



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

COVID-19: Places of Worship Guidance Document

All places of worship must adhere to the following requirements:

- Participation of no more than 30% of the capacity of your facility.
- Maintaining a 2-metre distance between all persons as much as possible.
- The use of masks is mandatory while in an enclosed public place.
- Limiting singing and loud speaking.
- Avoiding opportunities for the virus to spread through touch, either directly or indirectly through surfaces and objects, including objects that may be used in rituals or ceremonies.
- Enhancing cleaning and disinfection.

A. Preparation/ Screening

Establish Policies for Health Screening

Staff and volunteers must be screened each time before starting their duties. Persons who become ill while at the service must go home right away and self-isolate. Call a physician for further evaluation if necessary.

Training

Staff and volunteers should always use a mask/face covering while providing services. Instruct staff and volunteers on proper hand hygiene techniques and respiratory etiquette; when to use masks, proper use of a mask, and how to clean fabric masks or discard single use masks appropriately.

Print and Post Signs

- COVID-19 health self-assessment sign should be posted at all entrances.
- Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or who has been in contact with someone with COVID-19 should not enter the building.
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette signs should be posted in high visibility areas.
- Consider alternative ways to involve individuals at greater risk from COVID-19, including online services.
- Plan how to ensure physical distancing by calculating 30% of the capacity of the available space. This is the maximum number of participants allowed. The reduced capacity number includes all participants except children under two years of age.
- Plan how to control movement into and out of your facility, and within the space to ensure a two-metre distance. Discourage movement against the flow of people moving in the space. It may be necessary to mark off two metre distances outside and/or in a vestibule if it is anticipated that lines will form. Consider having someone control leaving the space by seating row.

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- Mark off seating areas to promote physical distancing. Remove seating if possible, to allow for only 30% capacity. Space out seating to promote physical distancing.
- Drinking fountains should be turned off or disconnected.
- Discontinue use of holy water stoup.
- All staff, volunteers and attendees are required to wear a mask to reduce the risk of transmission while inside church.

B. During Services

- Remind everyone not to attend the service in person if they are experiencing [symptoms of COVID-19](#).
- Modify the activities before and during the service to ensure a two-metre distance between leaders, staff, volunteers and attendees at all times.
- Regular childcare and children's programming should operate in a manner consistent with the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Guidance: Summer Day Camps.
- Activities that increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission should be suspended or adapted.
- Cohort individuals and families. For instance, organize attendance so the same individuals/families go to the same service each day/week to minimize mixing of different individuals/families.
- Respiratory droplets and aerosols generated during singing, loud speech or use of wind instruments may travel further than two metres. The following practices are recommended:
 - Congregational singing is not allowed. Spoken responses should be in a low voice. Leaders should use microphones unless the space is very small. Consider using audio or video recordings instead of live singing or wind or brass instrumental music.
 - Group/choir singing is strongly discouraged. However, if more than one person is singing, limit the number of people singing to the fewest possible.
- With instrumental music (e.g., piano, organ, but not wind instruments), if more than one is being played, ensure physical distancing, unless players are from the same household.
- Anyone singing or playing wind or brass instruments should be 2 metres from anyone else and separated by an impermeable barrier.
- Encourage attendees to bring their own non-medical mask/face coverings. Cloth masks can be made with household items such as a T-shirt or bedsheet, or a bandana may be used. Physical distancing is still required even when using a mask.
- Avoid any physical contact. Encourage people to greet each other with a smile, bow or wave (e.g., during in-service greetings).
- Allow for adequate cleaning and disinfecting of prayer and high traffic areas between services.

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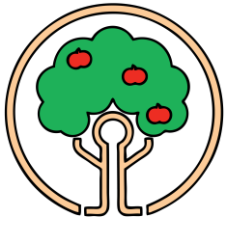
- Suspend or adapt the sharing or distribution of material or objects, which may include but is not limited to books, communion, microphones, prayer mats, prayer shawls, water etc.
 - Perform hand hygiene prior to distribution or sharing
 - Consider leaving objects or material on a table for individuals to pick up and/or
 - Limit the number of individuals who have contact with items and material and returned/accessed items are disinfected or not re-used immediately.
- Use printed service leaflets and discard after the service or use projection/audio-visual systems. Do not share microphones.
- Rituals involving close physical contact (e.g., baptisms) or shared items (e.g., receptacles, washing facilities) are strongly discouraged at this time. If they must be performed, considerations need to be made to provide them safely such as use of appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Discontinue use of holy water rites.
- Do not pass offering plates. Consider a designed area to offer donations or use of online/e-transfer or debit/credit card tap machines.
- Encourage hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette with hand sanitizer stations (at least 70% alcohol). Avoid access to hand sanitizer by young children without supervision.
- Encourage good respiratory etiquette. Cover mouth and nose with elbow when coughing or sneezing or use a tissue then discard tissue in waste bin. Wash or sanitize hands afterwards.
- Suspend or adapt all social gatherings, including those that occur before or after the service, and food services. Social gatherings are subject to public gathering limits and social distancing. Public health limits on social gatherings are different than the limits permitted for religious services, rites and ceremonies.

C. Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection

- Disinfectants kill germs on surfaces. Remove surface dirt first for the disinfectant to work.
- Most regular household cleaning products are effective at eliminating the coronavirus.
 - Cleaning and disinfection products should have an 8-digit Drug Identification Number (DIN) to confirm it is approved for use in Canada. Check the expiry dates of products and always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Keep products away from children.
 - See [hard surface disinfectants and sanitizers](#) for a list of approved products.
- Cleaning/disinfection wipes should only be used for surfaces, and according to the manufacturer's instructions. Alternatively, chlorine bleach solutions may be used for disinfection. Prepare fresh bleach solution daily.

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- Educate staff on proper use of cleaning agents and disinfectants, including required disinfectant contact times (amount of time that the product will need to remain wet on a surface to achieve disinfection). Understand safety precautions and requirement for use of mask and gloves.
- Ensure adequate ventilation when using products (e.g., open windows, doors, or use fans).
- Ensure ventilation systems are operating properly and replace filters as scheduled or sooner.
- Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces (e.g., pews, chairs, tables, toilets, sinks, door handles, light switches, remote controls) twice a day or more, and when visibly dirty.
- Ensure washrooms are always stocked with liquid soap and paper towel.
- Wash hands with soap and water immediately after cleaning.

Note: Disinfectant wipes may have combined cleaning and disinfection in one solution, but depending on how dirty the surface is, it may need to be pre-cleaned as disinfectants are less effective when dirt is present. Check instructions on the product's label.

D. Weddings and Funerals

- If a wedding or funeral is occurring indoors, the maximum number of participants is 30% of the capacity of the building space.
- Wedding and funeral ceremonies taking place outdoors will be limited to 100 attendees.

For more information

You can access the Ministry of Health at

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/advice_religious_services.pdf

Should you want to discuss any of the guideline, please feel free to contact our office at 613-732-3629 or www.rcdhu.com.

Source: Adapted from Ottawa Public Health.

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