



Best Practices to Prevent COVID-19 Guidance for Communities of Faith

For the latest version of this guidance, please check

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncorona2019/BestPractices/communitiesoffaith/>

Given the ongoing community transmission of COVID-19 and the presence of the Delta variant, masking indoors, regardless of vaccination status, is essential to slowing the spread of COVID-19 in the community. The Delta variant of the virus spreads much more easily than strains of the virus that circulated in LA in the past.

Per published reports, factors that increase the risk of infection, including transmission to people more than 6 feet away, include:

- **Enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation or air handling** that allow for build-up of exhaled respiratory fluids, especially very fine droplets and aerosol particles, in the air space.
- **Increased exhalation of respiratory fluids** that can occur when an infectious person is engaged in physical exertion or raises their voice (e.g., exercising, shouting, singing).
- **Prolonged exposure** to these conditions.

Below is a summary of requirements and best practices for communities of faith to enhance the safety of their employees, volunteers, and attendees, and to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission within their faith communities. In addition to this information, please remember:

- Organizations and venues that host indoor events with more than 1,000 attendees or outdoor events with more than 10,000 attendees must follow [State Guidance for Mega Events](#). Please note that the directives in the LA County [Health Officer Order](#) must be followed when they are more stringent than the State Guidance, such as the requirement that operators of outdoor Mega Events require all employees and attendees over age 2 to wear face masks while at the event except when they are actively eating or drinking.
- Requirements for employees are different than those for attendees. Employers must follow the [Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention Emergency Temporary Standards](#) (ETS) and the LA County Health Officer Order. Please note that the directives in the LA County Health Officer Order must be followed when they are more stringent than the Cal/OSHA ETS.
- On September 1, 2021, the California Department of Public Health updated the [Guidance on Isolation and Quarantine for COVID-19 Contact Tracing](#) to state that for workplace exposures, facilities should follow the more conservative standards. For this reason, employees with workplace exposures should continue to follow the Cal/OSHA [Emergency Temporary Standards](#) (ETS) Return to Work. This means that they cannot return to work for at least 10 days from when they were exposed. See [Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace](#).

Please be sure to read and follow the [general guidance for businesses and employers](#).

The specific best practices below are intended to supplement the general guidance.

Best Practices: Guidance for Businesses

Follow mask rules for employees and attendees

- ✓ **Attendees:** All persons aged 2 years and older attending indoor services are required to wear masks when they are indoors, regardless of vaccination status. Be prepared to provide masks to attendees who arrive without them.
 - ✓ **Outdoor Services and Events:** To enhance safety and lower the risk of transmission at outdoor events, it is recommended that unvaccinated attendees wear masks when they are in crowded outdoor settings, especially if there is singing or chanting and/or when physical distancing is difficult to maintain. If you are holding an outdoor Mega Event all persons aged 2 years and older must wear a mask regardless of vaccination status.
- ✓ **Employees*:** All employees and volunteers, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear masks when working indoors, riding in shared vehicles, or at outdoor Mega Events (events with more than 10,000 people in attendance). Masks need not be worn indoors if the employee is alone in a room or actively eating or drinking. If employees must eat indoors, they should be distanced at least 6 feet from other persons.
 - ✓ Upon request, employers are required to provide unvaccinated employees with the correct-size respirator along with basic instructions on how to use the respirator. Respirators must be replaced if they get damaged, deformed, dirty, or difficult to breathe through. For more information about free and low-cost PPE for businesses and organizations visit: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/docs/FreeAndLowCostPPE.pdf>.
 - ✓ Employees who work in a setting where they are in close contact with other people who may not be fully vaccinated should be encouraged to wear a higher level of protection, such as "double-masking" (wearing a cloth mask OVER a surgical mask) or a respirator. This is particularly important if the employee is not fully vaccinated and is working in an indoor setting, in a crowded outdoor setting, or riding in a shared vehicle.
- ✓ **Performers or presenters** must wear face masks indoors except when performing a task that cannot feasibly be done while wearing a mask. If any presenter or the person performing the service cannot feasibly wear a face mask, consider the following ways to reduce risk:
 - ✓ The presenter/performer should be fully vaccinated.
 - ✓ The presenter/performer should have a negative COVID-19 test result within 48 hours prior to the service.
 - ✓ The presenter/performer should be physically distanced at least 12 feet from all others while unmasked.
 - ✓ The presenter/performer must wear a mask when not actively presenting/performing.
 - ✓ Only one presenter/performer may be unmasked at any given time.
 - ✓ The presenter/performer should use a microphone to amplify their voice during the service, if possible, and should be aware that the louder they project their voice, the greater the risk of producing respiratory aerosols.
 - ✓ Any wind and brass instrument used by a presenter/performer must have a cover over the output (such as a fabric bell cover) to lessen the expelled aerosols and should be physically distanced at least 12 feet from all others.
 - ✓ Choirs and singers must be masked and physically distanced from each other and the audience as much as possible.
- ✓ See the [Los Angeles County Health Officer Order](#) page and the [Cal/OSHA Emergency Temporary Standards](#) page for more information about mask requirements. Please note that the directives in the

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LA County Health Officer Order must be followed when they are more stringent than the Cal/OSHA temporary standards.

