

Your Ministry During COVID-19: Re-Opening Your Church Office



Insurance Board recognizes the important role churches play in their communities; congregations are eager to resume their ministries. Before employees and volunteers resume daily operations of your church, check the Governor's website for your state. According to The White House Guidelines for [Opening Up America Again](#), "State and local officials may need to tailor the application of these criteria to local circumstances...Additionally, where appropriate, Governors should work on a regional basis to satisfy these criteria and to progress through the phases outlined." Insurance Board advises churches to also stay current on the recommendations from the Center for Disease Control (CDC). According to the CDC, "COVID-19 is a new disease and we are still learning about how it spreads and the severity of illness it causes."

Understanding How COVID-19 Spreads

- The virus is thought to [spread](#) mainly between persons who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- The best way to prevent illness is to avoid exposure.
- COVID-19 can be spread by people who are not [symptomatic](#).
- Respiratory droplets are produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. Droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or be inhaled into the lungs.

Preparing to Reopen Your Office

- Your state may advise that although it is safe to resume daily operations at your church, it may not be safe to conduct [worship services](#) in-person (recognizing the population of your congregation may be [high risk](#)).
- Identify a [COVID-19 coordinator](#) to be responsible for COVID issues at your church once your state says it is safe to reopen.
- Visit the CDC website to [print and post all alerts](#) related to COVID-19 and church operations for employees and volunteers.
- [Prior to return of operations](#) make sure all workspace has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Follow [CDC](#) guidelines. Use products that are [EPA approved](#) for use against COVID-19.
- Develop policies for employee/volunteer protection and provide [training](#) to all cleaning staff. Wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks in the cleaning process including handling trash.
- Ensure employees/volunteers are trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals used in accordance with OSHA's Hazard Communication standard ([29 CFR 1910.1200external icon](#)).
- All employees/volunteers should bring their own cloth [face mask](#) to the church office.
- Communicate with all staff and volunteers in advance regarding [return to work requirements](#).
- Include cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces: tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.
- Identify critical job functions; cross-train staff and volunteers to help ensure that essential jobs will be covered.
- Employees/volunteers (or their household members) returning to the church office must be COVID-19 [symptom free](#) for a minimum of 7 days.
- If an employee/volunteer's job function does not require their physical presence in the church office, allow them to [work from home](#).
- Establish flexible hours/schedules for essential jobs to limit the number of people in the church workspace at one time.
- No employee should be required to return to work without adequate transition time to secure care for loved ones for whom they have responsibilities (children or older adults).
- Many employees may opt to use the emergency family and medical leave provided by the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#).
- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance, and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.

Daily Operations

- Each employee/volunteer should take their temperature daily prior to coming to the church office. Monitor the readings.
- If temperature is less than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, employee/volunteer may go to the church office.
- An employee/volunteer who experiences fever and/or [symptoms](#) while at home should not report to work.
- An employee/volunteer who has a fever at or above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or is experiencing [symptoms](#) should immediately go home and monitor his or her symptoms. If an emergency should occur while an employee or guest is at the church office, follow [American Heart Association guidelines](#).
- A [protective mask](#) covering the mouth and nose should be worn.
- Provide hand sanitizer, tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles near hand washing locations.
- Encourage frequent hand washing with soap and water, and hand sanitizing when tasks are completed.
- Organize the church space so employees/volunteers can practice social distancing and maintaining distance (6 feet) from others.
- Increase physical space between employees/volunteers and guests (spaced entry to the business, drive through, partitions).
- When ready to exit the building, sanitize hands, and do not touch the door with hands. Use elbows if possible.
- All other previously established infection control practices are to be maintained during work, lunch and break periods.
- Any necessary meetings should have [capacity limits of 10 people](#) per the CDC. Discourage people who are at [higher risk for illness](#) from attending in person.
- Tight spaces like copier areas, kitchenettes, bathrooms and elevators should all be treated as 1 in, 1 out when possible. Provide sanitizing wipes for any shared equipment or common areas.
- Discourage employees/volunteers from using others' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. Clean and disinfect before and after use.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces: tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc. on a daily basis.
- Enable natural workplace ventilation (such as open windows and internal doors to allow airflow).