

Issued on 18 Jun 2020

Paragraphs 4 to 6 updated as of 2 Aug 2020

Paragraph 10 updated as of 18 Aug 2020

Paragraphs 4, 5, 8, 10 to 15, 18, 19 updated as of 30 Sep 2020

## RESUMPTION OF MORE RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES IN PHASE TWO

On 15 Jun 2020, the Multi-Ministry Taskforce announced that Phase Two will commence after 18 Jun 2020 2359hrs. This advisory provides guidance to religious organisations (ROs) on the gradual resumption of more activities in places of worship during Phase Two.

### PHASE TWO: SAFE TRANSITION

2. During Phase One ("Safe Re-opening"), places of worship could re-open for private worship for up to 5 households at a time, in addition to the conduct of marriage solemnizations as well as wakes and funerals.

3. From 19 Jun 2020, places of worship can gradually resume more religious activities, with the necessary precautions to safeguard public health. In particular, places of worship have to put in place safe management measures that reduce the density, intensity and duration of physical interactions during religious activities.

#### Marriage Solemnizations

4. Places of worship may conduct marriage solemnizations. From 3 Oct 2020, **solemnizations can involve up to 100 persons** (up from the current limit of 50 persons), excluding the solemnizer and religious and supporting workers, whose numbers should be kept to a minimum.

- a. If the total number of attendees is between 50 to 100 persons, attendees must be split into multiple zones of up to 50 persons (see paragraph 12 for zoning requirements). Attendees must remain within their zones and cannot cross from one zone to another.
- b. Persons attending the solemnization must maintain a 1 metre safe distance between groups, with each group made up of not more than 5 persons. An exception can be made for a core 'wedding party'<sup>1</sup> comprising up to 20 persons (including the couple and their two witnesses). There should be no intermingling or mixing between groups nor between the 'wedding party' and these other attendees.
- c. Attendees must leave the place of worship immediately after the event. There may not be any reception with food and drinks, or wedding celebrations that are not essential religious rites.

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<sup>1</sup> Besides the couple and their two witnesses, the core wedding party can comprise a group of close family and / or friends who are required or expected to interact with one another during the course of the solemnization.

- d. ROs must also comply with prevailing safe management measures stipulated by the Ministry of Health.<sup>2</sup>

5. Video link solemnizations will continue to be offered and encouraged as an option for couples.

### Funerals

6. Places of worship may continue to conduct wakes and funerals. Families may also continue to install niches for their loved ones in columbaria in places of worship. From 4 Aug 2020, **funerals, wakes, installation of niches and post-funeral rites at places of worship can involve up to 30 persons at any one time** (up from the previous limit of 20 persons), excluding religious and supporting workers, whose numbers should be kept to a minimum.

- a. Persons attending funeral-related activities must maintain a 1 metre safe distance between groups, with each group made up of not more than 5 persons.
- b. Attendees must leave the place of worship immediately after the event. There may not be any reception with food and drinks.

7. **Columbaria in places of worship may re-open to visitors. Families who visit in groups are limited to no more than 5 persons in a group**, with safe distancing of at least 1 metre between groups. These visits should be kept as short as possible, with no mingling between groups.

### Non-Congregational Religious Activities

8. Places of worship may conduct **religious rites and other religious activities (e.g. pastoral services, religious classes for adults and children) for groups of up to 5 persons, not exceeding a total of 50 persons for each activity**, subject to safe distancing and other safe management measures appropriate to the nature of the rite / religious activity. This is also subject to the total venue cap of 100 persons at any one time (see paragraph 14). Where necessary, there can be multiple groups of 5 in the same activity, so long as each group of 5 is separated by at least 1 metre with no mingling across groups.

- a. Religious classes must not exceed 50 persons, including the religious worker / teacher<sup>3</sup> (and supporting workers, if any). As a best practice, we encourage a greater separation of 2 metres between groups of students attending religious classes.

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to: <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg/safemanagement/sector>

<sup>3</sup> Persons who are speaking to a group in a classroom or lecture-style setting, where they largely remain at the spot from which they are speaking, may wear face shields in lieu of masks, and must be at least 1 metre away from any other individual.

