

COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Phase
4

Religious Establishments, Weddings, Domestic Partnerships and Funerals



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GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of Health

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Religious Establishments, Weddings, Domestic Partnerships and Funerals

This guidance:

- a. Establishes a framework for Religious Establishments to safely hold services and minimise the risk of transmission of the COVID-19 virus
- b. Allows each Religious Establishment to prepare their own risk assessment and risk management/mitigation policies.

Content

The guidance provides information on health and safety measures to be implemented in:

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Gatherings

When planning the approach to holding gatherings, PLEASE REMEMBER THE 3 C'S of staying healthy during COVID-19:

- 1. AVOID CROWDS**
- 2. AVOID CLOSED IN OR ENCLOSED SPACES**
- 3. AVOID CLOSE CONTACT**

During gatherings, the following should be adopted:

- a. Face masks are required for attendees when not seated. Once seated, attendees may remove their mask given that they are physically distanced (six feet) from those not in their household.
- b. Strict attention to **PHYSIAL DISTANCING** defined as
 - Six feet; or
 - Three feet, provided each person is wearing a mask which completely covers their nose and mouth.

Please note: singing and playing of wind and brass instruments may increase the projection of respiratory droplets (aerosols), which is why we advise social distancing between members of the public and recommend, in addition to social distancing, the use of outdoor services and facilities whenever possible.

- c. Outdoors services where practical. It may be possible to increase the number of attendees allowed, as long as strict physical distancing and the use of masks is enforced and well-marshalled.
- d. Use of Wardens/Deacons to control all aspects in the religious establishment plan:
 - Directing traffic flow and car parking
 - Queuing outside the religious establishment with strict physical distancing

- Control choke points inside the church
 - Exiting from church
- e. Ensure the use of multiple doors to minimise choke points for people entering and exiting the buildings, and to ensure traffic flow.
 - f. Consider offering multiple services to allow more people to attend
 - g. If multiple services is an option, ensure there is adequate time between services to allow for:
 - The congregation to leave
 - Cleaning/sanitizing of seats/equipment to take place
 - The next congregation to arrive
 - h. The elderly and those with medial conditions are especially vulnerable to COVID-19. Consider special services for these groups to protect them.
 - i. If separate services are held for seniors/vulnerable persons these should occur first before other services of the day. Aerosols can linger in air so those services should precede, not follow other services. The more time allowed between services generally the better i.e. early morning service followed by lunch time service followed by evening service is better than services at 8am, 10am, and 11:30am. All outdoor ventilation that can happen by opening doors and windows between and during services would be ideal as well. Please think long and hard before exposing our seniors and vulnerable members to high risks.
 - j. Essential sanitation of items that will be touched i.e. donation platters.
 - k. The use of shared hymnals/bibles/books is not recommended. Instead, we encourage the use of a multimedia projector screen with relevant passages to refer to or ask people to bring their own.

Greetings & Physical Distancing

- a. Ensure congregants of separate households **AVOID** handshakes, hugs, kisses and/or holding hands, at this present time, which is common during prayer.
- b. The Faith leader should give verbal announcements about hand hygiene and the need for continued physical distancing during the gathering.
- c. Hand hygiene and physical distancing requirements should be placed in highly visible locations of the religious establishments.

Correct use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- a. Every person attending the gathering **MUST** wear a face mask (covering their mouth and nose) when not seated. For example, when entering or exiting the building or moving around inside. Once you are seated, you may remove your mask given that you are physically distanced from those not in your household.
- b. The use of thermometers is recommended (but not mandatory) before everyone enters the building. It would be ideal if a nurse (or someone properly trained in temperature taking) is available with a digital thermometer; otherwise, control access and have large signs asking every congregant not to enter the service if they have any symptoms at all or not feeling well.

Cleaning

- a. Ensure that a thorough cleaning with antibacterial cleaning cloths is undertaken throughout the religious establishment giving specific attention to door handles, seats, rails, light switches and all bathroom and kitchen surfaces and meeting places.
- b. Have a thorough cleaning of all surfaces outlined above between services.
- c. Ensure appropriate capacity in bathrooms to allow for physical distancing.
- d. Ensure bathrooms are thoroughly cleaned between services.

