

**Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph
Proposals for Reopening
Parish Ministry**

**COVID-19 Template for
Adult Faith Formation, Bible Studies, RCIA,
SMALL Parish Groups of All Varieties
and other hosted meetings on Parish properties
2020-2021**

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a serious public health crisis that requires us to adapt the way we do ministry. We recognize that parish ministry efforts need a pathway for reopening safely with the health and well-being of our entire community in mind.

This is meant to serve as an internal document, a template, to aid pastors and parish staff in planning and developing their own specific operating procedures and guidelines for balancing the needs of public health and safety with the mission to engage the Faith and meet the needs of small gatherings at the parish of committees, boards, groups, meetings and so on. It is not meant to be distributed to parishioners or program participants in general. The guidance provided is not a list of rules, instead it is a collection of the best practices from numerous sources to facilitate in person gatherings when possible. This template is based upon the larger guidance provided by the Catholic Schools Office to pastors and principals of our Catholic Schools as well as those for youth ministry and youth religious education.

The suggestions of this document assume a vaccine will not be available for multiple months, which means each KCSJ Parish needs to respond quickly to circumstances in its own community as well as to conditions in surrounding municipalities. We strongly recommend that Parishes follow the direction of the local health department and/or civil authorities. Utilizing different models designed to fit a variety of circumstances will allow for an easier approach of navigating your local health department recommendations. This plan is based on the following principles:

1. Whenever safe and deemed necessary for the mission of the group, in person processes can be more effective over remote, virtual encounters.
2. The health, safety, and well-being of everyone are a top priority.
3. Practices and policies to reduce the risk of virus transmission when facing changing health circumstances will help achieve the health and well-being of the entire community.

Community Responsibilities

Safety is a value we all share. We expect that all persons will be physically and emotionally safe in our parishes. While it is possible that people may be exposed to Covid-19, it is vital everyone knows every reasonable precaution will be taken to ensure their safety. As a Catholic community, we must respect one another. To ensure the highest levels of safety possible for all, we share these norms:

All members of our communities and visitors:

1. Will treat others as people worthy of respect and deserving of a safe environment.
2. Will wear masks when appropriate, wash hands regularly, and follow physical distancing norms.
 - a. Physical distancing with or without a mask should be six feet.
3. Will take responsibility for maintaining a healthy environment.
4. Will self-screen for symptoms of illness and refrain from coming to the parish when ill.
5. Will comply with self-quarantine guidelines after potential exposure to Covid-19 or travel according to CDC guidelines.

Building Strong Community

A vital and distinguishing characteristic of Catholic institutions and our various ministries is the strength of the community.

No matter what model of small group gathering is activated for the parish ministry, the development and support of the community is critical to our families and individuals who make up our parishes. As a faith community, an outward expression of spiritual support in our interactions is vital. The suggestions below can help establish a strong

Catholic community:

1. Establish routines for in person or remote gatherings that include prayer, greetings, sharing, and other activities.
2. Parish personnel should solicit frequent feedback to assess the sense of belonging.
3. Develop routines for prayer and announcements that can continue during small group gatherings, perhaps with some participants on site and others joining virtually.
4. Create ways to orient everyone to new manners of gathering and ensure frequent interaction or connection.
5. Develop ways for participants to connect with the wider Catholic Community.

Risk Levels and Models for Meeting

In anticipation of ongoing ministry challenges associated with the coronavirus pandemic, KCSJ Parishes will need to take appropriate safety measures to fit the level of risk. The following are provided as possible models for small parish gatherings of committees, boards, prayer groups, RCIA groups, and the like based on risk level criteria below: In Person Meeting Model, continued Distance Meeting Model, and Hybrid Meeting Model.

Risk assessment decisions and selection of appropriate models are left to the Pastor and parish ministry leaders taking into account state and local county/city health directives and guidelines, particularly regarding occupancy restrictions.

Risk Level	External Considerations/Drivers (one or more indicates level)
HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● State or local government officials' close schools. ● The CDC or Health Department indicate high risk. ● Local infection rates are rising rapidly & remain at concerning levels ● There is a known infection in an individual ministry group. ● A Parish is not confident it can ensure safety or mitigate risks. ● Most public entities have closed.
MEDIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Guidance from the CDC or Health Department indicates a moderate risk. ● Local infection rates are rising slowly, remain at manageable rates, and are locally confined/traceable. ● The Parish is confident in its ability to mitigate risks with enhanced measures. ● Most public entities are open with precautions.

LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● State or local government guidance encourages reopening. ● The CDC or Health Department indicates a low risk. ● Local infection rates are declining and/or traceable. ● The Parish is confident in its ability to mitigate risks. ● Most public entities are open.
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Meeting Models Explained

1. **In Person Meeting Model:** The traditional meeting experience that allows ~~youth~~ participants to interact with parish leaders and others in supportive environments rich in engagement, social interaction, and feedback.
2. **Distance Meeting Model:** Participants attend meetings and sessions virtually through synchronous and asynchronous lessons, activities, and projects. All participants and leaders engage the small group meeting virtually.
3. **Hybrid Meeting Model:** This model combines in person small group gathering for some members with coordinated online experiences. This model recognizes that Distance or Virtual Meeting events do not provide the social interaction many desire; therefore, a hybrid model provides in person meeting for a percentage of the time while leveraging digital experiences the remaining percentage.

If the health risk is determined to be **HIGH**, ministries will be closed and move to Distance or Virtual Meeting. If the health risk is determined to be **LOW**, conditions are appropriate to reopen the ministries entirely with realistic safety precautions in place. Finally, if the health risk is determined to be **MEDIUM**, more robust preventative hygiene measures coupled with the reduction of participant density could lead ministries to utilize a Hybrid Meeting.

Health Observations in the Home for any Participants

1. Persons with one or more of the following symptoms or who test positive for COVID-19 will be excluded and asked to refrain from any in person ministry activities until they are symptom free for **72 hours** (3 days) or 10 days following the initial onset of symptoms, whichever occurs later:
 - a. Symptoms of Illness and possible COVID-19 including but not limited to the following list (CDC, MOSBA):
 - i. Fever 100.0 or greater
 - ii. Cough
 - iii. Chills
 - iv. Muscle or body aches (not associated with physical exercise)
 - v. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - vi. Fatigue
 - vii. New loss of taste or smell
 - viii. Congestion or runny nose
 - ix. Nausea or vomiting
 - b. Individuals with symptoms of illness will be removed sent home.
2. Return to Parish Ministry
 - a. Individuals must be free from the following symptoms for **72 hours** (3 days)(CDC) without the use of fever/pain reducers (i.e. Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Naproxen, Aspirin),

anti-nausea or diarrheal (i.e. Imodium, Pepto Bismol), or cough/cold medication.

- i. Fever at or greater than 100.0
 - ii. Runny nose or nasal congestion (not allergy related)
 - iii. Cough (continuous and consistent)
 - iv. Headache
- v. Sore Throat (unless diagnosed by a medical provider for strep or other explanation)

Volunteer and Parish Leaders' Responsibilities

1. Volunteers are expected to monitor personal temperatures prior to helping at the ministry.
2. Volunteers are expected to disclose to the director/coordinator if:
 - a. They have been diagnosed with a confirmed case.
 - b. They have come in close contact with someone with a confirmed case.
 - c. They have come in close contact with someone exhibiting symptoms of COVID- 19.
 - d. They are exhibiting symptoms, as defined by the Center for Disease Control (CDC).
 - e. They have traveled to a high-risk area as defined by the CDC, in the past 14 days.
 - f. They plan in the next few months to travel to a high-risk area, as defined by the CDC.
 - g. They anticipate any required business travel, regardless of destination.
3. Masks will be worn entering, moving around, and exiting the building.
4. Masks will be worn when encountering anyone closer than six feet of distance.
5. Volunteers will not use any common/shared materials such as pens, rulers, staplers, etc.
6. Volunteers will not have physical contact with any youth who are not their child.

Masks/Face Shields

1. Everyone is obliged to wear masks when moving within the facility or are not able to maintain physical distancing.
2. Participants can provide their own masks that are clean and fit well.
3. People who regularly cough or sneeze for any reason are obliged to wear a mask.
4. An individual who cannot wear a mask effectively due to sensory or health issues, will follow heightened physical distancing standards. These persons require a doctor's note stating the recommendation not to be required to wear a mask.
5. Volunteers wanting to make their face visible to others, especially during instruction, may temporarily wear face shields instead of masks when masks are required. When using face shields, leaders must maintain physical distancing.

Arrival at Gatherings

1. Maintain physical distancing as much as possible.
2. All individuals are obliged to wear face masks before exiting the car, as they enter the facility, and move to their gathering space.
3. Ministry leaders will require participants to verify that they are symptom-free and in good health.
4. Entrance doors should be propped or held open by a greeter to avoid anyone touching the door.
5. The greeter at the entrance door of the facility should invite the use of hand sanitizer.

Hallway Procedures

1. Everyone is obliged to wear masks when moving through the hallways.
2. All will move through the facility using physical distancing.
4. It is strongly recommended that everyone walk through the building in a single file rather than in pairs/groups.
5. Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that all remain at least six feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g., guides for creating “one-way routes” in hallways).

