

WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness, including fever, cough and shortness of breath. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus. It is not the same as other types of coronaviruses that commonly circulate among people and cause mild illness, like the common cold. Those who are older than 60 or have underlying health conditions such as heart or lung disease, and diabetes, are particularly at risk.

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

GUIDANCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Places of Worship are encouraged to conduct as many activities as possible remotely

Places of worship should continue using livestream, virtual services and drive-in services. Faith communities and religious leaders quickly adapted to these alternative services which continue to be recommended practices. Preparing livestream services and drive-in services should be conducted in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [guidelines](#).

In-person services are permitted in much of the state beginning May 8, 2020, religious services, including wedding ceremonies and funeral services, may continue and will no longer be subject to limits on social gatherings. However, social distancing and other sanitation measures will continue to apply. Wedding receptions and visitations before or after funerals remain subject to the limitations and restrictions for social gatherings, and it is recommended that religious leaders verify local restrictions.

If implementing in-person services, consider the following practices:

- Ask all individuals who are 65 and older or who have an underlying at-risk health [condition](#) to stay home and watch services online
- Ensure 6 feet between individuals or family units of the same households during services
- Space and mark seating, alternating rows when possible
- Clean between each service and regularly disinfect high-contact surfaces
- Place hand sanitizers in high-contact locations (e.g. bathroom, entry, exit) and ask staff, members and guests to sanitize their hands before entering the building
- Recommend putting on a face covering before entering the building



- Consider placing signage telling staff, members and guests to not enter if they are symptomatic or if they tested positive for COVID-19
- Implement no-contact greetings
- Avoid handing out materials
- Keep cafes, coffee and other self-service stations closed
- Establish safe protocols for any communion and collection to avoid contact
- Dismiss services in a way that supports social distancing
- Place readily visible signage to remind everyone of best hygiene practices

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Questions about COVID-19 may be directed to the ISDH COVID-19 Call Center at the toll-free number 877-826-0011 (available 8 a.m. to midnight).

Additional information and resources for COVID-19 are available at the links below.

- Back on Track Revised Guidance for Places of Worship: https://backontrack.in.gov/files/BackOnTrack-IN_PlacesOfWorship.pdf
- Additional guidance for the faith community from the CDC can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/guidance-community-faith-organizations.html>
- CDC COVID-19 webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/>
- ISDH COVID-19 webpage: <https://coronavirus.in.gov>