

**Diocese of San Angelo**  
**Phase Two, Version 2.0**  
**COVID-19 Gathering Protocols**  
**July 22, 2021**

The following Phase Two Gathering Protocols become effective in the Diocese of San Angelo upon promulgation. These protocols relate to the use of church facilities for gatherings such as receptions, family reunions, funeral meals, baby or wedding showers, choir practices, meetings of parish or outside organizations, parish festivals, etc.

1. Civil regulations:

Please follow state, county, and city regulations for gatherings.

2. If a gathering cannot maintain the safety requirements in this document, it may not take place. The person in charge of the facility (parish pastor, school principal, agency director) ultimately determines the practicability of any event in that facility.

Monitoring of these protocols is to be carried out by staff or trained volunteers.

3. Room capacity:

When facilities are used for gatherings, groups may not exceed state, county, or city limits of the normal occupancy capacity for the room being used. Normal occupancy capacity of a room is determined in accordance with the latest version of the International Fire Code as adopted by the State of Texas and the respective local government. There are no current state occupancy limits; however, pastors or gathering leaders must check and comply with any county or city limits and comply with those regulations.

4. Social Distance

Out of charity for others, all participants are encouraged to maintain 3 feet of social distance from others. When this is not possible, they are encouraged to wear a facemask. All participants are to be respectful of those who choose to maintain social distancing.

5. Outdoor Gatherings:

Currently there are no state limits on outside gatherings. Pastors, staff, or trained volunteers must monitor and ensure compliance for any county and local limits.

6. Attendees:

The following persons are encouraged to stay home:

- a. Those who have serious underlying medical conditions.

- b. Those who are feeling sick or who have a cough of any sort.
- c. Even more urgently, anyone who has any reason to believe they might have been exposed to COVID-19 should remain at home.

#### 7. Facemasks:

Under current conditions and capacities, facemasks are not required but are optional. If any person chooses to wear a facemask for their own personal reasons, their choice is to be respected and there is to be no mocking nor bullying for anyone who chooses to wear a facemask. The diocese will continue to monitor the public health situation, and changes are possible in response to changes in the pandemic, government guidance, or other mitigating factors.

- a) If facemasks are used, messages or images on the face coverings must not be contrary to Catholic faith and morals.
- b) Face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms.
- c) According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the coronavirus is spread mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets. The face covering acts as a barrier to prevent the droplets from traveling.

The enclosed and insulated interior of a vehicle makes the driver and riders more prone to the transmission of the coronavirus. Therefore, if driving conditions permit, there should be an exchange of air, by rolling down windows or stopping and opening doors periodically.

#### 8. Health protocols for clergy, staff, contractors, and volunteers:

- a. All clergy, staff, contracted vendors, and those volunteers assisting in these gatherings must be trained on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.
- b. All clergy, staff, contracted vendors, volunteers, and attendees are to self-screen and stay home or seek medical care if they have any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19:
  - 1) Cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste, loss of smell, diarrhea, feeling feverish, having a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit, or known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19.
  - 2) They are not to be allowed to return until they have met the criteria in the health protocols. These are as follows:
    - a. In the case of an employee or volunteer who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to work when all three of the following criteria are met: at least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since

recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications); and the individual has improvement in symptoms (for example, cough, shortness of breath); and at least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared; or

- b. In the case of an employee or volunteer who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to work until the individual has completed the same three-step criteria listed above; or
- c. If the employee or volunteer has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis. Do not allow an employee or volunteer with known close contact to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 to return to work until the end of the 14-day self-quarantine period from the last date of exposure (with an exception granted for healthcare workers, critical infrastructure workers and those who have been fully vaccinated)."

9. Health protocols for the facilities where gatherings are held:

- a. The CDC has determined that the probability of coronavirus transmission from surfaces is extremely rare; therefore, parishes are no longer required to sanitize church building surfaces after each gathering. Gathering leaders may utilize a prudent cleaning and sanitization schedule appropriate to their needs.
- b. Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available to staff, contractors, volunteers, and attendees. Encourage those entering or exiting to perform hand hygiene.
- c. Make hand sanitizer available to attendees near all entry points of the facility.
- d. Ventilation: When possible, the circulation of outside air into the room should be increased.

10. Food:

If food is served, it is suggested that it be pre-packaged in individual servings. If not, those who are serving food and those who are going through self-serve buffet lines must wear facemasks.

#### 11. Overnight retreats, conferences, and travel:

As a possible resource for any gathering sponsoring organization, parish or other entity involved in hosting, or transporting participants to an event, the diocese has developed an optional Overnight Room and Travel Assignment Form. The form can be used as a resource to aid in organizing room and travel assignments. If the form is used, it should be kept with all other pertinent registration and medical release forms.

- a. The optional Overnight Room and Travel Assignment Form will have these options: a participant's preference for a private room (additional costs may be incurred) and private travel, or rooming/traveling with a particular person, or rooming/traveling only with a fully vaccinated person(s), or if they have no preference and will room or travel with anyone assigned to them. If the participant is a minor, the selection(s) regarding the above options will be decided and signed by their parent or legal guardian. If the parent or guardian does not make a selection, the event organizers will make the decision based on the best available information.
- b. For overnight stays where groups sleep in a large community setting (such as gymnasium, classroom, or youth center) attempts should be made to provide good ventilation and good spacing between participants.

#### 12. Multiple-day events:

Multiple-day events are allowed under the same protocols listed for any other gatherings; however, all attendees, staff, volunteers, and clergy must self-screen daily according to the criteria listed above.

#### 13. Retreats and days of recollection:

Retreats and days of recollection are allowed under the same protocols listed for any other gatherings.