Common Spaces and Common Practices

1. Everyone is obliged to wear masks when moving within the common spaces or unable to maintain physical distancing.
2. All will utilize a “one-way traffic” flow in common spaces.
3. All water fountains will be turned off and not used. Everyone should bring their own water bottles. Parishes should adopt a procedure to fill water bottles as needed.
4. Snacks while beneficial for community growth could provide an avenue of gathering without a mask. Postponing snack breaks during this time of social distancing would be beneficial for the suppression of COVID-19.

Outside Gathering Spaces

1. All are obliged to wear masks when moving to outside gathering spaces or unable to maintain physical distancing.
2. Everyone must move to outside gathering space using physical distancing.
3. Physical distancing standards of six feet still apply to outdoor gatherings.
4. Masks may be removed once groups reach their desired outdoor location, depending on risk levels and physical distancing standards.
5. Common/shared materials will be avoided as well in outdoor gatherings.

Dismissal

1. All are obliged to wear face masks when exiting the building.
2. Physical distancing practices will always be followed.
3. Utilize multiple exits if possible, to reduce crowding in the halls and doorways.

Daily Building cleaning and disinfecting (per CDC guidelines)

The parish is responsible to maintain a clean and safe environment for all. Procedures should be put in place to clean and disinfect common touch points within the parish at least daily or between use as much as possible. Use of shared objects should be limited when possible or cleaned between use. Follow protocol in the appendix if an infected person attends parish ministry in person without knowing. (More guidelines can be found in Appendix B & C.)

Appendix A: Waiver of Liability Relating to Coronavirus/COVID-19

Waiver of Liability Relating to Coronavirus/COVID-19

Participant Name: _____

The novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has been declared a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organization. COVID-19 is reported to be extremely contagious. The state of medical knowledge is evolving, but the virus is believed to spread from person-to-person contact and/or by contact with contaminated surfaces and objects, and even possibly in the air. People reportedly can be infected and show no symptoms and therefore spread the disease. The exact methods of spread and contraction are unknown, and there is no known treatment, cure, or vaccine for COVID-19. Evidence has shown that COVID-19 can cause serious and potentially life-threatening illness and even death.

While [_____] (“Parish”) has implemented preventative measures, it cannot guarantee that one will not be exposed to, contract, or spread COVID-19 while attending the Parish ministries/meeting or are present on the Parish premises. It is not possible to prevent against the presence of the disease. Therefore, if you choose to utilize the Parish ministries/meeting and/or enter onto the Parish premises, you and family members may be exposed to and/or increase the risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19.

ASSUMPTION OF RISK: I have read and understood the above warning concerning COVID-19. I hereby choose to accept the risk of contracting COVID-19 for myself and/or my family to utilize the Parish ministries/meetings and enter the Parish premises. These services are of such value to me and/or to my family, that I accept the risk of being exposed to, contracting, and/or spreading COVID-19 in order to utilize the Parish ministries/meetings and the Parish premises in person [if applicable: “rather than arranging for an alternative method of enjoying the same services virtually (e.g. videoconference)].

WAIVER OF LAWSUIT/LIABILITY: I hereby forever release and waive my right to bring suit against the Parish and its owners, officers, directors, managers, officials, trustees, agents, employees, or other representatives in connection with exposure, infection, and/or spread of COVID-19 related to utilizing the Parish services and premises. I understand that this waiver means I give up my right and family’s right to bring any claims, including for personal injuries, death, disease or property losses, or any other loss, including but not limited to claims of negligence and give up any claim I may have to seek damages, whether known or unknown, foreseen or unforeseen.

CHOICE OF LAW: I understand and agree that the law of the State of Missouri will apply to this contract.

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ AND FULLY UNDERSTAND ALL PROVISIONS OF THIS RELEASE AND ATTACHED ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, AND FREELY AND KNOWINGLY ASSUME THE RISK AND WAIVE MY RIGHTS CONCERNING LIABILITY AS DESCRIBED ABOVE:

Acknowledgement

While the Parish has put in place preventative measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19, the Parish cannot prevent that program/meeting participants or staff members may contract COVID-19.

I acknowledge and accept it is my responsibility to monitor my own and/or my family's health each day prior to their participation in programs/meetings at the Parish, including but not limited to taking their temperature daily, and keep them or me home if one exhibits any symptoms of COVID-19.

If I or a family member is diagnosed as infected with COVID-19, I agree to immediately notify the director of any program/meeting in which I or my family are participating in at the Parish and that information will be provided to those individuals who may have been exposed.

I likewise commit to educate and encourage my family to comply with social distancing requirements to promote the health and well-being of others.

I understand if it is determined a staff member or participant of **any program or meeting** occurring at the Parish is infected with COVID-19, the Parish will be required to suspend, delay or terminate all programs/meetings occurring at Parish for such period of time as necessary to clean and disinfect exposed areas of the Parish.

I likewise understand programs/meetings may be suspended, delayed, or terminated due to increased occurrences of COVID-19 in the community.

