



Phase 3 – Places of Worship

START DATE: September 11, 2020

UPDATED November 2, 2020

The Office of State Fire Marshal is providing you with this update in conjunction with the Office of the Governor and the Louisiana Department of Health to keep you up-to-date with additional information and/or changes as it becomes available during our battle with COVID-19. These notifications are issued automatically and immediately to those who sign up through “OpenSafely” (<https://opensafely.la.gov/>).

Every attempt is being made to highlight critical changes that have occurred since the previously published notification for your convenience. However, please read through this entire document in context as these changes do not stand on their own and all of the additional general information and clarifications made may not be highlighted.

Preface:

This phasing plan applies to those organizations that have been affected during the COVID-19 stay-at-home order. Essential (critical) infrastructure businesses are not further restricted by these new guidelines and may continue to operate under the current guidelines that are applicable to the specific business. Refer to: https://gov.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/covid/Essential-Infrastructure_fact-sheet.pdf for specific information regarding critical infrastructure businesses.

COVID-19 is a highly contagious and deadly disease. The fundamental concept of this phased opening plan is to slowly open businesses at reduced occupant capacities that will allow for social distancing and circulation without encroaching upon others. Everyone’s cooperation is critical to the success towards defeating this disease and revitalizing our economy.

The virus spreads primarily through person-to-person contact, from droplets that are formed by coughing, sneezing or other projections, or by touching infected surfaces and then touching one’s eyes, nose or mouth. Individuals can carry the virus and be contagious for up to 14 days prior to having any symptoms. The guidelines outlined below for social distancing, face coverings and sanitation are proven methods of mitigating these modes of transmission. **THE MOST IMPORTANT FACT** to remember is that COVID-19 has not yet gone away. We must all continue to do our part to help slow the spread, to protect the most vulnerable, and to not tempt fate or become complacent before a cure or vaccine is found.

Guidance:

Places of Worship must adhere to moderate mitigation standards and social distancing measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Six feet of separation from other individuals not within the same household is recommended. In addition, other measures such as face covering, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, cleanliness, and sanitation should be rigorously practiced. **Individuals 65 years or older, people of all ages with poor control of medical issues like high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, or a weakened immune system are at a higher risk for getting very sick or dying from COVID-19 and should strictly adhere to all CDC guidelines, and are encouraged to stay at home as much as possible.** The specific requirements and guidelines for operation during this phase are listed below. These requirements and guidelines supplement and do not replace any directives or guidance provided by other state agencies, boards and commissions, or other authorities having jurisdiction. Where conflicts occur, the stricter of the requirements will apply.

Occupant Capacity and Building Safety Rules:

The maximum building capacity during the **Phase 3** period is limited to **75%** of the normal established capacity and is subject to the social distancing requirements as outlined below. Please note that capacity restrictions should be applied down to the individual room or space, not just overall facilities.

- Do not exceed the maximum building capacity of 75% which may be determined as follows:
 - One person per 20 square feet of gross area; or
 - 75% of the posted capacity by order of State Fire Marshal.
- Seating shall be arranged such that a minimum of 6 feet of distance between persons and small household groups is maintained.
- Avoid assigned seating within 6 feet from the center of the main aisle to allow for circulation and egress.
- Limit group seating to persons who are members of the same household.
- Eliminate physical contact as part of services.
- Eliminate gatherings in the building while entering, exiting, or moving about.
- Post signage prominently indicating no one should attend if they have experienced COVID-like symptoms or tested positive for COVID within the past 10 days OR have been in contact with anyone with a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis in the last 14 days.
- Current evidence suggests that SARS-CoV-2 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials. Cleaning of visibly dirty surfaces, as well as high-touch surfaces, followed by disinfection is a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in community settings. Follow the CDC guidance for proper cleaning and disinfecting. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning->

[disinfection.html](#)

- Refer to OSFM Interpretive Memorandum 2020-24 for guidelines addressing Outdoor Services.

Ushers:

- Ushers should be provided to call for emergency evacuation, enforce social distancing requirements, assign seating, and further manage any movement of people at all times that the building is occupied. This function may be performed by church deacons, ushers, staff, or leadership.
- One Usher should be provided for every 50 persons in attendance.
- In the event of a fire or other emergency, ushers must call for orderly evacuation and then call 911.

