



HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR ON-SITE PROGRAMMING

IMPORTANT: This document provides guidelines related to the safety, health, and hygiene of students, catechists, and parents to be considered by the **Health and Safety Reopening Team** for religious education programs that will be hosting on-site programming. Parishes employing regular in-person programming for children and/or youth will need to complete a certification process, which occurs between August 17 and September 4, 2020.

ELEMENTS OF THIS DOCUMENT INCLUDE:

- Requirements for in-person kickoff events for virtual fall programming
- Health and Safety Requirements for in-person programming

In-Person Kickoff for Virtual

A one-time in-person kickoff cohorts to build community and get to know each other may be considered by parishes planning to offer programming virtually in the fall. Please note:

- AOC certification not required for In-Person Kickoff.
- Careful coordination with parish staff required.
- PPE and hand sanitizer should be supplied by Religious Education programs.
- To the extent any indoor parish facilities are used, Religious Education programs are responsible for cleaning and disinfecting all impacted common areas, restrooms and meeting rooms. Cleaning and Disinfecting guidelines can be located [here](#).

IN-PERSON KICKOFF REQUIREMENTS

- Follow current state mandates regarding size of gatherings recognizing guidance is subject to change based on latest data.
- Follow Archdiocesan guidelines for small gatherings which is available [here](#).
- Utilize outdoor space or parish hall (not classrooms or small enclosed spaces) for In-Person Kickoffs.
- Consider breaking In-Person Kickoff into 2-3 different meeting times to limit crowds.
- Coordinate scheduling of In-Person Kickoffs with parish staff in an effort to de-densify campus. For example, these meetings should not be held during, or immediately before or after a scheduled Mass.

- If outdoors, attendees should be encouraged to bring their own chairs.
- Outside meetings should maintain 15'-20' between groups or cohorts of people.
- A pre-registration and/or attendance record-keeping process must be in place to support contact tracing efforts, which are vital to reducing the spread of COVID-19.
- Mask must be worn by all attendees and proper social distancing measures observed.
- Hand sanitizer should be readily available for meetings.
- No food or beverages allowed.

Health and Safety Guidelines for In-Person Programming

Faith formation and community-building occurs on campus on a limited basis. Please note:

- Students can gather on campus one time per month (max) to allow for smaller cohorts and greater social distancing.
- Parents can gather one time per month, following guidelines for adult gatherings.
- Program hours can be reduced to a minimum of fifteen per year and/or additional programming can offered virtually (hybrid approach).
- If school/classroom space is not available or safe for use, utilization of parish hall may be considered.

SPACE SHARING WITH CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

If programming will take place in facilities shared with a school, the parish and school need to coordinate to ensure that safety procedures, building access schedules and sanitization schedules are closely aligned.

- **Catechetical leaders and members of the Health and Safety Reopening Team should also carefully read the sections on Health and Safety Guidelines in the Archdiocesan and Office of Catholic Schools Reopening Plans:**
 - **All church reopening training and certification materials are posted on the Archdiocesan public website [here](#).** When hosting any in-person gatherings in the parish church and other buildings, it is important that the HSR Team is fully aware of the guidelines posted on the public website for parish building readiness regarding: Physical Space Planning Considerations, Parishioner Movement, Disinfection, and Social Distancing.
 - **All catholic schools reopening training and certification materials are posted on Izzy [here](#).** When hosting any in-person gatherings in the school buildings, it is important that the Health and Safety Reopening Team is fully aware of the guidelines posted on the public website for school building readiness.
- **OCS Recommendation to Principals:**
 - Parish ministries (such as Religious Education classes) and “external groups” (e.g., Boy Scouts) should be encouraged to use any vacant or unused instructional space if possible (including special area classrooms that are not being used). Such groups should restrict their access to required areas only. Used areas should be cleaned before and after usage by external groups.

- **School Space-Sharing Implications for Religious Education Programs:**

- Work with the school principal to develop an agreed upon plan for controlled access to the building for religious education programming (i.e., transition periods from when the school is in session to when religious education classes start).
 - Ensure that school staff, students and cleaning staff is scheduled to exit the shared space at least 30 minutes prior to parish staff or volunteers arriving.
 - Note that additional time may be needed for cleaning staff depending on number of classrooms to be sanitized and number of cleaning staff.
- A sanitization schedule needs to be negotiated between the school principal and parish catechetical leader regarding shared space. The sanitization schedule and shared-space arrangements need to be clearly communicated to schoolteachers and catechists.
 - Classrooms and common surfaces in shared spaces (e.g. office, bathrooms, door knobs, stair handrails, etc.) should be cleaned before and after religious education classes.
 - Areas of sanitization responsibility for Parish and School Health & Safety Teams regarding after school and before/after religious education classes is to be outlined.
- In cases where the sanitization guidelines specific to school space has been set forth by schools, those should be followed by the religious education program.
- In cases where guidelines regarding school space have not been implemented, or where parish spaces are concerned, the parish catechetical leader is responsible for ensuring the sanitization schedule of those spaces.

