



Guidance for Houses of Worship to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

This guidance is intended for religious services at houses of worship and ceremonies such as weddings, funerals, and baptisms (whether secular or religious). Activities such as graduations, birthdays, and quinceañeras must follow the Colorado requirements for indoor or outdoor events.

These requirements and best practices are particularly important while Boulder County is in Level Red: Severe Risk and Level Orange: High Risk in which new daily cases of COVID-19 are high. Ensuring the requirements listed below are followed will reduce the risk of further spread and allow children to attend school for in-person learning, reduce the burden on our healthcare workers and hospitals, and reduce the risk of hospitalization and death, especially for our most vulnerable populations.

Boulder County Public Health strongly recommends that all religious services and ceremonies be conducted virtually or outdoors as much as possible.

In-Person Services Requirements

Face Covering and Social Distancing

Outdoor Services

- Six feet of distance should be maintained between members of different households.
- If six feet of distance cannot be maintained, participants **must wear a face covering** unless doing so would physically make participation impossible (e.g. taking communion).

Indoor Services

- Face coverings are required at all times unless wearing a face covering would physically make participation impossible (e.g. taking communion).
- Service leaders, speakers, and performers such as pastors and musicians must wear a face covering at all times. Individuals performing or conducting services may remove their face covering as long as they are at least 25 feet from the audience to ensure respiratory particles don't reach participants.
- Members of different households must maintain at least 6 feet distance from members of other households.

All Services

- Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 or who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 must stay at home and should not attend in-person services.
- A coordinator should be responsible for addressing COVID-19 issues for the organization.
- All high-touch areas must and common spaces must be cleaned and disinfected.
- Signage about good hygiene should be posted in areas visible to visitors and staff.
- Proper ventilation should be in place.
- Employees should conduct daily temperature checks and monitor symptoms to the greatest extent possible.

Best Practices for All In-Person Services

Minimize Risk in Activities

Singing and other forced exhalation activity is known to create higher risk for transmitting the virus that causes COVID-19. Consider taking the following steps for singing during in-person services to protect participants and staff:

- Engage in singing and other forced exhalation activities outdoors as much as possible.
- Provide additional spacing (25 feet) between members of different households during singing activities.

Protect Individuals at Higher Risk

Individuals older than 65 and those with certain medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness if they become infected with COVID-19. To protect these residents, strongly encourage online services when possible. If not possible, create additional service times with smaller groups to serve these members.

Manage the Size of Groups

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads best when individuals are in close proximity. When there are many different households gathered together, the virus can quickly spread across households and into the community. To prevent rapid spread:

- Increase the number of services offered to reduce the number of participants at each service.
- Use separate rooms to create cohorts of participants, if possible. In larger spaces, use areas separated by at least 50 feet of space to create cohorts.
- Use separate restrooms, entrances, and exits for different cohorts, or schedule timed entrances and exits to avoid intermingling between cohorts.
- Require RSVPs to manage the number of participants and to allow for better contact-tracing, should it be needed.

Encourage Regular Testing

Although testing alone should not be used to reduce the risk of transmission, when used along with the other protections included here, it can help reduce possible transmission. Individuals who are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic can spread the virus, so regular testing can help identify the virus in individuals before it spreads to others.

- Encourage participants and members to get tested 1-3 days prior to attending a service. As of December 2020, testing may need to occur 3-5 days in advance of service to receive the results before the service. Testing site locations, including sites offering free testing are available at www.boco.org/covid19testing.
- Encourage participants to test again 5-7 days after attending a service.

Encourage Responsibility to Others

When every individual monitors their own health and interactions and takes care not to expose others to potential infection, it can help to reduce the likelihood that participants become infected and subsequently ill.

- Encourage participants to monitor their symptoms before and after service and refrain from attending if they are symptomatic.
 - Encourage participants to minimize contact with members outside their household for at least 7 days following the service to reduce the risk that they may infect others without knowing.
- 