

COVID-19 Protocols for All Parish Faith Formation/Religious Education Programs

Office of Religious Education
Archdiocese of Los Angeles

Revised October 11, 2021



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COVID-19 Protocols for all Parish Faith Formation/ Religious Education Programs

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles (ADLA) follows the COVID-19 (corona virus) guidance and reporting of Federal, State, County and City health directives, which are constantly changing as health experts learn more about the virus.

These protocols are subject to change.

Last revised: 10/11/2021

Who are these protocols for?

In the face of the coronavirus pandemic, we have adapted how we live our daily lives, as well as the ways we worship as a Church. Our priority is to care for and protect one another. These protocols apply to all faith formation ministries in a Parish. These include but are not limited to: religious education, youth ministry, young adult ministry, family ministry, any faith formation for adults, bible studies, etc.

1. What is REQUIRED

- For in-person ministry, **everyone** (participants,¹ catechists, parents, volunteers, visitors, etc.), regardless of vaccination status, **must wear a face covering while indoors**. While it is not required to wear a face covering outdoors, it is recommended to continue wearing one especially if one is not able to keep a distance from others in a crowd.
 - Face covering means a surgical mask, a medical procedure mask, a respirator (N95 or similar) or a tightly woven fabric or non-woven material of at least two layers

¹Participant: all children, teens, adults that participate in any faith formation ministry in the parish.

- A face covering does not include a scarf, ski mask, balaclava, bandana, turtleneck, collar, or a single layer of fabric
- Masks should be worn over both the nose and mouth
- Provide signage to remind volunteers, participants, and visitors of the proper use of face masks.
- For in-person ministry, everyone (participants, catechists, parents, volunteers, visitors, etc.) should be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 before entering the premises. Screening must be done on site or remotely.
 - Sample screening sign in sheet may be used for on site screening. For remote screening you are able to use Google Forms, Microsoft Office Forms, or apps like MyMedBot.
 - Parishes should post signage in a highly visible place reminding everyone to not enter the premises if they have symptoms of COVID-19.
 - Screening records must be kept by the parish should contact tracing be needed or in case of an outbreak.
 - Temperature checking is optional but is a good practice.

1.1 Reporting a COVID case

Should a Parish/PCL² learn that a participant or volunteer who was attending an in-person session tested positive for COVID-19, the Parish/PCL or the person in charge must:

- 1. Report this to the ADLA COVID Response Team using the online form “LA Archdiocese COVID-19 REPORT FORM Protocols in the Event of a Confirmed Case of COVID-19.”**

[Click here to complete the Report Form](#)

- **The report needs to be submitted the same day the Parish/PCL/person in charge learns of the positive case.**
- **Must notify the Pastor.**

²PCL is a Parish Catechetical Leaders, such as Directors of Religious Education, Youth Ministry Coordinators, Confirmation Coordinators, Adult Faith Formation Coordinators, RCIA Coordinators, Family Ministry Coordinators

2. The COVID response team will contact the person filling out the form to discuss the case and to provide additional guidance and answer questions.

The Parish/PCL should be prepared to do contact tracing to find out who was in close contact³ with the infected person during the infected person's infectious period; close contacts should be notified. Quarantine protocols will depend on a number of factors (those who are vaccinated against COVID-19 do not need to quarantine). Again, it is important that the Parish/PCL wait for instructions from the Archdiocesan COVID team.

Quarantine protocols set by your county's public health department can change quickly. If you wish to learn about the current instructions from county officials check the links below:

[Los Angeles County](#)

[City of Long Beach](#)

[Santa Barbara County](#)

[City of Pasadena](#)

[Ventura County](#)

Parishes/PCLs must have a plan in place should participants need to be quarantined.

If employees are present at the worksite when the infected person was present, Parishes/PCL's must provide Notice of Potential Exposure to COVID-19 to all employees who were present. See [Archdiocesan Administrative Handbook, Chapter 8, Section 8.12.2](#) for further instructions.

³Close contact: refers to being less than 6 feet away from the infected person for 15 minutes or more.