Choirs/Music:

- The Louisiana Department of Health recommends that vocal and wind instrument music activities be conducted outdoors *to the greatest extent possible. Outdoor practice and performance is always preferred.*
- Post signage prominently on the exterior of the building informing attendees that a choir/band with wind instruments will be performing during the service.
- When vocal or wind instrument music activities, conducted specifically by a choir or band relative to this guidance for Places of Worship, are unable to occur outdoors during Phase 3, the activities may be held indoors with the following requirements which include physical distancing, masking and instrument covering provisions:

General

- Measure performance/practice space to determine the best setup for adherence to social distancing requirements.
 - Limit the size of the choir/band with wind instruments according to spacing availability. Spacing distancing should not be reduced in order to accommodate more individuals. Consider decreasing choir or band size, potentially alternating weeks for participants if necessary.
 - Consider use of larger facilities as available.
- Distancing of 6X6 feet is suggested for all performers; 9X6 feet for trombone players.
 - Straight rows will allow for more space between performers than the traditional arch shape.
 - Mark spaces on the floor where performers and stands will be placed.
 - Pre-set chairs and stands when possible.
- If singing/choir or wind instruments will be employed, assure minimum of 15 feet distance from performers to audience
- Create a procedure for performers entering and exiting the performance/practice space and accessing materials to allow for adherence to recommended social distancing measures.

- Choirs/bands with wind instruments should not be stationed near or above a highly trafficked area such as the entrance or exit.
 - Instead they should be stationary in a designated un-trafficked area.
- Consider limiting rehearsal/performance times to 30 minutes or less to reduce the quantity and spread of aerosol among the individuals involved.
- Performers must not share music stands.
- Performers must not share sheet music.
 - Additional sheet music may need to be purchased to ensure all performers have their own copies.
- The performance area and materials such as stands should be sanitized after each performance/practice.
- Training and proper PPE must be provided to those who are responsible for cleaning.
- Water bottles must not be shared. Performers shall bring their own water bottles.

○ **Vocal Performers**

- Choral performers should have their own well-fitted masks which allow for proper vowel formation while keeping the mouth and nose covered.
 - Face shields should not be used in place of a facemask. Face shields are eye protection and should be worn in combination with a facemask.
- Microphones should not be shared.
 - If shared, cleaning should occur between each use.

○ **Instrumental Performers**

- Instruments should not be shared.
 - If shared, cleaning should occur between each use.
- Percussion performers must not share mallets without properly disinfecting them.
 - If shared, performers should wear gloves.
- Wind instrument performers should have masks with slits at the mouth to fit mouthpieces for playing their instruments only.
 - At all other times when not playing, the performers should wear a well-fitted mask that covers nose and mouth.
- Instrument bell covers should be used in all settings. Ideally, bell covers should be made of nonstretchy material that has a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) of 13.

Checklist for Leadership:

- Actively enforce the capacity and social distancing requirements and manage church congregations' movements.
- Ensure the exterior waiting areas are not blocked.
- Maintain social distancing requirements explained in this document.

Checklist for Management, Employees, Ushers and Volunteers:

- ☑ Check for fever or respiratory symptoms daily.
- ☑ Keep at least 6 feet from others.
- ☑ Wear face coverings.
- ☑ Wash your hands often.
- ☑ Clean and sanitize items you touch often.
- ☑ Clean and sanitize carts and counters.
- ☑ Clean and sanitize surfaces that attendees touch often, like doorknobs, handles, plates, light switches, chairs, benches/pews, etc.
- ☑ Clean and disinfect the restrooms regularly.
- ☑ Handwashing is the most important hand hygiene that can be done to stop the spread of COVID-19. Gloves are recommended when handling money but not recommended for other tasks that do not normally require gloves. If gloves are worn:
 - Hands should be washed before putting gloves on and after removing gloves.
 - Gloves should be changed often, changed between tasks, changed when they are obviously soiled, and changed after each interaction with a new individual.
- ☑ Eliminate physical contact with attendees.

Face Covering Guidance:

Refer to Louisiana Department of Health guidance here:

<http://ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/Coronavirus/resources/CDC-DIY-cloth-face-covering-instructions.pdf>

Steps for Cleaning Areas and Other Items:

1. First, clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty.
2. Then, use disinfectant.
 - If possible, use [EPA-registered household disinfectant](#).
 - Follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product.

Many products recommend:

- Keeping surfaces wet for a period of time (see product label).
- Precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

Diluted household bleach solutions may also be used if appropriate for the surface.

- Check the label to see if your bleach is intended for disinfection and ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Some bleaches, such as those designed for safe use on colored clothing or for whitening, may not be suitable for disinfection.
- Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.
- Leave the solution on the surface for at least 1 minute.

