



# **NEVADA PLACES OF WORSHIP AND LIFE-RITES CEREMONIES**

*Updated September 29, 2020*

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, Nevadans will need to gradually adjust our lives to new circumstances and learn how to co-exist with the virus until such time when effective vaccines and treatments become available. As a reminder, the best tools we have to combat the spread of this virus remain the same: maintain safe social distancing, wear face coverings, and practice good hygiene. These new circumstances are especially important within our gathering places of worship and life-rites ceremonies.

Faith leaders and their communities of staff, volunteers, and attendees must work diligently to adopt healthy risk mitigation practices as well as provide creative service options. Compliance with State guidance and the [CDC considerations for communities of faith](#) will help to reduce the risk to the health of Nevadans who choose to attend in-person services. The safest option to protect the most Nevadans, however, is to offer remote attendance to services, such as through online streaming. [Nevadans at higher risk](#) of severe illness from COVID-19 are highly recommended to use remote services at this time.

*The "[Nevada Guidance for Safe Gatherings: Celebrations, Ceremonies and Events](#)" is the controlling guidance for planning, coordinating, or hosting in-person gatherings (e.g. events, services, ceremonies and celebrations). These gatherings may take place in outdoor or indoor venues, including but not limited to, community centers, fellowship halls and gathering spaces in faith-based buildings, halls, rental space in event centers, or outdoor event spaces.*

Gatherings are limited to 250 people or 50 percent of fire code capacity. All gathering spaces and venues with more than 2,500 total fixed seating capacity that want to host a gathering for more than 250 individuals are REQUIRED to submit a "Large Gathering Venue COVID-19 Preparedness & Safety Plan" to the local health authority where the gathering is going to take place. [See "Large Gathering Venue COVID-19 Preparedness & Safety Plan Submission Guide"](#)

State guidance and recommendations apply to places of worship and settings where life-rites occur, such as funeral homes and venues for wedding ceremonies. Life-rites ceremonies include weddings, graduations, funeral services, baptisms, bris ceremonies, and other religious ceremonies.

## ***IMPORTANT:***

*Large in-person gatherings can present risk for increasing the spread of COVID-19 if social distancing, face covering requirements, and other mitigation guidance is not followed. All organizations, individuals and families, and event planners are encouraged to provide remote services as an alternative to hosting large gatherings.*



### **ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP AND LIFE-RITE CEREMONIES**

Any indoor or outdoor gathering space or venue will be limited by and executed in accordance to the gathering size identified in the ["Nevada Guidance for Safe Gatherings: Celebrations, Ceremonies and Events"](#)

**\*\*\*\*Any indoor venue may have up to 50 people regardless of capacity so long as social distancing and other requirements can be met.** This allows churches and other faith-based venues with capacity of 99 or less to continue with the previous 50-person gathering limit, so long as social distancing requirements are met.

#### **\*OPERATING RULES:**

- Limit occupancy to 250 people or 50% of fire code capacity, whichever is lower.
- For venues with fixed seating capacity of 2,500 or more, submit a "Large Gathering Venue COVID-19 Preparedness & Safety Plan" to the local health authority.
- Seating must be arranged to ensure a minimum of six feet of separation between congregants or attendees who are not part of the same household.
- Participants, including faith leaders and staff, must wear face coverings as required by Directive 024.
- Stagger services so that the entrance and exit of participants for different services does not result in a gathering larger than 250 persons or 50% of the posted fire code occupancy.
- Provide online and drive-up services to the greatest extent possible.

#### **\*RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES:**

- **Additional services:** Faith communities are encouraged to add additional services to accommodate the need for social distancing, as well as consider shorter event duration times or limited admission windows to minimize exposure time.
- **Baptism:** Baptismal fonts, pools, or basins are not suggested; however, if used, must be completely cleaned after each use by a single individual. Baptism candidates are not required to wear face coverings during the act of the baptism (submersion, pouring, etc.). Clergy and witnesses are required to wear face coverings in accordance with State guidance.
- **Child care and youth programming:** Places of worship that provide programming for children must adhere to [guidelines by the CDC](#). Youth programming that is separate from religious services may occur as long as they are in compliance with social distancing and face covering requirements.
- **Children and youth:** May attend religious services with parents or caregivers; must maintain at least 6 feet of social distance between children from different households.
- **Choirs and musicians:** Must follow the guidance for performers and entertainers in accordance with ["Nevada Guidance for Safe Gatherings: Celebrations, Ceremonies and Events"](#). This includes the health screenings, the use of face coverings, and additional social distancing requirements (25 feet).



