



Reopening New York

Guidelines for Religious and Funeral Services

These guidelines apply to all religious and funeral gatherings, including burial and committal services, statewide. For full details, see [“Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Religious and Funeral Services and Operations of Faith-Based Institutions.”](#)

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, all operators of religious and funeral services should stay up to date with any changes to state and federal requirements related to religious and funeral services and incorporate those changes into their operations. This guidance is not intended to replace any existing applicable local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and standards.

	Mandatory	Recommended Best Practices
Physical Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ For any religious or funeral service, limit the congregant/attendee capacity to no more than 50% of the maximum occupancy for a particular area as set by the certificate of occupancy for services occurring indoors. Such indoor capacity shall be updated as the public health conditions change and remain consistent with the occupancy limits for similar industries. ✓ Limit outdoor capacity such that at least 6 ft. can be maintained among individuals, except members of the same household. Implement a property-specific capacity limit for outdoor areas to ensure that the number of congregants/attendees on the premises at any given time doesn't jeopardize the ability of employees/volunteers to enforce, and congregants/attendees to comply with, public health requirements. ✓ A distance of at least 6 ft. must be maintained amongst all individuals at all times, unless safety or the core activity requires a shorter distance (e.g. pallbearing) or the individuals are members of the same household. However, any singing activity must provide for a distance between individuals of 12 ft., subject to additional protective measures. ✓ Employees, volunteers, and/or attendees should wear acceptable face coverings at all times. However, any time employees, volunteers, and/or attendees must come within 6 ft. of one another (or 12 ft., if singing), they must wear face coverings, unless they are members of the same household. ✓ Prohibit the use of small spaces (e.g. elevators, vehicles) by more than one individual at time, unless all individuals are wearing face coverings. If occupied by more than one person, keep occupancy under 50% of maximum capacity. ✓ Prohibit holding or shaking hands of members in different households during services or prayers. ✓ Limit activities involving singing (e.g. choir, soloist, cantor, musical ensemble), unless 12 ft. of separation can be provided between individuals or additional distancing or physical barriers can reduce transmission of respiratory droplets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Limit in-person presence of staff to only those employees/volunteers necessary. ✓ Modify the use and/or restrict the number of stations (e.g. podiums) and seating areas, so that staff members, volunteers, and attendees are at least 6 ft. apart in all directions and are not sharing stations or seats without cleaning and disinfection between use, unless all individuals are members of the same household. ✓ Hold services outdoors (e.g. services for religious gatherings, graveside-only funerals) and/or provide remote service options (e.g. live streaming, AM/FM broadcast), when possible. ✓ Offer advanced sign-ups to manage capacity. ✓ Change or remove practices that involve close contact or sharing things among members of different households (e.g. sharing a car or limousine ride between locations, providing food/beverages for attendees before, during, or after the event or service). ✓ Hold drive-in services. Ensure attendees remain in the vehicle in which they arrived and that they don't interact physically with clergy, employees, or attendees in other vehicles; vehicles should contain only members of a single household, and cars must be at least 6 ft. apart or use alternate parking spaces. ✓ Reduce bi-directional foot traffic by posting signs with arrows in narrow aisles, hallways, or pews.



NEW YORK STATE

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Protective Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide workers with an acceptable face covering at no-cost to the worker and have an adequate supply of coverings in case of replacement. ✓ Acceptable face coverings include but are not limited to cloth (e.g. homemade sewn, quick cut, bandana), surgical masks, and face shields. ✓ Face coverings are required at all times except while seated, provided all individuals are 6 ft. apart except for immediate household members. Faith leaders, officiants, volunteers, and/or attendees must be prepared to don a face covering if another person unexpectedly comes within 6 ft. (e.g. when walking to seats). ✓ Face coverings must be cleaned or replaced after use and may not be shared. Consult the CDC guidance for additional information on cloth face coverings and other types of personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as instructions on use and cleaning. ✓ If providing gowns or other garments, ensure they are cleaned and laundered between uses. ✓ Train workers on how to don, doff, clean (as applicable), and discard PPE. ✓ Limit the sharing of objects (e.g. religious texts, collection plates) as well as the touching of shared surfaces (e.g. pews, instruments, doors, railings); or, require individuals to wear gloves when in contact with shared objects or frequently touched surfaces; or, require individuals to sanitize or wash their hands before and after contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Place donation plates/boxes in central location with proper distancing protocols in place. ✓ Remove religious texts from pews or benches, and encourage congregation to bring their own. ✓ If choir/musical ensemble meets enhanced distancing measures, encourage members to launder their own gowns at home and bring their own instruments, where possible. ✓ Adapt certain religious practices that traditionally require close contact in order to minimize contact between individuals. ✓ Empty fonts or other shared water-related service or ceremonial activities.



