



DIRECTIVE OF THE HEALTH OFFICER No. 2020-34

**DIRECTIVE OF THE HEALTH OFFICER OF
THE CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO REGARDING REQUIRED BEST
PRACTICES FOR INDOOR RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL CEREMONIAL
GATHERINGS**

(PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTIVE)

DATE OF DIRECTIVE: September 30, 2020

By this Directive, the Health Officer of the City and County of San Francisco (the “Health Officer”) issues specific direction that Houses of Worship and people participating in Indoor Religious Gatherings, as described below, must follow as part of the local response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (“COVID-19”) pandemic. This Directive constitutes guidance as provided under Sections 4e and 11 and Appendix C-2 of Health Officer Order No. C19-07j issued on September 30, 2020 (the “Stay-Safer-At-Home Order”) and, unless otherwise defined below, initially capitalized terms used in this Directive have the same meaning given them in that order. This Directive goes into effect immediately upon issuance and remains in effect until suspended, superseded, or amended by the Health Officer. This Directive has support in the bases and justifications set forth in the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order. As further provided below, this Directive automatically incorporates any revisions to the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order or other future orders issued by the Health Officer that supersede that order or reference this Directive. This Directive is intended to promote best practices as to Social Distancing Requirements and sanitation measures, helping prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and safeguard the health of workers, customers, and the community.

**UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE
SECTIONS 101040, 101085, AND 120175, THE HEALTH OFFICER DIRECTS AS
FOLLOWS:**

- 1. This Directive applies to all individuals (“Participants”) participating in indoor gatherings for religious or cultural ceremonies, such as weddings and funerals (collectively referred to as “Indoor Religious Gatherings”) and all houses of worship or other providers of religious services or cultural ceremonies (“Houses of Worship”) hosting, organizing, or otherwise involved in Indoor Religious Gatherings in the City and County of San Francisco (the “City”), including the clergy or other faith-based or cultural leaders of such Indoor Religious Gatherings (“Leaders”), as permitted under Section 9 of Appendix C-2 of the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order.**
- 2. Attached as Exhibit A to this Directive is a list of best practices that apply to Houses of Worship engaged in Indoor Religious Gatherings (the “Best Practices”). All Houses of Worship must comply with all applicable requirements listed in the Best Practices.**
- 3. Houses of Worship must, before they begin to host or otherwise facilitate Indoor Religious Gatherings, create, adopt, and implement a written health and safety plan (a “Health and Safety Plan”). The Health and Safety Plan must be substantially in the form attached to this Directive as Exhibit B.**



Health Officer Directive No. 2020-34

4. Guidance from the Department of Public Health related to Indoor Religious Gatherings is attached to this Directive as Exhibit C and is available at <http://www.sfdph.org/directives>.
5. If an aspect, service, or operation of the House of Worship is also covered by another Health Officer directive (all of which are available at <http://www.sfdph.org/directives>), then such House of Worship must comply with all applicable directives, and it must complete all relevant Health and Safety Plan forms.
6. Each House of Worship must (a) make the Health and Safety Plan available to anyone interested in participating in the Indoor Religious Gathering and to any involved Personnel on request, (b) provide a summary of the plan to all Personnel working on site or otherwise in the City in relation to its operations, and (c) post the plan at the entrance to any other physical location that such House of Worship operates within the City. Also, each such House of Worship must provide a copy of the Health and Safety Plan and evidence of its implementation to any authority enforcing this Order upon demand.
7. Each House of Worship subject to this Directive must provide items such as Face Coverings (as provided in Health Officer Order No. C19-12c issued on July 22, 2020, and any future amendment to that order), hand sanitizer or handwashing stations, or both, and disinfectant and related supplies to any of that House of Worship's Personnel, all as required by the Best Practices. Where feasible, each House of Worship is also encouraged to provide such items to Participants of Indoor Religious Gatherings or to make sure that Participants bring their own to the gathering. If any House of Worship is unable to provide these required items to Personnel or otherwise fails to comply with required Best Practices or, if applicable under subsections 3, 4 or 5 above, fails to abide by its Health and Safety Plan, then it must cease operating until it can fully comply and demonstrate its strict compliance. Further, any Indoor Religious Gathering organized by such House of Worship where the House of Worship has failed to comply is subject to immediate closure and the fines and other legal remedies described below, as a violation of the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order.
8. For purposes of this Directive, "Personnel" includes all of the following people who provide goods or services associated with the House of Worship in the City: Leaders; employees; contractors and sub-contractors (such as those who sell goods or perform services onsite or who deliver goods for the business); vendors who are permitted to sell goods onsite; volunteers; and other individuals who regularly provide services onsite at the request of the House of Worship. "Personnel" includes "gig workers" who perform work via the business's app or other online interface, if any.
9. This Directive and the attached Best Practices may be revised by the Health Officer, through revision of this Directive or another future directive or order, as conditions relating to COVID-19 require, in the discretion of the Health Officer. All Houses of Worship must stay updated regarding any changes to the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order and this Directive by checking the Department of Public Health website (www.sfdph.org/healthorders; www.sfdph.org/directives) regularly.



