

EMERGENCY ALERTS

Coronavirus Update

Stay informed about COVID-19: Latest on cases, guidance, regulations *Aug. 12th, 2020, 9:00 am* [Read more](#) ▶

Travel Order: Requirements for individuals entering Massachusetts *Aug. 1st, 2020, 12:00 am* [Read more](#) ▶

Reopening Massachusetts: Learn more about the phased approach *Aug. 7th, 2020, 12:00 pm* [Read more](#) ▶

HIDE ALERTS



Safety Standards and Checklist: Places of Worship

Reopening Phase III mandatory safety standards, recommended best practices and a checklist for places of worship. UPDATED: July 6, 2020

Places of Worship are encouraged to hold services virtually or outdoors and to ensure that attendees who are not from the same immediate household are spaced at least 6 feet apart. When conducting services, places of worship must abide by the following requirements.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Key Documents for Reopening](#) (#key-documents-for-reopening-)

[Social Distancing](#) (#social-distancing-)

[Hygiene Protocols](#) (#hygiene-protocols-)

[Staffing and Operations](#) (#staffing-and-operations-)

[Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) (#cleaning-and-disinfecting-)

[Checklist](#) (#checklist-)

[Phase III Downloads and Translations](#) (#phase-iii-downloads-and-translations-)

[Phase II Downloads](#) (#phase-ii-downloads-)

[Phase I Downloads and Translations](#) (#phase-i-downloads-and-translations-)

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Key Documents for Reopening

Linked below are three important documents:

1. **Workplace Safety Standards** – Complete and official sector-specific standards for reopening places of worship (all workplaces must also comply with the [Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplaces](#))

3. **Checklist** – Printable tool to help businesses perform the required self-certification for opening and ensure compliance with the sector-specific standards

Phase III Workplace Safety Standards for Places of Worship (PDF)

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/sector-specific-workplace-safety-standards-phase-iii-step-1-for-places-of-worship-to-addr>)

Phase III Protocol Summary for Places of Worship (PDF)

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-iii-step-1-places-of-worship-protocol-summary/download>)

Phase III Checklist for Places of Worship (PDF)

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-iii-step-1-places-of-worship-checklist/download>)

Social Distancing

For indoor services, places of worship must monitor member entries and exits and limit occupancy at all times to the greater of the following:

- 50% of the building's maximum permitted occupancy as documented in its occupancy permit on record with the municipal building department or other municipal record holder
- Buildings for which no permitted occupancy limitation is on record may allow 10 persons (including staff) per 1,000 square feet of accessible space
- In any case, no enclosed space within the building may exceed occupancy of 10 persons per 1,000 square feet
- All occupancy counts and calculations shall include attendees, staff, and other workers
- Attendees who are not part of the same immediate household must be seated at least 6 feet apart. Members of the same immediate household are permitted to sit together and less than 6 feet apart

If there is fixed seating, rows should be blocked off and kept empty to allow for sufficient distancing between rows

All attendees and staff must wear face coverings or masks in accordance with COVID-19 Order No. 31 and the [Department of Public Health's Guidance](https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/news/wear-a-mask-in-public) ([/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/news/wear-a-mask-in-public](https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/news/wear-a-mask-in-public)) while inside and while entering and exiting places of worship or otherwise participating in in-person services, except where a person is unable to wear a face covering or mask because of a medical or disabling condition

A leader or celebrant engaged in conducting the service or making an address may remove his or her face covering while doing so, provided that he or she is able to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from other persons present; installation of protective, plexi-glass or other transparent barriers is recommended for lecterns and other points of address

For children between age 2 and 5, the wearing of a face covering or mask is at the discretion of the child's parent or guardian. Children under the age of 2 should not wear a face covering or mask

A person who declines to wear a face covering or mask because of a medical or disabling condition shall not be required to produce documentation verifying the condition

https://www.mass.gov/info-details/safety-standards-and-checklist-places-of-worship Go JUL AUG SEP
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18 May 2020 - 23 Mar 2021 2019 2020 2021 About this capture

If feasible, places of worship are encouraged to arrange online sign-up for services in advance in order to monitor and limit the number of attendees

Places of worship are encouraged to place tape or other visual distancing markings on seating to delineate 6 foot separations and to post signage indicating the maximum number of persons permitted per row

Promote ventilation for enclosed spaces where possible. For example, consider opening windows and doors to allow airflow

Places of worship may refuse entry to a person who refuses to wear a face covering or mask for non-medical reasons

Places of worship are encouraged to take steps to encourage orderly entering and exiting of services in a manner that encourages social distancing. For example:

- Signage or floor markings should be posted to have one-way aisles or otherwise direct attendees to follow certain pathways for entering and exiting the service
- If a line forms outside of the service, those waiting should be directed to maintain social distancing. Tape or other markings on the ground outside of Places of worship should be placed to encourage attendees to maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet
- Staff should direct people in high traffic areas to help maintain social distancing
- Officiants or other staff should direct successive, row-by-row exiting

Hygiene Protocols

Places of worship shall ensure that attendees and workers have access to handwashing facilities, including soap and running water, and allow workers sufficient break time to wash hands, as necessary. They are also encouraged to make alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol available, if possible

Staffing and Operations

Places of Worship shall communicate to members and workers that they should not attend services in-person if any of the following are true:

- Member or worker is experiencing any symptoms such as fever (100.0 and above) or chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, headache, muscle/body aches, runny nose/congestion, new loss of taste or smell, or nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Member or worker has had "close contact" with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19. "Close contact" means living in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, caring for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, being within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more, or coming in direct contact with secretions (e.g., sharing utensils, being coughed on) from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, while that person was symptomatic
- Member or worker has been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by their doctor or a local public health official

Places of worship shall not have communal gathering pre or post service (e.g., coffee hours or other food services)

Places of worship can allow small gatherings (such as support group meetings) to be held with 10 persons or fewer

Places of worship running food pantries or other prepackaged food distribution may continue to do so

If a place of worship learns that an attendee or worker or other worker has tested positive for COVID-19, it shall notify the local Board of Health (LBOH) in the city or town where the place of worship is located and assist the LBOH as reasonably requested to trace likely contacts and advise contacts to isolate and self-quarantine

Recommended best practices

Places of worship are encouraged to modify the means to collect any financial contributions from attendees so as to eliminate shared contribution trays and baskets and to minimize contact. Consider setting up a no-touch method to collect contributions, and encouraging contributions through mail or electronic means

Places of worship are encouraged to modify communal rituals, like taking communion or passing of the peace, so as to limit contact with others. Consider distributing, where applicable, prepackaged communion or sacraments

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Places of worship shall be cleaned and disinfected between each service, including disinfection of heavy transit areas and high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, bathrooms, microphones, shared instruments)

If a place of worship learns that an individual with COVID-19 attended a service or otherwise entered the place of worship, it shall conduct a deep cleaning and disinfecting consistent with the Centers for Disease Control [guidance](#)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

If a Place of worship learns that an attendee or worker or other worker has tested positive for COVID-19, it shall notify the local Board of Health (LBOH) in the city or town where the place of worship is located and assist the LBOH as reasonably requested to advise likely contacts to isolate and self-quarantine

Checklist

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Ensure >6ft between individuals

☐ For indoor services, places of worship must monitor member entries and exits and limit occupancy at all times to the greater of the following:

- 50% of the building's maximum permitted occupancy as documented in its occupancy permit on record with the municipal building department or other municipal record holder
- Buildings for which no permitted occupancy limitation is on record may allow 10 persons (including staff) per 1,000 square feet of accessible space
- In any case, no enclosed space within the building may exceed occupancy of 10 persons per 1,000 square feet
- All occupancy counts and calculations shall include attendees, staff, and other workers

☐ If feasible, places of worship are encouraged to arrange online sign-up for services in advance in order to monitor and limit the number of attendees

- ☐ If there is fixed seating, rows should be blocked off and kept empty to allow for sufficient distancing between rows
- ☐ Places of worship are encouraged to place tape or other visual distancing markings on seating to delineate 6 foot separations and to post signage indicating the maximum number of persons permitted per row
- ☐ Promote ventilation for enclosed spaces where possible. For example, consider opening windows and doors to allow airflow
- ☐ All attendees and staff must wear face coverings or masks in accordance with COVID-19 Order No. 31 and the [Department of Public Health's Guidance](https://www.mass.gov/news/wear-a-mask-in-public) ([/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/news/wear-a-mask-in-public](https://www.mass.gov/news/wear-a-mask-in-public)) while inside and while entering and exiting places of worship or otherwise participating in in-person services, except where a person is unable to wear a face covering or mask because of a medical or disabling condition
- ☐ A leader or celebrant engaged in conducting the service or making an address may remove his or her face covering while doing so, provided that he or she is able to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from other persons present; installation of protective, plexi-glass or other transparent barriers is recommended for lecterns and other points of address
- ☐ For children between age 2 and 5, the wearing of a face covering or mask is at the discretion of the child's parent or guardian. Children under the age of 2 should not wear a face covering or mask
- ☐ A person who declines to wear a face covering or mask because of a medical or disabling condition shall not be required to produce documentation verifying the condition
- ☐ Places of worship may refuse entry to a person who refuses to wear a face covering or mask for non-medical reasons
- ☐ Places of worship are encouraged to take steps to encourage orderly entering and exiting of services in a manner that encourages social distancing. For example:
 - Signage or floor markings should be posted to have one-way aisles or otherwise direct attendees to follow certain pathways for entering and exiting the service
 - If a line forms outside of the service, those waiting should be directed to maintain social distancing. Tape or other markings on the ground outside of Places of worship should be placed to encourage attendees to maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet
 - Staff should direct people in high traffic areas to help maintain social distancing
 - Officiants or other staff should direct successive, row-by-row exiting

