



**Diocese of Buffalo**  
**Guidelines for Faith Formation**  
**During the Coronavirus Pandemic**

*“Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you;  
and now he is living at your side every day  
to enlighten, strengthen and free you.”*  
*Pope Francis ~The Joy of the Gospel, no. 164*

During this difficult time it is even more imperative that we accompany God’s people as they develop and strengthen their relationship with Jesus. Faith Formation Leaders partner with parents who are the primary catechists for their children.

*The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch,  
but also in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ.*  
*General Directory for Catechesis (1997), no. 80*

Catechetical ministry must continue, but how it takes place will be different due to the pandemic. Parishes are accountable for providing for the health, safety and well-being of participants. Now that we have the New York State Department of Education and Health Guidelines for Reopening Schools we prepared these guidelines to assist you as you plan for Faith Formation.

Please note these guidelines are presuming you are having gathered Faith Formation/classroom model with children. If you are using a shared building with a Catholic School, then you must follow the same protocols and procedures as the Catholic School.

**Cleaning and Sanitizing**

- Conduct a thorough and detailed cleaning of the meeting spaces, with focus on high touch areas high-touch areas (door handles, sink handles, water bottle fountains, electronics, shared objects.)
- Sanitize high-touch surfaces before and after sessions (e.g., door handles, tables, chairs).
- Clean and sanitize restrooms regularly based on frequency of use.
- Disinfect tables, desks and chairs before and after each session.
- Provide hand sanitizer or wipes at every entrance and in all rooms used for sessions.
- Cover any/all water fountains as they are not allowed as per New York State Education Department Guidelines. Only water bottle fountains may be used.
- Avoid use of items (e.g. rugs, mats) that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected.

- If needed, arrange to store individual parish-owned items (e.g. reusable name tags, books, and other resources) in individually labeled storage bags and clean after each use.

### **Health and Safety**

- Post signs about hygiene practices (hand washing, wearing masks, etc.)
- All employees should follow their parish's protocols for temperature and symptom check before beginning their work day.
- Employees, volunteers (catechists/aides/hall monitors, etc. and students are to wear masks. The following protocols for masks during gathered Faith Formation sessions have been developed in accordance with New York State Education and Health Department Guidelines.

Masks or cloth face-coverings do not need to be worn when:

- At least six (6) feet of social distance is able to be maintained.
- In-person gatherings when held in an open, well-ventilated space with appropriate social distancing among participants.
- Employees are in their normal workspace while observing social distancing, or working alone within a workspace.

Exceptions to mask/face covering requirements will be made for those for whom it is not possible due to medical conditions, disability impact, or other health or safety factors.

- Additional disposable paper masks for adults and children should be available for anyone who needs one.
- Face shields may be provided by the parish for employees and volunteer catechists/aides.
- Keep hand sanitizer accessible for employees/volunteers to use before passing out papers, items, etc. to students.
- Have one or more forehead scan/touchless thermometers to check volunteers' and students' temperatures.
- All volunteers must be screened with a temperature check and Covid symptom questions before allowing them entry to Faith Formation sessions. Students must have a temperature check before entry. Anyone with a temperature of 100 degrees or above is not allowed to enter. If they do not have immediate transportation, then they must be taken to the designated quarantine room to await pick up. This is in accordance with New York State Department of Education Guidelines pages 20-21.
- Establish a designated quarantine room where an individual who has a temperature over 100 degrees or exhibits Covid symptoms will wait with a staff member (who will wear proper protective equipment) to be picked up by their family.
- Find out your county Health Department's procedures to follow if a student, employee, volunteer, or a member of their respective families tests positive for COVID-19 or has had contact with someone who has tested positive.

### **Contact Tracing**

- Keep a log of every volunteer and visitor to your office, program, and space where you hold sessions in addition to the student Attendance Records for your sessions. If you have a family session or meeting, keep a log listing every individual and volunteer who attended the session. At this time these logs are to be kept on file indefinitely.

### **Physical Distancing**

- Maintain six feet of physical distance between non-household participants.
- Establish arrival and departure procedures.
- If needed, implement delayed or staggered schedules, including dismissal and time spent outdoors and for any communal spaces.
- Establish room capacity. 20 square feet per person is required as per New York State Department of Education Guidelines page 49.
- Post social distancing markers using tape or signs that denote 6 feet of spacing in the hallways.
- Designate how many people may be on a stairway at a time to maintain 6 feet of spacing.
- Students should travel in single file on the right side of the hallway. Designate walking direction with arrows if necessary.
- Designate how many people are allowed in a bathroom at a time.
- Limit movement and intermingling of groups across facilities.
- Turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other) or have participants sit on only one side of tables, facing the same direction, spaced six feet apart.
- Participants are to store their own individual water bottles or food items.
- If food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each person instead of a buffet or family-style meal. Avoid sharing of food and utensils.
- If possible, participants are to bring their own supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible or limit use of supplies and equipment by one person at a time and clean and disinfect between use.

### **Facility Safety**

- Limit visitors to the program.
- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air by opening windows and doors.
- Advise all employees and volunteers to avoid unnecessary travel domestically and internationally. The New York State quarantine restrictions at the time of travel will apply to all employees and volunteers.
- Communicate to participating families who will be attending gathered Faith Formation sessions that as per New York State Department of Education Guidelines they are advised to avoid unnecessary travel domestically and internationally. The New York State quarantine restrictions at the time of travel will apply to all participating families attending gathered Faith Formation sessions.
- Make sure you have enough personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, face shields, etc.) and cleansers, hand soap, hand sanitizer, disinfectants and disinfectant wipes to meet cleaning/sanitizing/disinfecting requirements.
- Obtain a copy of your parish's New York State Business Reopening Safety Plan so you know the procedures and the cleaning supplies your parish is using.