Health Officer Directive No. 2020-34

- 10. Implementation of this Directive augments—but does not limit—the obligations of each House of Worship under the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order including, but not limited to, the obligation to prepare, post, and implement a Social Distancing Protocol under Section 9 of Appendix C-2 of the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order. The House of Worship must follow these Best Practices and update them as necessary for the duration of this Directive, including, without limitation, as this Directive is amended or extended in writing by the Health Officer and consistent with any extension of the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order, any other order that supersedes that order, and any Health Officer order that references this Directive.**

This Directive is issued in furtherance of the purposes of the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order. Where a conflict exists between this Directive and any state, local, or federal public health order related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including, without limitation, the Social Distancing Protocol, the most restrictive provision controls. Failure to carry out this Directive is a violation of the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order, constitutes an imminent threat and menace to public health, constitutes a public nuisance, and is a misdemeanor punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tomás Aragón".

Tomás J. Aragón, MD, DrPH,
Health Officer of the
City and County of San Francisco

Date: September 30, 2020



Exhibit A to Health Officer Directive No. 2020-34 (issued 9/30/20)

Best Practices for Houses of Worship Organizing or Facilitating Indoor Religious Gatherings

In addition to preparing, posting, and implementing the Social Distancing Protocol as required by Section 9 of Appendix C-2 of the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order, each House of Worship operating in the City must comply with each requirement listed below and prepare a Health and Safety Plan substantially in the format of Exhibit B, below. Participants and Houses of Worship must also comply with each of the applicable requirements listed below.

Requirements:

1. Section 1 – Understanding Risk:

- 1.1.*** Engaging in any gathering that includes individuals who are not part of a single Household increases the probability of transmitting COVID-19. The probability of transmission generally increases when gatherings are held indoors. Accordingly, while it is essential for many people’s spiritual and mental health to continue to practice their religious faith or attend cultural ceremonies and while the risks can be reduced by following the best practices required under this Directive, it is strongly recommended that all people avoid gatherings including for religious or cultural services, especially indoors. Instead people are encouraged to use temporary alternatives such as observing services or events live-streamed over the internet whenever possible or participating in small outdoor events of limited duration where they practice physical distancing, wear Face Coverings and take other safety precautions. For best practices related to outdoor gatherings, see Directive 2020-19c found at www.sfdph.org/directives.
- 1.2.*** If people wish to participate in an Indoor Religious Gathering, they should consider the risks to themselves and others before doing so and should take all possible steps to mitigate those risks, including those required under this Directive. Any person involved in an Indoor Religious Gathering should read and make themselves familiar with this Directive and related guidance from the San Francisco Department of Public Health.
- 1.3.*** All people are reminded that the risk involved in gathering involves not only personal risk but also an increased risk of community transmission of COVID-19 that may extend far beyond those who participate in a gathering.
- 1.4.*** Members of vulnerable populations (those over age 50 or with chronic medical conditions) are encouraged to carefully consider their increased risk of negative health outcomes from exposure to COVID-19 before determining whether to participate in an Indoor Religious Gathering. And Houses of Worship are strongly encouraged to prohibit members of vulnerable populations from attending Indoor Religious Gatherings and to continue supporting options for Participants to participate in services without engaging in in-person attendance.
- 1.5.*** Risk increases with frequency, duration and proximity of exposure. People are strongly discouraged from attending more than one Indoor Religious Gathering per week. The more contacts a person has with others, including during Indoor Religious Gatherings, the more they are placing themselves and others at risk of transmitting the virus.

Before entering the House of Worship all people must be screened for symptoms or close contacts as provided in Section 4.3 below and are prohibited from attending any Indoor



Religious Gathering if they feel ill or are experiencing any one of the following symptoms: fever, chills, repeated shaking or shivering, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, feeling unusually weak or fatigued, new loss of taste or smell, muscle pain, headache, runny or congested nose, or diarrhea.