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Hygiene, Cleaning, and Disinfection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Adhere to hygiene, cleaning, and disinfection requirements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Department of Health (DOH) and maintain cleaning logs on site that document date, time, and scope of cleaning. ✓ Provide and maintain hand hygiene stations on site, including handwashing with soap, water, and paper towels, as well as an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60% or more alcohol for areas where handwashing is not feasible. Hand sanitizer must be placed throughout the location. ✓ Provide and encourage participants to use cleaning/disinfection supplies before and after use of shared and frequently touched surfaces, followed by hand hygiene. ✓ Ensure distancing rules are adhered to in restrooms by reducing capacity, where feasible. ✓ Regularly clean and disinfect the location or facility and conduct more frequent cleaning and disinfection for high risk areas used by many individuals (e.g. restrooms) and for frequently touched surfaces, using Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) products identified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as effective against COVID-19. ✓ If cleaning or disinfection products or the act of cleaning and disinfecting causes safety hazards or degrades the material (e.g. religious artifact), put in place hand hygiene stations, supply gloves, and/or limit the number of individuals touching such material. ✓ For funeral-related services, prohibit touching, hugging, or kissing the body of a deceased person who had confirmed or suspected COVID-19, per CDC guidance. ✓ Prohibit shared food or beverages (e.g. self-serve meals and beverages). 	



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Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Affirm you have reviewed and understand the state-issued industry guidelines, and that you will implement them. ✓ Post signage throughout the facility to remind individuals to adhere to proper hygiene, social distancing rules, appropriate use of PPE, and cleaning and disinfecting protocols. ✓ Conspicuously post completed safety plans on site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Develop a communications plan for employees, volunteers, and congregants, that includes applicable instructions, training, signage, and a consistent means to provide individuals with information. Use webpages, text and email groups, and social media campaigns.
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implement mandatory health screening assessment (e.g. questionnaire, temperature check) for employees, faith leaders, and volunteers (but not attendees), asking about (1) COVID-19 symptoms in past 14 days, (2) positive COVID-19 test in past 14 days, (3) close contact with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case in past 14 days, and/or (4) travel within a state or country with significant community spread of COVID-19 for longer than 24 hours within the past 14 days. Responses must be reviewed and such review must be documented. ✓ A person who screens positive for COVID-19 symptoms must not be allowed to enter the gathering place and must be sent home with instructions to contact their healthcare provider for assessment and testing. ✓ If an employee or faith leader tests positive for COVID-19, immediately notify state and local health departments and cooperate with contact tracing efforts, including notification of potential contacts who had close contact with the worker, while maintaining confidentiality as required by state and federal law and regulations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Perform screening remotely (e.g. by telephone or electronic survey), before people arrive, to the extent possible. ✓ Coordinate screening to prevent people from intermingling in close contact with each other prior to completion of the screening. ✓ Screeners should be trained by individuals familiar with CDC, DOH, and OSHA protocols and wear appropriate PPE, including at a minimum, a face covering. ✓ Maintain a continuous log of every person, including workers and visitors, who may have close contact with other individuals at the gathering site or area; excluding deliveries that are performed with appropriate PPE or through contactless means. The log is not required to maintain a list of attendees. ✓ Encourage, but do not mandate, attendees to complete a screening and provide contact information, so they can be logged and contacted for contact tracing, if necessary. ✓ Refer to DOH’s “Interim Guidance for Public and Private Employees Returning to Work Following COVID-19 Infection or Exposure” regarding protocols and policies for employees seeking to return to work after a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 or after the employee had close or proximate contact with a person with COVID-19.