

# COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Requirements for Faith-based Communities, Places of Worship, Weddings, and Funerals

4/15/2021

Executive Order 21-11 began Monday, March 15, 2021, at 12 p.m. (noon) and does not have an end date. Effective March 31, 2021, at 11:59 p.m., larger venues, restaurants, gyms, and pools were able to expand their occupancy per the [Stay Safe Industry Guidance \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp). Effective April 14, 2021, at 11:59 p.m., the requirement to work from home shifted to a strong recommendation.

The Stay Safe MN website may be updated with frequently asked questions about the Governor's Executive Orders and related industry guidance. These frequently asked questions may also include clarifications to the requirements and recommendations in Executive Orders and guidance. See [Frequently Asked Questions about Stay Safe MN \(mn.gov/covid19/stay-safe/faq/index.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/covid19/stay-safe/faq/index.jsp) or [Stay Safe Industry Guidance \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp).

Updates to this document including making "work from home" a strong recommendation instead of a requirement as well as including a requirement for providing reasonable accommodations to workers.

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## Requirements under Executive Order (EO) 21-11

The full executive order (EO) with all requirements can be found at [Executive Orders from Governor Walz \(mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp).

- **Social gatherings limited.** Social gatherings are limited as described at [Stay Safe in Social Gatherings \(staysafe.mn.gov/individuals-families/social-gatherings.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/individuals-families/social-gatherings.jsp). Most commercial activities are not considered social gatherings, so this change will not impact most industries.
- **Masks and face coverings required.** EO 20-81, requiring face coverings in certain settings, remains in full force and effect, except as amended by EO 21-11. See [Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html). In addition,

## COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS PLAN REQUIREMENTS FOR FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES, PLACES OF WORSHIP, WEDDINGS, AND FUNERALS

Executive Order 20-81 allows industry guidance to establish additional face covering requirements for each sector, so businesses must comply with additional face covering requirements set forth in this document and other applicable industry guidance.

- **People at higher risk.** All people currently living within the State of Minnesota who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, as defined by EO 20-55, are strongly urged to stay at home or in their place of residence and follow the provisions of EO 20-55.
- **Work from home.** Effective April 15, 2021, working from home is strongly recommended, and businesses are strongly encouraged to allow employees to work from home when possible. Employers must provide reasonable accommodations as required under existing federal and state law. Employers are strongly encouraged to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with one or more members of their household who have underlying medical conditions and who are unable to be vaccinated.
- **Business and activities are affected differently.** For a full listing of all business and activity requirements and limitations, see the full executive order at [Executive Orders from Governor Walz \(mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp). Please review the guidance below for industry-specific requirements and applicable COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Guidance Requirements.

This guidance is for faith-based communities, places of worship, funeral homes and other venues that offer space for planned **services** or **ceremonies** such as worship, rituals, prayer meetings, scripture studies, weddings, and funerals. These venues must develop and implement a **COVID-19 Preparedness Plan** that follows the requirements in this guidance and the requirements in the [COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Guidance: Requirements for All Businesses and Other Entities \(dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/COVID\\_19\\_preparedness\\_plan\\_requirements\\_guidelines\\_businesses.pdf\)](https://dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/COVID_19_preparedness_plan_requirements_guidelines_businesses.pdf).

- Limit indoor occupancy to allow for 6 feet of distance between people from different households or groups at all times.
  - Members of the same household (regardless of household size) are not required to maintain social distance from members of their household.
  - Alternatively, attendees or visitors may arrive and attend a ceremony with a group of a maximum of six people (which may include members of different households) and are not required to maintain social distance from members of their group.
- Services and ceremonies are understood to be seated or stationary (i.e., in a standing area that is marked to ensure social distancing), except as otherwise provided in this guidance.
  - If the venue offers a space for patrons to mingle or gather before or after a service, the gathering must be conducted according to the venue guidance on [Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp).
- This guidance does not permit food and beverage service or consumption unless is an indispensable part of a ritual, service, or ceremony (e.g., communion).