2. Section 2 – Educating Personnel and Participants:

- 2.1. Ensure that all Personnel have reviewed and understand the requirements of the Social Distancing Protocol, this Directive, and the Health and Safety Plan.
- 2.2. Develop and implement a plan to educate Participants or others who may attend Indoor Religious Gatherings about the relevant requirements of the Social Distancing Protocol, this Directive, and the Health and Safety Plan. For example, a House of Worship may inform its congregation through a combination of emails, clear and conspicuous signage, or frequent public announcements.
- 2.3. Identify dedicated Personnel responsible for implementing all requirements of this Directive at a specific House of Worship. Identify dedicated Personnel to assist Participants in maintaining at least six feet physical distance, wearing Face Coverings, and otherwise complying with this Directive.
- 2.4. Prepare Personnel to respond to suspected or confirmed positive cases at the House of Worship in accordance with the Social Distancing Protocol. Guidance on responding to positive cases at your House of Worship can be found here under the tab for Businesses and Employers in the Information and Guidance for the Public section:
<https://www.sfcdep.org/infectious-diseases-a-to-z/coronavirus-2019-novel-coronavirus/>.

3. Section 3 – Making Indoor Spaces Safer:

- 3.1. If safe and feasible, make non-structural alterations to the physical indoor space to facilitate maximum social distancing (at least six feet of physical distance) between members of different Households by, for example, creating physical barriers, moving podiums, identifying dedicated paths of ingress and egress, prohibiting access to lobbies, meeting rooms or other common areas, moving or taping off seating, propping open doors at heavily used entry or exit points, closing every other parking space, and using signage or other indicators to control movement throughout the space and to remind people to avoid touching common surfaces like door handles. In bathrooms, maximize ventilation and minimize crowding and touching of common surfaces by, for example (and only when feasible), keeping doors propped open, closing every other sink, and posting signage establishing a maximum capacity for bathrooms with clearly marked and distanced queueing areas. Mark off space in seating, prayer or counseling areas to assist Participants in maintaining at least six feet of distance from members of other Households. Indicate walking paths between spaces designated for Participants to kneel so that people do not walk where someone may touch their head to the floor.
- 3.2. Conspicuously post signage around the House of Worship – including at all primary public entrances – reminding people to adhere to physical distancing, hygiene, and Face Covering Requirements and to stay at home when they feel ill. Posted signage must include a standalone sign bearing the message: that (1) COVID-19 is transmitted through the air and the risk is much higher indoors and (2) seniors and those with health risks should avoid indoor settings with crowds. Examples of signs can be found at <https://sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19>.



- 3.3.** Adequate ventilation is critical to reducing the risk of airborne transmission of the virus in indoor settings, and especially settings where people stay in the same room for a prolonged period. Go to <https://www.sfdcp.org/COVID-ventilation> to learn about how to improve airflow and reduce the risk of viral transmission. Make any necessary improvements to the ventilation of the establishment, including:
- 3.3.1.** Keeping doors and windows open, including while cleaning and disinfecting between gatherings, to increase the flow of outside air to the extent possible and appropriate given weather and air quality conditions.
 - 3.3.2.** Ensure HVAC systems and air exchangers are serviced and functioning properly. Ensure all air filters are achieving optimal performance and replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
 - 3.3.3.** If feasible, increase the percentage of outdoor air circulated through the HVAC system, disable demand-control ventilation controls that reduce air supply based on temperature or occupancy, and increase natural ventilation by opening outdoor-facing windows and doors when environmental conditions and building requirements allow.
 - 3.3.4.** Consider installing portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) cleaners, upgrading the building's air filters to the highest efficiency possible, running the building ventilation system even when unoccupied to maximize ventilation, and making other modifications to increase the quantity of outside air and ventilation in all working areas.
 - 3.3.5.** If the House of Worship uses pedestal fans or hard mounted fans, adjust the direction of fans to minimize air from fans blowing from one person towards another. If fans are disabled or removed, employers should remain aware of possible heat hazards and take steps to mitigate them.
- 3.4.** Discontinue use of high touch water vessels, fonts, fountains, and sinks. When ceremonial or ritualistic use of water is required, use low-touch or single-use alternatives or empty and disinfect vessels before they are used by people from different households or living units. If feasible, consider conducting necessary washing at home or otherwise before arriving at a House of Worship.
- 3.5.** Increase availability of hand sanitizer or hand washing stations around the House of Worship, including at entrances and exits. Ensure that restrooms are adequately stocked with soap and paper towels. Maintain adequate amounts of disinfectant and cleaning supplies, Face Coverings, or other appropriate personal protective equipment for Personnel.
- 3.6.** Develop and implement a plan to frequently clean and disinfect common use areas and surfaces touched by members of more than one Household in accordance with the Social Distancing Protocol.
- 3.6.1.** Disinfect all surfaces attendees touch at the gathering, including, but not limited to, seating areas, railings, prayer books and hymnals, ceremonial objects, microphones, podiums, pulpits, music stands, and door surfaces. If pews, chairs, or pillows used for sitting are of a porous material, use and replace disposable or washable coverings between each Participant when possible. If cleaning high



touch surfaces on or near the floor, avoid sweeping or vacuuming while others are present. Whenever possible, use a vacuum with a HEPA filter. If sweeping is necessary, gently sweep floors to prevent spreading pathogens. Personnel responsible for cleaning must wear a Face Covering at all times. Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces within restrooms regularly throughout the working day.