## Recording and Broadcast of Religious Services and Prayers

9. ROs are encouraged to continue supporting the religious needs of their communities via remote means such as recording and broadcast of religious services and prayers. From 18 Aug 2020, **ROs can have up to 30 persons on-location for these productions, of which up to 10 persons can be unmasked at any one time. If there is “live” singing during these recording / broadcast sessions, a maximum of 5 persons present may be unmasked at any one time.** Those who are unmasked for singing must maintain at least 2 metres safe distance from other individuals. All other persons present must remain masked and maintain a 1 metre separation. The time spent on-location for this activity should be kept as short as possible. The production team must also put in place safe management measures, including no-cross deployment between locations (where practicable), no socialisation during breaks and thorough cleaning of technical equipment.

## Worship Services

10. From 3 Oct 2020, places of worship may **conduct congregational and other worship services with up to 100 persons (up from the current 50) at a time** (excluding religious and supporting workers, whose numbers should be kept to a minimum), subject to safe management measures.<sup>4</sup>

11. Places of worship should observe the following safe management measures for worship services:

- a. Worshippers have to observe **1 metre safe distance** between others if they are worshipping individually. Worshippers may also worship in groups of no more than 5 persons, with 1 metre safe distancing between groups.
- b. Keep worship services to **as short a duration as possible**. Worshippers should leave immediately after performing their worship. There should be no reception or mingling between worshippers, before, during or after each worship service.
- c. All persons present (except children below 6 years of age) must **wear a face mask at all times**.<sup>5</sup> Young children are still strongly encouraged to use a mask or face shield, especially when they are in a group setting (e.g. attending worship service or religious class) or when interacting with others. Those who are involved in the conduct of the worship service (e.g. preachers, prayer leader, scripture reader) may wear a face shield when performing their speaking duties and must be at least 1 metre away from any other individual.

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<sup>4</sup> Places of worship that are located in residential units may re-open, subject to prevailing restrictions on homes and households, where visits are limited to any 5 visitors at a time.

<sup>5</sup> Children twelve years and below, as well as persons who have health conditions that may result in breathing or other medical difficulties when a mask is worn for a prolonged period of time, may wear a face shield in lieu of a face mask.

- d. **Singing and other live performances are not permitted during the worship service.** Singing is considered a higher risk activity as it could potentially release a larger amount of droplets. Places of worship may consider alternatives to singing and other live performance components in their worship services.
- e. There should be **no sharing of prayer and other common items** (e.g. holy books, passing of offertory baskets, prayer mats) as this increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Worshippers are to bring along their personal prayer items instead, where required.
- f. Places of worship with reduced air circulation (e.g. enclosed prayer spaces, air-conditioned worship hall) should, where possible, open doors and windows to naturally **ventilate the space after use**.

12. For congregational services exceeding 50 persons, worshippers have to be divided into zones holding no more than 50 persons each. As there should be no mingling of individuals across zones, each zone must be completely separated from another by either a physical solid partition (at least 1.8m high if not floor-to-ceiling, from wall-to-wall); or at least 3m physical spacing demarcated by barriers (e.g. cones, ropes). There must either be a separate ingress / egress for each zone or staggered entrance / exit timings so that attendees from different zones do not mix with one another during entry / exit. ROs must also take reasonable steps to ensure people do not cross the physical barrier (where applicable).

13. We hope to gradually increase the worship limit beyond 100 persons at a later time, if COVID-19 community transmission remains low and stable, and ROs are able to implement the safe management measures.

## **SAFE CAPACITY IN THE PLACE OF WORSHIP**

14. From 3 Oct 2020, all the permitted religious activities in paragraphs 4 to 9 (i.e. excluding congregational and other worship services) can take place concurrently at the place of worship subject to a **total cap of 100 persons (up from the current limit of 50)<sup>6</sup>**, and only if these activities can be conducted safely at separate locations within the place of worship. There must be sufficient signs and directions to guide the different parties such that they do not interact or meet each other while entering, exiting, or while in the premises.