- Services, ceremonies, events, and gatherings that involve food and beverage that is not an indispensable part of the service or ceremony must be conducted according to the venue guidance on [Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp).
- Staff, workers, and attendees are required to stay home if they have COVID-19 symptoms, tested positive, or have been exposed to COVID-19. See [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf) and [If You Are Sick: COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html) for more information.
- Music is an integral part of many faith-based services, weddings, and funerals. Singing and instrumental music produced by woodwind or brass instruments are higher-risk activities for COVID-19 spread due to the aggressive expelling of respiratory droplets. If choosing to provide live music of any kind, follow the requirements (and consider the recommendations) for [Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf).
  - Live music performances are allowed but performers must maintain physical distancing of 6 feet between other performers and 12 feet from the audience.
  - Congregational singing may occur if all participants wear face coverings.

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## Prevent the spread of COVID-19

The requirements and recommendations in Preparedness Plans will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and are based on the core principles below. Following the requirements and recommendations will reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 but will not eliminate it. COVID-19 is primarily spread through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Anytime people gather, the risk of spreading COVID-19 increases for everyone.

The best way to reduce your risk of getting sick from or spreading COVID-19 is to:

- Wear a well-fitting face covering.
- Keep at least 6 feet of physical distance from people not in the same household.
- People who are sick or exposed to someone with COVID-19 must stay home.
- Wash hands often.

COVID-19 vaccines are being administered across Minnesota. Get vaccinated when it is your turn. Even after a person has recovered from COVID-19 or is fully vaccinated they should still continue to stay distanced, wear a mask that fits well, wash their hands often, and follow other precautions. For more information, visit [COVID-19 Vaccine \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/index.html).

## COVID-19 Preparedness Plans

As required by the EOs issued by Governor Tim Walz under the Peacetime Emergency, all businesses, both critical or non-critical, and other entities identified in the EOs, are legally required to develop and implement COVID-19 Preparedness Plans (also referred to as “Plan” or “Plans”). Under the EOs, a “business” and “businesses” include entities that employ or engage workers, including private-sector entities, public-sector entities, non-profit entities, and state, county, and local governments. “Worker” and “workers” are broadly defined by the EOs to include owners, proprietors, employees, contractors, vendors, volunteers, and interns.

For purposes of this Plan Guidance, “other entities” includes those entities identified in the EOs that are not covered by the definition of a “business” but are also required by an EO to develop and implement Plans. Other entities include places of public accommodation, establishments, institutions, facilities, venues, and organizers identified in the EOs. Plan Guidance is designed to protect workers, customers, and other members of the public from the transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19.

This Plan Guidance constitutes the “Plan Guidance” referred to in EO 21-11 and applies to all identified businesses and other entities. **Businesses and other entities must develop and implement COVID-19 Preparedness Plans that address the following:**

- The requirements of EO 21-11,
- The requirements included in the Universal Plan Guidance for COVID-19 Preparedness Plans found at [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp), and
- The requirements included in this Plan Guidance that are applicable to their business or entity.

Unless clearly indicated that an action is recommended and included under “Recommendations,” **businesses and other entities should understand that the Plan Guidance imposes legally enforceable requirements.** In instances where a requirement uses language “to the extent possible,” the action is required, to the extent it is possible for the business or entity to implement the requirement.

Depending on the activities engaged in by a business or other entity, it may be required to comply with additional industry or activity specific plan guidance, such as plan guidance applicable to bars and restaurants, if the facility serves food and beverages or plan guidance applicable to businesses that provide personal services, if the facility has a hair salon.

[Frequently Asked Questions about Stay Safe MN \(mn.gov/covid19/stay-safe/faq/index.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/covid19/stay-safe/faq/index.jsp) have been posted to respond to questions about provisions of Executive Orders and Plan Guidance.

## Required plan guidance

Follow the **requirements** included in the Universal Plan Guidance for COVID-19 Preparedness Plans found at [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp) and consider the **recommendations** in the following sections of this document.