* Some independent contractors are considered as employees under the State Labor Code. For more details, check the California Department of Industrial Relations' [Independent contractor versus employee](#) webpage.

Screen attendees

- ✓ Screen attendees, volunteers, employees, and performers for [symptoms](#) before they attend the service and ask them not to attend if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or if they are under isolation or quarantine orders. See the DPH [Entry Screening Guidance](#).
- ✓ Consider requiring all attendees to show proof that they are either [fully vaccinated](#) against COVID-19 or they have had a negative COVID-19 viral test taken within 72 hours of attending indoor services.

Take extra care if serving food and beverages

- ✓ Places that serve food and beverages indoors are considered higher-risk settings because persons, both vaccinated and unvaccinated, are without face masks for an extended period of time. For this reason, it is strongly recommended that faith communities serve food only in outdoor spaces.
- ✓ If food is served and consumed indoors:
 - ✓ Masks must be worn at all times except while actively eating or drinking. When actively eating or drinking, all attendees should be seated or positioned at a stationary place such as a table or counter. "*Actively eating or drinking*" refers to the limited time during which the mask can be briefly removed to eat or drink, after which it must be immediately put back on. Attendees must wear a mask when not actively eating or drinking, such as when they are waiting for their food or while seated after finishing the food or drink.
 - ✓ Consider requiring all those in attendance to show proof of being fully vaccinated.

Reduce crowding, especially indoors

- ✓ Outdoor services present a lower risk of transmission compared to indoor services. Whenever possible, hold services outdoors.
- ✓ Use assigned seating for services (both indoors and outdoors) with the same seat assignments, if possible. This limits exposure and makes it easier to determine close contacts if there is a person present who is later diagnosed with COVID-19 infection.
- ✓ Establish procedures to prevent crowding among attendees waiting to enter or exit.
- ✓ If there will be a presentation or performance, maintain at least a 12-foot distance from performers and audience members. Place any unvaccinated performers that sing, yell, or play wind and brass instruments at least 12 feet away from others.
- ✓ If your faith community offers indoor religious classes, consider maintaining a 3-foot physical distance between participants.

Ventilate

- ✓ If your services are held indoors, make sure your building's HVAC system is in good, working order.

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- ✓ Maximize ventilation. Options include installing portable high-efficiency air cleaners, upgrading the building's air filters to the highest efficiency possible, and making other modifications to increase the quantity of outside air and ventilation in all working areas.
- ✓ When weather and working conditions allow, increase fresh outdoor air by opening windows and doors. Consider using fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows – position window fans to blow air outward, not inward.
- ✓ Decrease occupancy in areas where outdoor ventilation cannot be increased. Consider use of carbon dioxide monitors to monitor the effectiveness of your ventilation in more densely occupied indoor spaces.
- ✓ If your services are held indoors and have performers that will generate aerosols (such as a singer or a musician playing wind or brass instruments) take the following steps:
 - ✓ Assess the direction of the air flow in the room to determine where the air is exiting the room. In buildings with HVAC systems, this will be the air-return vents; if doors or windows are open, check the direction that the air is flowing.
 - ✓ During performances, position aerosol-generating performers closer to the locations where the air is exiting the room.
- ✓ See State [Interim guidance for Ventilation, Filtration, and Air Quality in Indoor Environments](#).

Support handwashing

- ✓ Place handwashing stations or hand sanitizer at entry and outside communal bathrooms with signage promoting use.
- ✓ Encourage frequent handwashing.
- ✓ Posters in multiple languages that [remind people to wash or sanitize their hands](#) and show [how to wash their hands](#) are available in the [signage section](#) of the [Best Practices for Businesses and Employers](#) webpage.

Communicate

- ✓ Consider using advanced registration as much as possible for services so you know how many people will attend. Advanced registration can also help you to reserve seating and convey your COVID-19 safety plans to attendees before they attend.
- ✓ Use your online platforms to communicate your COVID-19 safety policies to your faith community, including the requirement that all attendees must wear a face mask while indoors.