

# Religious and Faith-based Organizations COVID-19 Requirements

## Summary of May 13, 2021 update:

- Adds option for 12-15-year-olds to show proof of vaccination.
- Increases the age of the testing exemption to 5-year-olds for children sitting in vaccinated-only sections.
- Removes the requirement for vaccinated individuals in vaccinated sections to wear facial coverings.
- Permits vaccinated individuals to sing and perform on woodwind and brass instruments without facial coverings.

## Summary of May 3, 2021 update:

Permits organizations to have vaccinated-only sections during services in Phases 2 and 3.

## Summary of March 23, 2021 update:

- Introduces Phase 3 requirements, which permits:
  - Up to 50% of room (or building) capacity with a recommended maximum of 400 people if the space is less than 100,000 square feet and 600 people if the space is more than 100,000 square feet.
  - A maximum of 15 individuals to be seated together.
  - Choirs and congregations to sing indoors without size limitations.
- Requires woodwind and brass musicians to wear masks per the “Theater and Performing Arts” guidance.

With continuing reports of COVID-19 outbreaks at spiritual gatherings, the Governor still strongly encourages religious leaders and communities to conduct services remotely. Alternatively, drive-in services are permitted. In-person counseling services are essential and may be permitted if remote counseling is not viable.

In addition to remote and drive-in services, religious and faith-based organizations are permitted to conduct the following activities provided all requirements in this document are met:

### **Phases 1 and 2**

A) Hold indoor services at a place of worship with up to 25% of room (or building) capacity with a recommended maximum of 200 people, so long as six feet of physical distancing can be achieved between each group in all directions. A group may include a maximum of 10 individuals or two households, whichever is more. It is recommended, but not required that each group consist of individuals from no more than two households. Face coverings are required for all participants.

B) Hold outdoor services of unlimited capacity with a recommended maximum of 200, so long as six feet of physical distancing can be achieved between each group in all directions. A group may include a maximum of 15 individuals or two households, whichever is more. It is recommended, but not required that each group consist of individuals from no more than two households. Face coverings are required for all participants.

Religious services conducted outdoor, in the open-air, or in an outdoor structure (temporary or permanent) must comply with the requirements of the Outdoor and Open-air Seating Guidance [here](#).

C) Hold or provide in-home services inside a person's residence with up to five total individuals (excluding organization staff). Face coverings are required for all participants.

### Phase 3

A) Hold indoor services at a place of worship with up to 50% of room (or building) capacity with a recommended maximum of 400 people if the space is less than 100,000 square feet and 600 people if the space is more than 100,000 square feet, so long as six feet of physical distancing can be achieved between each group in all directions. A group may include a maximum of 15 individuals. It is recommended, but not required that each group consist of individuals from no more than two households. Face coverings are required for all participants.

B) Hold outdoor services of unlimited capacity with a recommended maximum of 400, so long as six feet of physical distancing can be achieved between groups in all directions. A group may include up to 15 individuals. Face coverings are required for all participants.

Religious services conducted outdoor, in the open-air, or in an outdoor structure (temporary or permanent) must comply with the requirements of the Outdoor and Open-air Seating Guidance [here](#).

C) Hold or provide in-home services inside a person's residence with up to 10 total individuals (excluding organization staff). Face coverings are required for all participants.

### Phase 2 and Phase 3 – Vaccinated-Only Sections are Permitted

Religious organizations are allowed to reserve sections only for those who are fully vaccinated where groups do not need to be physically distanced six feet apart if the following conditions are met:

1. All individuals in the vaccinated-only section must be fully vaccinated (or have proof of a negative COVID-19 test) as follows -

**Adults** (*i.e.*, those 16 or older) who are vaccinated against COVID-19 by a two-dose mRNA vaccine (such as Moderna and Pfizer), or a single dose vaccine (such as Johnson & Johnson), are considered "fully vaccinated" two weeks after the final dose of vaccine (the second dose for a two-dose regimen, or the single dose for a single-dose regimen).

**Children** between the ages of 5 and 15 who can provide proof of having tested negative for COVID-19 within 72 hours of admission, are also allowed in the vaccinated section. In addition, children aged 12-15 may either show proof of vaccination or proof of a negative test 72 hours prior to admission. Children under the age of 5 do not need to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test in order to be admitted to the vaccinated section when accompanied by a vaccinated adult.

2. One or more persons is designated by the organization to serve as a vaccination verifier. The verifier is responsible for checking every person's vaccination card or negative COVID-19 test and monitoring those who enter the vaccinated-only section.
3. Each person in the vaccination-only section has acceptable proof of full vaccination (or negative COVID-19 test) that must be presented at each and every religious service.

