
Guidance for Worship Services in Long-Term Care Facilities

Attending worship services is an important aspect of life for many long-term care residents. When determining how to best meet spiritual needs, facilities should consider their vaccination rates, the overall health/needs of the population they serve, and their ability to implement the following recommendations.

General Precautions

- Indoor services should only be held if the facility has had no positive staff or residents in the past 14 days and should take place in a large, well-ventilated space. Outdoor or virtual services may continue regardless of outbreak status.
- Physical distancing should be maintained at all times, including as residents enter and exit the service. Consider offering multiple service times, if needed, to accommodate this.
- Masks should be worn at all times by all participants.
- Residents who are on quarantine or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend services, but may participate virtually.

Clergy

- The facility may appoint a limited number of volunteer clergy to conduct worship services.
- Facilities are advised to select volunteers who are fully vaccinated for COVID-19, and at least two weeks past their final dose.
- Volunteers for worship services must comply with the same training and PPE requirements for staff and essential visitors. They should also agree to limit their exposure within the community and submit to symptom screening and a negative COVID-19 test prior to each visit. Testing may be performed by the facility or clergy may bring documentation of a negative test performed within the past 48 hours.

Music

- Singing greatly increases transmission risk and is not recommended, even while masked.
- It is appropriate to play recorded music or live, virtual performances for worship services. Piano or other non-woodwind/brass instruments may also be utilized.
- Consider offering printed music rather than hymnals for residents to follow along. Each resident should have their own copy.

Sacrament/Communion Service

- Room to room delivery is preferred for administering sacrament/communion due to the inability to partake while masked.
- If administered in a group setting, the facility should apply the same strategies they utilize for in-person dining. Masks should only be removed for the time needed to partake.
- Gloves should be worn at all times when preparing and delivering the sacrament.

- Sacrament should be served in individual cups or containers. Clergy should hand them out rather than allowing residents to take their own. Delivering communion directly into the mouth of the resident is discouraged. Used cups should not be returned to distribution trays; they should remain with the resident. Designate a single individual in full PPE to collect and discard used cups.
- In-room sacrament may be offered to quarantined residents after worship services have concluded. Clergy should wear full PPE in these rooms and be instructed on correct donning/doffing procedure. Afterward, they should exit the facility, avoiding further contact with other residents.

Recommendations of the Long-Term Care Facility Subcommittee of the Utah Governor's COVID-19 Community Task Force