

COVID 19 GUIDANCE FOR FAITH FORMATION ACTIVITIES

Following the archdiocesan COVID 19 task force updates, we present a summary of how these rules apply to faith formation programs and sacramental preparation. Based on the current increase of positive cases with the Delta variant, we recommend that parishes continue welcoming children and adults to in person activities and maintain capacity limits, safe physical distancing and require masks for everyone conducting or participating in indoor activities.

UPDATE August 19, 2021: Based on the Governor’s vaccination mandate for all schools, the Archdiocese of Seattle has extended this to parish staff and volunteers who regularly interact with children. This would include in-person faith formation activities.

Key Principles for Reducing Potential Exposures

The main ways of reducing exposure to the coronavirus and other respiratory pathogens involve:

- **Keeping ill persons at home.** Educate students, families, and staff to stay home when sick, and use screening methods.
- **Hybrid Programs:** Continue to offer online/virtual meetings or classes for those who cannot come to in person activities.
- **Masks/Facial covering.** Expected to be worn by everyone while indoors, no matter vaccination status.
- **Using cohorts.** Conduct all activities in small groups that remain together over time with minimal mixing of groups.
- **Physical distancing.** Minimize close contact with other people. (Close contact is 15 minutes of face-to-face interaction.)
- **Hand hygiene.** Frequently wash with soap and water. When a sink is not available use alcohol-based hand gel.
- **Environmental cleaning and disinfection.** Prioritize cleaning high-touch surfaces.
- **Improve indoor ventilation.** Open windows when possible.
- **Low-risk spaces.** Outdoor spaces are safer than indoor spaces. Move activities outdoors when possible.

Based on these principles, increased interaction, close contact, and longer activities between people increase the risk of spreading COVID-19.

Screening Questions

Have the parents/caregivers review these questions before sending children to the program. Parish can provide families paper or electronic forms, use online applications, that parents/caregivers send to the parish with the child to signal the screening has been complete and the answer to all questions is ‘no.’

Ask staff, parents, guardians, and older students to review the following questions. This review can happen at home or at parish.

1. Do you have any of the following [symptoms within the past day](#) that are not caused by another condition?
 - Fever (100.4°F) or chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - Recent loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea

2. If you are not [fully vaccinated](#), have you been in close contact with anyone with confirmed COVID-19 within the past 14 days?
3. Have you had a positive COVID-19 test for active virus in the past 10 days, or are you awaiting results of a COVID-19 test due to possible exposure or symptoms and not through routine asymptomatic COVID-19 screening or surveillance testing?
4. Within the past 14 days, has a public health or medical professional told you to self-monitor, self-isolate, or self-quarantine because of concerns about COVID- 19 infection?

Staff or students who answer ‘yes’ to any questions should stay home or be sent home.

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING IN PERSON PROGRAMS
 (It is recommended to continue offering Virtual/Online classes for those who cannot participate in person)

FF PROGRAMS K-12 (These guidelines are based on current CDC and governor’s guidelines for school age children)	SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION AND ADULT FAITH FORMATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity is “recommended” at 50% of the hall or meeting room total capacity and continue to keep safe distance (at least 6 ft). • If a school classroom is used, follow the protocol established by the Catholic School. • All Faith formation teacher must be vaccinated per the Governor’s new mandate. • Reduce the length of meetings/classes to 1 hour or 2 hrs. with a break. • Maintain sanitization stations and promote frequent hand washing. • Facial coverings are required for everyone age 5 and older when having classes, events, and meetings indoors. This includes teachers, event leaders, parents, volunteers, and students. • Maintain small groups with people from different households distanced from each other. • If it is possible, maximize the use of outdoor activities. • It is recommended that events do not have food as part of the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People must screen themselves for symptoms. • Parish staff/volunteers will not be checking people’s vaccination status. • Capacity is “recommended” at 50% of the hall or meeting room total capacity. • If a school classroom is used, follow the protocol established by the Catholic School. • Reduce the length of meetings/classes to 1 to 2 hrs. max. • Facial coverings are required for everyone participating in classes, events, and meetings indoors. • Maintain small groups gatherings with people from different households distanced from each other. • Maintain sanitization stations and promote frequent hand washing. • If it is possible, maximize the use of outdoor activities. • It is recommended that events do not have food as part of the program.

Safety, Supervision and Reporting protocols

All parishes are still required to have a COVID Safety Supervisor and staff trained on safety protocols. However, a COVID Safety Supervisor is no longer required at every event. If a catechist, presenter or a participant have a medical excuse from their physician, recommend the use of an alternate protection device, i.e. face shield. Any and every known positive case reported from a faith formation event must be followed up:

- In the event of a person reporting testing positive for COVID-19, follow the Exposure guidelines on the Exposure section of the [Control, Mitigation and Exposure archdiocesan form](#).

For Mass guidance, back to school and parish exposure guidelines, please refer to the Archdiocese of Seattle COVID 19 page [here](#).