- 3.6.2.** Disinfecting products must be approved for use against COVID-19 on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – approved list available at: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>).

4. Section 4 – Managing Risk During Indoor Religious Gatherings:

- 4.1.** Strictly limit attendance at Indoor Religious Gatherings to 25% of the capacity of the building or 100 people, whichever is less. Capacity limits include Personnel or other volunteers participating in the Indoor Religious Gathering. The capacity limits apply to discrete rooms or spaces within a House of Worship. For example, if a House of Worship includes a building with a capacity of 400 people, but holds services in a room with an individual capacity of 100 people, the service must be limited to 25 people or fewer (25% of the smaller room’s capacity).
- 4.1.1.** Conspicuously post signage stating the maximum capacity of the space and the maximum capacity currently permitted under the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order. Consider implementing a reservation system to ensure capacity limits are met. Houses of Worship are strongly encouraged to minimize the number of people engaged in an Indoor Religious Gathering.
- 4.1.2.** Encourage Participants to meet with the same group of people at each gathering, particularly if a service meets frequently or requires a minimum number of people to be present.
- 4.1.3.** Simultaneous or overlapping Indoor Religious Gatherings are permitted only under the following circumstances: (1) the gatherings must occur in spaces that are completely physically separated from each other either in distinct rooms separated by sealed floor-to-ceiling walls or in separate buildings; (2) each distinct gathering meets all ventilation requirements of this Directive; (3) Participants at one gathering have completely separate avenues of ingress and egress from the House or Worship or, if a common path of ingress or egress must be used, the House of Worship ensures (such as by creating staggered start times for services) that Participants from different gatherings do not enter or exit the House of Worship at the same time; and (4) before hosting any simultaneous or overlapping gatherings, a House of Worship must develop and maintain a written plan detailing compliance with this subsection.
- 4.1.3.1.** Houses of Worship may not combine groups in different rooms or spaces for a single ceremony or purpose. All Participants in an Indoor Religious Gathering must use the same room or space to attend the same gathering. For example, a House of Worship may not host a single wedding ceremony where some Participants are seated in one indoor room and some are seated in another indoor room or outdoor space.



- 4.1.4.** The capacity limits for Indoor Religious Gatherings apply to religious or cultural ceremonies themselves, and not to any reception or similar gathering before or after. Indoor receptions and similar gatherings are not permitted at this time. Any outdoor reception or gathering is subject to rules governing outdoor gatherings including Health Officer Directive 2020-19c found at www.sfdph.org/directives.
- 4.2.** Unless otherwise specifically provided in this Directive, strictly follow and enforce all applicable requirements of Health Officer Order C19-07j (the “Stay-Safer-At-Home Order”) and the Face Covering requirements of Health Officer Order C19-12c (the “Face Covering Order”) as they may be amended. Strictly follow and enforce all requirements of this Directive at all times and prohibit all people who fail to comply with this Directive from entering the House of Worship.
- 4.3.** Screen all Participants and Personnel on a daily basis using the standard screening questions attached to the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order as Appendix A and **Attachments A-1 and A-2** (the “Screening Handouts”). Screening must occur before people enter the House of Worship to attend an Indoor Religious Gathering. A copy of the applicable Screening Handout must be provided to anyone on request, although a poster or other large-format version of the Screening Handouts may be used to review the questions with people verbally. Any person who answers “yes” to any screening question is at risk of having the SARS-CoV-2 virus, must be prohibited from attending the Indoor Religious Gathering, and should be referred for appropriate support as outlined on the Screening Handouts. Houses of Worship can use the guidance available online at <https://www.sfdcp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID19-Screening-Questions-UPDATE-05.26.2020.pdf> for determining how best to conduct screening.
- 4.4.** Houses of Worship must be prepared to assist public health authorities in potential contact tracing efforts. Consider maintaining a list of Participants willing to voluntarily provide their name for contact tracing purposes. Any lists should be discarded after three weeks. If a Participant tests positive for COVID-19, the House of Worship must assist the Department of Public Health to identify other Participants who may have been exposed to help prevent further spread of COVID-19.
- 4.5.** Ensure that members of different Households remain at least six feet apart at all times during the Indoor Religious Gathering, except for seniors or people with disabilities who may be seated with their caregiver.
- 4.5.1.** Members of different Households may briefly be closer than six feet from a House of Worship’s Personnel if the following conditions are met: (1) After carefully considering all possible alternatives, a Leader determines that a specific ritual or custom requires a Participant be closer than six feet from Personnel, (2) all people involved in the ritual or custom wear Face Coverings at all times they are within six feet of each other, and (3) the duration of the ritual or custom is as short as possible.
- 4.6.** Consistent with the State’s health guidance, singing and chanting activities are not permitted during an Indoor Religious Gathering at this time. Even while wearing a Face Covering, these activities – in particular singing – greatly increase the distribution of contaminated exhalations which increases the potential for broad transmission of the virus.



of the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order and Health Officer Directive 2020-18. Only Leaders and any other Personnel necessary for allowed operations who cannot work remotely can use the accessory office space. Personnel who can work remotely are required to do so.