1. [Use of face coverings](#)
2. [Maintain 6 feet of social distance between households or groups](#)
3. [Hand hygiene](#)
4. [Buildings and facilities](#)
5. [Cleaning and disinfecting](#)
6. [Training and communication](#)
7. [Providing in-home services](#)
8. [Shared transportation](#)
9. [Shared temporary housing](#)
10. [General considerations](#)

### 1. Use of face coverings

#### Requirements

- Executive Order 20-81 requires all people to wear face coverings while indoors. In addition, staff must wear face coverings when outdoors in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained. For more information about face covering requirements, recommendations, and exceptions, refer to [Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html).
- Ensure all members of the congregation wear face coverings when participating in congregational singing.
- Take steps to ensure that staff, members, and visitors wear face coverings at all times when indoors, and, for staff, outdoors when they are unable to maintain 6 feet of distance from others.

#### Recommendations

- Ensure that all people, including staff, members, and visitors bring their own face coverings or be prepared to offer face coverings for use.
- Encourage members and visitors to wear face coverings outdoors, particularly when it is difficult or impossible to maintain 6 feet of distance from members of other households.
- Leaders in your organization are strongly encouraged to guide people prior to and during services to ensure face covering compliance.

## 2. Maintain 6 feet of social distance between households or groups

### Requirements

- Ensure that social distancing of at least six feet is maintained between members of different households or groups.
  - Members of the same household (regardless of household size) are not required to maintain social distance from members of their household.
  - Alternatively, attendees or visitors may arrive and attend a ceremony with a group of a maximum of six people (which may include members of different households) and are not required to maintain social distance from members of their group.
- Establish seating arrangements, control occupancy through active monitoring or reservations, and establish other controls (floor markings, marked queues, etc.) to ensure these requirements are met.
- Ensure that all people are seated or otherwise stationary (i.e., using marked or designated standing areas) during a service or ceremony to guarantee social distancing, except for controlled and planned movement.
  - Directed or controlled movement is permitted when essential to the service and planned by the organizers of the service. For example: directing people to available or assigned seating, communion, or creating a queue to honor the remains of someone who has died.
  - Establish clear, controlled, and directed queuing when engaged in movement to ensure that people maintain required distancing and that uncontrolled movement does not occur during a service.
  - Devote staff or volunteers to monitor and direct attendees to ensure that these seating arrangements are maintained and that social distancing between households and groups during movement is consistent.

### Recommendations

- While groups of up to six people may attend a service or ceremony together without maintaining distance from their group members, close contact with members of other households significantly increases transmission risk. Strongly encourage members of different households to maintain at least 6 feet of distance from each other at all times.
- Determine how to address arrivals if participants are not following the 6 feet of required distancing from others or face covering requirements. Plan ahead as much as possible to avoid this situation and prepare to implement your plan in real time.
- Adapt all practices during services, weddings, and funerals to avoid physical contact or passing objects between people (e.g., greetings, collection baskets, sharing of ceremonial objects), and maintain the required distance of 6 feet between people from different households or groups.
- Communion for some faiths is a critical part of their ritual. For faith communities that cannot make communion a touch-free encounter, consider following:

- Distribute communion hand-to-hand, not hand-to-mouth. Do not share cups.
- Maintain the maximum distance possible between the communion distributor and the receiver.
- Everyone involved must wear face coverings – the recipient should only remove the face covering after moving away from the distributor to self-administer communion.

### 3. Hand hygiene

#### Requirements

- Follow any requirements in the [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp).

### 4. Buildings and facilities

#### Requirements

- Follow any requirements in the [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp).

#### Recommendations

- Use different entrances, pre-arrange staggered arrival and departure times, and use signage, floor markers, and other ways to direct foot traffic in the building and designated waiting areas to avoid congestion at entry and exit points and common areas.
- Evaluate and make changes to space, configuration, and movement through the space to allow for required distancing in all aspects of services and activities.
- Open windows and doors to improve ventilation and air circulation to the extent possible.

### 5. Cleaning and disinfecting

#### Requirements

- Follow any requirements in the [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp).

