Parish/Diocesan Ministries COVID-19 Preparedness Guidance
Diocese of Saint Cloud, Minnesota

This document has been UPDATED, and replaces all previous versions.
UPDATED information may be found on pages 2, 3 and 5 -- indicated by a gray box.

Please read the entire document as you plan your activities and events.

This Guidance provides a framework in which to develop safe and responsible plans for ministries in the Diocese of Saint Cloud. This is to be used by pastors, ministry leaders and organizers and staff to ensure that efforts are safe, responsible and consistent throughout the Diocese.

The Diocese continues to encourage hospitality and care through flexible and creative solutions that continue serving the faithful, while keeping them safe. **It is expected that parishes and schools will provide reasonable accommodations to allow participation of people who cannot attend in-person events, activities, classes, meetings and so forth.**

Guiding Principles
- Mitigations will be developed from the guidance of the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and county public health departments.
- COVID-19 Preparedness Plans must be communicated clearly to parishioners and participants (website, email, mailings, e.g.).
- Proper training of staff and volunteers to understand and enact these plans is necessary to support community health and safety.
- Each parish must have a designated COVID-19 contact person to whom questions and concerns can be directed.
- Adaptations for increased accessibility and safety must be considered to serve people with special needs and vulnerable populations.
- Diocesan Safe Environment policies must be followed for all activities involving minors and vulnerable adults.
- Events and activities must provide for appropriate hospitality to assist people in understanding and following safety measures.

There are three (3) sections of this Guidance:

1. Required and recommended measures for all ministries
2. Additional required measures for programs with youth and children
3. Resources for COVID-19 Preparedness Planning

Required Measures for All Ministries
Health screening, Isolation, Quarantine, Hygiene, Sanitization and Ventilation

- **Health screening and Isolation**
  - Post signage for self-screening of all participants of in-person events and activities (leaders, youth, volunteers, drivers, e.g.)
    - For **adults**, use the following Health Screening Checklist: https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/screen.pdf
    - For **youth**, use the following: https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf
  - **UPDATED:** Have participants stay home if any of the following are true:
    - They are feeling ill, or showing symptoms continuous with COVID-19
      - Encourage them to get tested as soon as possible
    - They are awaiting COVID-19 test results
    - They have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 10 days, with no symptoms
    - They have been identified as a close contact of an infected person within the past 10 days, with no symptoms
  - Establish policies and procedures for participants to report when they have tested positive for COVID-19, are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or have been identified as a close contact

- **Close Contacts and Quarantine**
  - Create a system for identifying and communicating with participants who may have been a close contact or exposed to someone who has COVID-19 or COVID-19 symptoms. Ensure that participants who were exposed or identified as close contacts stay away for the applicable quarantine period and encourage them to be tested.
    - See **Close Contacts and Tracing: COVID-19:** www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/close.html and **Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19:** https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf for more information about close contacts, exposure, when to get tested, and quarantine periods

- **Hand hygiene practices**
  - Provide instruction, signage, facilities, and supplies to encourage regular handwashing and sanitizing. See **Hand Hygiene:** www.health.state.mn.us/people/handhygiene/index.html

- **Cleaning and disinfecting**
  - Establish a regular schedule and checklist for cleaning and disinfecting commonly touched surfaces (tables, chairs, pews, handrails, doorknobs, etc.), shared items, shared equipment, and high traffic areas. Continue to perform other routine environmental cleaning according to established schedules and procedures.
    - See the CDC guide on **Cleaning Your Facility:** https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html

- Use the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) List N for products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2: www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19

- **Ventilation**
  - Ventilation is an important factor in preventing COVID-19 transmission indoors. Evaluate the operational capacity of ventilation systems and increase and maintain ventilation provided throughout the building.
    - Increase the intake percentage of outside air to increase dilution of contaminants, and minimize recirculation, whenever possible, while maintaining indoor air conditions
    - In the absence of effective mechanical ventilation, increase natural ventilation as much as possible. Open windows if possible and safe to do so
    - For additional information on ventilation, see **MDH's Indoor Air Considerations:** www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/indoorair.html

UPDATED: Overnight programs
- All participants (adults and youth) who will stay overnight **are required to meet one of the following criteria:**
  - They must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (with at least 14 days following the final dose), and present no symptoms.
  - They must present a lab-confirmed (not home-based) negative test for COVID-19 within 36 hours of the start of the camp, and present no symptoms.
- Program leaders are responsible for obtaining proof of vaccination or negative test from participants
  - Vaccination may be demonstrated by presenting a person's CDC *COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card* to the program leader, or by keeping a copy of the *Record Card* with program registration materials
  - A negative test may be demonstrated by presenting the e-mail or other documentation received with the negative test result.