I understand significant costs are incurred by the Parish to develop and staff programs and host meetings. I understand any fees paid in advance of my participation in programs or meetings at the Parish may not be refunded.

Any refund or reduction in fees due to any occurrence related to COVID-19 is the sole discretion of program or meeting directors at the Parish.

I am the participant or parent/legal guardian of the minor named above. I have the legal right to consent to and, by signing below, I hereby do consent to the terms and conditions of this Release.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name (printed): _____

Appendix B: Deep Cleaning of the Facility Checklist

Prior to the opening of Parishes and as frequently as needed:

- ___ Inspect facilities to determine readiness for re-entry and obtain other legal and appropriate safety inspections. Examples:
 - ___ Fire code/safety inspections of all occupied buildings
 - ___ HVAC/air quality inspections
 - ___ Water quality inspections for drinking fountains and bathrooms that have not been used recently.
- ___ Thoroughly ventilate, clean, and then disinfect all buildings, desks, equipment, and common touch points prior to use, using CDC and OSHA guidelines.
- ___ Create a time schedule for effectively cleaning and disinfecting buildings once students return. Note: Use products that are less likely to trigger asthma attacks.
 - ___ Clean and disinfect all work areas, counters, restrooms, doorknobs, and stair railings several times daily.
 - ___ Create a plan to increase frequency during flu season and if there are increased incidents of COVID-19 exposure in the community.
- ___ Inventory facilities to improve prevention measures. Examples:
 - ___ Ensure there are enough accessible sinks and hand-sanitizing stations to accommodate frequent handwashing by entire classes.
 - ___ Determine if the parish has the appropriate number of no-touch trash receptacles and that they are placed appropriately to minimize exposure.
 - ___ Determine if there is a need for other protective devices for employees with repeated exposure to the public such as clear plastic barriers in facilities.
 - ___ Evaluate air quality to minimize transmission.
 - ___ Determine if there surfaces that are not easily cleaned that should be recovered or replaced to minimize infection.
 - ___ Evaluate how hygiene products like soap, paper towels, tissues and toilet paper are dispensed (no-touch), how frequently they are replenished and where they are stored.
- ___ Make sure that disinfectant and related supplies are available to all.
- ___ Effective hand sanitizer is made available to all persons in the building.
- ___ Develop a schedule for increased routine cleaning and disinfection.
- ___ Disinfect door handles, light switches, stair railings, and other common touch points frequently.
- ___ Disinfect bathrooms and other common areas frequently with posted schedules where workers sign off the time when the work has been completed.
- ___ Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of [cleaning and disinfection products](#) including storing products securely away from children. Use products that meet [EPA disinfection criteria](#).
- ___ Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk to children using the facility.
- ___ Drinking fountains should be cleaned and sanitized but encourage all to bring their own water to minimize use of water fountains.

Appendix C: Protocol for Sanitizing of Facilities after COVID-19 infected person attends.

If a circumstance arises in which an infected COVID-19 person attends the parish ministry before becoming aware of infection, time is vital and could be what helps to stop the spread of the disease. Steps below, modeled after guidance from the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>) will help to sanitize, clean, and prepare the facility for the next use.

1. Notify all that were in attendance OR in proximity with the infected person.
2. Close off areas visited by the ill persons. Open outside doors and windows and use ventilating fans to increase air circulation in the area. Wait 24 hours or as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection.
3. Cleaning staff, while using appropriate personal protective equipment, should clean and disinfect all areas used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.
4. In areas where ill persons have visited or used, continue routine cleaning and disinfection as in this guidance stated in Appendix C.
5. The risk of exposure to cleaning staff is inherently low. Cleaning staff should wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.
 - a. Gloves and gowns should be compatible with the disinfectant products being used.
 - b. Additional PPE might be required based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used and whether there is a risk of splash.
 - c. Gloves and gowns should be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area. Be sure to clean hands after removing gloves.
 - d. If gowns are not available, coveralls, aprons or work uniforms can be worn during cleaning and disinfecting. Reusable (washable) clothing should be laundered afterwards. Clean hands after handling dirty laundry.
6. Gloves should be removed after cleaning a room or area occupied by ill persons. Clean hands immediately after gloves are removed.
7. Cleaning staff should immediately report breaches in PPE such as a tear in gloves or any other potential exposures to their supervisor.
8. Cleaning staff and others should clean hands often, including immediately after removing gloves and after contact with an ill person, by washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.
9. Follow normal preventive actions while at work and home, including cleaning hands and avoiding touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - a. Additional key times to clean hands include:
 - i. After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - ii. After using the restroom.
 - iii. Before eating or preparing food.
 - iv. After contact with animals or pets.
 - v. Before and after providing routine care for another person who needs assistance such as a child.