



Instructions for Gatherings with Children/Youth

Gatherings with children and youth may resume in the Diocese of Manchester as long as they comply with the instructions established by the Diocese and by State and federal public health authorities. To summarize the current situation:

Allowed: Adult and youth faith formation meetings; youth group gatherings that are social or spiritual in nature.

Temporarily not allowed: Communal gatherings (such as coffee hours) that precede or follow a Mass.

Relevant provisions from Bishop Peter Libasci's recent document on *Preparing for Mass with a Congregation* should be considered as applicable to adult and youth faith formation gatherings as well. To highlight particular items:

Pastors and Parish Staff

Consider how staff and volunteers will be able to implement current guidance and how they can and will be trained to do so. Each parish should have a staff member who is designated as a resource for COVID-19 concerns.

Conduct daily health checks (e.g., temperature screening and/or symptom checking of staff and volunteers). This can be accomplished by designating a person or multiple people to screen others as they enter, or anyone planning to attend an event may be asked to complete a form prior to arrival to provide a temperature and self-certification of COVID-19 risk factors.

Actively encourage sick staff, volunteers, children/youth and families to stay home if they have tested positive, are showing signs of COVID-19 or have recently had a close contact test positive.

Most importantly, each parish is encouraged to inform, by website or social media, parishioners, volunteers, children/youth and families the steps that are being taken to protect the health and safety of all. Keep copies of these notices for a parish COVID-19 file.

Out-of-state travel for youth events, conferences or camps is prohibited.

Parent/Guardian permission is required to participate in any children/youth in-person gathering.

Social Distancing

Take steps to limit the size of gatherings. Limit attendance to no more than 50% of the building's maximum occupancy limit as documented in the building's municipal occupancy permit.

Maintain social distancing at youth groups and other gatherings, ensuring that clergy, staff, volunteers and attendees follow social distancing rules of 6 feet or more.

Hold youth groups and gatherings in a large, well-ventilated area or outdoors.

Pursue virtual activities and events in lieu of youth conferences/rallies, retreats, or lock-ins, as possible.

Ensure greeting without physical contact (e.g. hugs, hand shaking, high-fives).

Preventing Spread of Disease

Face coverings must be worn by staff, volunteers, youth, and parents.

Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for those who can safely use hand sanitizer), tissues, and no-touch trash cans.

Avoid use of frequently touched objects, such as worship aids, prayer rugs, prayer books, religious texts, books, sports equipment, cellphones or other items passed or shared among youth.

Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection, before and after gatherings.

Identify small groups and keep them together (Cohorting)

Ensure that children/youth and staff groupings are as static as possible by having the same group of children

Proper Ventilation:

Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms, or if weather conditions make air conditioning a safer option) to children/youth using the facility.

Proper Signage

Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or walkways and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and children/youth remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating "one-way routes" in hallways).

Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances and exits, and in restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs such as by properly washing hands and properly wearing a face cloth covering.

All attendees should be informed of the symptoms of COVID-19 before entering the facility (using signage and other forms of messaging). Risks include:

- a. Person has any of the following symptoms of COVID-19:

1. Fever (feeling feverish or a document temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher)
 2. Respiratory symptoms such as runny nose, nasal congestion, sore throat, cough, or shortness of breath
 3. General body symptoms such as muscle aches, chills, and severe fatigue
 4. Gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
 5. Changes in the person's sense of taste or smell
- b. Person has been in close contact with someone who is suspected or confirmed to have had COVID-19 in the past 14 days. (NOTE: This does not include healthcare workers caring for COVI-19 patients while wearing appropriate personal protective equipment)
- c. Person has traveled in the past 14 days either: (1) internationally (outside the U.S.); (2) By cruise ship; (3) Domestically (within the U.S.) outside of NH, VT, RI, CT, MA or ME (regardless of his/her mode of transportation).

As always, adults are expected to follow the *Code of Conduct and Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People* of the Diocese of Manchester, in particular, policies for appropriate boundaries with minors and established adult-student ratios.