

Religious and Faith-based Organizations COVID-19 Requirements

Summary of March 23, 2021 update:

- Introduces Phase 3 requirements, which permits:
 - Up to 50% of room (or building) capacity with a recommended maximum of 400 people if the space is less than 100,000 square feet and 600 people if the space is more than 100,000 square feet.
 - A maximum of 15 individuals to be seated together.
 - Choirs and congregations to sing indoors without size limitations.
- Requires woodwind and brass musicians to wear masks per the “Theater and Performing Arts” guidance.

Summary of January 11, 2021, update:

- Permits live music and performances so long as individuals wear face coverings and adhere to physical distancing requirements.
- Permits up to one individual at a time to speak during a service without a face covering.
- Permits up to two households to sit as group in Phase 1 outdoor services and Phase 2 indoor and outdoor services

With continuing reports of COVID-19 outbreaks at spiritual gatherings, the Governor still strongly encourages religious leaders and communities to conduct services remotely. Alternatively, drive-in services are permitted. In-person counseling services are essential and may be permitted if remote counseling is not viable.

In addition to remote and drive-in services, religious and faith-based organizations are permitted to conduct the following activities provided all requirements in this document are met:

Phases 1 and 2

A) Hold indoor services at a place of worship with up to 25% of room (or building) capacity with a recommended maximum of 200 people, so long as six feet of physical distancing can be achieved between each group in all directions. A group may include a maximum of 10 individuals or two households, whichever is more. It is recommended, but not required that each group consist of individuals from no more than two households. Face coverings are required for all participants.

B) Hold outdoor services of unlimited capacity with a recommended maximum of 200, so long as six feet of physical distancing can be achieved between each group in all directions. A group may include a maximum of 15 individuals or two households, whichever is more. It is recommended, but not required that each group consist of individuals from no more than two households. Face coverings are required for all participants.

Religious services conducted outdoor, in the open-air, or in an outdoor structure (temporary or permanent) must comply with the requirements of the Outdoor and Open-air Seating Guidance [here](#).

C) Hold or provide in-home services inside a person’s residence with up to five total individuals (excluding organization staff). Face coverings are required for all participants.

Phase 3

A) Hold indoor services at a place of worship with up to 50% of room (or building) capacity with a recommended maximum of 400 people if the space is less than 100,000 square feet and 600 people if the space is more than 100,000 square feet, so long as six feet of physical distancing can be achieved between each group in all directions. A group may include a maximum of 15 individuals. It is recommended, but not required that each group consist of individuals from no more than two households. Face coverings are required for all participants.

B) Hold outdoor services of unlimited capacity with a recommended maximum of 400, so long as six feet of physical distancing can be achieved between groups in all directions. A group may include up to 15 individuals. Face coverings are required for all participants.

Religious services conducted outdoor, in the open-air, or in an outdoor structure (temporary or permanent) must comply with the requirements of the Outdoor and Open-air Seating Guidance [here](#).

C) Hold or provide in-home services inside a person's residence with up to 10 total individuals (excluding organization staff). Face coverings are required for all participants.

The services covered in these operational guidelines include all worship services, religious study classes, religious ceremonies, and religious holiday celebrations. Religious weddings and funerals are not covered under this document and must follow the guidance [here](#).

Organizations are strongly encouraged to keep a log of attendees at each service or counseling session and to retain that log for at least two weeks. If an outbreak occurs, this information may be critical to help save lives.

Safety and Health Requirements

All facility owners have a general obligation to maintain a safe and healthy workplace in accordance with state and federal law and safety and health rules for a variety of workplace hazards. Employers must specifically ensure operations follow the main Labor & Industries COVID-19 requirements to protect workers. COVID-19 workplace and safety requirements can be found [here](#).

Additional information is available at [Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\) Resources](#) and [Paid Leave under the Washington Family Care Act and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#).

All religious and faith-based organizations are required to comply with the following COVID-19 organization-specific safety practices:

1. Prior to beginning operations as described in this document, all religious and faith-based organizations are required to develop for each location (indoor and outdoor if applicable) a comprehensive COVID-19 exposure control, mitigation and recovery plan. The plan must include policies regarding the following control measures: PPE utilization; on-location physical distancing; hygiene; sanitation; symptom monitoring; incident reporting; location disinfection procedures; COVID-19 safety training; exposure response procedures and a post-exposure incident project-wide recovery plan. A copy of the plan must be available at the location for inspection by state and local authorities, but state and local authorities do not preapprove the plan. Failure to meet planning requirements may result in sanctions, including the location being shut down.
2. COVID-19 safety information and requirements, such as CDC, DOH, OSHA posters shall be visibly posted at each location (indoor and outdoor).
3. Face Coverings and Exemptions - All employees, members, and visitors in attendance shall wear face coverings before, during, and after the service (whether indoor or outdoor). Face coverings are required to be worn by all during the service except when an individual is addressing the

congregation. If there are two or more speakers addressing the congregation during the service, only one speaker at a time may remove their face covering. If a speaker decides not to wear a face covering, it is recommended that a Plexiglas 3-sided barrier is used during the service. The barrier must be disinfected after every use.

