



Lincoln County Health Department

607 N. Sales Street, Suite 101, Merrill, WI 54452
Phone: 715-536-0307 (Fax: 715-536-2011
<http://lincolncountyhealthdepartment.com>



Lincoln County COVID-19 Guidance for Communities of Faith

Issue Date: June, 2020

As increasing operations are occurring for many different types of facilities in Lincoln County, it is important to recognize that continued diligence with proper safety precautions is essential during the COVID-19 pandemic to prevent the transmission of disease. Mental and physical health are important during the pandemic, and so is spiritual health. Taking time to be mindful, meditate, and pray are vitally important to many residents as part of their essential needs. Limiting the chances for physical contact in group settings has proven to be the most effective way to slow the spread of COVID-19 and keep communities of faith protected. The following guidance continues to stress the importance of following recommendations by the Lincoln County Health Department.

Religious Gathering Guidance

Mass gatherings are those planned or spontaneous indoor or outdoor events with a large number of people in attendance. As per Lincoln County Health Department Guidance, religious gatherings can be considered mass gatherings and should only be held if **all** of the following strategies are met:

1. Lincoln County Health Officials recommend gatherings should not exceed more than 50 people.
2. Events should limit the number of individuals to not exceed more than 25% of the total occupancy limit established by the local municipality.
3. Physical distancing of 6 feet must be maintained at any gathering.
4. In order to reduce spread of disease, face coverings are recommended. It is important to know that face coverings do not take the place of 6 feet physical distancing.
5. Frequent cleaning and disinfection, including hand washing/hand sanitizer availability; all surfaces frequently touched such as benches or door handles should be cleaned and disinfected pre and post gathering. Frequent cleaning of bathroom facilities should occur.
6. If a participant does not or is unable to wear a face covering during the religious gathering or service, they should maintain 6 feet physical distance from others.

Minimize sharing of worship materials and other items

1. Consistent with the community's faith tradition, consider temporarily limiting the sharing of frequently touched objects, such as worship aids, prayer rugs, prayer books, hymnals, religious texts and other bulletins, books, or other items passed or shared among congregants, and

Our mission: Providing services to residents promoting optimal health and safety through prevention, protection, and intervention.

encourage congregants to bring their own such items, if possible, or photocopying or projecting prayers, songs, and texts using electronic means.

2. Modify the methods used to receive financial contributions. Consider a stationary collection box, the main, or electronic methods of collecting regular financial contributions instead of shared collection trays or baskets.
3. Consider whether physical contact (e.g., shaking hands, hugging, or kissing) can be limited among members of the faith community.
4. If food is offered at any event, consider pre-packaged options, and avoid buffet or family-style meals if possible.

Plan for when a staff member or congregant becomes sick

1. Identify an area to separate anyone who exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 during hours of operation, and ensure that children are not left without adult supervision (if applicable).
2. Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who becomes ill at the facility to their home or a healthcare facility.
3. Notify local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility and communicate with staff and congregants about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act or other applicable laws and in accordance with religious practices.
4. Advise those who are ill or feeling unwell to stay home and self-isolate until feeling better and if feeling suspicious for disease related to COVID-19 to call their health care provider for testing recommendations.
5. Close off areas used by any ill person and do not use the area until after cleaning and disinfection. Ensure safe and correct use of disinfectants and keep disinfectant products away from children.
6. Advise staff and congregants with symptoms of COVID-19 or who have tested positive for COVID-19 not to return to the facility until they have met CDC guidelines as advised by Lincoln County Health Department.

In the event a person diagnosed with COVID-19 is determined to have been in the building and poses a risk to the community, it is strongly suggested to dismiss attendees. Then it is important to properly clean and disinfect the area and the building where the individual was present before resuming activities. Participation to assist with public health investigations related to COVID-19 confirmed or suspect cases is important as related to any/all faith-based organization operations including assistance with identification and contacting of attending individuals to any in person events held.

Contact the Lincoln County Health Department with concerns or questions at 715-536-0307 and check out our website <http://lincolncountyhealthdepartment.com> for the latest information as this situation continues to evolve.