- 4.13.** All Indoor Religious Gatherings must be scheduled to conclude in no more than two hours. The duration of all gatherings should be limited to the maximum extent possible.
- 4.14.** Houses of Worship must prohibit any gathering or congregating after services are complete. Houses of Worship are encouraged to facilitate organized ingress and egress that minimizes grouping or queueing such as by having those seated in the back row exit the building first at the end of a service.
- 4.15.** Schedule at least 30 minutes between Indoor Religious Gatherings during which Participants may safely exit and clear the area and House of Worship Personnel may adequately clean and sanitize all high touch surfaces and otherwise prepare the space for the next gathering. Houses of Worship may permit Personnel to participate in sequential Indoor Religious Gatherings during a single day but are reminded of the increased potential to transmit the virus from one gathering to another. Personnel participating in sequential Indoor Religious Gatherings must thoroughly wash hands and clean, sanitize, or replace any items or clothing that have come in contact with Participants or different House of Worship Personnel during earlier gatherings.
- 4.16.** Keep other areas of a House of Worship closed unless otherwise expressly permitted to operate under the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order. Facilities such as day care centers, schools, kitchens, food service areas, gymnasiums or indoor athletic facilities, and children's play structures and areas are not permitted to operate unless in compliance with the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order and any applicable Health Officer orders or directives.
- 4.17.** This Directive establishes minimum best practices applicable generally to all Houses of Worship. Houses of Worship are encouraged to apply the concepts and spirit of this Directive to modify their rituals in a collective effort to mitigate the risk of transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19. Examples include discontinuing kissing of ritual objects, allowing rites to be performed by fewer people, discontinuing the use of a common cup, offering communion in the hand instead of on the tongue, or providing pre-packed communion items on chairs prior to service. Houses of Worship also must implement and enforce any additional or more restrictive guidance regarding religious gatherings provided by the Centers for Disease Control or the California Department of Public Health found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>; and <https://covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-places-of-worship.pdf>.

Nothing in this Section allows a House of Worship to replace, supplement, or change any restriction in the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order, this Directive, or any local, state, or federal health order or guidance related to COVID-19 with a less restrictive measure. For clarity, all Houses of Worship must strictly implement every measure in this Directive and should only supplement new or different safety measures to the extent they are more restrictive (i.e., more protective of public health) than any local, state, or federal health order or guidance related to COVID-19.

Health Officer Directive No. 2020-34 (Exhibit B) Health and Safety Plan (issued 9/30/2020)

Each House of Worship must complete, post onsite, and follow this Health and Safety Plan.

Check off all items below that apply and list other required information.

Business/Entity name:

Contact name:

Entity Address:

Contact telephone:

(You may contact the person listed above with any questions or comments about this plan.)

- House of Worship is familiar with and complies with all requirements set forth in Health Officer Directive No. 2020-34, available at <http://www.sfdph.org/directives> and the Social Distancing Protocol available at <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/C19-071-Appendix-A.pdf>.
- House of Worship has prepared the facility for an Indoor Religious Gathering to ensure adequate physical distancing between and among Personnel and Participants. For example, House of Worship made a plan for Participants to get in and out of the outdoor space safely while maintaining social distancing, added physical markings to demonstrate a 6-foot distance in areas Participants may be seated or congregating and, created a reservation system to manage Participant arrival and departure times.
- House of Worship has placed signage throughout the facility reminding Personnel and Participants of their obligations to wear Face Coverings, maintain physical distance, and engage in proper personal hygiene.
- Personnel have been trained in the requirements of the Social Distancing Protocol and this Directive including obligations to screen themselves and Participants, maintain enhanced sanitation measures, and enforce the physical distancing and Face Covering requirements of the Directive.
- House of Worship has created and implemented a plan for cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces such as seating, doors, and other common high-touch surfaces or objects before each gathering or after each use.
- House of Worship has implemented all feasible HVAC and ventilation practices identified in the Directive.
- Gatherings are limited to the lesser of 25% of room capacity or 100 total people, scheduled to last 2 hours or less, and kept as short as possible.
- Six feet of physical distance is maintained between people from different Households. Everyone wears a Face Covering unless eating or drinking or otherwise exempt.
- Singing, chanting, and shouting are not permitted during the Indoor Religious Gatherings. Houses of Worship must not encourage Participants to sing, chant, or shout during the Indoor Religious Gathering.
- Participants are not permitted to congregate before or after Indoor Religious Gatherings.

