



Religious

# Parish Life Reopening the Workplace

Gallagher's Five-Step Process to Guide  
Your Return to Workplace Strategy  
With Confidence

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**Gallagher**

Insurance | Risk Management | Consulting

# Guidelines Build Confidence



As states and other government authorities lift the restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses are starting to prepare for reopening. The decision to reopen is a complex issue. We cannot advise you whether you should or should not reopen your business. If you decide to do so, we have generated this information for your review and consideration. It includes some high-level ideas that you may want to consider as you move through process, and may not take into account all of the unique and specific issues that may be involved in opening your business. If you have questions about this information or your insurance coverages, please contact your Gallagher representative.

We also encourage you to go to [www.ajg.com/convocation](http://www.ajg.com/convocation) for developing resources for the church.

## Gallagher's expertise can help your:

**PEOPLE** by supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of your workforce

**PROPERTY** by monitoring and mitigating potential virus rebounds or outbreaks

**FINANCIAL STABILITY** by reducing your risk and supporting your revenue streams

Reopening a Roman Catholic diocesan parish will require careful planning and consideration for the safety of our employees, volunteers, parishioners and the church community we serve. The safety and health of our staff, volunteers and church community is a top priority. An action plan will need to be developed and followed to reduce the possibility of reintroducing the virus. The following guidelines establish action items, which should be considered before opening churches for service and after a church service or mass.

The following steps are recommended as the initial phase for opening our facilities as our temporary new normal approach to the complexities of dealing with the safety of our parishioners, staff, volunteers and others during our church activities. Updates will be provided as we move toward adjustments to normalcy.

### Five-Step Process to Returning to the Workplace





STEP  
1

## Key Actions Safety Checklist

**GOAL:** Monitor and assess the legal obligations your organization may face when reopening based on state, local and federal government directives. Document the information you're tracking to help inform the development of policies and procedures to reopen. At this time, your employees have not returned to the workplace and should maintain their current work status.

## ELIGIBILITY TO REOPEN

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It is essential that each parish and jurisdiction understand all regulatory requirements and what is needed to reopen the church. The following should be considered:

- Establishment of a reopening leadership team
- Check of federal/state/county/local regulations for any restrictions or precautions that must be in place
- Determination of core personnel needed for day-to-day operations and mass
- Assessment of facility preparation needs (see below)
- Establishment of employees/volunteers safety practices (see below)
- Securement of necessary equipment/products/personal protective equipment (PPEs)
- Establishment of communication/education/training for employees/volunteers/parishioners
- Review and understand CDC guidelines

# STEP 2

## Key Actions Safety Checklist

**GOAL:** Develop a plan that provides clear, realistic, and meaningful guidance to site-specific protocols and procedures that protect your employees. Make sure you have a plan and structure in place to communicate these processes and policies with employees, and share new information as local, state and federal requirements evolve.

# EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER SAFETY

A key element to reopening is establishing administrative controls (guidelines, training and communication) to protect employees and volunteers. Guidelines include:

## 1. Leadership Group

- Determine the workforce and volunteers needed for reopening.
- Consider establishing the following requirements:
  - A no return-to-work policy if displaying high temperature or flu-like symptoms
  - A position on travel/travel abroad
  - A position on quarantine for someone in the family in contact with an infected person
  - A position on employee hygiene on-site (i.e., wash hands frequently)
- Provide all employees with hand sanitizer kits and masks.
- Consider temperature checks of all employees.
- Practice social distancing of six feet, and wear masks in accordance with regulatory requirements.
- Shut off drinking fountains and close break rooms to limit gathering areas.
- Wipe down desk surfaces and high-touch areas at workstations.

