



COVID-19 Guidelines: RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

MARCH 9, 2020

For You To Know Right Now

Yolo County's Health Officer strongly recommends that all community organizations, schools, religious organizations, other entities and event planners cancel any non-essential mass gatherings or large community events starting on March 10, 2020. The Yolo County Health Officer will reassess this recommendation on or before April 1, 2020.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Yolo County is working with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) in monitoring COVID-19 and providing guidance and resources to prevent, detect and respond to the occurrence of COVID-19 cases in Yolo County and California. All organizations hosting events should prepare for possible impacts of event cancellations due to COVID-19 and take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as well as other infectious diseases, including influenza. We are now seeing cases of COVID-19 that represent community spread.

STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED IN YOLO

The goals of the Health Officer's recommendations are:

- 1) To protect people attending and working at large gatherings in the local community from contracting COVID-19; and
- 2) To reduce community transmission and introductions of COVID-19 into new communities.

Mass gatherings and large community events bring people from multiple communities into close contact with each other and have the potential to increase COVID-19 transmission. **Mass gatherings are events** where large numbers of people are within an arm's length of one another for an extended period of time. Mass gatherings may include: religious services, sporting events, plays, music concerts, assemblies, and conferences.

One method to slow the spread of respiratory virus infections, including COVID-19, is by increasing **social distancing** (reduce close contact), especially for the more susceptible or immuno-compromised populations. **Social distancing** also helps prevent our healthcare system from becoming rapidly overwhelmed.

STRATEGIES FOR RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Everyone can do their part to help plan, prepare for, and respond to this emerging public health concern. Religious institutions frequently hold large gatherings and events that bring people into close contact, which have the potential to increase the transmission of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. In addition to canceling such non-essential mass gatherings and large community events, religious institutions can implement other strategies to protect their congregations and the public:

Actively Encourage People to Stay Home:

- People who have symptoms of respiratory illness are recommended to stay home until they are free of fever (100.4° F or greater) and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants).
- Be aware that more people needing to stay home from work to care for themselves, sick children, or other sick family members may cause hardship on families and communities.

Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene:

- Place posters that encourage [staying home when sick](#), [cough and sneeze etiquette](#), and [hand hygiene](#) at the entrance to facilities and in other areas where they are likely to be seen.
- Remind people to clean their hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Provide soap and water, alcohol-based hand rubs, tissues, and no-touch disposal receptacles.
- Encourage the use of nods or elbow bumps in place of handshakes and hugs.

Offer Alternatives Options for Traditional Religious Practices:

- Some religious practices and traditions may be more likely to allow for the transmission of disease, such as communal use of the blessed water basin, communion by intinction, and communal drinking cups. Consider refraining from these practices or implementing alternatives such as single serving disposable cups and use of hand sanitizer.
- Offer online and video streaming for services and meetings, so congregations can participate in religious services from home.



Perform Routine Environmental Cleaning:

- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in your facilities. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label. Ensure that daycare areas are thoroughly cleaned.

RESOURCES

- www.yolocounty.org/coronavirus
- www.yolocounty.org/coronavirusguidance
- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCD/C/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>