

Revised: 29 June 2022

GUIDELINES FOR COVID SAFE OPERATIONS FOR HOUSES OF WORSHIP

The following principles set the mandatory minimum parameters for safely operating Houses of Worship during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Houses of Worship means a church or other building set apart primarily for worship in which religious services are held and the main body of which is kept for that use and not put to any other use inconsistent with its primary purpose.

The protocols and measures herein are designed to ensure minimal risk when conducting religious activities and may be subject to review (modification, additional or removal).

- 1) Houses of worship can operate at full capacity with adherence to physical distancing, and the establishment must be well ventilated.
- 2) Religious Officiant must ensure all persons wear appropriate PPE, such as face coverings, adhere to physical distancing and the establishment must be well ventilated. There is to be no sharing of bibles, fans and other items while at the House of Worship.
- 3) House of Worship attendees must not come into any physical contact, such as hugging/kissing/close contact with other attendees, unless from the same household bubble.
- 4) Face coverings must be worn at all times; however, they can only be removed at the point of consuming a devotional offering. Children under the age of 8 years are exempted from wearing a face covering. However, they are encouraged to do so (if possible).
- 5) Houses of Worship are strongly encouraged to organise multiple sessions to ensure no crowding in or outside the establishment.
- 6) Preaching and teaching by the worship/religious leader without a face covering is allowable from a well-defined and well-ventilated area, separated from the congregation.
- 7) Music/live choir, singing without a face covering is allowable from a well-defined and well-ventilated area, separated from the congregation.
- 8) Houses of Worship must provide hand washing facilities and sanitisers.

- 9) Houses of Worship must maintain safe hygiene protocols and regularly disinfect all high-touch surfaces. Thorough disinfection should be undertaken every day before opening and closing, e.g., door handles.
- 10) When preparing devotional offerings, Houses of Worship must ensure hygiene practices. No sharing of glasses and cutlery amongst themselves.
- 11) Houses of Worship must maximise natural ventilation by opening windows, doors, and vents when conditions allow (if that does not pose a safety risk), or mechanical ventilation using fans and ducts, or a combination of both. Any poorly ventilated spaces must be identified and steps are taken to improve fresh air flow in these areas.
- 12) In buildings with heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, ensure that:
 - i) These systems are operating in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and design specifications;
 - ii) All regularly scheduled inspections and maintenance procedures are conducted;
 - iii) Maximise the amount of outside air supplied
- 13) If a positive case is found on the premises, the House of Worship must decontaminate all of its high-touch surfaces before resuming operations.

The Covid Committee has developed the above protocols to allow Houses of Worship to commence operations under strict COVID Safe protocols.

Houses of Worship must satisfactorily demonstrate the implementation of COVID Safe protocols.

LEGAL

Any person who fails to comply with the mandatory requirements under this Protocol as ordered by the Director for Health commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years or both under the Public Health Act 1965.