

Directives For Return to In-Person Faith Formation



The OEEC believes that every parish in the Archdiocese of Hartford has the ability to develop meaningful and innovative faith formation programs that utilize virtual and at-home strategies. Support from the OEEC is available to assist with implementing these virtual strategies or a hybrid approach to offering parish faith formation. However, if you plan on in-person Faith Formation, the safety of the parish faith formation staff, volunteers and families has to be the priority to guide any decision on when and how to gather in person. Keeping in line with the focus on the health and safety of all parish communities in the Archdiocese of Hartford, the OEEC presents these **Return to In-person Instruction Directives**. If your parish plans to offer in-person catechesis this pastoral year you will need to review these OEEC Directives and submit the attached **Return to In-person Faith Formation Strategy** (*found on pages 9–14*) that has been approved by your pastor, to the OEEC, by **August 24, 2020**.

These Directives have been modified from the State of Connecticut's document: **Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together** and need to be followed to ensure the safety of all involved. Further, the OEEC also feels that it is necessary for parishes to have a plan in place to pivot to a virtual strategy in the event that the state of Connecticut requires increased social distancing measures during the upcoming pastoral year.

Modified from Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together. The whole document can be found on the State of Connecticut Website: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/COVID-19/CTReopeningSchools.pdf>



Guiding Principles of these Directives:

- Safeguarding the health and safety of all students, parish staff and volunteers
- Monitoring the building, students, and parish staff and, when necessary, potentially cancelling classes/gatherings in the future to appropriately contain COVID-19 spread
- Fostering strong two-way communication with pastors, parish staff, volunteers and families
- Factoring into decisions about reopening, the challenges to the physical safety, social-emotional well-being of parish staff, volunteers, families and students
- Continuing to modify plans as necessary

Things to think about before you open:

- Collect data from families to confirm their intent to participate, as that may affect facilities and operations planning.
 - Create a plan for parents and students who may temporarily choose not to participate in the return to in-person faith formation.
- Review building space and reconfigure available classroom space, such as gymnasiums, auditoriums and parish halls, to maximize social distancing, consistent with public health guidelines in place at that time.
 - Consider the possibility that you might not be allowed to gather students in the usual place for classes and plan for alternative locations.
- Training and communication for the volunteer catechists before the start date regarding: social distancing, [cleaning protocols](#), and hygiene practices. Require attendance by all catechists and volunteers.
- Create a plan using the OEEC template, signed by the pastor to be submitted to the OEEC, by **August 24, 2020**.
- Collect a supply of
 - Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for parish staff, volunteers or students who “forget” to bring them to class and cleaning products (see list of vendors in the **Resources** section below).
 - Soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% ethyl alcohol or 70% isopropyl alcohol (for parish staff and older students who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, cloth-face coverings, and no-touch/foot-pedal trash cans.
- Flexible attendance policies and makeup classes for students, as well as back up plans for substitute catechists

Communications:

- Have a central contact and effective communication with your pastor, parish staff, volunteers and families.
- Put in place a plan for how the parish community will be notified of any policy changes, cancelled classes, or other changes or restrictions.
- Follow Federal, State and Town guidelines.
- Make communication plans available in appropriate languages for families in the community, as well as accessible to those with visual and/or hearing impairments.
- Focus on distribution of information and regular communication about the actions communities can take to [stop the spread](#). This includes posting [signs](#) in highly visible locations (e.g., entrances, parish staff areas, and restrooms) that [promote everyday protective measures](#), and providing instruction related to [properly washing hands](#) and [properly wearing cloth-face coverings](#).
- Ensure related resources (e.g., messages and videos) are distributed when communicating with parish staff, students, volunteers and families (such as on websites, in emails, and on social media accounts).
- Place signs near sinks reminding students, volunteers and parish staff to wash hands before and after using the restroom.
- Find free [CDC print and digital resources](#) in several languages on CDC's [communications resources](#) main page.

Pastoral Care – Tracking Families and Children:

- Be sure you have contacted all the families who previously participated in faith formation. Identify if they will come back. If they are not planning on returning to in-person faith formation, discuss options for digital and at home catechesis.
- Plan how to support their evangelization and continuous connection to the parish community.

