



GUIDANCE ON WORSHIP SERVICES

On April 6, 2020, Governor Carney signed the tenth modification to his State of Emergency declaration, and provided restrictions for Houses of worship and other places of religious expression or fellowship to fight the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). On April 1, 2020, Governor Carney signed the ninth modification to his State of Emergency declaration, further limiting public gatherings to enforce social distancing. The modified order limits public gatherings to 10 people through May 15, or until the public health threat has been eliminated.

Houses of worship must, whenever possible, conduct their activities from home or through remote audio or video services.

Houses of worship often gather as large groups of people in one building during a religious service or activity. But during this public health crisis, in accordance with Governor Carney's State of Emergency and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), providers of essential services must follow certain mitigation strategies to slow the spread of COVID-19.

- Houses of worship should conduct remote audio, video, or teleconference activities whenever possible.
- If a house of worship cannot conduct its service remotely due to a lack of capability (technological or financial), then it must follow the Governor's State of Emergency restrictions and the guidelines in this document.
 - No more than 10 individuals — including clergy, staff, and participants — may be present inside the Religious Facility during the service.
 - Follow social distancing guidelines



Limited In-Person Services

Clergy may conduct **limited** in-person services at their respective Religious Facilities, and participants may leave their homes to travel to and from the Religious Facility for such services. However, the participants, clergy, and staff at Religious Facilities must adhere to the following requirements to protect public health, safety, and welfare:

- No more than 10 individuals — including clergy, staff, and participants — may be present inside the Religious Facility during the service.
- Participants may not interact physically with clergy, staff, or other participants. This includes, but is not limited to, collecting donations by basket or plate.
- Participants, clergy, and staff must:
 - Be at least six feet apart from one another at all times, except for participants that are part of the same household; and
 - Comply with all applicable guidance from the CDC and the Delaware Division of Public Health regarding social distancing.
- There must be at least a four-hour gap between the end of one in-person service and the beginning of the next in-person service. The Religious Facility should be cleaned between services, in accordance with CDC cleaning and disinfection guidance.

Minimal Operations at Religious Facilities

Clergy and other staff of Religious Facilities are permitted to continue conducting minimal operations, provided that they comply with all applicable guidance from the CDC and Delaware Division of Public Health regarding social distancing. In the case of religious facilities, the term “Minimal Operations” includes, but is not necessarily limited to, facilitating remote services.



Alternative Ways to Worship

Faith-based communities across the nation are moving their services online using live streaming, social media, Zoom, etc. Others are offering "drive-in" services.

Drive-in services will not violate the order if they adhere to the following:

- People attending the service must remain in their vehicles at all times, but are permitted to open their windows halfway if the message of the church is being provided over loud-speaker.
- Vehicles attending services may only include immediate family members who live in the same household.
- No outdoor seating shall be permitted, including outdoor seating in an open bed of a vehicle.
- Vehicles must remain at least 15 feet from each other (including side-to-side while parked).
- Owners/operators of the property being used for drive-in services shall clearly mark spacing appropriate to identify 15 feet between cars.
- No exchange of materials shall take place between attendees and each other or attendees and the providers of the services.
- There must be strict adherence to social distancing guidelines recommended by the CDC and the Division of Public Health.
- Owners/operators shall provide clear signage regarding these requirements.

If you have questions on this guidance, contact the Division of Public Health Call Center at 1-866-408-1899 or email DPHCall@delaware.gov.