HYGIENE PROTOCOLS

Apply robust hygiene protocols

- ☐ Ensure that attendees and workers have access to handwashing facilities, including soap and running water, and allow workers sufficient break time to wash hands, as necessary. Places of worship are also encouraged to make alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol available, if possible

STAFFING & OPERATIONS

Include safety procedures in the operations

- ☐ Places of Worship shall communicate to members and workers that they should not attend services in-person if any of the following are true:

• Member or worker has had “close contact” with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19. “Close contact” means living in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, caring for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, being within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more, or coming in direct contact with secretions (e.g., sharing utensils, being coughed on) from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, while that person was symptomatic

• Member or worker has been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by their doctor or a local public health official

☐ Places of worship shall not have communal gathering pre or post service (e.g., coffee hours or other food services)

☐ Places of worship may allow small gatherings (such as support group meetings) to be held with 10 persons or fewer

☐ Places of worship running food pantries or other prepackaged food distribution may continue to do so

☐ Any childcare services should follow the latest EEC child-care guidance, available on the [EEC Reopening Site](#)

(https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://eeclead.force.com/apex/EEC_ChildCareEmergencyReopenInfo)

☐ If a place of worship learns that an attendee or worker or other worker has tested positive for COVID-19, it shall notify the local Board of Health (LBOH) in the city or town where the place of worship is located and assist the LBOH as reasonably requested to trace likely contacts and advise contacts to isolate and self-quarantine

☐ Places of worship are encouraged to modify the means to collect any financial contributions from attendees so as to eliminate shared contribution trays and baskets and to minimize contact. Consider setting up a no-touch method to collect contributions, and encouraging contributions through mail or electronic means

☐ Places of worship are encouraged to modify communal rituals, like taking communion or passing of the peace, so as to limit contact with others. Consider distributing, where applicable, prepackaged communion or sacraments

CLEANING & DISINFECTING

Incorporate robust hygiene protocols

☐ Places of worship shall be cleaned and disinfected between each service, including disinfection of heavy transit areas and high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, bathrooms, microphones, shared instruments)

☐ If a place of worship learns that an individual with COVID-19 attended a service or otherwise entered the place of worship, it shall conduct a deep cleaning and disinfecting consistent with the Centers for Disease Control [guidance](#)

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>)

☐ If a Place of worship learns that an attendee or worker or other worker has tested positive for COVID-19, it shall notify the local Board of Health (LBOH) in the city or town where the place of worship is located and assist the LBOH as reasonably requested to advise likely contacts to isolate and self-quarantine

Phase III Downloads and Translations

- [Sector Specific Workplace Safety Standards \(Phase III Step 1\) For Places of Worship To Address COVID-19](#)

(</web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/sector-specific-workplace-safety-standards-phase-iii-step-1-for-places-of-worship-to-address/download>)

- [Phase III Step 1 Places of Worship Protocol Summary](#)

(</web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-iii-step-1-places-of-worship-protocol-summary/download>)

- [Phase III Step 1 Places of Worship Checklist](#) (</web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-iii-step-1-places-of-worship-checklist/download>)

- [Phase III Step 1 Places of Worship Protocol Summary - Korean | 한국어](#)
(/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-iii-step-1-places-of-worship-protocol-summary-korean-hangugeo/download)
- [Phase III Step 1 Places of Worship Protocol Summary - Spanish | Español](#)
(/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-iii-step-1-places-of-worship-protocol-summary-spanish-espanol/download)
- [Phase III Step 1 Places of Worship Protocol Summary - Chinese Simplified | 中文 \(简体字\)](#)
(/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-iii-step-1-places-of-worship-protocol-summary-chinese-simplified-zhongwenjiantizi/download)
- [Phase III Step 1 Places of Worship Protocol Summary - Chinese Traditional | 中文 \(正體字\)](#)
(/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-iii-step-1-places-of-worship-protocol-summary-chinese-traditional-zhongwenzhengtizi/download)
- [Phase III Step 1 Places of Worship Protocol Summary - Vietnamese | Tiếng Việt](#)
(/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-iii-step-1-places-of-worship-protocol-summary-vietnamese-tieng-viet/download)
- [Phase III Step 1 Places of Worship Protocol Summary - Khmer | ខ្មែរ](#)
(/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-iii-step-1-places-of-worship-protocol-summary-khmer-khmaer/download)
- [Phase III Step 1 Places of Worship Protocol Summary - Portuguese | Português](#)
(/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-iii-step-1-places-of-worship-protocol-summary-portuguese-portugues/download)
- [Phase III Step 1 Places of Worship Protocol Summary - Haitian Creole | Kreyòl ayisyen](#)
(/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-iii-step-1-places-of-worship-protocol-summary-haitian-creole-kreyol-ayisyen/download)
- [Phase III Step 1 Places of Worship Protocol Summary - Gujarati | ગુજરાતી](#)
(/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-iii-step-1-places-of-worship-protocol-summary-gujarati-gaujaraatai/download)