Recommended Measures for All Ministries
Vaccination, Social Distancing

- **Encourage Vaccination**
  - Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent getting or spreading COVID-19. For more information about what you can do when vaccinated, visit **COVID-19 Vaccine:** www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/index.html
  - Bishop Kettler addresses moral questions surrounding COVID-19 vaccines: https://thecentralminnesotacatholic.org/bishop-kettler-addresses-moral-questions-surrounding-covid-19-vaccines/

- **Wear a face covering indoors if you are not vaccinated**
  - This is especially advised for those who:
    - Are likely to be in contact with others who have been exposed to, or have contracted COVID-19
    - Are vulnerable to complications from sickness due to COVID-19
    - Share transportation with others outside of their family or regular working or social environments

- **Social distance if you are not vaccinated (6ft+)**
  - In designing events, ensure that you can accommodate vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals with:
    - Space to allow for people to practice social distancing
    - Hospitality and understanding for groups with a mix of socially distanced, masked and unmasked persons

Additional Required Measures for Programs with Youth and Children

Faith Formation, Religious Education, Youth Ministry,
Children's Ministry, Sacramental Preparation

Handling suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19
- Minnesota Rule 4605.7070 requires any person in charge of any institution, school, child care facility, or camp to report cases of COVID-19 to MDH
- **Report any positive test results using this form**: https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=KKWLDH3ARC

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Additional Recommended Measures for Programs with Youth and Children
Vaccination, Testing, Communication, Staffing, Face Coverings,
Physical Distancing and Cohorting, Meals, Transportation, Lodging

For full details to use in planning and operations, see the
MDH COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Certified Child Care, Youth Programs, and Camps:
https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/youthguide.pdf

The following are recommendations, but are NOT required.

- **Full vaccination status for all program staff**
  - Vaccination provides the best protection from contracting and spreading COVID-19 to, and with participants, allowing the most stable and safe program environment

- **Communicate clearly with families about program expectations and mitigation measures**
  - This includes information about health screenings, reporting COVID-19 exposures, attendance, isolation and quarantine requirements
  - Include information about how practices have changed from the past, if needed
  - Be clear about how practices or mitigations may change if needed, due to community transmission levels
  - Share how participants will be accommodated with needs or comfort level in the use of face coverings or social distancing practices

- **Develop a flexible staffing plan to accommodate volunteer or staff absences due to illness or quarantine needs**

- **Establish clear procedures with any vendors or services (catering, e.g.) to mitigate interaction with participants that maintains COVID-19 prevention measures**

- **Face coverings**
  - Because children under the age of 12 are not eligible for vaccination and many over the age of 12 may not yet be fully vaccinated, there is an increased risk of COVID-19 transmission in youth program settings. Face coverings are strongly recommended:
    - During indoor programming
    - During outdoor programming, if physical distancing cannot be maintained

- **Physical Distancing and Cohorting**
  - Follow CDC guidance on physical distancing for physical distancing and cohorting, indoors and outdoors:
    https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html

- **Meals**
  - In addition to following any and all required food safety regulations:
    - Food service workers should keep 6ft+ of distance from others
    - Stagger mealtimes to limit the number of people indoors at the same time. If possible, use cohort arrangements
    - Clean and disinfect between groups or cohorts
    - Consider pre-packaged or pre-plated meals in place of buffet or self-service
    - Whenever possible, dine outdoors

- **Transportation**
  - If participants will share transportation outside of cohort arrangements:
    - Create a plan to allow for as much distance between participants as possible
    - Have participants (adults and youth) wear face coverings
    - Allow for ventilation during transportation whenever possible
    - Clean and disinfect touched surfaces in the vehicle between routes
  - Encourage families to transport their own children whenever possible
  - Persons who become ill, or develop any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 during programs or events should not use shared transportation to return home
    - Develop a plan for parents to pick up children who need to return home prior to the end of the program

- **Lodging**
  - Designate cohorts for staff and camp participants based on those who share cabins, tents, or other lodging
  - Consider sleeping arrangements that allow 6ft+ of distance while sleeping, and if possible, re-arrange spaces or reduce numbers in each space to allow this
  - Set up designated storage areas for participants to keep belongings separated
  - Limit access to lodging to only people who reside in that lodging

Other Ministries

Worship

The latest Guidance for worship and related activities is available at http://stcdio.org/coronavirus-update/.

Catholic Schools

Each Catholic school has developed COVID-19 prevention plans for the 2021-2022 school year. Contact your school principal for more information.

Resources for COVID-19 Preparedness Planning

The offices of the Diocese of Saint Cloud will provide support to pastors and parish staff members in using this guidance, as well as in particular ways to adapt ministry efforts for continuation throughout the pandemic, as shown here:

Catholic Education Ministries
Faith-formation, religious education, youth ministry, sacramental preparation, lay ministry, Catholic schools

Communications
Connecting with parishes and communities, sharing COVID-19 preparedness plans

Office of Marriage and Family
NFP Instructors, Sponsor Couples, Marriage Course

Human Resources
Parish and diocese offices and workplace settings

Office of Worship
Art of Re-Opening our Churches for Public Worship; Sacramental liturgies

Web Resources

Diocese of Saint Cloud COVID-19 Updates: http://stcdio.org/coronavirus-update/

CDC Guidance for Workplaces and Businesses:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/workplaces-businesses/index.html

MDH COVID-19 Decision Tree for Schools, Youth and Child Care Programs:
https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf

MDH COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth and Student Programs:
https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/youthguide.pdf

CDC Guidance for Community Organizations and Gatherings
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html

Catholic Mutual Group COVID-19 Resources:
http://catholicmutual.org/en-us/home/covid-19caresresources.aspx