

# FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND PLACES OF WORSHIP CHECKLIST

## SAFE RETURN TO BUSINESS



WINDSOR-ESSEX REGIONAL  
Chamber of Commerce

For more detailed recommendations and links to additional helpful resources, please review the **“Safe Return to Business: A Public Health Toolkit for the Windsor-Essex Business Community”** document from the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit. *This checklist is meant to be a guide for businesses and should not take place of any legal advice or rules put in place by any governing body or legislation.*

The occupancy limit imposed by the Government of Ontario remains at 30 percent of the building's capacity. The following recommendations are general guidelines and may not be applicable to all religious denominations. Apply those practices that are relevant to your faith-based organization or place of worship (e.g., church, mosque, synagogue, temple).

Stay updated on the latest federal actions, current provincial restrictions, and local orders by visiting WECHU's **Restrictions & Guidance webpage** and visit WECHU's **Workplace Specific Webpage** to find other Safe Return to Business Checklists providing specific guidance to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

*\*\*This document is subject to change and is current as of September 22, 2020*

### COMMUNICATION TO STAFF AND WORSHIPPERS

- Inform worshippers about your re-opening timeline and changes to how your faith service will operate. Use as many methods of communication as possible, such as subscribed email lists, direct customer phone calls for urgent matters, social media, and your website.
- 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.
- Post signage at entrances and throughout the building that clearly communicate procedures for physical distancing between worshippers, staff and customers. This include posters and floor markings such as instructional tape/stickers that direct the flow of people or customers waiting for services indoor or in any outdoor waiting areas. Examples of signage can be found in Appendix B in the **Toolkit** or the **Resources & Signage** section of the WECHU website.
- Displaying **“Stand Here”** and **“Do Not Enter...If You Are Sick”** signage can serve as important components of a broader communication strategy to minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread between employees, staff, and customers. The two signs noted above (i.e., floor sticker and

window cling) are available in English in limited supply by completing the “**Business Reopening Signage Order Form.**”

- Post signage to communicate entry procedures such as **hand sanitizing, sneeze and cough etiquette**, wearing of cloth masks, and/or screening for symptoms.
- Ensure employees, volunteers, parishioners, and worshippers are aware of common **COVID-19 symptoms** and are instructed to complete a daily **COVID-19 self-assessment** before attending a religious service or gathering. It should be made clear that anyone who is sick must remain at home for the safety of others.
- 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.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Create policies and procedures that outline roles and responsibilities of the employer and the employee, including **cleaning and disinfection of the workplace**, how workers can report signs of illnesses, how to handle potentially high levels of employee absenteeism, staff return to work after COVID-19 illness, and how work will be scheduled.
- Create a response plan to handle any staff, volunteer, parishioner, or worshipper who becomes ill while at work or while attending a service. Consider collecting the names and contact information of attendees. This information will be useful to provide to the WECHU in the event that someone attending the service tests positive for COVID-19. This would be voluntary for attendees. Records would only need to be kept for two weeks, and the organization must protect the personal information of attendees.
- 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.
- Decide which staff will be returning to work and what job function they will be assigned to. Consider staggered staff return dates and times to minimize large groups arriving at once.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- 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.
- Print and display posters describing proper methods of hand washing and hand sanitizing.
- If a building has been shut down for an extended period of time, it is important to perform a general building inspection that includes:
  - Security system checks.
  - First aid supply checks.

- Ensuring all tools and equipment are in good working order.
- Discarding any expired or spoiled inventory.
- Checking for evidence of pest/rodent infestation such as droppings.
- Checking the HVAC system to ensure it is in good working order and replace filters if necessary.
- Flushing all drinking water taps for at least 5 minutes.
- Performing a deep cleaning and disinfection throughout the business.
- Complete any needed modifications in areas where there will be staff, worshippers, and/or volunteers, to assist with physical distancing and proper cleaning and disinfection. For example:
  - Install Plexiglas barriers at check-outs and/or between workers who must work in close proximity to each other.
  - Replacing fabric/plush furniture with hard surfaces that can be easily cleaned and disinfected.
  - Providing additional garbage bins for safe disposal of used PPE, tissues, and paper towels.
- Choose your information sources wisely. Check the [WECHU website](#) regularly for updates and helpful resources and bookmark official municipal, provincial and federal government websites.
- 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](#).

