



Town of Walpole
Health Department
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March 12, 2020

You are receiving this notice as you were identified as a church in the Town of Walpole. The Walpole Health Department has been closely following the continuously changing coronavirus (COVID-19) situation. The Department of Public Health (DPH) recognizes that there are several procedures that are not in place yet, however they are working closing with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Federal Government to develop more guidelines as more information is gathered.

The CDC and DPH have been providing very informative updates via their websites:

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

DPH: <https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

As you know this is a very fluid situation and information regarding COVID-19 is changing rapidly. The Walpole Health Department wants to keep you informed so that you can take the necessary steps to protect your church group.

At this time, the risk in Massachusetts is still considered low (although it is evolving by the minute). At the same time, the risk for the influenza virus is very high. It is important to note that Massachusetts residents are much more likely to become sick with a cold or the flu than to be exposed to COVID-19. Many of the precautions that help prevent colds and the flu can help protect against other respiratory viruses, including COVID-19. There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid exposure. As a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces (tables, countertops, door handles, cots, bathrooms) using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Stay home when you are sick!

For information about handwashing, see [CDC's Handwashing](#) website

For information specific to healthcare, see [CDC's Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings](#)

CDC also has [specific guidance for travelers](#)

People with flu-like symptoms including a fever and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (cough or shortness of breath) should CALL their primary health care provider to review symptoms and receive guidance on next steps. Anyone who thinks they may have been exposed to COVID-19 should also CALL their

healthcare provider immediately.

Since you are an organization that has a high number of members of all ages coming in and out of your church on a weekly, and in some cases daily, basis we ask that you do your part by implementing the following immediately:

- Limit the number of individuals in your services and/or group gatherings so that social distancing can occur. CDC recommends a social distancing of 6 feet.
- Be mindful to limit person to person contact as well as contact with food should a gathering occur.
- Be sure adequate hand sanitizer is placed throughout your facility and that all sanitizer dispensers are stocked at all times.
- Current cleaning procedures should be reviewed by the person in charge to assure proper cleaning/sanitizing throughout the entire building (with an elevated focus on high touch points) is in place on a routine basis.
- All hand wash sinks throughout the facility MUST be stocked with hot water, soap and single use drying provision or hand dryer.
- Proper hand washing signage should be available within your bathrooms (this can be provided to you by the Health Department should you need).
- In order to be proactive we are asking that all individuals coming into your church are being accounted for and that there is a roster of names for all individuals who attend your services. If there were a need for an investigation to be conducted, being able to account for individuals within your church would be necessary.
- If you do currently stream your service please encourage both your older more susceptible folks as well as your folks with underlying medical conditions to watch from home as they are more vulnerable should the spread of a virus occur.
- Continue to reinforce your illness/sick policies that are already in place at your individual church for all clergy and individuals entering the building. No one who is sick should enter the building.
- Your organization should be holding routine meetings with your church leaders and staff to keep them up to date with the evolving COVID-19 so that additional preventative measures can be implemented as needed.

We ask that you take the time to work with your church leaders and staff to assure that all of the above items are being met and that your church is taking the proper precautionary measures to better protect all folks entering your church and to prevent community spread.

The Health Department will continue to share new information with you, as necessary, about this evolving situation and please feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns: 508-660-7321.



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