MASKS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

- All individuals in parish and school buildings (students, parents, employees, visitors/volunteers, etc.) must wear face coverings at all times unless they are younger than 2 years of age.
- Parishes should ask families to purchase masks for their child/children, and give instructions that the masks used during religious education classes and youth gatherings not be the same mask that their child wears during their regular school day, or if using the same mask that it is sanitized prior to entering the parish campus or other program site.
- Parish catechetical leaders and/or youth ministers should speak to their pastor about needed supplies and ensure that the parish supply of PPE accounts for the needs of the religious education program, its students, and its catechists.
 - Parishes should ensure that all employees and catechists have face masks.
 - Parishes should have extra face masks available for students that forget to bring a mask or be prepared to have a contingency plan in place for any student who is dropped off without a mask (e.g., student is to wait in a designated space for maintaining social distance and no interaction with others until a parent picks up the student or delivers a mask for them).
 - Parishes should maintain a regular supply of gloves for cleaning surfaces and treating students with medical injuries/illnesses.
 - Due to on-going disruptions in the supply chain, it is important for parishes to have a 30-60 day stock of the needed supplies on hand.

TEMPERATURE CHECKS

- Parishes should ask parents to take the temperature of their child/children before religious education classes. Employees and volunteers are likewise responsible for taking their temperature before religious education classes. Any individual with a temperature over 100.4 °F must remain home (see Outbreak Protocol section).
- If any individual exhibits COVID-19 symptoms, the parish catechetical leader or another parish employee should immediately perform a temperature check and follow steps under “Response to COVID-19 Symptoms.”
- Volunteer catechists should not be directed to perform temperature checks on any individual.

THE COHORT MODEL

According to the OCS Reopening Plan, all Archdiocese of Chicago Catholic Schools must operate under a “cohort” model when buildings reopen this Fall. Under a “cohort” model, students and staff are grouped by homeroom in “cohorts.” These groupings are as static as possible by having the same group of children stay with the same staff (all day for young children, and as much as possible for older children).

This strategy is also required for religious education programs, as it maintains a safe environment by eliminating the interaction between cohorts, which allows single classes to be quarantined in the event of infection, rather than closing the entire program. For religious education programs, catechists are considered part of the same cohort as their students, but other catechists and staff are considered outside of the cohort.

The size of each cohort should be determined by the size of the smallest gathering space utilized by the cohort. Because of the increased risk involved in gathering youth from multiple school cohorts within a single program, students in parish religious education and youth programs should be able to maintain a minimum of six feet distance at all times while seated, standing or moving. Even while utilizing the cohort model, religious education programs should strive to physically separate students in the same cohort as much as possible. Such separation will help mitigate risk. For example, classroom furniture should be arranged to maximize space between students.

GENERAL FACILITY CLEANING, LAYOUT, PROGRAM SUPPLIES

- If using space in the parish school, religious education programs should follow the building cleaning and disinfection procedures outlined in the **Catholic Schools Reopening Plan**.
- If using space in general parish buildings, religious education programs should follow the building cleaning and disinfection procedures outlined in the **Parish Reopening Plan**.
- Sharing of supplies such as pencils, markers and art supplies should be eliminated. All students should maintain their own program supplies in individually labeled containers.
- The individual supply containers may be purchased by families and brought to class each week by students or be purchased by the religious education program and stored in a bin at the parish.
- Textbook sharing should also be eliminated. All textbooks should be individually labeled and either brought to class each week by the student or stored in a bin at the parish.
- Religious education program storage bins will need to be stored in a designated space outside of the classroom. Please coordinate with principal.
- All rooms should have access to either a sink and soap for frequent hand washing, or hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