To make a bleach solution, mix:

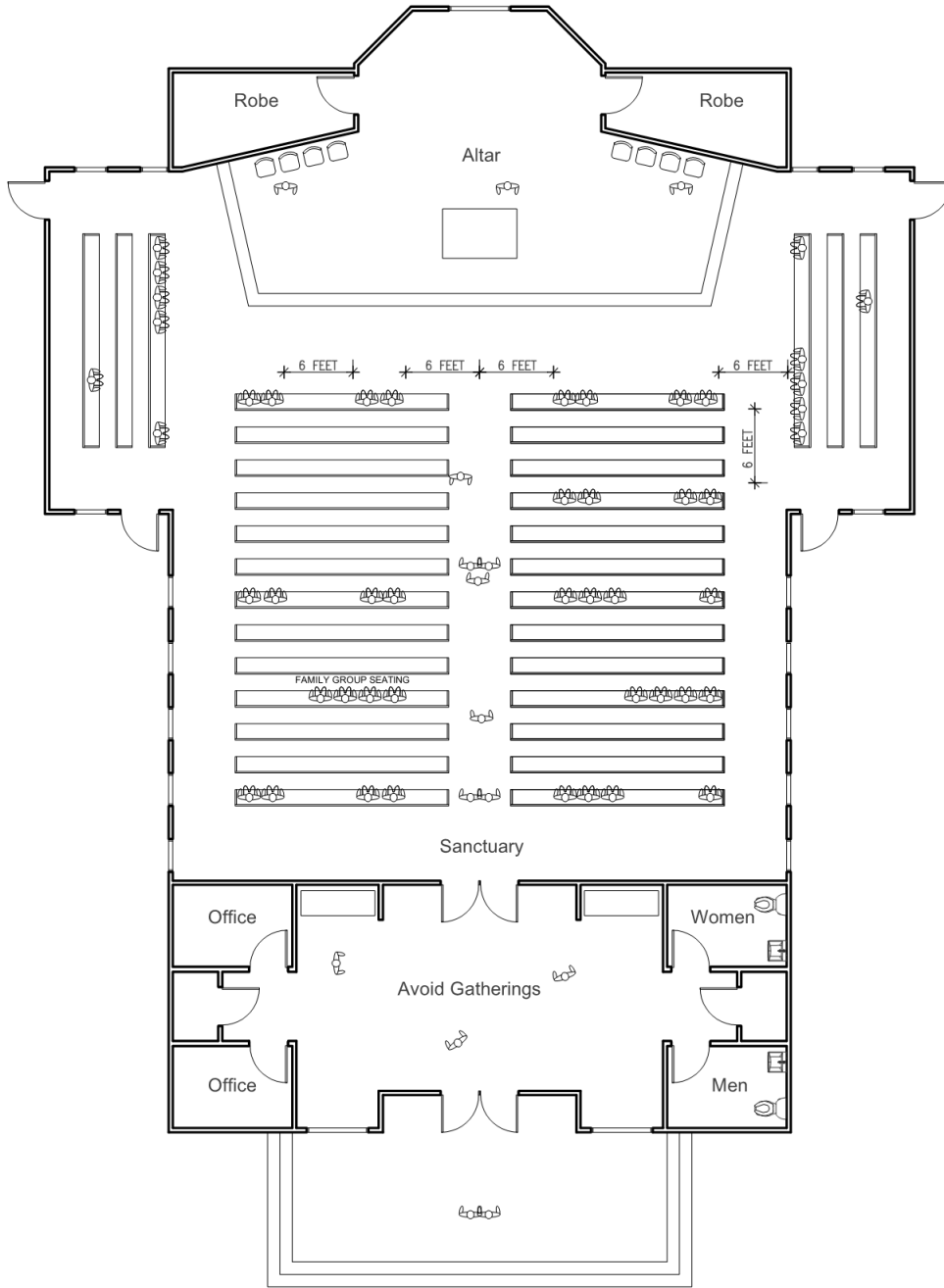
- 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) of bleach per gallon of water; or
- 4 teaspoons of bleach per quart of water.

Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol may also be used.

The CDC offers this additional guidance for cleaning: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

Sample Seating Layout

Normal maximum capacity = 360, Phase 3 maximum capacity = 270



Referenced Documents:

- ❑ Essential (Critical Infrastructure) Services remain operational with guidelines in place.
See: https://gov.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/covid/Essential-Infrastructure_fact-sheet.pdf
- ❑ Outdoor Religious and Place of Worship Services.
See: http://lasfm.org/doc/press/pr_2020-33.pdf