

### 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, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. 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. The risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at highest 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 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or longer in a 24-hour period) 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. The best way to protect yourself and to help reduce the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 is to limit your interactions with other people as much as possible and take precautions to prevent getting COVID-19 when you do interact with others. Those steps include wearing a face covering, maintaining social distance of 6 feet and washing your hands frequently. If you start feeling sick and think you may have COVID-19, get in touch with your healthcare provider within 24 hours.

### 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
- See Gov. Eric J. Holcomb's Executive Order [20-37](#) for face covering requirements. Any person attending or engaged in a religious service as he or she must already maintain six feet of social distancing from another person not in the same household is exempt from the face covering requirement.
- 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

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](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>
- Checklist for Community and Faith Leaders: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/checklist.html>
- FAQs for Administrators and Leaders at Community- and Faith-Based Organizations: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/community-faith-based/faq.html>
- CDC COVID-19 webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/>
- ISDH COVID-19 webpage: <https://coronavirus.in.gov>