- Disinfectant wipes and cleaning disinfectant should be readily available for use throughout religious education classes.
- Think through traffic flow throughout your building, with the intent of keeping cohorts physically apart. Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and children remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating “one-way routes” in hallways and stairwells). Parish catechetical leaders should ensure that traffic flow patterns are determined in the buildings (both school and parish) being used for religious education.
- Utilize as much of your parish/school buildings as possible to achieve distancing. Close and (where possible) lock areas of the parish/school buildings not being used.
- Arrange desks in rows facing the same direction and provide as much distance between desks as possible. If tables are used instead of desks, attempt to spread out students at tables as much as possible. Consider taping off tables to separate student workspace. If using school rooms, this will already be done. If using parish space, ensure that student workspaces are distanced.
- Declutter classrooms as much as possible with the intent of maximizing floor space. If using school rooms, this will already be done. If using parish space, ensure that those spaces are decluttered.
- Food and drink should not be shared (including student snacks and birthday treats).
- Ensure that all drinking fountains are deactivated. Drinking fountains should not be used and should be cleaned regularly even while not in use.
- When practical, increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to children using the facility.
- When possible, interior doors should be kept open to eliminate the need to use door handles. Be mindful of fire code and student safety when determining whether to keep internal doors open.
- If there is a religious education program office, landline phones should only be used by a single, designated individual. Where parish catechetical leaders do not have access to a designated landline, parishes may want to explore the option of a dedicated cell phone for the parish catechetical leader.

MAIN OFFICE AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM WORKROOM

- All parish office-related matters, including protocol for staff returning to the parish office, are to follow the previously issued guidance, which is **posted to IZZY**.
- Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions in shared areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart (e.g., religious education program main office or desk area).
- Spread out seating in main office to ensure distancing. Eliminate seating when distancing is not possible.
- Use tape on the office floor to direct traffic flow and manage any lines, ensuring proper distancing is followed.
- Parish staff and parish catechetical leaders should wear masks and maintain distancing when in the main office or religious education program workroom. Be mindful of high traffic areas, such as copy machines. Catechists and other volunteers should not use the main office nor REP workroom and should not access copy machines.
- Clean common surfaces frequently, such as counters, desks, doorknobs, and copy machines.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

- All students and employees must wear facemasks on arrival.
- Parishes must perform “Wellness Checks” of all students at program entrances as students enter the building or gathering space. Wellness Checks consist of four individual “checks”:
 - **Temperature Checks:** A temperature check of each student must occur. Any student with a temperature over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit must be sent home (see Infection Protocol section).
 - **Hand Washing or Sanitizer Check:** Students should either wash hands or receive hand sanitizer (from an adult or a stationary dispenser). Staff should ensure that such hand cleaning occurs.
 - **Mask Check:** A check of each student to ensure that masks are present and properly worn
 - **Symptom Check:** Students should be asked the following questions every day: “Do you feel sick in any way? Do you have a cough or fever?” Any student who identifies as feeling sick should be sent home.
- To help limit cross-contamination between cohorts, utilize as many exterior entryways as possible, assign classes to enter and exit through only their assigned doorway and stagger arrival/dismissal times by cohort.
- **Arrival by car:** Establish a drop-off procedure in which parents do not leave their car and children remain in their car until instructed by a designated staff member or volunteer.
- **Arrival by foot:** Each family should have a designated entrance and each entrance should have markers at least six feet apart where students should wait to enter the building.
- **Dismissal:**
 - Ensure that students are assigned designated exits and pickup times which are communicated clearly to families and catechists.
 - Ensure social distancing of six feet or more as students exit the premises towards their vehicle or homes.
- Doors should be propped open for students to have a clear path to their classrooms.
- All students, parents, staff, and catechists must wear facemasks on arrival and dismissal.
- All individuals entering the building must utilize sanitizer on arrival. A staff member or catechist should be at every building or classroom entrance on arrival to distribute hand sanitizer directly into the student’s hands without the student touching the sanitizer bottle.
- Parents and guardians should not enter the building to escort students to/from classrooms at arrival and dismissal.

STUDENT MOVEMENT

- Parish catechetical leaders should carefully think through how students travel through the parish/school buildings. Depending upon the layout of the buildings, parish catechetical leaders should assign classes to use specific routes at specific times.
- Avoid having assigned bathroom breaks during religious education classes. Be sure to communicate this procedure to parents.
- Bathrooms are to be used individually in cases of emergency.
- If needed, assign different classes to different bathrooms and/or assign designated bathroom times to classes.
- When a student does use a bathroom, an adult would need to make sure that there is no one in the bathroom from another student cohort.

CATECHISTS TO REMAIN WITHIN COHORTS

- It is advised that religious education program catechists be regular volunteers who can serve for longer periods of time (vs. several volunteers over shorter periods). It is also advised to have two catechists per classroom.
- Substitute catechists are to be avoided. If there is no catechist for a given session, the class should be canceled or held virtually.
- All students and catechists must continue use of face coverings within cohorts.
- Catechists can move throughout the classroom, though should attempt to maintain distance when possible.

