

Youth Ministry Regathering Guidelines
Episcopal Diocese of NC
4/16/21

This document outlines guidelines for programming for youth. Please refer to the [Diocesan Reopening Plan](#) for additional guidance and specifics for those who are in grades 6-12.

Allow for 42 square feet of space per individual when determining your maximum enrollment for indoor and outdoor activities through Stage 3. In addition to this requirement, the chart below outlines the maximum numbers allowed at activities, regardless of the size of your space.

Youth and adult leaders may gather in spaces that allow for 6 feet of distance per individual. Capacity should never exceed 30% of your fire code or more than the maximum number listed in the chart below. When determining your maximum capacity, use the number that is the lesser of the 2 numbers, 30% or the max number found in the chart, and make certain each person is allotted 42 square feet of space. If your congregation has a plan that differs greatly from this plan, please submit it to the Youth Ministry Department for approval.

Please note that concurrent activities **are** allowed if groups do not share common spaces; churches may have multiple groups participating in programming at the same time (to accommodate different ages) if groups have separate entrances and exits. An indoor space **may** be utilized by a second group after a space of 6 hours.

↓As of April 20th

Diocesan Stages for Reopening:	STAGE ONE-B	STAGE TWO/2B <i>County positivity rate must also be below 6.5% and trending downward</i>	STAGE THREE	STAGE FOUR
Outdoor Maximum # of Individuals	18	40	60	No restriction
Indoor Maximum # of Individuals	15	25	40	No restriction

The Safe Church Best Practices offers ratios of youth to adults as seen below:

1 adult per 8 youth, with 2 adults for minimum. Additional information can be found in the [Best Practices](#).

These guidelines and recommendations have been prepared by a team of diocesan clergy, staff, and lay leaders. Our highest value is to protect the wellbeing of our youth, students, faculty and their households. As we all realize, however, wellbeing, safety and risk are large concepts and definitions may vary from situation to situation.

Though a variety of perspectives and situations were part of this collaboration, we know there is no one size fits all when it comes to your discernment about when and how to reopen places of learning for youth and teenagers. While setting some essential parameters, these guidelines and recommendations give you and your local community room to make some of your own determinations for your own location.

Recommendations for Stage 2:

- Bible studies, coffee hours, social gatherings, meetings - including youth gatherings - and other small group activities take place via telephone, online or **inside in groups of 25 masked participants (youth and adults) or outside in groups of 40 or fewer outside masked participants (youth and adults)** maintaining 6 feet of physical distancing. It is not recommended to include activities that involve running or other exertion or sharing equipment due to the increased risk of spreading COVID-19 droplets.
- **We recommend during this Stage that there are no overnight events.**
- **Please note: Your county positivity rate must also be below 6.5% and trending downwards in order to gather in person.**
- It is recommended that virtual youth gatherings still be an additional way youth ministries meet.
- Communicate to young people, volunteers and parents any new applications/safety protocols prior to their return and if/when they change.
- In-home pastoral visits by clergy, staff, and lay people with appropriate PPE may resume in Stage 2. In-home visits must be preceded and followed by thorough hand washing (or use of hand sanitizer if necessary, followed by hand washing as soon as possible). These visits should be outside, each party wearing a mask, and remaining at a physical distance of at least 6 feet. All Safe Church guidelines should be followed.
- All pastoral visits assume that neither the visitor nor the clergy person has any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Pastoral care conversations via telephone and video call are also encouraged. All guidelines concerning confidentiality apply to these conversations as they would to in-person conversations.

Gathering Guidelines:

- People should sign in and, **only** if required by government and health authorities have their temperature taken.
- People should bring their own mask and wear it. Churches should have masks for youth to use if anyone forgets theirs.
- Tie mask securely in place or loop elastic around ears to cover your **nose and mouth** with no gaps between your face and the fabric. If it does not stay or fit securely, do not use it; find one that fits properly instead.
- Do not touch your face or the outside of your mask until you are out of the church or building.
- Use stationary ground markers to indicate where people should sit.
- Everyone should bring their own chair, drinks, snacks, masks, and any materials needed like pen/paper/markers.
- Parents will drop off and pick up with social distancing away from the group at a designated area.
- Masked singing is allowed per the guidelines in the [Updated Music Guidelines](#).
 - No congregational singing is allowed indoors.
 - Masked congregational singing is permitted if households remain 10 feet apart.
 - Up to 4 unmasked singers may sing if they are spaced 20+ feet away from others AND 10 feet away from each other.
 - All those singing congregationally, in a small group, or if more than one other person is present must always wear a high-quality, well-fitting mask. That means a surgical or multilayer cloth mask that fits snugly over both nose and mouth.
- Cough/sneeze into the elbow (when wearing long sleeves) or into the shirt (when wearing short sleeves), or cover with tissue. DO NOT sneeze into the hand!
- Put necessary documentation in place: signage in the building, contact tracing measures, such as sign-in sheets, and update all necessary contact information for young people and volunteers.
- Have all needed supplies for cleaning/disinfecting surfaces and spaces. Have adequate PPE and sanitizer.

