

July 30, 2020

Guidelines for Returning to Faith Formation

If a parish is in a county that is currently on the COVID-19 watch list, in-person faith formation gatherings will not be allowed until that county is off the watch list for a minimum of fourteen days. If your parish is located in one of these counties, please plan alternatives to live gatherings. Examples can be found in the section entitled "Off-Site Models of Faith Formation".

Gathered faith formation for children and teens will be allowed at parishes in the Diocese of Sacramento in counties that are not on the COVID-19 watch list using the protocols listed below. However due to the current pandemic, it is highly recommended that for the 2020-2021 faith formation year, parishes consider alternatives to weekly live gatherings, such as virtual meetings or a hybrid model of in-person and virtual meetings in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Protocols for In-Person Faith Formation

Organization:

- When a family registers for faith formation, data should be collected as to what school(s) the children attend. The children should then be placed in small groups by school with as few schools as possible represented in each cohort.
- Keep class size small. No more than 15 per group (including teachers and aides.) Meeting room must be of adequate size to accommodate social distancing (six feet) of all students.
- Each time a child gathers for faith formation, they should do so with the same small group. Small groups should not intermingle.
- In general, in-person meetings, especially large gatherings should be minimized or suspended as called for by state and county regulations. Large gatherings are governed by the same rules as public Mass.
- The teachers, aids or volunteers for each small group should be the same each week, in order to reduce the number of people exposed to the group.

Facility/Environment

- Meeting rooms must be labeled with maximum occupancy number taking into account social distancing.
- Everyone must wear a mask with the following exception:
 - TK – 2nd grade students while seated at desks
- Everyone must practice social distancing of six feet.
- In order to mitigate the spread of the virus, children and adults involved in faith formation must provide their own Bibles, paper, writing utensils, and other needed supplies to gatherings. Sharing of these materials is not allowed.
- Visual cues should be used to remind children to stay socially distanced, wear masks, and practice good hygiene (signs, taped arrows directing children from drop off location to classroom, traffic patterns)
- Drop Off/Pick Up-
 - Implement drop off and pick up process that does not require additional contact with others. This would include parent's staying in the car and dropping off children at the curb. A volunteer should direct traffic in order to maintain safety and social distancing as children are dropped off.
 - Parents should still sign their children in and out of faith formation class. This should be done in a way that minimizes the contact of parents with other people. Either a contactless sign in / sign out system can be utilized (Google forms, Google sheets, or Sign Up genius) or a staff

member or volunteer can sign children in and out for parents with a clipboard as they are dropped off at the curb.

- A staff member or volunteer needs to ensure children are wearing masks entering and exiting the vehicle at drop off and pickup locations.

Arrival to Meeting Rooms

- Follow sanitation guidelines for public Mass. Spaces and surfaces used should be sanitized before every faith formation gathering. Classes should be scheduled in a manner that ensures adequate time is available to complete the sanitation process.
- Advise parents and students to use restroom at home before coming to class.
- Students and teachers must conduct a self-check prior to coming on campus.
- A temperature check will be conducted on-site for all persons prior to class. This includes teachers, aides, volunteers, and students. This should happen as people arrive on campus in the faith formation office or at the door of each meeting room.
- Each student, teacher, aid, and parent volunteer must wash their hands before each class gathering, either with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
- Attendance records must be kept for each class to serve as a method of contact tracing if needed.

Delivering Instruction

- Teachers and students are not to visit another classroom outside of their cohorts.
- Staff will be trained in sanitation and hygiene instruction.
- Teachers will provide initial and routine instruction in social distancing and health practices to their students.
- Activities that involve singing must only take place outdoors.
- Implement procedures for turning in assignments to minimize contact.
- Consider the use of non-classroom space for instruction, including regular use of outdoor space, weather permitting.
- Any student showing signs of illness will have their temperature taken in the office or other designated area. Students with a temperature or that show any respiratory symptoms will be isolated and sent home.
- Students will not share spaces or supplies.
- No more students will be admitted into a restroom than the number of sinks in that bathroom.
- No food is allowed in the classroom nor should food be provided.

Parishes with Parochial Schools – (shared classroom space)

- Given the unique situations and varied environment of each parish and school, it is important that a parish team including the Pastor, DRE/CRE, and school principal determine the best path forward for the parish use of the school.
- There should be **one** cleaning standard for each parish & school site that should be implemented and adhered to in order to provide a safe and sanitary environment that is consistent.
- Faith Formation should consider adjusting their program schedule to minimize the economic impact for the program in regard to sanitation costs. Samples of alternative Faith Formation schedules can be found below.

Parishes without Parochial Schools

- Adhere to parish standard of cleaning before and after Mass and implement for the use of shared spaces for religious education.