HSP

Health and Safety
Plan

Checklist

Health Officer Directive No. 2020-34 (Exhibit B) Health and Safety Plan (issued 9/30/2020)

- If House of Worship Personnel are taking part in sequential gatherings, there is sufficient time between gatherings to engage in proper sanitation and disinfection procedures. If hosting simultaneous or overlapping services, the House of Worship developed and maintained a written plan in accordance with section 4.1.3 of the Directive.

Additional Measures

Explain:



Tips and Frequently Asked Questions for Gatherings

UPDATED September 30, 2020

This document was updated from September 17, 2020, to reflect expanded authorizations for outdoor and indoor gatherings.

AUDIENCE: Hosts and Participants in different types of gatherings involving people from more than one household.

BACKGROUND: As of Sept 30, 2020, [Health Officer Directives 2020-19c and 2020-34](#) authorize and provide updated guidance for Gatherings. This document summarizes tips and frequently asked questions about how to participate in these types of gatherings during COVID-19. Additional guidance can be found in the Directives (www.sfdph.org/directives) and documents located at www.sfdcp.org/covid19.

Overview of Types of Gatherings

GATHERING TYPE		DESCRIPTION OF GATHERING	NUMBER OF PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT HOUSEHOLDS
<i>Outdoor</i>	Outdoor Meal Gatherings	Eating or drinking	6
	Outdoor Special Gatherings	Religious services or ceremonies, political protests	200
	Small Outdoor Gathering	All other types (e.g. reception, fitness, gathering at a park, any hosted tours)	12
	Drive-in Gatherings	In vehicles (e.g. for movie) (see Directive)	100 (vehicles)
<i>Indoor</i>	Indoor Religious and Cultural Ceremonial Gatherings	Indoor religious and cultural ceremonies (see Health Directive No. 2020-34), including wedding ceremonies and funerals (but not receptions)	25% of capacity or 100, whichever is fewer



Frequently Asked Questions

How can I keep a Gathering as safe as possible?

- Keep your gathering under 2 hours; the shorter it is, the safer it is.
- Don't attend if you are or a family member is feeling ill or experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms (see www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/covid-screening.pdf).
- Consider staying home if you are a member of a vulnerable population, e.g. those over age 50 or with chronic medical conditions (see www.sfcdcp.org/vulnerable).
- Bring items such as masks, hand sanitizers, and your own water bottles.
- Wear a face covering or mask at all times, unless you are specifically exempted per [Health Order C19-12](#).
- Avoid high risk activities that expel more air and thus increases COVID-19 transmission such as singing, chanting, shouting, and playing wind or brass instruments. See more under "How can singing, chanting, shouting, and playing wind/brass instruments be done more safely?"
- Do not do any activities or sports that don't allow physical distancing. Sports with shared equipment are only allowed among members of up to 2 households.
- Flu vaccines are critical in the fight against COVID-19 by (1) keeping workers and communities healthy and (2) reducing strain on our healthcare and testing systems that are responding to COVID-19. **Strongly encourage all personnel to get a flu shot.** Post signage to encourage flu vaccine among customers, visitors, etc.

What do I need to do as a Host business or organization?

- Complete, maintain, and implement the following documents for your Gathering:
 - The relevant [Health and Safety Plan](#) for the type of gathering (see www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus-health-directives.asp to find the correct link for your gathering), including, among other requirements, COVID-19 screening for all [Personnel](#) (www.sfcdcp.org/screening-handout) and [Participants](#) (www.sfcdcp.org/screeningvisitors). This must be provided to Host Personnel, available to Participants, and posted at the physical entrance where the Host operates.
 - A [SFDPH Social Distancing Protocol](#) that includes, among other requirements, a plan to clean and disinfect high touch surfaces such as seating, doors, and others before each Gathering (see [SFDPH Cleaning/Disinfection Guidance](#), posted at www.sfcdcp.org/covidcleaning).
- **Indoor Religious/Cultural Gatherings** are required to post [SFDPH Approved Signage](#), including standalone signage stating:
 - That COVID-19 is transmitted through the air and that indoor settings carry a much higher risk of infection.
 - That seniors and those with health risks should avoid indoor settings with crowds.
 - The maximum capacity of the space and the maximum capacity currently permitted under the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order.
- Hosts are responsible for assisting public health authorities in contact tracing efforts in case an attendee develops COVID-19 and there is a need to conduct contact tracing.
 - Consider keeping a list of Personnel and Participants willing to voluntarily provide their names for three weeks after an event. Any lists should be discarded after three weeks.
 - Try to maintain an up-to-date email or contact list to alert attendees in the event of potential exposure.
- Keep the Gathering as short as possible to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Follow SFDPH's guidelines on "[COVID-19 Positive At Workplace](#)" if someone at your gathering tests positive for COVID-19.