## OTHER REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure Attendance is limited to no more than 30% building capacity.
- To limit the number of people attending the service and to protect groups at greater risk, such as older adults (over 70) or people with chronic health conditions, consider:
  - Providing digital or live stream worship services.
  - Offering designated services for those who are unable to attend and for those who are experiencing symptoms and must remain home.
- Consider implementing an online RSVP system or call-in system for each service or event. This will help places of worship and faith-based organizations collect contact information and limit the number of people attending each service.
- It is strongly recommended that all individuals wear a face covering in all indoor spaces, public spaces and in outdoor spaces where physical distancing may be a challenge.
  - Local municipalities may have enacted by-laws in addition to the Section 22 class order issued by Windsor-Essex County's Medical Officer of Health under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, mandating the use of face coverings in commercial establishments.

Refer to [WECHU's 'Face Masks and Coverings'](#) webpage or your local municipality's webpage for more information.

- Ensure that worshippers or attendees bring their own face covering (i.e., cloth mask or non-medical mask).
- Section off seating/standing/kneeling areas to allow for 2 metres distance to be maintained in all directions. Individuals from the same household are allowed to be seated together.
- Consider grouping individuals and families so that they attend the same service each day or week to minimize mixing of different individuals or families.
- Clearly communicate that each person entering the facility complete the [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) so that they are appropriately screened before entering the place of worship.
- Given the limits on building capacity, consider holding multiple shorter services; however, it is important to clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and objects between each service.
- Parishioners and worshippers should wait in their car or outside until the service begins, to limit any congregation within the lobby or entryway.
- Use signs, posters, flagging tape, cones, or directional arrows indicating specific entry and exit points to control the flow of traffic and minimize physical interactions between employees, volunteers, parishioners, and worshippers from different households.
- 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.
- Other common-use items should be removed from use. Projecting materials or the distribution of single-use materials is preferable.
- 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.
- Singing 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 congregation should be in a low voice.
- Choirs are not permitted at this time. Instead, consider the continued use of recorded music. A single cantor or soloist may be used, however, and should be located away from the congregation (e.g. minimum of four metres), with sufficient barriers in place, such as glass, plexiglass, or other material that forms a complete barrier between the singer and the congregation. Singing from a balcony is also not permitted.
- If singing outdoors, ensure that physical distancing of 2 metres is maintained at all times.
- The use of woodwind and brass instruments are not recommended at this time. With instrumental music (e.g., guitar, piano, organ, but not wind instruments), musicians are

required to use face coverings and must maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person, unless players are from the same household. Where appropriate, attendees can be encouraged to hum along to instrumental, remote, or recorded performances.

- 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 mitigate the risk by wearing personal protective equipment and ensuring proper hand hygiene.
- Faith communities centred on a communion ritual must exercise extreme caution if they wish to proceed with offering communion. Denominations or families of churches wishing to offer communion at this time will be required to develop protocols by which the communion can be offered in a way that safeguards the health of the communicants and celebrant. The use of a common cup is not permissible.
- Do not offer shared receptacles for liquid (e.g., holy water fonts). If washing facilities are required, they should be supplemented by hand hygiene products.
- Passing of offering baskets are not permitted at this time. Consider touchless ways to collect offerings such as online donations, text-to-give, e-transfer, etc.
- Restrict the number of people in shared spaces, including confessionals, meeting rooms, kitchens, break rooms, and offices to maintain at least a 2 metre distance between people.
- Regular childcare and children’s programming may resume, provided it generally operates in compliance with the Ministry of Health’s [COVID Guidance: Summer Day Camps](#) and/or WECHU’s [COVID-19 Guidelines for Child Care Centres, Before and After School Programs, and EarlyON Programs in Windsor and Essex County](#).
- Social gatherings before or after in-person services, including those where food and drink are available, if held, are subject to public gathering limits and physical distancing requirements (i.e., different from the limits permitted for religious services, rites, and ceremonies). These types of social gatherings are limited to 100 people if outdoor and 50 people if indoor. Buffet-style services are not permitted at this time.
- 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.

## 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](#)