



LENAWEE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Coronavirus – Guidance for Faith Based Organizations

8-28-2020

The health department is providing the following guidance so that churches and houses of worship can operate safely. Everyone's actions can help limit the spread.

There are currently limits on the number of people that can gather both indoors and outdoors per Executive Order 2020-160. As long as a place of religious worship is being used for religious worship (so for example, they are holding a service and not an event) then the place of religious worship, its owner, and any individual participating in the religious worship **are not subject to penalty** under [EO 2020-160](#) (Section 14).

However, the gathering limits in Executive Order 2020-160, do apply to social gatherings or organized events held at churches: **10** people total for **indoor** gatherings, **100** people total for **outdoor** gatherings. Total means total number of people for the ENTIRE event, not at any given time.

The executive orders can be found on the following website:

https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98178_98455-521682--,00.html.

Hygiene:

Encourage frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Provide hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for times when soap and water are not available. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.

Encourage congregants to cover coughs or sneezes by using the inside of their elbow. Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.

Post signage encouraging good hygiene and wearing cloth face coverings.

Reducing Risk:

Encourage congregants to monitor themselves for symptoms such as fever (100.4 or higher), dry cough (excluding chronic cough due to known medical reason or allergies), shortness of breath, and sore throat. Other symptoms of chills, muscle pain, headache, new loss of taste or smell, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea have also been reported. If you choose to monitor temperatures upon entry, only do so with a touch-free thermometer.

Congregants should stay home when sick.

Encourage social distancing of 6 feet:

- Assign seating and have all household members sit together in the same spot. Space household groups at least 6 feet apart. Consider closing off seating areas.
- Dismiss congregants by rows
- Use visual markers, such as brightly colored tape to indicate a six-foot distance.

Shorten the length of the service to reduce the amount of time congregants are around others.

Stagger services to limit the number of people in the building at one time and limit the size of children's services and childcare programs.

Ensure that any toys provided either go home with the child or are disinfected before being used by another child.

Prop the doors open prior to the service to eliminate multiple hands touching door handles.

Depending on the size of your house of worship, have congregants exit through the door closest to them to minimize congestion at an exit door.

Require congregants to wear a cloth face covering when in your house of worship. Cloth face coverings should not be placed on children younger than 2 years old or anyone who has trouble breathing. Cloth face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms.

Provide communion elements prepared individually to prevent the shared use of containers or cups. The person who distributes communion should wear a cloth mask.

Eliminate the passing of common touch items such as collection plates. Instead, place collection plates at fixed locations.

Eliminate coffee hours and other social gatherings.

Turn off water fountains.

Water that sits unmoving in building plumbing for extended periods is at increased risk for leaching of metals (such as lead), reduced effectiveness of water treatment chemicals and bacterial growth. Take steps to ensure that all water systems are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize these risks. See: Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html>

Because the virus can be more easily spread through respiratory droplets when singing, you may wish to forego singing by a choir or as a congregation. Other options include choosing a soloist or other types of musical performance appropriately physically distanced from others at the front of the congregation.

Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, etc. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety risk to children using the facility.

Encourage smiles and waves and discourage handshakes, hand-holding, and hugs (except among household members).

Cleaning and Disinfecting:

Clean AND disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as door handles, light switches, keyboards, telephones, handrails, pews (especially where hands touch) and bathrooms. Dirty surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against COVID-19: [EPA Approved Disinfectants for Use Against COVID-19](#) and are appropriate for the surface.

Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.

Communication:

Provide, or continue to provide, web and mobile-based communications services like livestreaming, if possible, to give more vulnerable populations an option to stay home.

Continue communicating with congregants. Email lists, social media, website, newsletters, and press releases to local radio stations and newspapers are all good options.

Keep in touch more frequently with congregants who are at highest risk for getting very sick, such as those age 65 and over, and those with underlying health conditions, and make sure they have food, medications, and other household supplies.

Plan for when a staff member or congregant becomes sick:

- Identify an area to separate anyone who exhibits [symptoms](#) of COVID-19. The individual should be sent home as soon as possible.
- Notify local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility.
- Close off areas used by the sick person and do not use the area until after cleaning and disinfection. Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants. See further guidance for how to clean your facility after someone is identified as being sick with coronavirus: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility-H.pdf>
- Advise staff and congregants with [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 or who have tested positive for COVID-19 not to return to the facility until they have met CDC's [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#).

Staff:

Screen employees daily for COVID-19 symptoms. Those with symptoms should stay home.

Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit an employee to stay home if an employee or a family member in their household are at higher risk for developing severe illness from COVID-19 due to age (65 or older) or underlying medical condition.

Encourage staff to have a supply of items (food/water/medications etc.) at home should the need arise for them to stay home due to illness.

Additional Information

www.lenaweehealthdepartment.org

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/>
www.michigan.gov/coronavirus

Contact the Lenawee County Health Department with questions at 517-264-5226 option 5 from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday; or [email lenaweehd@lenawee.mi.us](mailto:email.lenaweehd@lenawee.mi.us).

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has established a statewide hotline for the public to ask health related questions at 1-888-535-6136 (operational 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., seven days a week). Individuals can also [email COVID19@michigan.gov](mailto:email.COVID19@michigan.gov) 24/7. Emails are answered 7 days a week from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.