Screening:

- Because COVID-19 can occur in persons with no symptoms, mild symptoms and severe illness, screening with specific questions can help identify people at risk for unrecognized infection. Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2-14 days after virus exposure. A negative test is no guarantee that a person is not infected, as false negative results vary with the brand and type of test used.
- Everyone attending should be logged with name, phone number and answers to

screening questions below. Only one adult should handle the log sheet.

- A listing of those present should be kept in the event of any contact tracing.
- Members should self-select to stay home if they have any of the symptoms of Covid-19 to protect others:
 - The [symptoms of COVID-19 are regularly updated by the CDC at this link](#).
 - Congregations should stay updated and post the most up-to-date list.
- Youth may have similar symptoms as adults but generally have milder illness and so they too, should be screened with questions.
- Church communications about meetings and activities should make clear that persons answering YES to any of the following questions should NOT physically participate in an activity:
 - In the past 30 days, have you traveled internationally?
 - In the past 30 days, have you or anyone in your household had contact with persons with confirmed or suspected Coronavirus exposure or COVID-19?
 - In the past 30 days, have you or anyone in your household had contact with persons with COVID-19 symptoms?

Bathrooms:

- Only 1 person is allowed in the restroom at a time.
- Masks must be worn in restrooms at all times.
- Please knock on the main restroom door and stand back to wait.
- Wash hands for 20 seconds (post instructions on mirror) prior to touching the stall door.
- After using toilet, put toilet seat (where possible) down to flush, wash hands again,
- Use a paper towel to dry hands and to turn off the water faucet.
- Use Clorox wipe to wipe down the stall door handle, flush handle, and any other surface you touched.
- If you must blow your nose, use a tissue, deposit into a trash can, wash hands as above.
- Use a paper towel to open the main restroom door to exit if not propped open.
- Use hand sanitizer after exiting the restroom.

Online Best Practices:

These are some best practices to put in place, particularly at this time of physical distancing, as we are having to use social media, texting and video conferencing to offer programs and to stay in touch with young people.

- Create a group covenant, group norms and ask all participants to adhere to the covenant and norms.
- Establish methods for handling inappropriate comments and communications.

- Get permission from parents/guardians before inviting minors into these types of communication methods.
- Include parents and guardians on communications and keep them informed of the ways in which the group is keeping in contact.
- Use the organization's official account to communicate. Do not use a personal account.
- All groups/chat rooms/video conferencing should be private. Do not share or repost any portion of these communications.
- Turn off the comment feature or set it so that any comments must be approved by the host.
- Always have at least two unrelated adults participating in these forms of communication.
- **Maintain the 'Rule of Three': Have a minimum of two adults when working with youth and avoid one-to-one conferencing between adults and minors.** Make sure never to be alone in a chat room with a parishioner, particularly minors. Have your hosts (two unrelated, trained adults) log in a few minutes before the scheduled time. Have a plan if you find yourself on a video conference with one adult and one or multiple youth. For example, you can request that one of the young people ask a parent to join the call or discontinue the call and reschedule for a different time.
- Any inappropriate comments or behavior should be reported immediately to your direct supervisor. Don't post links to meetings on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other public places online. Send them in emails or texts. Don't invite people you don't know into a private space with youth and youth.
- For meeting with anyone (adults and/or minors): the host can mute, turn off video, or remove participants from the call.
- We suggest, if possible, that whoever is spiritually leading the meeting is NOT set as the host, so they can focus on their ministry.
- Ask another trusted leader to be the host of the meeting to run a ministry of boundaries. This second person can manage the meeting: i.e., mute/unmute participants, turn on/off video, remove participants if needed.
- Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of youth or youth apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.
- For Zoom meetings specifically, go into your [settings](#) and make the following changes:
 - Require [registration](#) to secure a meeting. Registration can be customized. Requiring cell phone numbers is good practice.
 - Turn off "Join before host," and enable the waiting room feature so participants wait until the host has started meeting.
 - Turn off private chat.
 - Auto save all chat history.
 - Turn off file transfer.

- Turn off screen sharing for participants.
- Turn off the whiteboard or turn on auto save if you're using it for the lesson/game.
- Turn off "allow removed participant to rejoin."
- Provide transparency by recording the entire meeting. Be sure to let every participant know that it is being recorded and for what purpose. If you are recording minors, you should get the permission of their guardians.
- Don't post screenshots of meetings online without permission of everyone in the photo. Remove names from the photo before posting. Do not share screenshots of minors without permission from their guardian.
- For further information there is a Facebook [tutorial](#) on Zoom meetings by Sarah Stonesifer Boylan, VTS Digital Missioner.

Confirmations:

It is appropriate to delay confirmations until the community can be together. Regional confirmations will take place once we may gather, in consultation with the Bishop's Office.