Phase II Downloads

These are updated documents for Phase II of the reopening plan.

Additional Resources

Sector Specific Workplace Safety Standards (Phase II) For Places of Worship To Address COVID-19

(https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/sector-specific-workplace-safety-standards-phase-ii-for-places-of-worship-to-address-covid-19/)

(PDF 504.82 KB)

Places of Worship Phase II Protocols Summary

(https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/places-of-worship-phase-ii-protocols-summary/download) (PDF 173.43 KB)

Places of Worship Phase II Checklist

(https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/places-of-worship-phase-ii-checklist/download) (PDF 195.74 KB)

Phase I Downloads and Translations

Additional resources below, including easy print versions of the sector-specific circular and checklist.

Additional Resources

Sector Specific Workplace Safety Standards (Phase I) For Places of Worship and Religious Services To Address COVID-19

(https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/sector-specific-workplace-safety-standards-phase-i-for-places-of-worship-and-religious-services/)

(PDF 123.58 KB)

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/safety-standards-and-checklist-places-of-worship>

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202 captures

18 May 2020 - 23 Mar 2021

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Phase I Places of Worship Checklist

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-checklist/download>) (PDF 197.14 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Protocols Summary (Vietnamese)

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-protocols-summary-vietnamese/download>)

(PDF 683.5 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Checklist (Vietnamese)

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-checklist-vietnamese/download>) (PDF 504.01 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Protocols Summary (Chinese Traditional | 中文 (正體字))

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-protocols-summary-chinese-traditional-zhongwenzhengtizi/download>)

(PDF 493.72 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Checklist (Chinese Traditional | 中文 (正體字))

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-checklist-chinese-traditional-zhongwenzhengtizi/download>)

(PDF 346.98 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Protocols Summary (Chinese Simplified | 中文 (简体字))

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-protocols-summary-chinese-simplified-zhongwenjiantizi/download>)

(PDF 457.31 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Checklist (Chinese Simplified | 中文 (简体字))

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-checklist-chinese-simplified-zhongwenjiantizi/download>)

(PDF 308.33 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Protocols Summary (Portuguese | Português)

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-protocols-summary-portuguese-portugues/download>)

(PDF 307.13 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Checklist (Portuguese | Português)

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-checklist-portuguese-portugues/download>)

(PDF 303.78 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Protocols Summary (Khmer | ខ្មែរ)

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-protocols-summary-khmer-khmaer/download>)

(PDF 234.08 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Checklist (Khmer | ខ្មែរ)

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-checklist-khmer-khmaer/download>) (PDF 164.37 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Protocols Summary (Haitian Creole | Kreyòl ayisyen)

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-protocols-summary-haitian-creole-kreyol-ayisyen/download>)

(PDF 407.19 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Checklist (Haitian Creole | Kreyòl ayisyen)

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-checklist-haitian-creole-kreyol-ayisyen/download>)

(PDF 403.71 KB)

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/safety-standards-and-checklist-places-of-worship>

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18 May 2020 - 23 Mar 2021

(PDF 433.21 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Checklist (Gujarati | ગુજરાતી)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-checklist-gujarati-gaujaraatai/download>

(PDF 217.78 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Protocols Summary (Korean | 한국어)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-protocols-summary-korean-hangugeo/download>

(PDF 424.92 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Checklist (Korean | 한국어)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-checklist-korean-hangugeo/download> (PDF 422.21 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Protocols Summary (Arabic | اللغة العربية)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-protocols-summary-arabic-allght-alrbyt/download>

(PDF 223.18 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Checklist (Arabic | اللغة العربية)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-checklist-arabic-allght-alrbyt/download>

(PDF 281.52 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Protocols Summary (Spanish | Español)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-protocols-summary-spanish-espanol/download>

(PDF 216.25 KB)

Phase I Places of Worship Checklist (Spanish | Español)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812143621/https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-i-places-of-worship-checklist-spanish-espanol/download> (PDF 199.72 KB)

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July 6, 2020