



GUIDELINES FOR COVID-19 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).

Guidelines for places of worship

- Places of worship can open with **public health measures** in place. Regularly clean¹ shared surfaces before and after each service.
- **Every person attending must wear a face mask.** Children under 8 do not need to wear a face mask, but are encouraged to wear one,
- Offer **multiple services** so everyone attending can keep a safe distance apart.
- Let fresh air in by opening windows. This will improve ventilation and can help reduce the risk of catching or spreading COVID-19.
- Provide **hand sanitisers or soap** so attendees can wash their hands
- **Remove communal resources** such as Bibles or fans and encourage attendees to bring their own.
- **Singing**, for example church choirs and other types of performance can go ahead. Performers do not need to wear a face covering but must maintain distance from the congregation.
- Leaders do not need to wear a face covering when preaching or teaching – as long as they can keep a safe distance from attendees.
- Remind attendees to **stay home if they are unwell.**
- You **can serve food and drink**, but you should try to avoid attendees sharing utensils.
- If a positive case is found to have been at the premises, it is considered a **Location of Interest** and the House of Worship must decontaminate² all of its high-touch surfaces before

¹ Routine cleaning using household/supermarket detergents is sufficient to substantially reduce viral levels on surfaces.

² If there has been a COVID-19 case, wear a mask, and open windows and doors before cleaning and disinfecting. Cleaning means physically removing germs, dirt, and grime from surfaces. Disinfecting means using chemicals, such as bleach, products containing $\geq 70\%$ alcohol, or products with antiviral activity, to kill germs on surfaces. Follow the instructions on the disinfectant to ensure they are used safely and effectively.

resuming operations. Any people who were present at the same time as the case are likely considered Persons of Interest and must monitor themselves for symptoms and get tested if they develop any.

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

If you are going to a place of worship

- Do not attend a service or prayer if you are unwell or if you are isolating.
- Wear a face mask.
- Avoid close physical contact such as hugging or kissing with people who are not in your household bubble.
- Wash and sanitise your hands regularly.
- Avoid congregating or gathering at entrances or in small, shared spaces such as the bathroom.
- Try to keep at least 1 metre away from people you do not know.
- Avoid sharing food, drinks, and utensils with other people.

Compliance

The COVID-19 Committee has developed the above protocols to allow Houses of Worship to commence operations under strict COVID-19 Safe protocols.

Any person who fails to comply with the mandatory requirements 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.