15. **ROs who wish to conduct congregational and other worship services, can do so with no more than an additional 100 worshippers in the premises.** For example, if there are 100 persons in a worship service, as well as a religious class involving 50 persons, there can be at most another 50 persons taking part in other permitted religious activities<sup>7</sup> (i.e. not worship services) at the same time. Worshippers

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<sup>6</sup> This total cap is the combined number of persons participating in the various permitted activities (excluding congregational and other worship services) on the premises at any one time, excluding the religious and supporting workers. Respective caps on the individual activities will continue to apply.

<sup>7</sup> For example, this could be a separate religious class involving 50 persons, or a religious rite involving up to 50 persons.

should not mingle across activities. However, we strongly urge ROs to consider reducing other concurrent activities when congregational and other worship services are ongoing, so that there is a smaller total number of people on the premises at any one time, which will help to minimise the risk of large clusters from forming.

16. ROs must establish a one-way flow for entry and exit points for all the permitted activities, and manage the arrival of worshippers to avoid queues from forming.

## DEPLOYMENT OF MANPOWER

17. ROs should **primarily engage their religious workers and staff to support the permitted religious activities but can deploy volunteers to support if necessary**. The number of personnel involved in conducting each permitted activity should be kept to a minimum.

18. In Phase Two, ROs can **resume their workplace activities at their registered premises** without the need to apply to the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) for a Time-Limited Exemption. Work-from-home remains the default mode of working. However, from 28 Sep 2020, employees who are able to work from home may return to the workplace to better support work and business operations, subject to prevailing workplace safe management measures stipulated by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM).<sup>8</sup> There should also be no cross-deployment<sup>9</sup> or interaction between workers in different shifts, teams or worksites, even outside of work.

## MANDATORY SUBMISSION OF SAFE MANAGEMENT PLANS

19. ROs must submit their Safe Management Plans (SMPs), including manpower deployment, **at least 3 days** before commencing Phase Two activities. The detailed requirements and format for submitting these SMPs can be found at [www.cpro.gov.sg](http://www.cpro.gov.sg).

- a. For private worship, marriage solemnizations, funeral-related activities and recording / broadcast sessions that ROs are already allowed to conduct in Phase One, they may continue to do so under Phase Two parameters for these activities.
- b. For the religious activities in paragraph 8 that are newly-permitted under Phase Two, ROs with SMPs that comply with the parameters set out in this advisory may commence these activities from 19 Jun 2020, or 3 days after the SMP is submitted, whichever is later.
- c. Congregational and other worship services may resume from 26 Jun 2020, as ROs require more time to prepare the safe management measures. Similarly, these should only proceed no sooner than 3 days after the SMP is submitted, whichever is later.

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<sup>8</sup> Refer to: <https://www.mom.gov.sg/covid-19/requirements-for-safe-management-measures>

<sup>9</sup> If cross-deployment cannot be avoided (e.g. due to the nature of the job), additional safeguards must be taken to minimise the risk of cross-infection (e.g. systems are in place to ensure no direct contact with the cross-deployed personnel).

- d. ROs that have previously submitted their Phase Two SMPs have to submit an updated SMP if they wish to have more than 50 persons for their congregational and other worship services.

20. ROs requesting deviations from the parameters set out in this advisory will require MCCY's approval before proceeding with their activities.

21. MCCY reserves the right to suspend a RO's activities if there are gaps in the SMP submitted and until the necessary rectifications are made. Should there be any confirmed COVID-19 cases linked to a RO's premises or place of worship, the premises may be closed for a period of time as determined by the authorities.

## **WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE SINGAPORE COVID-SAFE**

22. As we resume more religious and other activities, there will be more physical contact between persons, which increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission. We will therefore have to remain vigilant and regularly refine our safe management measures in order to safely conduct religious activities. MCCY will continue to work with our ROs to ensure a COVID-safe environment for religious activities.

## **MINISTRY OF CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH**

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For more information and FAQs on COVID-19 for the religious sector, please visit [www.cpro.gov.sg](http://www.cpro.gov.sg) or contact MCCY's Crisis Preparedness for Religious Organisations Programme Office at [cpro@mccy.gov.sg](mailto:cpro@mccy.gov.sg).