The following are acceptable as proof of full vaccination: Vaccination card (which includes name of person vaccinated, type of vaccine provided and date last dose administered) OR a photo of a vaccination card as a separate document OR a photo of the attendee's vaccine card stored on a phone or electronic device OR documentation of vaccination from a healthcare provider

electronic health record or state Immunization Information System record. Self-reported vaccination records that are not verified by a health care provider cannot be accepted.

The following are acceptable as proof of a negative COVID-19 test result: printed document (from the test provider or laboratory) OR an email or text message displayed on a phone or electronic device from the test provider or laboratory. The information provided should include name of person tested, type of test performed, and date of negative test result (for PCR, date of negative result must be within prior 72 hours; for antigen, date of negative result must be within prior 24 hours). Self-reported negative test results that are not from a test provider, a laboratory, or a health care provider cannot be accepted.

4. There is at least 6 feet of distance between the vaccinated-only section and any other section.
5. Face coverings are not required for vaccinated individuals.

In addition, organizations with vaccinated-only sections are allowed to increase the capacity of the vaccinated section to 100% capacity. If there are vaccinated and unvaccinated sections in the facility, the vaccinated-only sections may be at full capacity in that section only. Unvaccinated sections are still required to be limited to 25% capacity, and all households or groups must maintain 6 feet of distance from other households or groups.

Nothing in this section should be read to prohibit a facility from providing a separate seating area to unvaccinated individuals, including those individuals claiming an exemption. Seating areas for unvaccinated individuals must follow the requirements found in sections describing “Phase 1 and 2” and “Phase 3” guidelines for both outdoor and indoor participants in this document.

The services covered in these operational guidelines include all worship services, religious study classes, religious ceremonies, and religious holiday celebrations. Religious weddings and funerals are not covered under this document and must follow the guidance [here](#).

Organizations are strongly encouraged to keep a log of attendees at each service or counseling session and to retain that log for at least two weeks. If an outbreak occurs, this information may be critical to help save lives.

### **Safety and Health Requirements**

All facility owners have a general obligation to maintain a safe and healthy workplace in accordance with state and federal law and safety and health rules for a variety of workplace hazards. Employers must specifically ensure operations follow the main Labor & Industries COVID-19 requirements to protect workers. COVID-19 workplace and safety requirements can be found [here](#).

Additional information is available at [Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\) Resources](#) and [Paid Leave under the Washington Family Care Act and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#).

### **All religious and faith-based organizations are required to comply with the following COVID-19 organization-specific safety practices:**

1. Prior to beginning operations as described in this document, all religious and faith-based organizations are required to develop for each location (indoor and outdoor if applicable) a comprehensive COVID-19 exposure control, mitigation and recovery plan. The plan must include policies regarding the following control measures: PPE utilization; on-location physical distancing; hygiene; sanitation; symptom monitoring; incident reporting; location disinfection procedures; COVID-19 safety training; exposure response procedures and a post-exposure incident project-wide recovery plan. A copy of the plan must be available at the location for inspection by state

and local authorities, but state and local authorities do not preapprove the plan. Failure to meet planning requirements may result in sanctions, including the location being shut down.

2. COVID-19 safety information and requirements, such as CDC, DOH, OSHA posters shall be visibly posted at each location (indoor and outdoor).
3. Face Coverings and Exemptions - All employees, members, and visitors in attendance shall wear face coverings before, during, and after the service (whether indoor or outdoor). Face coverings are required to be worn by all during the service except when an individual is addressing the congregation. If there are two or more speakers addressing the congregation during the service, only one speaker at a time may remove their face covering. If a speaker decides not to wear a face covering, it is recommended that a Plexiglas 3-sided barrier is used during the service. The barrier must be disinfected after every use.

There are exemptions to wearing face covering, so please refer to the [Department of Health's Order on Face Coverings](#).

4. There may be no direct physical contact between servers and members or visitors. Anything to be consumed may not be presented to the members or visitors in a communal container or plate.
5. Live music and performances –
  - a. **Choirs and Congregational Singing:**
    - i. **Phases 1 and 2:** Choirs with up to 15 singers are permitted to sing indoors during the service so long as each singer maintains 9 feet (12 feet is encouraged) of physical distancing and wears a three-layer cloth mask or surgical mask. For religious organizations without a choir or with a choir of fewer than 15 singers, congregants and staff are permitted to sing so long as the total number of people singing does not exceed 15 and all those singing adhere to the 9 feet (12 feet is encouraged) of physical distancing and three-layer cloth mask or surgical masking requirements.

