

Houses of worship proposed reopening plan

Sector Information

Sector Name: Houses of worship

Sample Companies: churches, synagogues, temples, mosques

Vermont Sector Trade Association Name(s):

Vermont Employees in Sector:

\$ Vermont Payroll in Sector:

Plan Components

1. Tier 1: Current situation
 1. Funerals: Outside, no reception afterwards, six feet distance between household units, 10 people
 2. Weddings: Virtual if allowed by law only
 3. Other life-cycle events: Virtual only
 4. Regular worship: virtual
 5. Religious education (children & adults): virtual
 6. Social programming: virtual only
 7. Major holidays: virtual only
 8. Food consumption: virtual only
 9. Pastoral care: virtual one
 10. Caring community guidelines: If community members need food, guidelines must fit the health department's guidelines for safety. Guidelines should be posted. No physical contact.
 11. Employee and committee/volunteer restrictions: Virtual unless needed for care of building and only one person in building.
2. Tier 2: First turn of the spigot

1. Funerals: Outside, no reception afterwards, six feet distance between household units, 10 people, more people may be allowed at the discretion of the clergy/spiritual leader if stringent social distancing measures can be ensured.
2. Weddings: Virtual with only officiant and couple present practicing social distancing OR conducted outside, six feet distance between households, facemasks for attendees, 10 people with more allowed only with stringent measures for social distancing at the discretion of the clergy/spiritual leader.
3. Other life-cycle events: Follow guidelines for regular worship.
4. Regular worship: Because of the nature of the demographics of houses of worship, we urge people to not be gathering in person, even if other places are opening. However, if houses of worship choose to open, restrictions should be:
 1. Inside: follow general state guidance for maximum gatherings of people, wearing masks, seating in household units with at least 6 feet in all directions between units or individuals and at least 6 feet between occupied rows, no physical contact, and worshipers enter and exit one household group at a time. Following all government procedures for social distancing. Clean and disinfect according to CDC guidelines between services.
 2. Gatherings of 10 people to conduct the service with virtual access for a wider group of people encouraged. This would provide access for our elder populations.
 3. Outside: Same as inside except more people allowed at the discretion of the clergy/spiritual leader if outside space allows stringent measures

for maintaining CDC recommended social distancing. Wind is a factor and should be considered when conducting outside services.

5. Religious education (children & adults): Virtual only
6. Social programming: Virtual only
7. Major holidays: Follow guidelines for regular services.
8. Food consumption: No food consumption as a congregation. No receptions after services.
9. Pastoral care: all pastoral care visits should be evaluated with regard to clergy's/spiritual leader's age and any chronic health problems, as well as any symptoms (cough, fever, etc.) prior to the time of the pastoral visit.
 1. Hospice and hospital visits:
 1. With social distancing.
 2. Dependent upon the COVID-19 situation in the hospital.
 3. Must be willing to learn and use PPE when deemed necessary by medical personnel. PPE use will depend upon availability at a facility. Direct care medical staff have first priority for PPE.
 4. DOH is asked to provide training to clergy/spiritual leader on proper donning of PPE.
 2. Home visits:
 1. With someone who screens positive for COVID (which is different than testing positive for COVID) necessitate PPE.
 2. Six feet minimum should be kept between the household members and the spiritual care provider, as a way to care for both the household members and the spiritual care provider. If weather permits, spiritual care visits are best accomplished

outside -- sitting on a porch, in a front yard. (It is hard to maintain a six-foot distance inside many homes.)

3. No physical contact between household members and spiritual care providers. Again, this about caring for both the household members and the spiritual care provider.
4. Both the spiritual care provider and the household members should be wearing double-sided cloth masks, at the very least, while also maintaining the six-foot distance.

10. Caring community guidelines: If community members need food, guidelines must fit the health department's guidelines for safety. Guidelines should be posted. No physical contact.

11. Employee and committee/volunteer restrictions: Virtual unless needed for care of building and only one person in building.

3. Tier 3: For the care and protection of our clergy, leaders, and congregants, we urge houses of worship to practice higher levels of social distancing. Our demographic tends to come from a wider geographical distance and include a wide age range, and we are responsible for human life. However, as life must eventually return to normal, houses of worship should be held at least to the minimum guidelines of gatherings set by the state. Houses of worship are responsible for setting expectations with attendees and put structures in place to ensure current social gathering restrictions. Outside gatherings may allow additional attendees at the discretion of the clergy/spiritual leaders if outside space allows stringent measures for maintaining CDC recommended social distancing.

1. Religious education (children & adults) may resume under gathering restrictions. Be mindful that our children span many school districts, so programming may require additional time in virtual mode.

2. Social programming may resume under social gathering restrictions.
 3. Major holidays follow same guidelines as regular worship.
 4. Food consumption may resume if the responsible employee/lay leader can ensure adherence to state and federal safety guidelines.
 5. Pastoral care: At the discretion of the clergy/spiritual leaders and their boards to determine the balance between protecting life and their religious practice.
 6. Employee and committee/volunteer restrictions: Follow state guidelines for office work
4. Tier 4: Normal operations
 5. Training & Education Plan: As houses of worship open further, we will be responsible for supporting tracking and safety efforts by the state.
 1. Designation of Employee(s) on site responsible for Training and Education: Each house of worship will assign one employee or lay leader to maintain adherence to safety protocol and to track health complaints of members/worshippers
 2. Responsible lay leader/employee will be registered with DOH with contact information. DOH will provide a portal for houses of worship to register reopening and responsible lay leader or employee.
 3. Responsible lay leader/employee will track CDC and state health guidelines, monitor health of event attendees, and disseminate safety information/requirements/protocol to community/worshippers/attendees/visitors prior to every event/regularly.
 4. Responsible lay leader/employee will post all state-issues communications and comply with all posting requirements. Responsible lay leader/employee will train congregation on need for tracking, social distancing, and other procedures.

5. Responsible lay leader/employee will ensure that each event has a tracking system. Complete list of attendees maintained with name, age, hometown, and contact information. This information will be held for 21 days and should be deleted or destroyed afterwards to ensure privacy of worship. This will be maintained securely by responsible lay leader/employee and will not be shared beyond what is necessary for tracking infection.
6. Responsible lay leader/employee will ask CDC four questions of all employees and all on-site lay leaders each week.
6. Postings and Notifications: Posting all state mandated guidelines.
 1. Safety, Health, Sanitation, Compliance and Enforcement Plans: Clean and disinfect between each event [according to CDC guidelines.](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html)
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7. Health Monitoring Policy for Vendors: If the house of worship requires contracting with a vendor for supplies or repairs, only vendors deemed operable by the state will be contracted with. Name, hometown, and contact information for any vendors that interact with the house of worship will be tracked.