

INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR RELIGIOUS/FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS



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Champaign-Urbana Public Health District
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This document summarizes CUPHD's recommendations for Religious & Faith-based Organizations during Phase 4 of Restore Illinois. This guidance will be reviewed and updated by CUPHD if our region moves Phases.

CUPHD recommends that places of worship **continue to facilitate remote services** even if they choose to offer in-person services. This is particularly important to provide as an option for congregation members who are more vulnerable to COVID-19, including older adults and those with underlying health conditions.

The Safest Options: Remote Services & Drive-in Services

- Remote services can be streamed online, broadcast by radio, and/or conducted by phone or dial-in. Remote services are the only way to guarantee that places of worship will not become sources of new infection.
- Drive-in services involve congregants driving to a common location and worshipping from their household vehicle while listening to a broadcast through speakers so attendees can listen from inside their car keeping their windows rolled up. Best practices for drive-in services include:
 - Congregants that live together, travel together--do not introduce new people to the vehicle. Congregants must remain in their car the whole time.
 - Staff will determine a safe number of cars to ensure ample room for each to park with at least 6 feet left between cars.
 - Staff performing services will remain 6 feet apart and use a transmitter.
 - There will be parking lot attendants making sure everyone leaves an empty parking space between cars. The parking lot attendants will wear face masks and uphold the 6 feet social distancing rule.
 - Donations/offerings will be collected online.
 - Communion will be pre-packaged.
 - The building should remain locked and congregation members should be notified ahead of time that restrooms will not be open.

Relatively Safe Options for In-Person Worship

- It is important to understand that gatherings of any size pose a risk of COVID-19 transmission. If your place of worship chooses to hold in-person activities, the safest way to do so is outlined below:
 - Develop and communicate a social distancing plan that includes where congregants will sit, how they will enter and exit seating areas (including staggered and scheduled arrival times and staggered exit times), and how social distancing can be maintained at all times given the physical layout of the place of worship. Use the social distancing plan to determine a safe capacity limit.
 - Consider a reservation system to limit capacity, assign seating to ensure social distancing, and to allow for contact tracing in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case and the need to contact exposed individuals.
 - Encourage staff and congregants/visitors who are sick or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, or who have family members who are ill, to stay home.
 - Congregate Outdoors at 25% capacity or 50 people (whichever is less)
 - Where weather and facilities permit, it is much safer for activities to occur outdoors rather than indoors. Groups should be limited to 25% capacity or 50 people, whichever is less. People should be able to maintain social distance (6 ft).
 - Congregants who are living together can sit together, at least six feet apart from other congregants and groups.
 - Everyone should wear a face covering.
 - Refrain from singing and group recitation, which significantly increases the risk of transmission of the virus by projecting respiratory droplets. Consider prerecorded music or other alternatives. If continuing with singing and group recitation, increase social distance to at least 10 feet between groups and ensure face coverings are worn.
 - Limit the number of people that use the restroom at one time. Restrooms should be regularly sanitized and have sufficient soap and hand sanitizer.
 - Congregate in groups indoors at 25% of your buildings' capacity or 50 people (whichever is less)
 - If your place of worship chooses to hold in-person, indoor services, the safest thing to do is limit the number of people during a given service.
 - Consider holding multiple services for multiple small groups, limiting to 25% of your buildings' capacity or 50 people, whichever is less. This includes special events such as baptisms, weddings, funerals, etc.
 - Consider offering additional times for services or meetings (per day or per week) so that fewer guests attend at one time. Ensure enough time between groups to prevent gathering and disinfect properly between groups.

- Congregants who are living together sit together, at least six feet apart from other congregants and groups.
- Wear a mask/cloth face coverings.
- Refrain from singing and group recitation, which significantly increases the risk of transmission of the virus by projecting respiratory droplets.
- Restrooms should be regularly sanitized and have sufficient soap and hand sanitizer.

Additional guidance for in-person activities:

- The State of Illinois issued [Guidance for Places of Worship & Providers of Religious Services](#)
- [CDC Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith](#)