



JEFFERSON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

1400 6th Avenue South | Birmingham, AL 35233 (205) 933-9110 | www.jcdh.org

Serving Jefferson County Since 1917

Faith-based Organization Guidance During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As preparations are made for larger faith-based gatherings, the Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH) wants to assist faith-based organizations to operate as safely as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please find helpful guidance from the Alabama Department of Public Health at: [Guidelines For Places of Worship](#).

While risk-reducing actions can decrease the chance of spreading COVID-19, measures such as those outlined in this document will not fully remove the possibility of infection with COVID-19 while the virus remains in the community. To ensure faith-based organizations are operating in a safe manner, and as a partner to our local community, JCDH provides the following technical direction on guidelines and other best practices. Specific plans should be developed for each facility to promote COVID-19 safety.

Establish protocols to maintain at least six (6) feet physical distance among people

- Social distancing must be observed and promoted to congregants and staff to encourage safety.
 - This means 6 feet of distance should be maintained between each congregant and each staff member.
 - Consider using every other row of seating.
 - Provide at least six feet of space between family units in a single row.
 - Consider adding additional services to limit the overall number participants in a single service.
 - A limitation in operating capacity should be enacted to allow for 6 feet of distance.
- Determine the maximum capacity that will allow a minimum of 6 feet between congregants.

Establish protocols to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 among congregants and staff

- Wearing of a facemask/face covering in areas of high traffic by the members of the congregation and staff.
- Clearly posted signs advising people to remain at home if feeling ill.
- All staff and congregation members should be encouraged to wash hands frequently and maintain a distance of 6 feet from one another as much as possible.
- High contact surfaces that are utilized during normal activities should be cleaned and disinfected frequently.
- Persons who are over the age of 65 and/or who have chronic medical conditions should be advised to stay home to ensure their safety.
- Continue to limit the size of services as this could result in large-scale spread of COVID-19.
- Encourage congregants and/or staff with COVID-19 to remain home until meeting CDC guidelines for ending quarantine.

Continue to utilize alternative methods for conducting worship services

- Continue to optimize online and video services for those who cannot attend in person.
 - Recommend utilizing a reservation system to avoid exceeding maximum capacity in the facility.
- #### **Other Alterations to Typical Practices**
- Hold services in large and well-ventilated areas or outdoors as much as possible. Open doors and windows, when feasible.
 - Avoid and suspend use of a choir.
 - Consider using a soloist and limit musicians to the number that can fit on stage while maintaining social distancing.
 - Recommend suspending congregational singing and responsive readings, but if they continue, all participants must wear a facial covering.
 - Temporarily limit or discontinue use of shared objects such as hymnals, prayer books, bulletins, etc.
 - Modify the method of receiving financial gifts. Encourage online giving, use a stationary collection box, or mail rather than passed collection trays.
 - Avoid buffet style meals, potlucks, or family-style shared food events. If food is offered, provide individually boxed meals for participants.
 - Provide bottled water and tape off water fountains.
 - Disinfect seats, hymnals, and other shared worship materials between services.
 - Discontinue self-serve snack or coffee stations.
 - Consider keeping childcare closed unless the facility can meet CDC standards for childcare centers.
 - Temporarily limit or discontinue communion, unless provided in a contact-free manner.