

For general workplace guidelines, please refer to COVID-19 Workplace Information on [P. 13](#). All businesses operating in Saskatchewan must be in compliance with these guidelines. The information below provides specific information for places of worship.

The Government of Saskatchewan, in consultation with leaders from faith communities in the province, developed guidelines for places of worship to resume service. These guidelines apply to indoor and outdoor gatherings, except where more specific provincial guidance exists, such as the Drive-in or Remote Worship Services Guidelines on [P. 40](#).

These initial guidelines are intended to support a return to in-person services for places of worship. Further guidelines will be forthcoming to address additional critical services, pastoral care and community supports provided by faith-based institutions in Saskatchewan. The initial guidelines are intended to allow places of worship that choose to return to service to do so safely and guard against the transmission of COVID-19.

Places of worship should only return to service once they are able to safely implement the controls identified in these guidelines.

Guidelines for Accommodating Worship

Effective June 8, 2020, places of worship may resume services providing social distancing of two metres can be maintained between each individual household. The allowable occupancy is one-third of the defined occupancy rate of the facility to a maximum of 30 individuals for the initial stage of re-opening.

- Delivering services virtually or through remote delivery such as drive-in service is encouraged.
- Where possible, registration of participants is encouraged to effectively manage the number of individuals attending. Registration should be facilitated to discourage attendees from common-use items such as pens and pencils.
- Attendees who are medically vulnerable are strongly encouraged to delay their return to services and continue to participate in services online, where possible.
- Attendees, employees and volunteers are required to stay home if sick or symptomatic.
- Places of worship will be required to identify measures by which entry and exit is managed to ensure physical distancing is maintained.
- Promote physical distancing by marking the directional flow of people through buildings and areas. Mark seating areas and post visual reminders to observe physical distancing.
- Individuals from the same household may be seated together and should remain in place once they are seated.
- Seating (or designated worship space) must be arranged so that physical distancing can be observed at all times. Consideration must be given to how people enter and exit pews and other seating areas. A minimum of two metres must be maintained between household groups.
- If multiple gatherings are held on a single day, the start and end times must allow those who attend one gathering to exit safely, avoiding contact with those arriving for the next gathering. Time is needed to clean and disinfect common surfaces between services.
- Dismissal of gatherings should be done in a way that supports physical distancing.
- All ancillary events, such as social events, should be postponed for the immediate future.
- Where possible, consider managing parking lot assignments to ensure physical distancing is maintained.

Guidelines for Hygiene and Cleaning

- As part of the return to service, places of worship will be required to enhance cleaning and disinfection practices.
- Review cleaning and disinfection practices on [P. 16](#).
- Increase cleaning and disinfection of commonly contacted areas, including seating areas, doorknobs, handles, ceremonial objects, elevator buttons, railings and light switches.
- Encourage everyone to practicing proper hand hygiene and coughing/sneezing etiquette, including:
 - Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - Use hand sanitizer when hands are not visibly dirty and handwashing isn't available.
 - Use hand sanitizer of least 70 per cent alcohol that is approved by Health Canada (DIN and NPN number).
 - Avoid touching your face, mouth, nose and eyes.
- Manage access to washrooms in a way to promote social distancing and increase cleaning and disinfection. Ensure washrooms are always well stocked with liquid soap and paper towels, and that warm running water is available.
- Garbage bins should be emptied frequently.
- Place an alcohol-based hand sanitizer in dispensers or provide hand washing stations near doors and other high-traffic areas.

Guidelines for Higher-Risk Activities

- All physical contact, such as handshaking or passing objects between individuals, is not permitted. Ushers, greeters or other guest services must maintain social distancing and avoid physical contact with worshippers.
- Microphones cannot be shared between individuals due to the difficulty of cleaning and disinfecting these devices. Minimize the number of attendees providing readings or performing other activities that would require the use of a microphone.
- Singing is a high-risk activity because the virus can be transmitted through saliva or respiratory droplets. One documented COVID-19 outbreak resulted in the spread of the virus to 87 per cent of choir attendees from one infected person. Therefore, singing is not recommended at this time.
- The use of woodwind and brass instruments may also increase the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus due to the aerosolized respiratory fluids. As such, they are not recommended at this time.
- Where leaders of services are required to sing, they must increase the distance between the congregation to prevent transmission of respiratory droplets and/or wear a mask.
- Ceremonies or rituals that involve physical contact between individuals, such as the handling of the Torah scroll or baptism, should be modified to maintain physical distancing. Where physical distancing is not possible, participants will be required to mitigate the risk by wearing personal protective equipment and increased hand hygiene.
- The celebration of communion raises specific challenges because of the possibility of inadvertently transmitting the virus. Faith communities centred on a communion ritual must

exercise extreme caution if they wish to proceed with offering communion. Denominations or families of churches wishing to offer communion at this time will be required to develop protocols by which the communion can be offered in a way that safeguards the health of the communicants and celebrant. The use of a common cup is not permissible.

- Passing of offering baskets will not be permitted. Alternatives are encouraged, such as online giving options or a depository to accept offerings.
- Objects that cannot be disinfected between uses should not be distributed. If objects cannot be disinfected, the place of worship must determine the means by which they can be discarded after use to prevent contamination, such as paper bulletins or other single-use materials.
- Books and other common-use items should be removed from use, if possible. Projecting materials or distribution of single-use materials can be considered. Books or items that can't be disinfected should be removed and held for 72 hours before being brought back into use.
- Food and beverage service must be suspended at this time.