

Returning to Limited In-Person Children's Formation: Recommendations for Stage 2

from the Task Force for Family Ministry, Children's Ministry and Schools

As we enter into a season of weather conditions that will likely make outdoor gatherings impractical, in-person formation offerings and programs for children are allowed to return under some strict guidelines and limitations. Children's formation groups, Sunday school classes, Godly Play groups, etc., might consider meeting in-person (indoors or outside) while wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing, or they may continue to gather online. It is also recommended that congregations continue to offer Faith@Home material.

As a reminder, youth formation activities (for 6th graders and older) should follow the same guidelines set for adult formation gatherings.

Please refer to [A Time of Challenge and Change](#), the official reopening document of the Episcopal Diocese of NC, for full details, guidelines, and recommendations on all in-person gatherings.

Children's formation gatherings should follow these guidelines that are in addition to those stipulated in A Time of Challenge and Change:

Maximum number of participants for indoor formation for children (all participants are able to social distance at 6-8 feet in gathered room):

8 total participants who are aged preschool* through kindergarten

10 total participants who are in grades 1-5

A total number of 10 children for mixed age groups of children

* Preschoolers will be defined here as those children who are toilet trained and able to wear a mask for the duration of the formation activity. This may preclude 2 year olds from participating. It should be understood that children may need assistance or reminders about proper mask wearing.

The numbers above do not include the minimum of 2 adults (instructors, staff, volunteers) who will be in the space with the children.

Concurrent Formation Activities:

Church *may* offer offering formation activities for different age groups that occur on the same day and time *only if* their facility and personnel resources allow for a high level of isolation between the groups of ten (i.e. two adults and up to eight children.) Entrances and hallways present particular challenges and risks for aerosol spread. Therefore, buildings that have been designed with outside doors to inside classrooms, or where each group can access a classroom or learning space from a different direction than another classroom or learning space on the

same hallway, may consider indoor formation. Keeping cohorts of children separate from other cohorts is essential to keeping everyone safe.

If churches choose to offer simultaneous gatherings, please adhere to the guidelines above for each group, ensuring each group does not comingle.

For questions or clarifications, [contact Amy Campbell](#), Missioner for Children and Families.

Nursery:

There is no allowance or exception in Stage 2 for church nursery service. We encourage each and every congregation to offer a designated space for families to take care of diapering, nursing, and feeding needs. This area should be free of toys, and should have hand sanitizer available. It should also have cleaning supplies available in order to wipe down areas that are used. Notices should be posted in this area reminding of the 3 Ws (Wash/Wait/Wear). This area should be sanitized/cleaned after each use.

Best Practices for Children's Formation During Stage 2:

Refer to Appendix E: Building Reopening Checklist in [A Time of Challenge and Change](#) for a complete list of safety procedures.

- Children's formation groups who plan to begin meeting in-person first hold a parent meeting via Zoom to walk through the guidelines for the in-person gathering.
- Safe Church requirements state that at least two unrelated adults will work with groups of children. These adults will be subject to all of the screening questions and protocols, i.e. wearing masks, physical distancing, etc. Church staff should ensure that all adults are properly trained on new safety procedures.
- All participants must pre-register and answer pre-screening questions.
- All participants must sign in with a volunteer or staff member who will check off names on a registration list.
- Children and adults must wear a mask covering their nose and mouth at all times. Churches should provide masks for anyone who does not have one.
- Children and adults should enter the indoor or outdoor space staying 6 feet apart from anyone not from their own household. Staff and program volunteers should help guide physical distancing. Volunteers that help only with check-in do not have to count towards the quota for the session. All volunteers should, however, be screened.

- Children and adults should sign in and have their temperature taken with a touchless thermometer.
- No group singing is allowed indoors or outdoors.
- It is recommended that children are given an area in which they may sit and move about freely. One recommendation is to use beach towels to represent the space a child will be able to move freely within. If using beach towels or other types of floor markings, you will need to ensure a 6 foot free zone from the edge of the towel/marking, not the center of the towel/marking.
- Hand sanitizer should be placed at the entrance of the room, and hands should be either sanitized or washed upon entry, and then sanitized/washed upon leaving.
- Siblings will be allowed to sit together, but will be counted as individuals for the total number of children.
- If classrooms used on formation for children who belong the parish are also used by a weekday preschool, the church must and is required to have the rooms disinfected according to the standards of [the regathering plan](#), and the preschool must be in agreement with the procedures. The final agreement on shared space is to be negotiated among the Vestry and preschool leaders following all the safety standards of the diocesan reopening plan.
- There should be no snack or feast time in the course of the gathering.