## 2. General Training Requirements

- All employees/volunteers who return to work shall first receive training for the appropriate work before they can assume their duties.
- All employees and volunteers should be trained in basic requirements, including:
  - Proper use of PPE, including respirators, face masks, eye protection and gloves
  - The basics of how the virus is spread
  - How to decontaminate surfaces
  - Proper procedures for social distancing
  - Proper procedures for social contact with church members and vendors
  - Proper hand sanitation
  - Assisting the disabled

## 3. Staff Meetings

- When possible, meetings should be held virtually.
- Staff meetings during the opening process should be limited to necessary staff only and require seating that allows for six feet between participants.
- All staff meetings shall require the participants to wear a face mask or respirator.
- Normal social greetings such as shaking of hands, hugging or any other bodily contact should be discontinued.
- If an employee/volunteer feels ill, they should stay home.
- Hand sanitizers shall be made available in the meeting room and offices.

#### 4. Maintenance and Custodial Employees

- All maintenance and custodial employees should be provided with the necessary PPE, gloves, masks and eye protection. In accordance with [CDC guidelines](#), custodians should wear required PPE when cleaning/disinfecting or working less than six feet from others.
- All maintenance and custodial employees should receive additional training in proper cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.
- Follow the cleaning product manufacturer's label instructions for all cleaning and disinfection of product and equipment surfaces for concentration, application method and contact time, etc.
  - Use EPA disinfecting products. Follow label instructions ([see EPA website](#))
  - Establish a cleaning/dusting/vacuum/mopping and disinfection schedule based on site use and conditions (church, narthex, sanctuary/offices/quiet/crying room/meeting rooms/day care/religious education).
  - Develop inspection and monitoring plan for signage rules, hand sanitizer stations restroom cleaning.
  - If an outside vendor is used for cleaning/disinfecting, establish a minimum cleaning/disinfecting plan. Continuously clean/wipe down common touch areas such as doors, light switches and hard surfaces throughout the day where heavy pedestrian traffic areas exist.

# STEP 3

## Key Actions Safety Checklist

**GOAL:** Ensure your facilities can safely resume operations. This could include third-party cleaning and disinfection, facility safety checks, assessment of technology, security, and the potential design and installation of new technologies intended to eliminate virus exposures from HVAC systems, etc.

## FACILITY PREPARATION

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Many of our facilities and churches have not been occupied for an extended period, therefore it is important to make sure they are ready for reoccupancy.

- All critical building systems should be checked for proper operation.**
  - Inspect and test all mechanical systems to ensure their proper operation.
  - Clean heating, ventilation, air conditioning system (HVAC). Consult with your air conditioning contractor for enhancing air filtration system, and determine if the system can increase the number of air exchanges in the church.
  - Test all life safety devices (alarm panel, jockey pump, emergency lights, smoke/heat detectors, etc.) to ensure their proper functioning.
  - Starting with valves closest to the water main, open all domestic water valves (sinks, showers, fountains, etc.) and flush them for at least five minutes.
  - Flush all toilets twice prior to reopening.
  - Remove all ice from ice machines, sanitize, and then restart if applicable.
  - Inspect the property for any existing physical hazards and mitigate them.
  - Sanitize all public spaces with approved disinfecting cleansers.
  - Deep clean and sanitize all common areas and restroom hard surfaces, with emphasis on any surface areas where high contact or touch is likely. Use [CDC guidelines](#) for disinfecting.
  - Clean and disinfect kitchen, refrigeration, cooking equipment, counters and floors.
  - Follow Department of Health guidelines for your state/county/local authorities.
  - Clean and disinfect child care areas, all rooms used for mass and church meetings.
  - Check parking lot, sidewalks and common areas for any tripping or other hazards.
  - Install hand sanitization stations at high-traffic areas, restrooms and common areas.
  - Determine where social distancing will need to be considered for limited crowding (six-foot distancing).
  - Post signage of reopening rules, proper etiquette, social distancing, hand-washing, etc.

STEP  
4

## Key Actions Safety Checklist

**GOAL:** A review of your systems and processes to ensure vendor compliance; identification of supply chain needs for increased PPE and sanitizer demands; and evaluation of how your organization's compliance with current pandemic requirements can affect your students, stakeholders and the public.

