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## COVID-19 REOPENING GUIDANCE FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP

UPDATED ON 6/18/20

### PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

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To provide general guidance and best practices for safe reopening. Contact [COVIDRecovery@acgov.org](mailto:COVIDRecovery@acgov.org) if you have questions or require technical assistance. For business resources, visit <http://www.acphd.org/2019-ncov/covid-recovery.aspx>.

NOTE: The [Alameda County Reopening Plan](#) is in alignment with the [State's Resilience Roadmap](#), but there will be areas where Alameda County is more restrictive than the State. The more restrictive guidance prevails.

### STANDARD REQUIREMENTS

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1. Prepare and implement a [COVID-19 Site Specific Protection Plan](#) based on local and [State industry specific guidance](#)
2. Train employees on COVID-19 prevention, symptom screening, face coverings, and importance of physical distancing and frequent handwashing
3. Implement [symptom screening](#) for all employees and do not allow employees who exhibit symptoms to come to work
4. Develop cleaning and disinfecting protocols
5. Establish physical distancing guidelines
6. Ensure compliance with the [Alameda County Face Covering Order](#) by all persons in your place of worship (congregants, employees, volunteers, etc.)
7. Comply with guidance issued by the [California Resilience Roadmap](#), all [Local Health Officer Orders](#), and applicable federal, California, and local provisions for paid sick leave for individuals who cannot safely work for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### RELIGIOUS SERVICES AND CULTURAL CEREMONIES GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICES

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- Any places of worship that facilitate congregational services under these guidelines are strongly encouraged to continue providing virtual/remote offerings that do not require congregants or visitors to gather in-person.
- Outdoor religious services or cultural ceremonies may be facilitated, under strong recommendation that gatherings not exceed 25 persons.

- Physical distancing of six feet must be maintained between individuals and/or households and congregants must wear face coverings.
- Indoor religious services or cultural ceremonies may occur on a first come first served basis not to exceed 100 persons, or 25% of the facility's maximum occupancy, whichever is less. The Alameda County Health Officer strongly recommends 25 persons or less. Individual places of worship may establish lower occupancy limits if desired. Physical distancing of six feet must be maintained between individuals and/or households and congregants must wear face coverings.
- Small religious gatherings that bring together stable Social Bubbles of 12 or fewer people from different households with proper precautions including physical distancing and face coverings to the extent possible may continue.
- Provide vehicle-based gatherings with proper precautions including face coverings when windows are open and keeping vehicle passengers within the same household. See [vehicle-based guidance](#).
- Establish protocols for frequent cleaning and disinfection of commonly used surfaces (e.g. pulpits and items on pulpits, microphones, door handles and railings) and high traffic areas such as lobbies, hallways, and chapels.
- Discourage use of shared items such as prayer books, hymnals, prayer rugs, offering plates, etc. Alternatively, ensure items are only handled by one individual or household during the service, and placed away for 1-3 days before next use.
  - If available, use technology friendly applications for display of scripture and collection of offerings (e.g. Venmo, CashApp, etc.)
- Utilize tape and/or signage to arrange seating and close off rows in order to guide congregants and visitors to sit at least six feet from each other. Have a staff member or volunteer direct the flow of traffic to organize seating arrangements.
- Discontinue food and beverage offerings, particularly those that are self-serve and/or potluck and family-style. Provision of food and beverages is strongly discouraged, but if served utilize single-serve, disposable containers and ensure individuals serving food wash their hands frequently and wear disposable gloves and face coverings.
- Suspend singing, chanting, and other group recitation activities where aerosol generation is dramatically increased. We strongly discourage singing, chanting, and other group recitation activities even if individuals are wearing face coverings. Broadcast previously recorded audio for celebratory ministry.

## RITUAL CEREMONIES (FUNERALS, WEDDINGS, BAPTISMS, BRIS, ETC.) GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICES

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- Consider reducing visitor capacity and/or stagger visitation times for ritual ceremonies.
- Funeral services may be facilitated with up to 25 persons in attendance, should be conducted outdoors if feasible, and physical distancing of six feet and face coverings must be maintained. Food and beverage not allowed.
- Implement modified religious or cultural practices when washing or shrouding bodies of those who have died from COVID-19 in accordance with CDC guidelines.

- Wedding ceremonies may be facilitated with up to 25 persons in attendance, should be conducted outdoors if feasible, and physical distancing of six feet and face coverings must be maintained. Wedding receptions/parties (food and beverage) are not permitted at this time.
- Recommend spiritual communion only, as providing communion directly is a high-risk activity. For those places of worship that choose to conduct communion/sacrament rituals, it is advised that this ritual be held for the end of service. The communion/sacrament should be distributed in the hand. Ensure all are wearing face coverings and use hand sanitizer between individuals receiving communion.
- Congregants should be baptized in their own clothing to refrain from using baptism gowns which may be shared. Baptistry workers should wear protective equipment (e.g. gloves, eyewear, face coverings) and those being baptized should wear face coverings and maintain physical distancing. Baptistry water should be tested and disinfected on a regular basis. Food and beverage not allowed.
- Catholic Mass recommend the priest celebrant or minister remains more than six feet from the congregation during the entirety of Mass to forego mask and gloves while ministering. Modify processions and placement of other personnel to ensure safe physical distancing of at least six feet.

## CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICES

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- Places of worship must close play areas, and should discontinue activities and services for children where physical distancing of at least six feet cannot be maintained.
- Households are encouraged to attend services as a family unit, with children remaining with their parents or guardians through the duration of service.
- Where children/youth are participating in religious services as their Childcare or Youth Extracurricular (CYE) Activity Unit, they should remain in a stable group of 12 or fewer participants for at least 3 weeks. Limit of one CYE Activity Unit outside of the household.