TEACHING AND MAINTAINING SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Programs should consider teaching protocols for wearing masks and social distancing. This will especially be critical for younger students. Parents should be fully informed of these protocols so they can reinforce them with their child(ren).
- Visual supports and visual reminders for safe behaviors (like wearing masks) can help increase compliance.
- Parish catechetical leaders should ensure that the supports and reminders are posted in the spaces (both school and parish) being used for religious education classes.

STUDENT BEHAVIORAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Programs will need to identify those students with health and/or sensory issues related to wearing masks and work to develop remediation strategies.
- Programs will need to adopt a “re-teaching mentality” for those students who have difficulty in exhibiting appropriate social distancing. Young students and those students who typically have difficulty in maintaining social proximity will require additional re-teaching and other prompts to support this behavior.

HEALTH CHECKS AND MEDICAL CARE FOR STUDENTS

- Create a procedure for a student and/or staff who becomes ill during the program. This should include a place of isolation until the affected individual can leave the building.
- Parish catechetical leaders may provide for the ongoing medical needs of students, as per a normal year. This includes administration of approved medicines and prescriptions, basic first aid, etc.
- Parish catechetical leaders should wear gloves when providing medical care that involves touching students.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

- Religious education programs should avoid conducting emergency drills until more information is provided by ISBE, the OCS, and the Office of Lifelong Formation.

VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS

- Limit visitors to the parish/school buildings as much as possible. Cancel or postpone events that involve a lot of visitors in the buildings (e.g. “Special Persons’ Day”).
- Keep accurate records of visitors and volunteers, including the individual’s reason for visit, contact information, and all locations visited, in case contact tracing is needed.

SPECIAL EVENTS (MASSES, FIELD TRIPS ETC.)

- Use the **Archdiocesan Liturgical and Sacramental Guidelines** to determine how/whether to conduct religious education program masses (including family masses). As of June 1st, public masses are allowed for the number of people that is 20% of the church capacity in parishes that have completed the certification process for reopening. Parish catechetical leaders (with assistance from the pastor) should use those guidelines to determine the allowed attendance capacity for religious education program masses.
- If multiple cohorts are attending a mass, cohorts should be separated (in addition to outright social distancing). Masks should be worn during Masses.
- Work with your pastor to ensure that you are following the particular reopening plan of your parish for any liturgical celebrations.
- Effective with the launch of Phase 4 of Restore Illinois on June 26, non-liturgical gatherings of up to 50 people are allowed at the parish as long as social distancing and cleaning/disinfecting guidelines are adhered to and masks are worn.
- Virtual group events should be considered, if possible.
- Avoid field trips and mission trips during the pandemic.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM MEETINGS

- Effective with the launch of Phase 4 of Restore Illinois on June 26, non-liturgical gatherings of up to 50 people are allowed at the parish as long as social distancing and cleaning/disinfecting guidelines are adhered to and masks are worn.
- Meetings with catechists should be conducted in parish buildings (vs. school buildings) and according to the parish guidelines for non-liturgical gatherings. These meetings may also be conducted virtually when possible and/or preferred.
- Parent conferences and meetings should also be conducted in parish buildings (vs. school buildings) and according to the parish guidelines for non-liturgical gatherings. These meetings may also be conducted virtually when possible and/or preferred.
- A pre-registration and/or attendance record-keeping process must be in place to support contact tracing efforts, which are vital to reducing the spread of COVID-19.
- Hand sanitizer should be readily available for meetings.
- In the event there are requests for food and beverages at meetings, all food and beverages must be in single-serve containers. For example, individual boxed lunches are permitted, but an open buffet, potluck and/or boxes of bagels or donuts are not. Single, unopened bottles of water are permitted, but a pitcher of water is not. All utensils and plates must be disposable and intended for one-time use.

CATECHIST TRAINING

- A mandatory webinar will be provided to train all catechists and volunteers participating in on-site programming on COVID-19 response protocols, as outlined in this document. In addition, the HSR Team at your parish should train catechists in the specific safety protocols at your parish.
- Pastors, parish catechetical leaders and youth ministers should be available to answer questions and handle concerns about these protocols. If a pastor, catechetical leader or youth minister is unable to answer a catechist's question, he/she can contact the Office of Lifelong Formation at **olf@archchicago.org** or the Vicariate Lifelong Formation Coordinator.

Questions? Please contact **ReopenREYM@archchicago.org**.