There are exemptions to wearing face covering, so please refer to the [Department of Health's Order on Face Coverings](#).

4. There may be no direct physical contact between servers and members or visitors. Anything to be consumed may not be presented to the members or visitors in a communal container or plate.
5. Live music and performances –
 - a. **Choirs and Congregational Singing:**
 - i. **Phases 1 and 2:** Choirs with up to 15 singers are permitted to sing indoors during the service so long as each singer maintains 9 feet (12 feet is encouraged) of physical distancing and wears a three-layer cloth mask or surgical mask. For religious organizations without a choir or with a choir of fewer than 15 singers, congregants and staff are permitted to sing so long as the total number of people singing does not exceed 15 and all those singing adhere to the 9 feet (12 feet is encouraged) of physical distancing and three-layer cloth mask or surgical masking requirements.

Choirs in excess of 15 individuals and the entire congregation are permitted to sing outdoors provided that all singers maintain 9 feet (12 feet is encouraged) of physical distancing and wear a three-layer cloth mask or surgical mask.
 - ii. **Phase 3:** Choirs of any size are permitted to sing so long as six feet of physical distancing is maintained between each singer and all singers wear a three-layer cloth mask or surgical mask.

Congregations of any size are permitted to sing as long six feet of physical distancing is maintained between groups and all congregants wear a three-layer cloth mask or surgical mask.
 - b. **Soloist singers** are permitted to sing during the service without a mask provided that the individual maintains 15 feet of physical distancing.
 - c. **The performance of woodwind and brass instruments** is permitted during the service so long as the performer(s) maintain 9 feet (12 feet is encouraged) of physical distancing. Woodwind and brass performers are required to wear their masks during their performance.
 - d. **Musical ensembles and other disciplines of performing arts** are permitted to perform during the service so long as all of the discipline-specific requirements outlined in the ["Theater and Performing Arts"](#) guidance document are followed.
6. All services must provide access to restrooms.
7. Soap and running water shall be abundantly provided at locations for frequent handwashing. Employees should be encouraged to leave their workstations to wash their hands regularly, and required to do so before and after going to the bathroom, before and after eating and after coughing, sneezing or blowing their nose. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with greater than 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol should also be provided and used, but are not a replacement for the water requirement.
8. Disinfectants must be available to employees, members, and visitors throughout the location (indoor and outdoor) and ensure cleaning supplies are frequently replenished.

9. Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces after each use—including personal work stations, mirrors, chairs, headrests and armrests, doorknobs, handrails, restrooms and breakrooms—using soapy water, followed by the appropriate disinfectants. If these areas cannot be cleaned and disinfected frequently, the organization shall be shut down until such measures can be achieved and maintained.
10. All organizations must adhere to physical distancing requirements and have six feet of space in all directions between the congregation’s seats, pews, and benches or have physical barriers between them.

This may require the organization to reconfigure the congregation’s seats, pews, and benches or have physical barriers between them.

In Phases 1 and 2, groups of up to 10 individuals may be grouped together for indoors services and 15 individuals for outdoor services.

In Phase 3, groups of up to 15 individuals may be grouped together.
11. Brief physical contact may be permitted among a limited number of people (up to 15 individuals) if it is a critical component to the organization’s religious service so long as face coverings are worn and hands are sanitized immediately before and after the contact.
12. Increase ventilation and filtration of indoor spaces to improve air quality and reduce airborne exposures where feasible as recommended by [DOH](#), the CDC, and ASHRAE. Good ventilation and indoor air quality are important in reducing airborne exposure to viruses, including SARS-CoV-2 that causes COVID-19, as well as other disease vectors, chemicals, and odors. More information available [here](#).
13. Ensure that tissues and trashcans are placed throughout the location (indoor and outdoor).
14. Inform all employees, members, and guests that they must self-screen for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 before arriving at the location.
 - Request employees, members, and visitors to take their temperature before attending a service. Any individual with a temperature of 100.4°F may not attend the service or attend work at the organization.
 - Any individual with a household member who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or with symptoms of COVID-19 (including a fever above 100.4°F) may not attend the service or attend work at the organization.
15. For in-home services, religious and faith-based organizations are permitted to convene up to five individuals in Phases 1 and 2 and 10 individuals in Phase 3 excluding organization staff. These individuals do not need to be from the same household. However, individuals must wear face coverings when individuals from outside of the household participate.

All issues regarding worker safety and health are subject to enforcement action under L&I’s Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH).

- Employers can request COVID-19 [prevention advice and help](#) from DOSH.
- Employee workplace safety and health complaints may be submitted to the DOSH Call Center: (1-800-423-7233) or via e-mail to adag235@lni.wa.gov.
- General questions about how to comply with the agreement practices can be submitted to the state’s Business Response Center at <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/how-you-can-help/covid-19-business-and-worker-inquiries>.
- All other violations related to Proclamation 20-25, et seq., can be submitted at <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/report-safe-start-violation>.