## Road to Recovery: Moving to a New Normal

*\*Research and the CDC suggest that activities like singing may project respiratory droplets in greater quantity and over greater distance, increasing the risk of COVID-19 transmission, particularly with prolonged exposure.*

- **Communion:** Direct interaction between faith leaders and congregants should be touch-free. Individually packaged communion is the safest option. When communion is not individually wrapped, the container for the sacrament should remain covered and uncontaminated during blessings and prayers. The distribution of elements should be touch-free. Common vessels or cups are very high-risk and should not be used.
- **Contact with religious objects:** Minimize communal contact with objects of religious or spiritual significance. If permissible with the faith tradition, consider wearing gloves and ensure sanitization between handlings.
- **Family services:** Particular services should be catered to families in order to minimize the risk of cross-generational transmission.
- **Food pantries and other services:** These activities may occur at the religious facility, assuming all applicable State guidance is complied with.
- **Greeters:** Greeters and attendees must greet while maintaining at least 6 feet of distance at all times and refrain from shaking hands or any other physical contact.
- **Muslim ablution:** Where possible, it is recommended ablution occur privately at the attendees' place of residence before arriving at the mosque. If that is not possible, staff or volunteers should clean faucet handles and other items between each use.
- **Offering:** Offering boxes or baskets should be attached to the wall or set at an entrance or exit of the worship space in a way that attendees do not have to touch it when they give. Do not pass baskets or plates among attendees.
- **Other sacred ceremonies:** As with all other services offered, if State guidance can be met, these events are permitted.
- **Outdoor services:** These services are allowed, subject to State guidance for gatherings.
- **Pre-registration:** Consider advanced registration, reservations and/or ticketing (e.g. on-line, app-based, email, will-call prior to event date) to distribute the number of attendees across the services being offered (in accordance with the social distancing guidance). Collect contact information for attendees through tickets, reservations, RSVPs, or having sign-in sheets. Include times of worship or service, to help with potential exposure notification.
- **Religious books:** These items, such as hymnals, should be removed from the venue and photocopies should be made available for discard after one individual use, if permissible in the faith tradition. Examples of best practices include attendees bringing their own religious books, using technology to project materials, or providing electronic links for use on items such as a smartphone.



## Road to Recovery: Moving to a New Normal

- **Religious studies, book studies, and other small groups:** These groups are strongly encouraged to continue to meet remotely. Groups may meet at a residence, as long as compliance with residential guidance is achieved.
- **Social receptions or parties:** These events must follow State guidance and limitations for gatherings with focus towards compliance with food and beverage restrictions.
- **Speakers, preachers, presenters:** Masks or face coverings must be worn unless exempted pursuant to Directive 024, and there must be a separation distance of 25 feet from attendees.

### **CONFIRMED CASES**

- Immediately isolate and seek medical care for any individual who tests positive.
- Shut down any facility for deep cleaning and disinfection, if possible. Use disinfectants outlined on [EPA List N](#)
- Work with local health authority to identify potentially infected or exposed individuals to help facilitate effective contact tracing/notification. All suspected infections or exposures should be tested.
- Following testing, contact local health authority to initiate appropriate care and tracing.
- Local public health agency contacts are:

### **Carson City Health and Human Services**

Areas Served: Carson City, Douglas County, Storey County and Lyon County (Cities: Minden, Gardnerville, Genoa, Glenbrook, South Lake Tahoe, and Topaz Lake)

Address: 900 East Long Street, Carson City, NV 89706

Phone: (775) 887-2190

### **Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health**

Areas Served: Churchill County, Elko County, Esmeralda County, Eureka County, Humboldt County, Lander County, Lincoln County, Mineral County, Nye County, Pershing County, and White Pine County.

Address: 4150 Technology Way, Carson City, NV 89706

Phone: (775) 684-4200



### **Southern Nevada Health District**

Areas Served: Clark County (Cities: Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Henderson, Boulder City, Mesquite and Laughlin)

Address: 280 S. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107

Phone: (702) 759-1000

### **Washoe County Health District**

Areas Served: Washoe County (Cities: Reno, Sparks, Gerlach, Vya, Pyramid, Washoe City)

Address: 1001 East 9th Street, Reno, NV 89512

Phone: (775) 328-2400

*\* These rules and recommendations were compiled based on the Governor's Emergency Directives, guidance from the CDC, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), [Nevada OSHA](#), and other relevant agencies for the industry and public health officials, including state licensing boards. The information provided is only intended as general information to the public. Following these guidelines does not constitute, and is not a substitute for, compliance with all laws and regulations applicable at any particular time. Individuals and businesses are responsible to ensure that they comply with all laws and regulations that apply to them, including, but not limited to, federal and state health and safety requirements. Additionally, compliance with these regulations does not ensure against the spread of infections from COVID-19 or any other cause.*