# PRODUCTS, SUPPLIES AND THIRD-PARTY VENDORS

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- With the current demands on PPE, hand sanitizer and cleaning chemicals, it is important to check with your suppliers for these items and get your orders placed as there may be delayed times to get these products/supplies.
- Third-party vendors for your building systems such as fire protection/alarms, HVAC system, kitchen equipment and other building system vendors need to be contacted for services in preparation of reopening the building/facilities.
- If a third-party vendor is used for cleaning and disinfecting, contact them to review their cleaning protocols and make sure they follow CDC guidelines and use EPA-approved disinfecting chemicals in their cleaning/disinfecting. Consider contract review with legal representatives.
- On-site vendors should follow social distancing protocols. In addition, vendors should only have limited access to the building where their jobs are performed.



# STEP 5

## Key Actions Safety Checklist

**GOAL:** Reaffirm your relationships with students, other stakeholders and the general public with ongoing communication. Make it clear what policies, procedures and protection methodologies you've implemented, and how you're properly using physical barriers, management controls, and procedures to maintain safety and an optimal workplace environment.

# RELIGIOUS SERVICES AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH/EDUCATION

Direction and monitoring by church employees, ushers and/or volunteers will be essential to maintain observance of guidelines during all sacrament celebrations, meetings and/or events. Additional individuals may be added to help team leaders carry out their responsibilities. Continue to communicate your plan as it changes to church staff and members, while partnering with other churches and governmental agencies.

### Sacrament Celebrations

- Mass celebration (weekend daily):** Consider streaming virtual mass celebration.
- Accept limited attendees and apply a first-come, first-enter system according to building capacity and following social/physical distancing guidelines. For mass celebration, social distancing of six feet should be maintained when parishioners enter the church. Based on the needs assessment, formation of an entrance line and spacing may need to be considered.
- Mark pew spaces and chair separation, rearranging so seating is six feet apart side by side and from front to back. Families arriving together can sit together as they prefer.
- Provide hand sanitization to all upon entry to church.
- Require those attending mass to wear face masks before entering church. (Have supply for backup). Church should communicate this message before mass celebration.
- Encourage an online offertory, if available. For those churches without online capabilities and/or parishioners without internet at home, the church should modify the offertory and recommend parishioners place their offering in the collection basket by the exit door or central drop area (church to minimize the ushers' contact).
- Handshakes, holding hands, hugs and kissing cheeks should be suspended during communal sign of peace.
- Consider no shared use of the cup.
- Parishioners to accept the communion on the hand.
- Eucharist ministers and priest should follow [CDC guidelines](#) for hand-washing prior to dispensing communion.
- Eucharist ministers and priests should wear face masks when dispensing communion.
- Maintain physical distance while walking to receive communion, ushers should guide parishioners as necessary. Install step markings on floor for proper distancing.
- Recommend suspension of parishioner gatherings before/after mass indoors/outdoors.
- Consider emptying all holy water fonts.
- Consider not sprinkling holy water during mass.
- Remove all prayer books and hymnals from the pews.
- Suspend large choir functions. Only have instrumental music or reduce choir with proper social distancing.

- Disinfect entire area including but not limited to the altar, seats, kneelers, tables, doorknobs, microphones and instruments before and after every mass/sacrament and or event/meeting. [CDC guidelines](#) should be followed for cleaning.
- Disinfect restroom, stall closets and doorknobs, and consider eliminating use of water fountains.
- Complete the disinfecting of chairs, kneelers and other surfaces after use.
- Educate and encourage parishioners, employees and/or volunteers to stay home if they are not feeling well.
- Educate the congregation on new policies/protocols.
- Post infection control and social distancing guidelines throughout the facility.
- Provide ministries, volunteers and employees with the proper PPE.
- Blessed sacrament adoration:** Consider streaming virtual blessed sacrament adoration. Accept limited attendees and apply a first-come, first-enter system according to building capacity and following social/physical distancing guidelines.
- Confession:** As this sacrament could be one of the most challenging to celebrate considering the one-on-one face-to-face encounter and the amount of people attending, it will be important to complete the disinfecting of the chair, kneeler and/or area used. Accept limited attendees and apply a first-come, first-enter system according to building capacity and following social/physical distancing guidelines.
- Following sacraments/celebrations:** All parish meetings/events should follow social/physical distancing guidelines at all times. Limit attendance to provide with appropriate space and distancing.
  - Baptisms
  - First communion
  - Confirmation
  - Weddings
  - Funerals
- Religious education:** All religious education should follow social/physical distancing guidelines at all times. Consider/continue offering virtual education.
  - First communion
  - Confirmation
  - RCIA class
  - Counseling
- Parish meetings/events:** Consider/continue offering the virtual meetings and/or events. All parish meetings/events must follow social/physical distancing guidelines at all times.
  - EMAUS
  - Rosaries (outdoor)
  - Church retreats
  - Conferences
  - Parish directive and/or financial
  - Any other ministry meetings/events not mentioned