Location:

- Ensure that the space that you will be gathering in has a proper ventilation system. (Guidance for ventilation systems can be found [here](#).)
- Configure space distribution and maximum number of people allowed in a given space.
- Configure number of entrance & exits designated for use to ensure safe social distancing.
- Ensure consistent and proper cleaning and disinfection of surfaces inside facilities. Schedule when to do it and how frequently it needs to be done. For example, if you will have a group in the morning you will have to clean and disinfect in between as soon as the first group leaves.
- Check [Department of Public Health \(DPH\) Guidance for the Cleaning and Disinfection of Buildings During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
 - Increase cleaning and disinfection of bathrooms consistent with [CDC disinfecting and cleaning guidelines](#). Set up policies and protocols for bathroom use to minimize contact with surfaces.
 - Consider access to other spaces such as utilizing a Church hall versus smaller classrooms.
- Review the facility floor plan and consider ahead of time the best way to use, assign, and access bathrooms.

Social Distancing

- Maintain the recommended social distancing to the maximum extent possible.
- Emphasize grouping students by the same class/group of students and teacher (into a cohort) so each team functions independently as much as possible.
- Discourage the sharing of supplies among students.
- Clean high touch – high traffic areas:
 - Appropriately clean, disinfect, or sanitize materials at the end of each faith formation session, consistent with [CDC guidelines](#).
 - Keeping in line with the CDC, Connecticut State and the Archdiocese of Hartford, face masks are required for all students, parish staff and volunteers when they are inside the building.
- Be prepared to provide a mask to any student, volunteer or parish staff member who does not have one.

Cleaning

- Plan to spot-disinfect high-touch surfaces. These surfaces include soap and paper towel dispensers, doors within toilet stalls, and toilet handles.
- Consider delaying cleaning when faith formation classes are not in session, such as over the weekend when possible, and particularly if there is a suspected case (See section *Plan for if a Parish Staff Member or Parish Community Member Becomes Sick* below), to allow for passive decontamination.
- Increase cleaning and disinfection of bathrooms consistent with [CDC disinfecting and cleaning guidelines](#). Set up policies and protocols for bathroom use to minimize contact with surfaces.

Plan for if a Parish Staff Member or Parish Community Member Becomes Sick

- Identify an area to separate anyone who exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 during hours of operation, and ensure that children are not left without adult supervision.
- Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who becomes sick at the facility to their home or a healthcare facility.
- Notify local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility and communicate with staff and congregants about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required by the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) or other applicable laws and in accordance with religious practices.
- Advise those with exposure to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms, and follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop.
- Close off areas used by the sick person and do not use the area until after cleaning and disinfecting. Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep disinfectant products away from children.



- Advise staff and congregants with symptoms of COVID-19 or who have tested positive for COVID-19 not to return to the facility until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation.

**Other information can be found on page 19 "Reporting Illnesses and Addressing Vulnerable Populations" of the State of Connecticut document: Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together*

Drinks and Food Restrictions

Do not provide any communal food or drinks, however individually portioned or wrapped food is acceptable. Parents may need to be asked to send their children with any snack or drink they might need to accommodate for any medical conditions.

Transportation

- Use an alternating arrival and drop-off schedule, properly communicated with your parish staff, volunteers and families, with enhanced safety protocols in place.
- Consider ways to encourage parents and/or guardians to transport their children to in-person faith formation and plan accordingly to safely accommodate new traffic patterns and foot traffic.

Future Planning for Remote Blended Learning

- Be prepared to provide remote blended-learning opportunities immediately upon cancellation of in-person faith formation classes, or in conjunction with in-person faith formation classes.
- Develop a plan for extended absences and communicate with parents or guardians in the event of a second extended closure, including distribution of learning materials according to the children/families needs.

Resources

- [Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting](#)
- [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
- [Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Decision Tool](#)
- [CDC Guidelines and other information for Communities and Faith Communities](#)
- [Connecticut Covid-19 Page](#)
- [OEEC List of Approved Vendors](#)

Español

- [Aquí están las directivas para limpiar antes de abrir un lugar público](#)
- [Directivas de la CDC para Organizaciones Comunitarias](#)
- [Consideraciones Para Eventos y Congregaciones](#)

