



Safer at Home

PLACES OF WORSHIP

COVID-19 REOPENING GUIDANCE

GOVERNOR'S ECONOMIC REOPENING TASKFORCE



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Effective immediately, in person religious services may resume in accordance with the following guidance and religious services taking place under this guidance shall be exempt from Emergency Order #16. This guidance applies to indoor and outdoor religious services, including weddings and funeral services.

The guidance below is intended to help protect the staff, attendees/congregation, and the surrounding community; this guidance can help mitigate, but not entirely eliminate, risk of COVID-19 transmission in a house of worship and surrounding community.

Review and follow the New Hampshire [Universal Guidelines](#).
Review CDC's [Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith](#)

Additional Guidance:

1. Places of worship are encouraged to continue conducting services online or through means that allow participants to remain in their homes. This is particularly important for [people at higher risk of severe illness](#) from COVID-19 who are still advised to avoid group gatherings for the protection of their own health and safety.
2. If possible, services should be held outdoors to avoid the increased risks of transmission in an enclosed building.
3. All places of worship shall limit building occupancy to 50% of the building's maximum permitted occupancy level as documented in its occupancy permit on record with the municipal building department or other municipal record holder. However actual occupancy might need to be lower than 50% occupancy in order to comply with social distancing and other guidance contained in these Guidelines. For outdoor services, the maximum number of attendees shall be the highest number of attendees for which the social distancing requirements contained in this guidance can be met using the space available for the service.
4. The occupant count shall include all persons inside the place of worship, including attendees and staff.
5. To meet demand, leaders should consider hosting multiple services that are staggered and spaced apart to avoid one group leaving while another is arriving.
6. Staff should be actively screened each day according to the NH [Universal Guidelines](#).
7. All attendees should be informed of the symptoms of COVID-19 before entering the worship facility (using signage and other forms of messaging). Risks include:
 - a. Person has any of the following symptoms of COVID-19:
 - i. Fever (feeling feverish or a document temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher);
 - ii. Respiratory symptoms such as runny nose, nasal congestion, sore throat, cough, or shortness of breath;
 - iii. Whole body symptoms such as muscle aches, chills, and severe fatigue;
 - iv. Changes in the person's sense of taste or smell?



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- b. Person has been in close contact with someone who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 in the past 14 days? (**NOTE:** Healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients while wearing appropriate personal protective equipment should answer “no” to this question)
 - c. Person has traveled in the past 14 days either:
 - i. Internationally (outside the U.S.);
 - ii. By cruise ship; or
 - iii. Domestically (within the U.S.) outside of NH, VT, or ME on public transportation (e.g., bus, train, plane, etc.)?
8. Assign a dedicated staff member (i.e., a safety officer) who is tasked to monitor and improve compliance with social distancing and other protective policies, including education, hand hygiene and cloth face covering use.
9. To avoid having to turn people away at the entrances, it is recommended that places of worship develop a schedule of worship services, specifying days and times that members and attendees can sign up for in advance of the service (online or by phone).
10. Places of worship should develop a system and process that builds in social distancing at all times so that participants are separated by at least 6 feet of space when entering, kneeling/sitting/standing and participating in worship, and leaving the service.
11. Attendees who are not part of the same immediate household must be seated/positioned at least 6 feet apart..
12. Places of worship should develop a one-way flow of traffic utilizing a different entrance and exit for the facility. As people enter and arrive at their seat, there should be a process and space for people to get to their seat without coming in close contact with others.
13. When possible, places of worship shall allow enough spacing between people for them to move from their seats as needed (for participation in worship activities or to move to and from the restroom) without coming into close contact with others.
14. Where lines of people may form (e.g., entry, exit, receiving sacraments, veneration of religious objects, processions) the floor should be clearly marked to delineate 6 feet distances between participants.
15. Shared cups, serving utensils, books of worship, or passing of plates must be avoided:
 - a. Donations, for example, should utilize a single drop-off receptacle for any collection of donations that might occur.
 - b. Communion and Eucharist, for example, should not involve a shared cup or passing of a plate between people. Having individual elements that are picked up by attendees upon entry to a facility is recommended.
 - c. Veneration of communal religious objects should occur without physical contact.



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16. When possible, alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be made available at entrances and exits of the facility, in addition to within the place or worship for staff and attendees to use. Leaders of a religious ceremony, ritual or service must sanitize hands before and after the event.
17. Cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces, restrooms, objects and utensils should occur at the end of each service following guidance outlined by the CDC and highlighted in the NH [Universal Guidelines](#).
18. The following activities are discouraged:
 - a. Close or physical contact with other attendees, staff, including handshakes, embraces, and kissing.
 - b. Pre- or post-service communal gatherings (e.g., coffee hours or other food services) may take place but must comply with [all applicable guidance](#) and [Emergency Orders](#), including the [Universal](#) and [Food Service Industry guidance](#), and [Emergency Order 63](#).

