Faith-based Organization Guidance During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As preparations are made for larger faith-based gatherings, the Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH) wants to assist faith-based organizations to operate as safely as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please find helpful guidance from the Alabama Department of Public Health at: Guidelines For Places of Worship.

While risk-reducing actions can decrease the chance of spreading COVID-19, measures such as those outlined in this document will not fully remove the possibility of infection with COVID-19 while the virus remains in the community. To ensure faith-based organizations are operating in a safe manner, and as a partner to our local community, JCDH provides the following technical direction on guidelines and other best practices. Specific plans should be developed for each facility to promote COVID-19 safety.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establish protocols to maintain at least six (6) feet physical distance among people</th>
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| - Social distancing must be observed and promoted to congregants and staff to encourage safety.  
  - This means 6 feet of distance should be maintained between each congregant and each staff member.  
    - Consider using every other row of seating.  
    - Provide at least six feet of space between family units in a single row.  
    - Consider adding additional services to limit the overall number participants in a single service.  
  - A limitation in operating capacity should be enacted to allow for 6 feet of distance.  
| - Determine the maximum capacity that will allow a minimum of 6 feet between congregants.  

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<tr>
<th>Establish protocols to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 among congregants and staff</th>
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| - Wearing of a facemask/face covering in areas of high traffic by the members of the congregation and staff.  
| - Clearly posted signs advising people to remain at home if feeling ill.  
| - All staff and congregation members should be encouraged to wash hands frequently and maintain a distance of 6 feet from one another as much as possible.  
| - High contact surfaces that are utilized during normal activities should be cleaned and disinfected frequently.  
| - Persons who are over the age of 65 and/or who have chronic medical conditions should be advised to stay home to ensure their safety.  
| - Continue to limit the size of services as this could result in large-scale spread of COVID-19.  
| - Encourage congregants and/or staff with COVID-19 to remain home until meeting CDC guidelines for ending quarantine.  

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<th>Continue to utilize alternative methods for conducting worship services</th>
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| - Continue to optimize online and video services for those who cannot attend in person.  
| - Recommend utilizing a reservation system to avoid exceeding maximum capacity in the facility.  

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<th>Other Alterations to Typical Practices</th>
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| - Hold services in large and well-ventilated areas or outdoors as much as possible. Open doors and windows, when feasible.  
| - Avoid and suspend use of a choir.  
  - Consider using a soloist and limit musicians to the number that can fit on stage while maintaining social distancing.  
| - Recommend suspending congregational singing and responsive readings, but if they continue, all participants must wear a facial covering.  
| - Temporarily limit or discontinue use of shared objects such as hymnals, prayer books, bulletins, etc.  
| - Modify the method of receiving financial gifts. Encourage online giving, use a stationary collection box, or mail rather than passed collection trays.  
| - Avoid buffet style meals, potlucks, or family-style shared food events. If food is offered, provide individually boxed meals for participants.  
| - Provide bottled water and tape off water fountains.  
| - Disinfect seats, hymnals, and other shared worship materials between services.  
| - Discontinue self-serve snack or coffee stations.  
| - Consider keeping childcare closed unless the facility can meet CDC standards for childcare centers.  
| - Temporarily limit or discontinue communion, unless provided in a contact-free manner.  