2. Best Practices

2.1 Faith Formation / Religious Education Sessions:

- Social distancing of 3 feet (minimum) to 6 feet (optimal) between individual participants, volunteers and family units is recommended.
 - When possible, utilize assigned seating charts to keep track of where participants are sitting and next to whom they are sitting, for contact tracing.
 - Whenever possible keep participants in consistent small groups. Keep record of small groups for each session. This will assist should contact tracing be necessary.
- Whenever possible do activities like games and icebreakers outdoors to help minimize exposure.
- Have disposable masks available for participants
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers in the rooms for participants
- Provide good ventilation in the rooms where faith formation sessions are taking place by opening windows, keeping doors open, etc.
 - Consider using outdoor spaces, weather permitting, for faith formation sessions
- The Parish/PCL should stress the importance that children stay home if they are sick or have COVID symptoms.
- Supplies (such as pencils, markers, crayons, etc. and textbooks)
 - whenever possible participants can be provided with their own set of supplies (stored in individual boxes/bags) or participants may bring their own supplies from home. If possible, each participant should have their own textbook, which is not shared with others.
 - If individual supplies are not available for each participant build in time to wash hands before and after using shared materials
 - If individual supplies are not available for each participant build in time to disinfect the items after being used. Keep un-sanitized items separate from sanitized items.

2.2 Faith Formation Catechists and Volunteers

The Office of Religious Education *strongly recommends* that all eligible PCLs, Catechists, and Faith Formation volunteers be vaccinated against COVID-19.

- Volunteers are subject to screening and should be told not to come to the parish if sick or if they have been exposed to a person who has COVID-19.
- Volunteers will check-in by signing the “Sign in sheet for employees and visitors” before beginning their ministry tasks. [Sign-in sheets can be found here.](#)
- The parish or PCL may not disclose the vaccination status of their volunteers to others without their permission
- If the PCL is collecting copies of volunteers’ vaccination cards, these must be kept in a secure and confidential place.

2.3 Cleaning

- If the parish has a school and any faith formation ministry is using their facilities, the parish school’s cleaning procedures should be followed.
- For other parish facilities, Faith Formation teams should clean the rooms, high touch surfaces, and furniture (such as tables and chairs), following the instructions of the cleaning products used.
 - Cleaning products should be supplied by the parish or the Faith Formation program

3. Overnight Retreats

- If planning an overnight retreat for minors please follow [Reopening Protocol for Overnight Organized/Children's Camps: Appendix K-1](#)
 - If the retreat center you want to use doesn't have sufficient protocols to keep participants safe please make sure to find a location that does have appropriate protocols in place.
- Screening applies for everyone attending any retreat experience
- In the event that someone presents symptoms while on retreat have a plan prepared:
 - Ensure you have space to isolate the person
 - Ensure you have appropriate PPE on hand should it be needed
- Make sure emergency contacts for each participant are readily available should someone have to be picked up due to symptoms
- Provide as much detail to parents/participants to help answer/ease their concerns/questions
- When planning overnight retreat for adults consult the facilities and make sure they have appropriate protocols in place
- Have other options for those participants who are not able to participate in an overnight retreat

4. Transportation

- If transport vehicles (e.g.) buses are used, drivers, volunteers and all participants should practice all safety actions and protocols
 - Masks are required to be worn
 - Create physical distance between attendees on buses or transportation
 - Keep all windows open as much as possible to maintain good ventilation. Avoid recirculating air options while there are passengers in the vehicle; use the car's vents to bring in fresh outside air
 - Attendees who live in the same household may be seated together
 - Keep a record of seating arrangement on buses
 - Avoid snacks during transit

5. Other Information

- Food can be provided within a faith formation setting; however, if a buffet style is used, assign designated food servers. The servers must wear gloves and masks. Keep food covered when not being served.
- We strongly recommend PCLs and other Faith Formation leaders read through the [ADLA Handbook section 8.12.2 “COVID Guidance and Reporting”](#) and regularly check the Archdiocese’s webpage lacatholics.org/emergency for updates.

If you would like to help your community by providing access to the COVID-19 vaccine, please contact Isaac Cuevas (ICuevas@la-archdiocese.org) who may be able to assist your community in arranging a vaccine clinic.

6. Resources

- [ADLA Administrative Handbook 8.12.2 “COVID-19 Guidance and Reporting”](#)
- [Archdiocese COVID Reporting Form](#)
- [Volunteer Sign-in sheet](#)

COVID Testing Sites

- [California](#)
- LA County: <https://covid19.lacounty.gov/testing/>
- Santa Barbara County: <https://publichealthsb.org/testing/>
- Ventura County:
<https://www.venturacountyrecovers.org/coronavirus-testing/>

COVID Vaccine Clinics

- CDC (National): <https://www.vaccines.gov/>
- State of California: <https://myturn.ca.gov/>

7. Archdiocesan Contacts

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