#### Recommendations

- Personal equipment, items used in rituals or services, microphones, computers, and other devices should not be shared or should be disinfected after each use.
- Sharing books, hymnals, and religious texts by people from one service to the next does not pose a significant risk of spreading COVID-19. Limit the sharing of these texts in close proximity to each other at the same time to those in your own household. Consider cleaning the covers of these objects along with other frequently touched items in your worship space as established in your cleaning schedule.
- If people's faces come into contact with the floor, carpet, or other surface during prayers, request that they bring their own rug, or provide a paper covering for one-time use and disposal.

## 6. Training and communication

### Requirements

- Follow any requirements in the [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp).

### Recommendations

- Advise people who may be at higher risk for severe COVID-19 infection to strongly consider not attending services or events. People over 65 and people of any age with certain underlying medical conditions are at higher risk.
- Encourage members and participants to consider vaccination and to follow all public health recommendations. See more information at [About COVID-19 Vaccine: For fully vaccinated people \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/basics.html#recs\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/basics.html#recs).
- Communicate with members and participants the health screening, distancing, and masking requirements of your COVID-19 Plan prior to or at the start of the service, event, or gathering to inform them of their role in protecting themselves, staff, and others from the spread of COVID-19.
- Use websites, social media, pre-appointment phone calls, and other outlets to inform members of the steps being taken for their protection and the protection of staff.
- Use posters and signs to guide participants about how to comply with requirements and recommendations. See [Materials and Resources for COVID-19 Response \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/index.html).
- If your faith-based organization is contacted by local public health or the Minnesota Department of Health regarding COVID-19 cases at your facility or an event led by your organization, it is strongly recommended that you inform your membership that there have been COVID-19 cases in attendance.
  - Ensure you are aware of your privacy obligations and do not disclose information (particularly information relating to specific people) that is considered private or confidential under state or federal law.
  - It will serve as a reminder for members to observe social distancing and masking when attending services or events to protect their own health and the health of others.
  - Notifying the members or participants that someone tested positive will alert them to get tested should they develop symptoms, and to stay home if they are not feeling well or waiting for test results. For those people who are found to be close contacts of someone with COVID-19, follow: [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf).

## 7. Providing in-home services

### Requirements

- Follow any requirements in the [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp).

## 8. Shared transportation

### Requirements

- Follow any requirements in the [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp).

## 9. Shared temporary housing

### Requirements

- Follow any requirements in the [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp).

## 10. General considerations

- As requirements are set by Executive Orders for the faith-based organization sector, your community may choose to implement more restrictive practices regarding gathering size and limiting the types of gatherings offered, based on the risk tolerance of your community.
- Continue on-line services, phone contact, and other outreach to vulnerable community members, even as other members engage in person. Due to their risk level, some of your members and staff may not feel comfortable resuming in-person contact for a longer period of time. Faith communities can help ensure that members do not experience negative consequences from those communities because of their decision not to attend in-person services or events.

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## Related guidance documents

Guidance for Caring for People in Their Homes – for non-medical visits found on [Stay Safe in Social Gatherings \(staysafe.mn.gov/individuals-families/social-gatherings.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/individuals-families/social-gatherings.jsp)

[Planning Funeral and Memorial Services during COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/providers/mortsci/docs/planduringcovid.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/providers/mortsci/docs/planduringcovid.pdf)

[Guidance for Hmong Funerals during COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hmongfuneral.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hmongfuneral.pdf)

Guidance for Vehicle Gatherings, Parades, and Drive-ins found on [Stay Safe Guidance for Drive-In and Vehicle Gatherings \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/drive-ins.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/drive-ins.jsp)

COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS PLAN REQUIREMENTS FOR FAITH-BASED  
COMMUNITIES, PLACES OF WORSHIP, WEDDINGS, AND FUNERALS

Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19

([www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf))

Gatherings, receptions, celebrations that are not a planned, seated services, or ceremonies that may or may not include food and beverages should follow [Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp) ([staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp))

Sunday School or other youth programs that are not classroom style, seated events should follow COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth and Student Programs found on [Stay Safe Guidance for Schools, Colleges, and Universities](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/schools.jsp) ([staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/schools.jsp](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/schools.jsp))