Off-Site Models of Faith Formation

For many years, the US Bishops have encouraged us to focus on educating parents in the faith as they are the first and best educators of their children through their words and example. This year, we have an opportunity because of the pandemic, to focus more intentionally on educating parents in the faith to assist them in their role as the primary teachers of the faith to their children.

Option 1: Train Parents to Teach their Children at Home (Grade Level or Family-Based Model)

For the 2020-2021 school year, parishes are encouraged to consider sending books and materials home or use online materials and train parents to teach their children at home. This can be done in a grade level or family-based model (details below). Most publishers of faith formation materials are offering online lessons and tools to facilitate a move to online or hybrid learning. The Office of Family & Faith Formation staff can provide resources, coaching and assistance to parish coordinators to make this transition.

- a. *Grade Level Model:* Parent trainings can be offered online (via Google classroom, Zoom, or another video conferencing platform) once or twice per month by grade level. If necessary, parent sessions can also be held in person up to 100 people at a time using the same guidelines for gathering for public Mass. Parent sessions offer teaching for the parents and instruction on how to teach the material to their children at home. Catechist/teachers that normally teach students would help with the online parent or in-person sessions and be assigned to a group of parents and be available to answer questions that parents have and to mentor, resource and support them. Most programs that parishes are currently using can be easily adapted to this model. Many offer their entire curriculum including a lesson plan for teachers that can be used by parents.
- b. *Family Model:* Parishes might consider a more family-friendly and parent-friendly format that may utilize family-based materials instead of teaching by grade level. These usually involve a monthly faith theme and materials that families can work on together. Most programs that parishes are currently using can be adapted to this model. Other resources are available using this model. The Office of Family and Faith Formation will be putting together resources to assist parishes. Parent trainings can be offered online (via Google classroom or Zoom) once or twice per month for all parents in the program. Catechist/teachers that normally teach students would help with the online parent or in-person formation and be assigned to a group of families and be available to answer questions, mentor, support and even participate virtually in family sessions if parents need support.

Option 2: Grade Level or Family-Based Classes using Zoom or Google Classroom

Train catechist/teachers to use online video conferencing tools, such as Google classroom, and provide a weekly class online. This can be done by grade level with the children only or using a family-based model where families tune in and learn together. This model works best when class size is small (no more than 10 students per class, plus teachers and aides).

Option 3: Hybrid Model

Use a combination of equipping parents to teach at home, online teleconferencing meetings and/or live gatherings each month. The point of a hybrid model is to put something together that is unique and customizable for your individual parish. Live gatherings should be minimized and *only happen for parishes in counties NOT on the COVID-19 watchlist.*

Example A:

- Twice a month online call with DRE, Grade Level Catechist, and Parents.
- Call will be approximately 45 minutes in length. Time will be spent explaining the next topic to be taught to students, explaining the lesson to parents and then training parents on how best to teach the lesson to their children.
- Alternating weeks, students will meet with their Grade Level Catechist via online video conferencing or live *in counties not on the COVID-19 watch list*.
- Occasional gatherings in person at church after a designated Mass (*outside Mass if in a county on the COVID-19 watchlist*) to pray together and turn in lessons to catechists.

Example B: (Only for parishes in counties NOT on the COVID-19 watch list)

- Neighborhood cohort model where Catechist and/or DRE hosts a monthly gathered session for groups of families in the church or gym from a particular school/geographical area. All required safety protocols must be followed (social distancing, face masks, proper sanitation).
- Session involves opening prayer, lesson by the catechist/teacher, and an activity worked on by individual families together.
- Materials are sent home with the parents to work on with their families.
- Catechists follow up through the week with each family to assist in any questions or struggles.

Employee and Volunteer Protocols

Employee and volunteers must be trained in sanitation and hygiene instruction. Volunteers will provide initial and routine instruction in social distancing and health practices to their students.

Screening

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the potential risk of exposure, all employees and volunteers will be required to undergo a two-step Daily Wellness Screening.

Employees and volunteers will first be required to conduct a self-screening of COVID-19 symptoms. If an employee or volunteer is experiencing any of the following symptoms they are expected to remain home and inform the Pastor:

- Has a fever – OR –
- Has felt ill in the last 72 hours – OR –
- Has one or more of the following conditions:
 - Skin rash
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Persistent cough
 - Decreased consciousness or confusion of recent onset
 - New unexplained bruising or bleeding (without previous injury)
 - Persistent diarrhea
 - Persistent vomiting (other than air sickness)
 - Headache with stiff neck
 - Appears obviously unwell

Upon arrival on-site each day, every employee and volunteer is expected to complete the final step of the daily wellness screening process. The process works as follows:

- Each employee and volunteer will be expected to have their temperature taken and answer an additional screening questionnaire.
- If the employee or volunteer **does not** exhibit a fever or symptoms identified on the screening questionnaire, they will be allowed to proceed forward on-site.
- If the employee or volunteer **does** exhibit a fever or symptoms identified on the screening questionnaire, they will not be allowed to proceed forward on-site. The Pastor will be informed that the employee or volunteer has been instructed to go home.