Hygiene/Bathroom Facilities

- a. Hand sanitizer stations must be at each entry point of the facility.
- b. Signage at certain locations must be in place to reinforce the rules.
- c. Ensure hot running water is available in all bathrooms and kitchens for use during the gathering.
- d. Ensure liquid hand soap is available in all bathrooms and kitchens for use during the gathering.
- e. Ensure paper towel and toilet paper via dispenser(s) are available for use during the gathering.
- f. Remind all congregants to wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before drying thoroughly.
- g. Encourage congregants to use disposable paper when touching toilet handles, bathroom taps, and when opening bathroom doors.
- h. Ensure trash bins are available, regularly cleaned and emptied during the gathering and available for people to open the doors using the paper towels.
- i. Ensure no one feeling unwell enters the buildings.
- j. Ensure tissues are readily available to catch coughs, sneezes and for nose wiping.
- k. Ensure trash bins are available to collect used tissues throughout the church.
- l. Promote the use of knuckles to operate light switches if concerns arise.
- m. Promote the opening of doors with elbows or tissues if concerns arise.

Luncheons and Agape Feasts

A plan should be developed to identify the risk mitigation steps which should be taken when serving or preparing food.

The recommendation is to use only pre-wrapped individual food items and single-use utensils. This must also include approved measures for disposal of all said items.

Please see the following guidance:

<https://www.gov.bm/sites/default/files/Guidance%20for%20Indoor%20Dining%20Phase%204%20with%20Cover%20200825.pdf>

<https://www.gov.bm/sites/default/files/Food-Business-Re-opening-Checklist.pdf>

https://www.gov.bm/sites/default/files/11645_COVID-19_Takeout_Delivery_Dine-In_Food_Service.pdf

https://www.gov.bm/sites/default/files/Guidance_for_Outdoor_dining_Phase4.pdf

Weddings, Domestic Partnerships and Funeral Services

Weddings, domestic partnerships and funeral services may be held in a religious establishment or outdoors and are not limited to a number of persons. Strict physical distancing, however must be maintained which includes:

- Six feet; or
- Three feet, provided each person is wearing a mask which completely covers their nose and mouth.

Please note: singing and playing of wind and brass instruments may increase the projection of respiratory droplets (aerosols), which is why we advise social distancing between members of the public and recommend, in addition to social distancing, the use of outdoor services and facilities whenever possible.

If the number of persons attending the reception, wake, or other non-service part of the wedding, domestic partnerships or funerals, is more than 75 the host of the event must apply for an exemption for a mass gathering from the Ministry of National Security. Please refer to the [mass gathering guidance](#).

Also keep in mind, the more people an individual interacts with at a gathering and the longer that interaction lasts, the higher the potential risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 and COVID-19 spreading. The risk of COVID-19 spreading at gatherings and services is ranked as follows, from lowest to highest:

- Lowest risk:** Virtual-only services and gatherings.
- Lower risk:** Smaller outdoor, in-person services and gatherings in which individuals from different households remain spaced at least 6 feet apart, wear masks, do not share objects.
- Higher risk:** Medium-sized in-person services and gatherings, either indoors or outdoors, adapted to allow individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart, with some individuals wearing face masks and with some attendees coming from outside of Bermuda. Sharing of items or objects is limited.
- Highest risk:** Large in-person services and gatherings held indoors and where it is difficult for individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart; many attendees travel from outside of Bermuda. Few individuals wear masks and objects are shared.

For persons planning a wedding, domestic partnership or funeral, the following guidance is provided:

- a. It is vital that detailed planning takes place with the funeral director and/or family so that the limitations of the service can be fully understood.

- b. Assessing capacity of a facility with physical distancing will dictate the maximum number of people that can attend a funeral or marriage service.
- c. Funeral, wedding and domestic partnership attendees must be by invitation only up to the maximum capacity of the building to maintain physical distancing. It is advisable to have door stewards to welcome guests and remind them of the requirements as necessary.

Anyone who is showing symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss of taste and smell) should not attend the funeral or marriage due to the risk that they pose to others; remote participation should be considered, for example live streaming.
- d. **Persons travelling to Bermuda for a wedding, funeral or domestic partnership, should not attend until they receive results from their day 8 test results.**
- e. Traditionally, at funerals people will queue to meet and express condolences to next of kin. This should be avoided to prevent crowding.
- f. Remember only people from the same household can be closer to each other than six feet without a mask.
- g. The signing of the register needs to be undertaken in a place where the participants can keep at a safe distance. Many vestries will be unsuitable. All those signing the register should sanitize their hands before signing, complete all the signatures necessary for them and then sanitize them again.
- h. Service books should be avoided. Use single use printed service sheets.
- i. If in a religious establishment, it should be fully cleaned before and after the event.