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In-Person Ministry Protocols

Office of Religious Education
Archdiocese of Los Angeles



Revised March 16, 2021

Protocols for Religious Instruction

As ministers, we have been navigating together the different challenges that the pandemic has brought to our diverse ministries. We have also grown in our creativity in reaching out to the people whom God has entrusted to us. Public health conditions continue to improve across the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, which means we will now face a different set of challenges as we transition to in-person activities. The Office of Religious Education continues to recommend virtual gatherings for religious education. At the same time, we are aware that some parishes would like to begin to have in person gatherings. As we gradually start to spread our wings and ourselves once again in the exercise of our ministries, we have prepared the following protocols for Religious Instruction.

These protocols are valid until further notice and are in accordance with the directions received through local county health department guidelines. Always refer to the county/city in which your parish resides for the most up to date regulations. All ministries are at risk for complete closure of the parish facility if these guidelines are not followed.

For whom are these Protocols intended?

- Directors of Religious Education (DREs)
- Parish Catechetical Leaders (PCLs)
- Catechists
- Volunteers
- Participants (students, children, minors) and parents

Religious instruction in Los Angeles County must follow all the protocols of the **Los Angeles County Health Officer Orders (Order) for Places of Worship** which should already be posted at all parishes. Parishes in the Counties of Ventura and Santa Barbara and the cities of Long Beach and Pasadena should check their respective Health Department websites for guidance and updates. Los Angeles Public Health recommends that Religious Instruction (**FAQ Religious Instruction**) be held outdoors or virtually to the extent practicable. Regardless of the location, all social (physical) distancing, face masking, sanitizing and other safety modification requirements must be followed.

Outdoor Religious Instruction

- Religious instruction may be held outdoors with no limitation on the number of participants provided that the outdoor space is large enough to accommodate all social distancing requirements.
- Singing, chanting and shouting are not permitted.
- Appropriate cleaning and sanitizing should be implemented between groups.

Indoor Religious Instruction

- Places of Worship may hold Religious Instruction indoors at 25% maximum capacity of the church, hall, room or other facility based upon the applicable Building or Fire Code limitations, not to exceed what can be done while maintaining at least six feet between all persons not residing in the same household.
 - Consult with your Pastor and Catholic School Principal to determine if school buildings and/or classrooms will be available, and if so, what on-site restrictions, procedures and responsibilities for cleaning and sanitizing protocols will be required.
- Students should be grouped in the same space and in stable groups (cohorts) as small and as consistent as possible, always keeping six feet in social distancing. Students should be grouped with the same instructors. To the extent practicable, keep students from the same household in the same Religious Instruction group. The student cohort size may be up to (depending on chosen location capacity) 14 students with up to 2 stable instructors. These group cohorts should remain stable to reduce close contact between students and instructors from other groups. Students should not transfer to another group. An instructor should not be assigned to more than two different stable groups of students.

- Singing, chanting, shouting and physical exertion significantly increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission because these activities increase the release of respiratory droplets into the air. Per the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), activities such as singing, and chanting negate the risk reduction achieved through six feet of physical distancing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends organizations consider suspending singing, chanting, and shouting, especially when indoors. At this time, singing, chanting, and shouting are not permitted indoors or outdoors during religious instruction.
- There are steps that providers of Religious Instruction should take to reduce the risk of instructors or students getting sick or infecting others with COVID-19.

All participants should:

- Wear a cloth face covering whenever outside of their home and around non-household members (people who do not live with them).
- Practice social or physical distancing . Keep at least 6 feet apart from everyone else.
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact, like sharing cups or utensils, toys, or sports equipment (unless it has been disinfected before sharing).
- Avoid or clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces often using a regular household cleaning product.
- Cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If no tissue is available, use your elbow (not your hands).
- Increase ventilation - go outside or open windows if it is safe to do so.
- Stay home if you are sick.

Food and Snacks

No sharing of food or beverages is permitted. Participants are not allowed to eat or drink on the premises before, during or after religious instruction.

Archdiocesan Contacts

If you have questions about COVID related issues, please contact:

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PLEASE NOTE: These protocols are subject to change in accordance with federal, state, and local orders and regulations.