Indoor gatherings are more risky than outdoor gatherings. How do we make these as safe as possible?

- Observe the applicable measures laid out in “How can I keep a Gathering as safe as possible?”
- Personnel and participants should be aware of this heightened risk of indoor gatherings and decide if they can safely attend based on how much risk they want to tolerate.
- Consider making alternations to facilitate social distancing between members of different households such as, moving podiums, creating physical barriers, taping off or moving seating, identifying entrance and exits, prohibiting access to common areas (if possible).
- Maximize ventilation and minimize crowding and touching of high touch surfaces such as keeping bathroom doors propped open, posting social distancing signage.
- Indicate walking paths between spaces designated for prayers to kneel so that people do not walk where someone may touch their head to the floor.
- Increase availability of hand sanitizer or hand washing stations, including at entrances and exits.
- Discontinue use of high touch water vessels, fonts, fountain, and sinks.
- Regularly clean and disinfect common and high touch areas, including bathrooms.
- Consistent with the State’s health guidance, singing and chanting activities are **not permitted** during any Indoor Gathering at this time. Even while wearing a face covering, these activities – in particular singing – greatly increase the risk of infection with COVID-19.
- Food and drink may not be served at an Indoor Gathering. If eating or drinking is required for a faith-based ceremony, see “Can we eat or drink at Gatherings?” below for more details.

Can we host multiple gatherings one after another or at the same time?

- A Host may allow Personnel to participate in sequential gatherings in the same day. If Hosting sequential gatherings, the Host must also:
 - Ensure at least 30 minutes between gatherings for Participants to leave and Personnel to clean and sanitize all high-touch areas.
 - Ensure Personnel thoroughly wash hands and clean, sanitize, or replace any items or clothing that became soiled or contaminated with secretions or bodily fluids from Participants or different Host Personnel during earlier gatherings.
- Hosts can hold only **one** gathering at a time, unless this event is an **Outdoor Meal Gathering** or a **Small Outdoor Gathering** (but not Drive-In or Outdoor Special Gatherings) and the Host can ensure the following rules are followed:
 - The Host must ensure the gatherings will remain separate, such as by placing physical barriers between the gatherings:
 - If a physical barrier is used to keep groups separate, groups must be at least six feet apart. If there is no physical barrier, groups must be at least 12 feet apart.
 - If the gathering occurs on a moving vehicle (such as a bus or a boat) where a physical barrier between groups is not possible, at least six feet must be maintained between groups.
 - The Host must prohibit mingling among personnel or participants from different gatherings or groups.
 - Hosts of fitness classes may hold two simultaneous classes (with 12 people total in each class, including instructors) if either physical barriers ensure 6-foot separation between the groups or markings / other device are used to ensure 12-foot separation between the groups.
- Hosts may **not** hold both indoor and outdoor gatherings simultaneously to allow for more people to attend a gathering (e.g. indoor and outdoor wedding or funeral).



Can we have multiple indoor Gatherings at the same time in a large facility?

- Simultaneous or overlapping Gatherings may be allowed in a multi-use facility only under the following circumstances:
 - Gatherings must occur in spaces that are physically separated from each other either in different rooms separated by sealed floor-to-ceiling walls or in a separate building.
 - Each room must meet all ventilation requirements of the Directive.
 - Participants from different gatherings should use separate avenues of entrances and exits; if only one shared entrance and exit exist, the Host must ensure participants from different gatherings do not enter or exit at the same time.
 - Hosts may **not** hold gatherings simultaneously to allow for more people to attend a single gathering or ceremony (e.g. multiple indoor rooms or a mix of indoor and outdoor spaces may not be used for the same wedding or funeral).
- Schedule at least 30 minutes between indoor gatherings to allow sufficient time for participants to exit safely and for personnel to clean/sanitize high touch areas.
- Staff may be allowed to work inside the facility while multiple indoor Gatherings occur as long as the rules are followed for [the Business Operating Office Facilities Directive](#) and Stay-Safer-At-Home Order
 - In general, keep the areas that are not reserved for an indoor gathering closed unless expressly permitted under the Stay-Safer-At-Home Order.

Can we eat or drink at Gatherings?

- Eating and drinking is permitted at **Outdoor Meal Gatherings** which are limited to 6 people from different households.
- 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, it must be done in a way to minimize contact between people, especially involving the hands and mouth. In these circumstances, face coverings must be worn when Personnel and/or Participants are within 6 feet of one another. As an example, communion rituals could have the priest and participants masked at all times, with the participants receiving communion in the hand and moving away from others to briefly lower their mask to place the sacramental bread on the tongue (see example video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8tg8A5jmPO).
- Glasses, cups and utensils should not be shared. If they are, glass, cup, or utensil will be disinfected between each use and the users' hands will be cleaned using appropriate hand washing or hand sanitizer.