Employee and Volunteer Illness

If an employee or volunteer begins to feel ill and exhibit any of the symptoms of the virus, especially a fever, a changing cough, or difficulty breathing, the individual must immediately leave the premises while wearing a face covering until off property. After leaving the premises, the individual is to immediately contact the DRE or Pastor to notify them that they are feeling ill and have left the premises to ensure the safety of others.

If diagnosed with COVID-19, an employee or volunteer may return to faith formation when **all** of the following criteria has been fulfilled:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) passed since recovery (no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications)
- Free of the following symptoms:
 - Skin rash
 - Difficulty breathing

- Persistent cough
- Decreased consciousness or confusion of recent onset
- New unexplained bruising or bleeding (without previous injury)
- Persistent diarrhea
- Persistent vomiting (other than air sickness)
- Headache with stiff neck
- Medically cleared by a physician to return to work

If you have symptoms that could be COVID-19 and are not evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, it is assumed that you have COVID-19 and may not return to parish ministry programming until all the criteria listed above has been fulfilled.

Shared Spaces

Employees and volunteers are encouraged to disinfect their workspace before and after faith formation sessions, giving special attention to commonly touched surfaces. Sites must have alcohol-based hand sanitizers and cleaning products accessible throughout the church grounds to disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as telephones and keyboards. There will be limited access to certain spaces to reduce exposure to risks and ensure employee and volunteer safety. Workspace usage is as follows:

- **Office Capacity** – Site will be monitoring the number of persons in the offices. Signage indicating capacity limits will be posted.
- **Conference Rooms, Classrooms, & Meeting Rooms** – Parish employees must monitor the number of persons in all meeting spaces. Signage indicating capacity limits will be posted. Employee and volunteer meetings are required to use a virtual option.
- **Copy Room** – There will be limited access to the copy room. Signage indicating capacity limits will be posted.

Daily Health Screening (Adults)

Name: _____

Position: _____

Q1: Since your last time on campus, have you had a cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or been in close contact with a person lab confirmed to have COVID-19?

If yes, circle what applies above and notify staff immediately.

Q2: Since your last time on campus, have you had any two of these symptoms

Fever

Muscle pain

Sore throat

Chills

Headache

New loss of taste or smell

Repeated shaking with chills

If yes, circle symptoms and notify staff immediately.

Running Record

| Date | Temp | Symptoms (Y/N) | Screened by | Signature |
|---------------------|------|----------------|-------------|-----------|
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| < OFFICE USE ONLY > | | | | |

If a person is exhibiting symptoms or exceeds the body temperature allowable by the resident county HHS they will be instructed to go home or to the nearest health center.

Then, complete the following section of this form:

Date the employee was sent home: _____ Recorded temperature: _____

Are visible signs of respiratory illness present? _____ Yes _____ No

Date the employee returned to work: _____

Cleaning & Supplies

Facilities Cleaning:

The safety of everyone is our first priority. Upon reopening, all parish facilities must be completely cleaned and disinfected, and parishes must continue to adhere to all necessary safety precautions. In addition to the deep cleaning of the facilities before employees, volunteers and students return, the steps outlined below will routinely serve to protect everyone and reduce the risk of spread of infection.

General Disinfection Measures

| Category | Area | Frequency |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Workspaces | Classrooms, Offices | At the end of each use/day |
| Appliances | Refrigerators, Microwaves, Coffee Machines | At the end of each use/day |
| Electronic Equipment | Copier machines, Shared computer monitors, TV's, Telephones, Keyboards | At the end of each use/day and/or between use |
| General Used Objects | Handles, Light switches, Sinks, Restrooms | At the end of each use/day |
| Common Areas | Cafeteria, Library, Conference rooms, Gyms, Common Areas | At the end of each use/day; between groups |

Additional Supplies

| Item | Quantity | Notes |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Hand Pump Sprayer | 1/classroom | For teacher use, to spray desks for students to wipe down. |
| Staff Gloves | 500 count/class | Nitrile gloves |
| Cleaning Solution | | Alcohol-based |
| Restroom Soap Dispensers | | Automated |
| IR Therm | 2/parish | Housed in faith formation or parish office |
| Acrylic/Plexiglass | | Office counter & isolation space |