

COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND PLACES OF WORSHIP: OPERATING IN GREY – LOCKDOWN

Windsor-Essex County is currently in the Grey-Lockdown level of the provincial **COVID-19 Response Framework**. Religious services, rites, ceremonies and related celebrations must comply with the **Reopening Ontario Act**.

During this time, it is recommended that faith leaders limit in-person and move to virtual services to reduce the risk of COVID-19. This document is intended **to be a guide for Faith-Based Organizations and places of worship, and should not take place of any legal advice or rules** put in place by any governing body or legislation.

Stay updated on the latest provincial restrictions and local orders by visiting WECHU's **Local Pandemic Status webpage** and **Restrictions & Guidance webpage**.

***This document is subject to change and is current as of December 17, 2020*

GATHERING LIMITS

In the Grey-Lockdown Level, gathering limits are as follows:

	Gatherings for weddings, funerals, or religious services, rites or ceremonies	Social gatherings associated with weddings, funerals, or religious services, rites, or ceremonies
Indoor	10 people or less, per service, rite, or ceremony	None permitted* *Exception for members of a single household or one person from outside the household of a person that lives alone.
Outdoor	10 people or less, per service, rite, or ceremony	10 people or less

- The mandatory capacity limits include parishioners, officiants and staff. In addition, all individuals must be able to maintain at least two metres/six feet physical distancing from people they do not live with at all times.
- Discourage social gatherings before or after the service, including between staff.
- Postpone social gatherings/receptions for a later date, or limit to household members only.

VIRTUAL SERVICES

- Virtual services are strongly recommended at this time to reduce the spread of COVID-19, and to ensure that everyone can participate safely.
- Many of the COVID-19 cases are from in-person transmission. Call or connect virtually with vulnerable individuals or people who live alone.

SCREENING

- All individuals must be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 before attending the place of worship. Ensure employees, volunteers, and parishioners are aware of common **COVID-19 symptoms**. Post the **WECHU COVID-19 Screening Tool** at entrances or share the **Ontario online self assessment tool** with attendees to complete before their arrival.
- Information may be gathered beforehand if there is online registration. If collecting information at the entrance, maintain physical distance and do not pass pen and paper around.
- Encourage worshippers, volunteers, ushers, and parishioners to download the **COVID-19 Alert App** so that they may receive notifications if they were in close contact with someone who was tested positive for COVID-19.
- Keep an attendance record of all staff, volunteers and visitors. Include name, date, time/event, email address or phone number.
 - Personal information collected can only be used for contact tracing and should be kept in locked drawer or office for 30 days, and then shredded.

HAND HYGIENE AND RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

- Post signage to communicate entry procedures such as **hand sanitizing, sneeze and cough etiquette**, wearing of cloth masks, and/or screening for symptoms.
- Provide training to employees and volunteers on effective **hand hygiene practices** and if required, the **proper way to put on and remove PPE** such as masks, face shields, gowns, and gloves.
- Provide hand sanitizer stations by entrances, and in high traffic areas.
- Encourage handwashing with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching face with unwashed hands.
- Cover cough or sneeze into your sleeve or with a tissue.
- Do not use gloves as a substitute for hand hygiene.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- Post signage at entrances and throughout the building that clearly communicates procedures for physical distancing between worshippers, employees and volunteers. This includes posters and floor markings such as instructional tape/stickers that direct

the flow of people waiting for services indoor or in any outdoor waiting areas. Examples of signage can be found in the [Resources & Signage](#) section of the WECHU website.

- Implement policies to discourage activities that may increase the risk of spreading COVID-19 such as greeting by shaking hands, hugging, kissing, or eating and drinking from communal dishes and cups.
- Displaying “[Stand Here](#)” and “[Do Not Enter...If You Are Sick](#)” signage to minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread.
- Parishioners should wait in their car or outside until the service begins, to limit any congregating within the lobby or entryway.
- Remove or tape off seats and alternate rows for 2 metre distancing between attendees.
- Consider seating by households and encourage everyone to remain seated for the service.
- Singing and live playing of music is a high-risk activity because the virus can be transmitted through saliva or respiratory droplets. Congregational singing and chanting is not permitted at this time. Any spoken responses by the congregate should be in a low voice.
- Ceremonies or rituals that involve physical contact between individuals, such as the handling of the Torah scroll or baptism, should be modified to maintain physical distancing. Where physical distancing is not possible, participants will be required to wearing face masks and ensure proper hand hygiene.
- Passing of offering baskets is not permitted at this time. Consider touchless ways to collect offerings such as online donations, text-to-give, e-transfer, etc.

Consider drive-in religious gatherings with vehicles parked at least two metres apart and discourage people from leaving their vehicle during the service, except to use the washroom. It is recommended that no more than five people conduct the service from outside the vehicle, physically distanced by at least two metres.

FACE COVERINGS AND MASKS

- Everyone should wear a mask indoors, with some exceptions. Masks are not required for children under the age of two and people who have trouble breathing.
- Review the WECHU [Face Masks and Coverings](#) page for important provincial and local by-laws and other helpful information.
- A mask should be worn outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- If required, order [supplies](#) including disposable masks for worshippers and disposable or reusable masks for parishioners, volunteers, and staff. Medical masks should not be used as these are being conserved for health care workers. Print and display posters describing [proper usage](#).

ENHANCED CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- Create policies and procedures that outline roles and responsibilities for **cleaning and disinfection of the facility**.
- Assign staff or volunteers to clean and disinfect at least twice daily.
- Keep a cleaning log to track activities.
- Order an adequate supply of approved disinfecting solution or wipes, and an alcohol-based hand rub (hand sanitizer) with at least 60% alcohol content, liquid hand soap, and paper towels. These should be easily accessible to all attending the religious service or place of worship.
- Do not hand out or share items that cannot be cleaned and sanitized before and after each use (e.g., books, hymns, prayer mats, pipes, and programs). Encourage congregants to bring their own items and avoid sharing them with others. Books or items that can't be disinfected should be removed and held for 72 hours before being brought back into use. Objects that cannot be disinfected between uses should not be distributed.
- Microphones must not be shared between individuals due to the difficulty of cleaning and disinfecting these devices. Minimize the number of attendees providing readings or performing other activities that would require the use of a microphone.
- Wash garments and linens after use, at the hottest temperature setting possible.
- Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter instead of sweeping floors.
- Line the waste bins with plastic bags and empty waste bins often.
- Change gloves when changing tasks, or more often as necessary.
- Wash hands with soap and water after taking off gloves.
- Always read the labels. Avoid mixing cleaning agents. Use in a well ventilated area

CHILDCARE

- If provided, childcare services must meet all requirements in the **Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014** and comply with the **Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak: Child Care Re-Opening**.

RESOURCES

Ministry of Health

COVID-19 Advice Religious Services, Rites or Ceremonies

Public Services Health & Safety Association

Health and Safety Guidance during COVID-19 for Employers of Office Settings