



Updated July 26, 2020

## What do Phases 1 and 2 of Safe Start Washington mean for faith-based organizations?

Although in-person spiritual worship is permitted in a limited capacity under Phases 1 and 2 of Safe Start, it continues to be safer to hold services remotely or as drive-in services. If spiritual worship must be done in-person, follow these requirements:

- In Phase 1, you may hold outdoor services on your organization's property and limit attendance to 100 people.
- In Phase 2,
  - You may hold indoor services at a place of worship and limit attendance to 200 people or 25% of building capacity, whichever is less. Maintain six feet of physical distancing between households.
  - You may also hold in-home services or counseling at a residence and limit attendance to five people.
- Attendance numbers exclude organization staff but include organization volunteers. If possible, keep a log of attendees for at least two weeks after each service.

## What are the COVID-19 health and safety requirements for faith-based organizations during Phases 1 and 2?

- All organizations, including faith-based ones, are obligated to protect employees, members, and visitors.
  - Educate employees about COVID-19 prevention in the language best understood by the employee.
  - Ask all employees, members, and visitors to screen for [symptoms](#) at the start of every shift and before each service. Make sure sick employees stay home and send employees if they develop symptoms during their shift.
    - Anyone with a temperature above 100.4 degrees F may not work or attend the service.
    - Anyone who lives with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19 or has been diagnosed with COVID-19 may not work or attend the service.
  - Keep a six-foot distance between employees, members, and visitors at all times. When not possible, use a barrier or stagger work shifts or breaks. Mark six foot spacing on pews, seats, and floors to guide members and visitors.
  - A face covering must be worn by each individual not working alone. See the [Coronavirus Facial Covering and Mask Requirements](#) for additional details. In addition to employees, members and visitors shall wear face coverings before, during, and after indoor or outdoor services.
  - No food or drink may be offered on a communal plate or container.
  - Ensure frequent handwashing. Keep adequate handwashing supplies on hand. Use single use disposable gloves where appropriate.
  - Develop and carry out a cleaning and disinfecting schedule, especially for frequently touched surfaces. Visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting page](#).
  - Develop and post at each location your COVID-19 exposure control, mitigation, recovery plan, and COVID-19 safety information.
  - Limit building access to the front door and keep other access points closed.
  - Choirs may not sing during services. Individuals may sing as long as a face covering is worn.
  - Increase ventilation where possible.

- These documents provide detailed guidance:
  - [Phase 1, Modified Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3 Religious and Faith-based Organization COVID-19 Requirements](#)
  - [Washington State Department of Labor & Industries General Requirements and Prevention Ideas for Workplaces](#)

### How can I hold a religious ceremony and still adhere to social distancing and crowd sizes?

- Livestream small group and parish meetings. Whether it's a virtual book club, Bible study, prayer group, or other small group, empower attendees to coordinate with others who are involved to meet weekly for a video call.
- Continue recurring parish meetings through a conference call or video calls (e.g., Google Hangouts, Go To Meeting, Zoom). Even if events are canceled, personal and spiritual check-ins can continue.

### We don't have internet access in our facility so we can't livestream. What should we do?

- Both Facebook and YouTube have options called "Premiere" that will allow you to pre-record, load, and schedule a video of your service to start at a certain time. This provides a similar feel and comments section interaction of a livestream, but does not require you to broadcast live with WiFi from your building. [This article has tips on setting up your video premiere.](#)

### How can we stay engaged with our congregation members during this time and continue to offer our services and outreach ministries?

Implement strategies to continue essential services for the people you serve.

- Consider the needs of persons at [higher risk of severe illness](#) and those who may be more impacted socially or economically. Identify ways to ensure the safety and social well-being of groups that may be especially impacted.
- Ensure availability of meal programs and other assistance for the people you serve, including transportation services. Consider options such as "grab-and-go" bags or delivery; avoid distribution of food or other household essentials in settings where people might gather in a group or crowd.
- Follow [recommended precautions for caregivers](#) (i.e., outreach workers and others who visit persons with COVID-19 symptoms) in a non-healthcare setting.
  - Consider working with the local health department, a local hospital, healthcare agency, or service organization, such as the American Red Cross, to provide infection control training to caregivers who will serve your members or clients.
- Implement alternative meeting and service options.
  - Provide phone and online (live or recorded) meeting and service options, if possible. Determine how to:
    - Train staff and volunteers to use the necessary technology.
    - Triage technical issues if faced with limited IT support and staff.
    - Address the potential lack of access to computers and the Internet among members and people you serve.
  - Mailed newsletters, prerecorded messages from trusted leaders on a designated call-in telephone number, and printed copies of daily teaching guides may be options, especially to reach those without internet access.
  - For religious services, give people the option to watch online (live or recorded), if possible. In addition to technology, this involves permission from religious leaders that it is acceptable to not

attend religious services in person. Viewers can send a comment via the online/livestream platform or an email or text to let you know they were watching. This also may involve permission or guidance about the use of electronic devices at times when that practice is usually not permitted, such as Jewish Sabbath.

- Leverage existing ministries and activities. Pivot your ongoing ministry efforts in new ways that address the needs created by COVID-19. Rather than starting from scratch, begin with what your congregation is already doing to serve others.
  - Identify the current ministries and activities your congregation is engaged in that could be used to help address the impact of the COVID-19.
  - Use existing communications methods and programs to instill hope in response to concerns about COVID-19.
  - Care for people's spiritual, emotional, physical, social, and safety needs.
  - Consider ways your congregation helps bring calm and encouragement to stressful situations; comfort worries over COVID-19.
  - Leverage ways your congregation is already speaking out on behalf of the marginalized and vulnerable; ensure the fair distribution of resources so that these groups don't fall through the cracks amidst the public health crisis at hand.