- Additional parish meetings/events** should follow virtual protocol.
  - Special events
    - Consider temporarily eliminating any transportation—if you must transport, contact diocese office for additional guidelines
  - Catholic charities at discretion of the diocese, and following and meeting health department guidelines.
    - Pantry food distribution
    - Home meal deliveries
    - Kitchen or cooking
- Follow social distancing guidance during mass; in the choir; at the altar; and during meetings, funerals, weddings/baptisms and other religious events. Establish maximum number in attendance at a function or mass to create social distancing of six feet of separation if not in the same family.
- Discontinue the cross sign of peace on the forehead.
- Consider outdoor presentations, weather permitting and drive-in masses.
- Ensure hand-sanitizing stations are available in the narthex and sanctuary before reopening.

It will be necessary to develop additional guidelines for different religious operations for the following:

- School reopening ([CDC resources](#))
- Child care/after care programs
- Catholic charities ([CDC resources](#))
- Thrift stores

### Community Outreach and Education

In order to execute any well-intentioned plan, a communication plan needs to be established to inform all parties of reopening guidelines and practices for all stakeholders involved.

Consider the following:

- Assign a communications person (or persons) who will handle the master communications.
- Your parish should work with the chancellery to create a consistent message.
- Organize your diocese into different communication groups (e.g., parishioners, clergy, facilities, the public, third-party vendors, staff, volunteers).
- Create an outreach program to communicate new protocols with all parishioners and employees.
- Use your contacts and multiple touch points to deliver outreach program messages such as posting to your website, utilizing your phone bank, posting flyers, installing new signage, email blasts, committees, etc.

- Train employees and volunteers to deliver a consistent, clear verbal message.
- Assign employees or volunteers the duty of directing and informing parishioners of these new protocols in the parking lots, lobbies and cathedral areas.
- Utilize mass service to preemptively inform parishioners of new and changing protocols moving forward.

### Education

- Develop education programs for employees, volunteers, mass/religious services, ushers/greeters, parish office and facility maintenance/custodial team.
- Establish guidelines for vendors.
- Establish visitor management guidelines.
- Understand how to respond to emergency during mass and religious services.

### Appendix/References

Various guidelines have been used in this document. For additional information, please review the links below for additional information or clarification.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#))
- CDC Cleaning and Sanitizing Guidance ([CDC Cleaning and Sanitizing](#))
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ([EEOC](#))
- Americans with Disabilities Act ([ADA](#))
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration ([OSHA](#))
- The United States Environmental Protection Agency ([EPA](#))

The recommendations above are our interpretation of the latest guidelines. Please reach out to a Gallagher National Risk Control consultant to assist you in this important part of your business.

For more helpful and up-to-date information regarding COVID-19, please visit our [Pandemic Information Hub](#).

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Gallagher will continue to provide easy-to-understand, meaningful guidance you can use today and in the future as pandemic conditions change. If you are reopening your operation after being closed for an extended period, modifying your current workplace strategy or having to conduct temporary closures in the future, Gallagher is here to provide guidance to assist you in making your own critical business decisions.

Gallagher continues to monitor the potential risks related to returning to the workplace through OSHA, the CDC, the WHO, and state and federal regulatory authorities. Please visit [ajg.com/us/pandemic-preparedness](http://ajg.com/us/pandemic-preparedness) for the latest information.

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