Religious Institutions

SAFE MODE: Guidelines for safer operations during the COVID-19 pandemic

As Philadelphia residents and workers restart economic and physical activities, they must do so safely—that is, in a way that prevents the COVID-19 virus from spreading from person to person. Everyone must take precautions consistently to protect not only themselves, but also their family members, friends, colleagues, and everyone else.

The precautions will vary by the activity and setting, but some general guidelines apply to all.

Safety Checklist

- **Masks**
  
  Block the virus from spreading from infected individuals by wearing masks and requiring others to wear them.

- **Barriers**
  
  Use sneeze guards or plexiglass screens to prevent respiratory droplets expelled by infected persons from reaching others.

- **Isolate**
  
  Keep people who might be carrying the virus safely away from others (ideally at home).

- **Distance**
  
  Maintain space between people to reduce the chance that one infected individual will infect others.

- **Reduce crowds**
  
  Decrease the number of people that an infected person could pass the virus to if other steps are not successful.

- **Handwashing**
  
  Reduce the spread of virus from one person to another from touching contaminated surfaces.

- **Clean**
  
  Remove respiratory droplets that may contain virus from surfaces that people may touch.

- **Communicate**
  
  Ensure staff, customers, and others taking part in permitted activities understand this Safety Checklist.

This Safety Checklist must be followed at all times. If an employee, customer, or participant develops COVID-19 infection or has a positive test, businesses and other organizations must take additional precautions to stop the virus from spreading further, as described in Guidance for Essential Businesses and Organizations During COVID-19. Required precautions include calling the Philadelphia Department of Public Health at 215-685-6741 to report positive cases.

If employees or customers want to report possible health and safety violations in the workplace related to COVID-19, please call 311.

If you have questions or concerns about the applicability of these guidelines to your business, please email business@phila.gov.

Note that guidance in this document is subject to change. Please check back for updates.

This document is intended as a plain language summary of rules for reopening in the Yellow Phase and does not replace the need to follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

See also:

1. **Order** of the Secretary of Health providing for building safety measures, issued April 5, 2020.
2. **Order** of the Secretary of Health providing for business safety measures (to keep employees and customers safe), issued April 15, 2020.
5. **Other future applicable Department of Health (DOH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance.**
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Gatherings of over 25 are prohibited by the state until the Green Phase. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health recommends that no gatherings of any size be held until Green Phase.

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See also:
Order of the Secretary of Health providing for building safety measures, issued April 5, 2020.
Order of the Secretary of Health providing for business safety measures (to keep employees and customers safe), issued April 15, 2020.

Protections Needed

Masks
- Provide masks for staff and require them to mask when on site except only:
  - As necessary for the staff member to eat or drink during break times. The staff member should be seated at least 6 feet from others when taking off mask.
- Require all congregants to mask while on site.

Isolate
- Screen every staff member for symptoms before every shift and prevent them from remaining on site if they have cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, muscle pain, or new loss of taste or smell.
- It is not necessary to conduct on-site temperature measurement. If you measure temperatures, use a no-touch thermometer, and do not allow anyone with a temperature of 100.4 or higher to remain on-site.
- Have sick leave policies in place so that staff members excluded from the workplace do not lose earnings.
- If an employee develops COVID-19 infection or has a positive test, businesses and other organizations must take additional precautions to stop the virus from spreading further, as described in Guidance for Essential Businesses and Organizations During COVID-19. Required precautions include calling PDPH at 215 685-6741 to report positive cases.

Distance
- Use signage to encourage individuals/family groups to space themselves at least 6 feet from others.
- Use floor decals or other visual cues to encourage spacing of at least 6 feet between attendees.

Reduce crowds
- Continue to offer remote service options even after in-person services resume to offer a safe option to those at high risk and to allow for greater physical distancing of in-person attendees.
- Once in-person gatherings are permitted, follow City of Philadelphia guidance on limits of attendees including staff and congregants.
- If possible, offer staggered service times to increase physical distancing.

Handwashing
- Place handwashing stations or hand sanitizer at entry and outside communal bathrooms for all staff and congregants with prominent signage promoting use.
- Give staff hourly handwashing breaks.

Clean
- Wipe down high-touch surfaces with disinfectant at least once every 4 hours. See CDC guidance for details.

Communicate
- Educate staff about symptoms and prevention of COVID-19.
- Post prominent signs at entrances and in staff break rooms (if applicable):
  - Asking people who are sick or who have had contact with someone with COVID-19 within the past 14 days not to enter.
  - Encouraging people to cover coughs or sneezes.
  - Mandating physical distancing of at least 6 feet.
  - Mandating that all staff and congregants wear masks.

Other
- Do not allow choir practice or performance or any group singing until public health authorities have given guidance on the safety of group singing.
- Do not share items such as communion cups.
- Consider alternatives to passing plate for donations (e.g. fixed donation box near entrance) to avoid passing items from hand to hand.
- Food and drink should not be served or consumed at services or gatherings until Green Phase.

For organizations that also maintain offices for operations, continue to adhere to the guidance for office settings in your offices.