



Frequently Asked Questions for Practitioners of Outdoor Faith-Based Gatherings

July 21, 2020

The following guidance was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health for use by local facilities, and will be posted at www.sfcddp.org/covid19. This interim guidance may change as knowledge, community transmission, and availability of PPE and testing change.

AUDIENCE: Practitioners planning a small outdoor faith-based gathering.

Summary of Key Points

- Only outdoor faith-based gatherings are currently allowed. No indoor services or ceremonies may be held at places of worship or other facilities.
- Outdoor attendance is currently restricted to no more than 12 attendees, including staff, at any time.
- Remote attendance is the preferred method to conduct a gathering.
- Create a [Health & Safety Plan](#) (Exhibit B of Health Officer Directive 2020-19, posted at www.sfdph.org/directives) and monitor it closely in case you need to make changes to improve safety.

Frequently Asked Questions

How many people may attend an outdoor gathering?

- People from different households may gather in a group totaling no more than 12 people. See [Tips for Small Outdoor Gatherings](#) posted at www.sfcddp.org/safersocial
- Outdoor options include parks or other spaces where such gatherings are allowed. The space used must allow everyone attending to remain at least 6 feet apart from those not in their household at all times.
- Sunshades, awnings, or similar outdoor structures may be used, but must be completely open on all sides to provide maximum ventilation.
- Gatherings must be scheduled to last no longer than 2 hours.
- Members of the same household may be seated together but should maintain at least six feet of distance from other households.
- Think about offering additional gathering times on the same day to allow more people to attend. Be sure to clean the space between each gathering.

Are face coverings or masks required for all who attend including those conducting the service or ceremony?

- [Face coverings or masks are required](#) by all participants and service leaders at all times. To help remind your staff and attendees, you can put up signage to let people know that masks or face coverings are required.



Do I need to conduct a health screening for my staff?

- Yes, [SFDPH screening guidance](#) (posted at www.sfcdcp.org/screen) will help you through the questions to ask your staff.
 - See what to do if personnel get a [positive COVID-19 result](#) on the sf.gov website.
 - See when personnel can [return to work after COVID-19](#) (posted at www.sfcdcp.org/rtw)

Are we able to pass objects between people?

- No, you should prevent shared touching of objects. If an object is of critical importance and must be shared, you must take every precaution after each instance of sharing to clean and sanitize the object and/or the hands of people who share the object.

Is singing or chanting allowed at the gathering?

- Projecting your voice like when singing or shouting can spread more virus, even when wearing a face covering. Choral singing can be especially risky. Church choirs have been linked to fatal outbreaks. Consider listening to recorded music or having a live musician play instruments.

Are we able to have food or liquid at the gathering?

- Self-service food, potlucks, or family style eating and drinking events should not be held. By avoiding these situations, you can avoid the risk of cross contamination.
- If, as part of a faith-based ceremony, eating or drinking is required, you must do it in a way that minimizes contact between people, especially involving the hands and mouth.
- Glasses, cups and utensils should not be shared; if they are, they must be disinfected between each use and the users' hands must be cleaned using appropriate hand washing or hand sanitizer.

What is the best method for collection of donations?

- Explore the possibility of using digital systems that allow touch-free donations. Discontinue using baskets or similar items for donations.

How should we greet one another? Shaking hands, kissing cheeks, etc.?

- This is not advised. Identify how your community could greet each other in different ways while maintaining social distance.

Do I need to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for my staff?

- You will need to provide face coverings to employees. You must also ensure that employees have access to adequate handwashing areas or hand sanitizer.



Even if we conduct gatherings outside do we still need to clean and disinfect our building?

- Yes, it is still important to clean and disinfect if you and your staff will be in the building interacting with each other. Please see guidance on [what and how to clean and disinfect](#), posted at www.sfdcp.org/businesses.
- Put up signage to remind staff about the importance of frequent handwashing.
- Disinfect microphones and stands, music stands, instruments and other items between each use.
- If appropriate for your outdoor seating, think about using disposable seat covers for attendees which then can discard and replace between each use. Wash religious garments and linens after each service or event, at the highest water setting possible.

Can our facility still record small indoor services for livestreaming or broadcasting?

- Yes, your facility may continue to livestream small indoor services but you are strongly encouraged to conduct streaming activities outdoors.
- No congregants or other members of the public may participate in or attend any indoor service. If a service or ceremony requires participation of congregants or other members of the public (e.g., a wedding or baptism), it must be conducted outside. Effective Monday, July 20, 2020 funerals must also be hosted outdoors, including for streaming purposes.
- Indoor services are **only** allowed if:
 - They are for the purposes of streaming to others.
 - There are no more than 12 people total, including staff and camera crew.
 - The indoor space remains closed to congregants and the general public. Congregants who regularly volunteer to support services may be part of the group of 12.
 - The event complies with all social distancing, face covering, cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.

Additional Resources

San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH)

- Information and Guidance for the public can be viewed at www.sfdcp.org/covid19
- [Tip Sheet for Small Outdoor Gatherings](#) and the Directive governing Small Outdoor Gatherings can be found at www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/Directive-2020-19-SmallOutdoorGatherings.pdf
- The template for the required [Health and Safety Plan for Small Outdoor Gatherings](#) is posted at www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/2020-19-Small-Gatherings-Health-and-Safety-Plan.pdf
- [Safer Social Interactions](#) tips are posted at www.sfdcp.org/safersocial
- [Interim guidance on cleaning and disinfecting](#) is posted at www.sfdcp.org/businesses.
- [Interim Guidance: Asking COVID-19 Screening Questions at Any Businesses, Organization, or Facility](#) is posted at www.sfdcp.org/businesses.
- Information on [Masks and Face Coverings](#) can be found at <https://sf.gov/information/masks-and-face-coverings-coronavirus-pandemic>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html

California Department of Public Health: Places of Worship and Providers of Religious Services and Cultural Ceremonies
<https://files.covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-places-of-worship.pdf>