Must we wear masks/ face coverings all the time?

- All people must wear masks except as specified in the Face Covering Order.
- Proper use of face coverings is even more critical when in higher risk gatherings, such as indoors.
- Face coverings may be removed briefly while eating or drinking, however proper social distancing should be maintained. If removing face coverings/masks is deemed as essential in a ritual or ceremony, a person may briefly remove their face covering only if they (1) maintain social distance and do not speak, recite, chant, shout or sing; or (2) isolate themselves from all other people to speak or recite, such as by speaking inside an enclosed chamber or behind a plastic or glass partition or face shield no more than 12 inches from the mouth of the speaker and greater than 12 feet away from others.



What about camping, cookouts, or BBQs?

- Arrive with your own supplies including soap, disinfectants, hand sanitizer, paper towels, etc.
- Do not share BBQs or outdoor grilling stations with people outside of your household. Clean all stations frequently.
- If camping with someone from outside your household, consider self-isolating for 14 days before and after if you will be in close contact to minimize the risk of transmission.
- “Close contact” is defined by the CDC as being within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 2 days before the illness starts (for people without symptoms, this means 2 days before they were tested; www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/appendix.html#contact).

How can singing, chanting, shouting, and playing wind/brass instruments be done more safely?

- Singing, chanting, shouting, and playing wind/brass instruments raise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 because of the forceful exhalation involved and should be avoided. Ideally, play a recording to avoid live performance.
- These activities are permitted at an **Outdoor Special Gathering** by one person at a time and only if:
 - The person performing the activity is at least **12 feet** from any other person.
 - The person singing, chanting, or shouting is wearing a **Face Covering** at all times.
 - The instrument’s bells and/or openings where air/sound exit are covered with a mask/other fabric at all times.
 - Participants may not sing, chant, or shout along with the person who is engaging in that activity.
- When these activities are permitted, consider the following to reduce risk:
 - Ensure the performance is in a large, well ventilated area (see www.sfcddcp.org/COVID-ventilation).
 - Minimize the amount of time engaged in these activities.
 - Minimize the intensity to the extent possible (e.g., sing/play instruments at a reduced volume, use amplifiers, etc.).
 - Consider having a physical barrier between the performer and others in the Outdoor Special Gathering.
 - Project voices and air exhaust from instruments away from Participants (e.g. have performers position themselves in silhouette).
 - Encourage performers to get tested for COVID-19 as close to the performance date as possible, accounting for the turnaround time for the test (which is typically about 2 days but can be longer). People can get tested by their regular healthcare provider or at CityTestSF (<https://sf.gov/citytestsf>).
 - Prohibit anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 or anyone who is a “Close Contact” of someone with COVID-19 from performing these activities. See www.sfcddcp.org/screeningvisitors.
 - For wind instruments:
 - Performers must be masked at all times as much as possible when not performing.
 - Instruments must not be shared among individuals of different households.
 - If relevant to the instrument, performers should use a large, thin, plastic-lined pad on their chest and lap to collect spit.



Can ventilation reduce COVID-19 transmission risks for indoor activities?

- Hosts should follow **SFDPH Ventilation Guidance** for any indoor activities: Make any necessary improvements to the ventilation of the establishment, including:
 - HVAC systems (if one is present)
 - Ensure HVAC systems are serviced and functioning properly.
 - Evaluate possibilities for upgrading air filters to the highest efficiency possible.
 - Increase the percentage of outdoor air through the HVAC system, readjusting or overriding recirculation (“economizer”) dampers.
 - Disable demand-control ventilation controls that reduce air supply based on temperature or occupancy
 - Evaluate running the building ventilation system even when the building is unoccupied to maximize ventilation. At the minimum, reset timer-operated ventilation systems so that they start operating 1-2 hours before the building opens and 2-3 hours after the building is closed.
 - Increase natural ventilation by opening windows and doors when environmental conditions and building requirements allow.
 - Consider installing portable air cleaners (“HEPA filters”).
 - If the establishment uses pedestal fans or hard mounted fans, adjust the direction of fans to minimize air blowing from one individual’s space to another’s space.
 - For more information and additional resources, please see the following: San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH): www.sfcddp.org/COVID-ventilation.

Resources

Useful COVID-19 Resources to keep checking:

- San Francisco guidance: www.sfcddp.org/covid19
- San Francisco Health Officer orders: www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus-healthorders.asp
- Printable resources such as signage: <https://sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19>
- California guidance:
 - <https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/>
 - <https://files.covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-places-of-worship.pdf>
- CDC guidance: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/index.html