underlying medical conditions who have not been vaccinated are at higher risk.
- Encourage members and participants to consider vaccination for their protection from COVID-19. For more information, visit [About COVID-19 Vaccine: For fully vaccinated people \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/basics.html#recs\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/basics.html#recs).
- Communicate health screening requirements to members and participants.
- Use websites, social media, pre-appointment phone calls, and other outlets to inform members of the steps being taken for their protection and the protection of staff.
- Use posters and signs to guide participants about how to comply with requirements and recommendations. Visit [Materials and Resources for COVID-19 Response \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/index.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/index.html).
- If your faith-based organization is contacted by local public health or the Minnesota Department of Health regarding COVID-19 cases at your facility, it is strongly recommended that you inform your membership that there have been COVID-19 cases in attendance.
 - Ensure you maintain privacy and do not disclose information (particularly information relating to specific people) that is considered private or confidential under state or federal law.
 - Informing members of positive participants will alert them to get tested and stay home should they develop symptoms. For close contacts of someone with COVID-19, follow [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf).

3. General considerations

Recommendations

- As requirements are set by Executive Orders for the faith-based organization sector, your community may choose to implement more restrictive practices regarding gathering size and limiting the types of gatherings offered, based on the risk tolerance of your community.

- Continue on-line services, phone contact, and other outreach to vulnerable community members, even as other members engage in person. Due to their risk level, some of your members and staff may not feel comfortable resuming in-person contact for a longer period of time.

Related guidance documents

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Guidance: Requirements for All Indoor Businesses and Other Entities found on [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp)

Guidance for Caring for People in Their Homes – for non-medical visits found on [Stay Safe in Social Gatherings \(staysafe.mn.gov/individuals-families/social-gatherings.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/individuals-families/social-gatherings.jsp)

[Planning Funeral and Memorial Services during COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/providers/mortsci/docs/planduringcovid.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/providers/mortsci/docs/planduringcovid.pdf)

[Guidance for Hmong Funerals during COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hmongfuneral.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hmongfuneral.pdf)

[Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf)

Gatherings, receptions, and celebrations must follow [Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp)

Sunday School or other youth programs that are not classroom style, seated events should follow COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth and Student Programs found on [Stay Safe Guidance for Schools, Colleges, and Universities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/schools.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/schools.jsp).

Child care, youth programs, and camps must follow [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Certified Child Care, Youth Programs, and Camps \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/youthguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/youthguide.pdf).