



# CECIL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

JOHN M. BYERS HEALTH CENTER • 401 BOW STREET • ELKTON, MD 21921

LAUREN LEVY, JD, MPH, HEALTH OFFICER  
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September 10, 2020

Dear Faith Community Leaders,

As we enter Stage Three of the Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery, I wanted to reach out to you to ensure that you are aware of the latest orders and guidance for faith communities to help keep your congregations safe and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

The Executive Order issued September 1, 2020 increases the number of people allowed in religious facilities from 50 to 75 percent of the facility’s maximum occupancy. The order also requires that all Marylanders over the age of five wear a face covering when indoors at any location where members of the public are generally permitted, including religious facilities. As you hold services and other activities, I urge you to adopt additional measures recommended by the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives workgroup of faith-based leaders to ensure the safety of your congregations. These include:

- Limiting attendance to the number of people who can safely fit into your worship space while maintaining a distance of at least 7 feet between individuals or family groups;
- Wearing face masks at all times;
- Taking non-contact temperature at the door (preferred) or at home and asking anyone with a fever (100.4° F or higher) to remain at home;
- Refraining from congregational singing. Singing dramatically increases the risk of transmitting COVID;
- Sanitizing contact surfaces before and after worship;
- Scheduling multiple, shorter services;
- Continuing faith-based ministerial visits following public health guidelines; and
- Ensuring that sick congregants, or those exposed to someone who is sick, remain at home for at least two weeks.

The Faith-Based Workgroup’s guidance can be found here: [Faith Based Recommendations](#).

Faith leaders may choose to implement additional measures to protect their congregation, and as the Health Officer for Cecil County, I continue to recommend the following:

- Live streaming of services and encouraging vulnerable members of your congregation, such as older adults and those with underlying health conditions, to continue to participate virtually;
- Holding religious services outside where possible. This helps dissipate viral particles much more effectively than indoor settings;
- Ensuring that nursery care and religious education sessions follow all applicable guidelines for childcare and school-based settings found here: [CDC Community Schools](#)

*Healthy People. Healthy Community. Healthy Future.*

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES.....410-996-5550	ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.....410-996-5160
ALCOHOL AND DRUG RECOVERY CENTER.....410-996-5106	HEALTH PROMOTION.....410-996-5168
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS.....410-996-5113	MENTAL HEALTH AND SPECIAL POPULATIONS SERVICES.....410-996-5112
COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES.....410-996-5130	TTY USERS FOR DISABLED: MARYLAND RELAY.....800-201-7165
DISEASE CONTROL.....410-996-5100	EN ESPAÑOL.....410-996-5550 EXT 4680

[and Childcare Guidance](#); and

- Ensuring that additional measures for safety are in place, including:
  - planned traffic patterns
  - adequate amounts of disinfectant
  - disposable masks for those who forget them
  - hand sanitizer
  - alternative music plans
  - signage related to social distancing measures
  - safe processes for offerings, Communion, and other actions that involve multiple people touching the same objects
  - plans for congregants who become ill while at a service

Your denomination may have additional guidance for your congregation.

If you have questions or concerns regarding these recommendations, or would like assistance in determining how to hold religious services safely, please contact us at [info@cecilcountyhealth.org](mailto:info@cecilcountyhealth.org). We would be happy to assist you.

For additional information on COVID-19, please refer to Cecil County Health Department's website at <http://cecilcountyhealth.org/coronavirus/> or call our COVID-19 Call Center at 410-996-1005, open Monday – Friday from 8 am – 5 pm.

Thank you for your time and attention. With your cooperation, we can better protect your congregations and our community.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lauren Levy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lauren Levy, JD, MPH  
Health Officer