Choirs in excess of 15 individuals and the entire congregation are permitted to sing outdoors provided that all singers maintain 9 feet (12 feet is encouraged) of physical distancing and wear a three-layer cloth mask or surgical mask.
    - ii. **Phase 3:** Choirs of any size are permitted to sing so long as six feet of physical distancing is maintained between each singer and all singers wear a three-layer cloth mask or surgical mask.

Congregations of any size are permitted to sing as long six feet of physical distancing is maintained between groups and all congregants wear a three-layer cloth mask or surgical mask.
    - iii. All vaccinated individuals are permitted to sing without face coverings.
  - b. **Unvaccinated Soloist singers** are permitted to sing during the service without a mask provided that the individual maintains 15 feet of physical distancing.
  - c. **The performance of woodwind and brass instruments** is permitted during the service so long as the performer(s) maintain 9 feet (12 feet is encouraged) of physical distancing. Unvaccinated woodwind and brass performers are required to wear their masks during their performance while vaccinated musicians are not required to wear masks.
  - d. **Musical ensembles and other disciplines of performing arts** are permitted to perform during the service so long as all of the discipline-specific requirements outlined in the ["Theater and Performing Arts"](#) guidance document are followed.
6. All services must provide access to restrooms.

7. Soap and running water shall be abundantly provided at locations for frequent handwashing. Employees should be encouraged to leave their workstations to wash their hands regularly, and required to do so before and after going to the bathroom, before and after eating and after coughing, sneezing or blowing their nose. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with greater than 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol should also be provided and used, but are not a replacement for the water requirement.
8. Disinfectants must be available to employees, members, and visitors throughout the location (indoor and outdoor) and ensure cleaning supplies are frequently replenished.
9. Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces after each use—including personal work stations, mirrors, chairs, headrests and armrests, doorknobs, handrails, restrooms and breakrooms—using soapy water, followed by the appropriate disinfectants. If these areas cannot be cleaned and disinfected frequently, the organization shall be shut down until such measures can be achieved and maintained.
10. **Physical distancing requirements for unvaccinated sections:** All organizations must adhere to physical distancing requirements and have six feet of space in all directions between the congregation's seats, pews, and benches or have physical barriers between them.  
This may require the organization to reconfigure the congregation's seats, pews, and benches or have physical barriers between them.  
In Phases 1 and 2, groups of up to 10 individuals may be grouped together for indoors services and 15 individuals for outdoor services.  
In Phase 3, groups of up to 15 individuals may be grouped together.
11. Brief physical contact may be permitted among a limited number of people (up to 15 individuals) if it is a critical component to the organization's religious service so long as face coverings are worn and hands are sanitized immediately before and after the contact. Face coverings are not required for vaccinated individuals who have physical contact with other vaccinated individuals.
12. Increase ventilation and filtration of indoor spaces to improve air quality and reduce airborne exposures where feasible as recommended by [DOH](#), the CDC, and ASHRAE. Good ventilation and indoor air quality are important in reducing airborne exposure to viruses, including SARS-CoV-2 that causes COVID-19, as well as other disease vectors, chemicals, and odors. More information available [here](#).
13. Ensure that tissues and trashcans are placed throughout the location (indoor and outdoor).
14. Inform all employees, members, and guests that they must self-screen for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 before arriving at the location.
  - Request employees, members, and visitors to take their temperature before attending a service. Any individual with a temperature of 100.4°F may not attend the service or attend work at the organization.
  - Any individual with a household member who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or with symptoms of COVID-19 (including a fever above 100.4°F) may not attend the service or attend work at the organization.
15. For in-home services, religious and faith-based organizations are permitted to convene up to five individuals in Phases 1 and 2 and 10 individuals in Phase 3 excluding organization staff. These individuals do not need to be from the same household. However, individuals must wear face coverings when individuals from outside of the household participate if there are one or more persons unvaccinated.

All issues regarding worker safety and health are subject to enforcement action under L&I's Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH).

- Employers can request COVID-19 [prevention advice and help](#) from DOSH.
- Employee workplace safety and health complaints may be submitted to the DOSH Call Center: (1-800-423-7233) or via e-mail to [adag235@lni.wa.gov](mailto:adag235@lni.wa.gov).
- General questions about how to comply with the agreement practices can be submitted to the state's Business Response Center at <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/how-you-can-help/covid-19-business-and-worker-inquiries>.
- All other violations related to Proclamation 20-25, et seq., can be submitted at <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/report-safe-start-violation>.