



Diocese of
Green Bay

RE & YM Social Distancing Guidelines for the Diocese of Green Bay

Fall 2021

[Revised 8-12-2021]

<Updated or especially emphasized material is in **bold print** and/or *italicized*.>

These are the guidelines for Religious Education and Youth Ministry events in our diocese.

- Students
- Catechists
- Catechetical Leaders
- Volunteers
- Youth Ministers
- Chaperones
- Any other adults involved in RE, Confirmation, or YM-related activities

*Please follow all federal, state, county and local **mandates** related to safety and to the mitigation of the COVID-19 pandemic as these will supersede our diocesan guidelines. The ability of RE and Confirmation preparation and of youth ministry events to be held in person will **be subject to any appropriate and applicable mandates** from federal, state, county, and local health authorities. If there are subsequent waves or variants of COVID-19 that are resistant to vaccines or other approved therapies, we will need to revise these guidelines significantly and with little notice.*

We encourage all RE classes, Confirmation classes and Youth Ministry programs to meet in person this fall but to do so with all due prudence in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and its variants. The only restriction on the number of students and adults involved in your programs (parents, catechists, volunteers etc.) gathering in person will be:

- 1)** You have sufficient catechists and volunteers who are less likely to be at risk if they contracted COVID-19 (i.e., under the age of 65 with no comorbidities); or sufficient catechists and volunteers that have received the full schedule of COVID-19 vaccines.
- 2)** Your ability to have everyone **social distance a minimum of 3 feet** away from each other.
- 3)** Your ability to sanitize frequently touched surfaces in your meeting space(s) after people have left.
- 4)** Your ability to make sanitizers and disinfectant wipes readily available in all classrooms, meeting rooms and common areas.

WHENEVER POSSIBLE MEET IN LARGER SPACES LIKE GYMS OR THE NAVE OF THE CHURCH OR, AS WEATHER PERMITS, OUTDOORS.

Please note that masks/face coverings are optional for outdoor activities and athletics.

Recommendations and best practices for RE, Confirmation Prep and YM

For parish staff, students, volunteers, and visitors: masks indoors are strongly encouraged for all. In Christian charity, the rights of health, freedom, and conscience are to be respected by all. These guidelines are to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and will continue to be measured, monitored, and adjusted as needed. For Volunteers, while indoors, masking is encouraged but they may be required to wear a mask at the pastor/pastoral leader's direction depending on their role. Social distancing of at least 3 feet is still required.

Please note that every pastor/pastoral leader can (ideally, in consultation with their RE and YM staff and parents) require all staff, students and volunteers wear a mask indoors, regardless of their vaccination status, if the COVID numbers in your city or county are high- especially if the COVID-19 Case Rate/Burden in your parish's county (and any surrounding counties from which you draw a significant number of students and families) is in the critically high or very high category (as designated by Wisconsin Department of Health Services).

There should be no expectation for the following to wear a face covering/mask:

- Children under the age of 2
- Individuals who have trouble breathing.
- Individuals with medical conditions, intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, or other sensory sensitivities that prevent the individual from wearing a face covering/mask.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

- 1. Masks/face are still optional for outdoor activities and athletics.**
2. Employees and volunteers should try to limit physical contact with students and other staff (no handshakes, high fives, fist bumps etc.).
- 3.** The number of people in smaller rooms (bathrooms, offices, maintenance work areas, etc.) should be limited based on total space. Programs should consider having students sanitize their hands when sharing books, materials, or equipment.
- 4. Whenever possible, hold ice breakers or games outside.**
5. Catechetical leaders and youth ministers should plan activities that minimize personal contact and practice distancing in the best way possible. If possible, avoid the handling of equipment by multiple people, and sanitize each shared item after being used by each person.
6. Students will wash or sanitize hands before and after any meal or snack.
 - Students should be socially distanced in line.
 - Food must be served by one or two designated individuals.
 - Students should not serve themselves.
 - Those serving must wear a mask/face coverings and gloves.
 - If possible, students should sit with one seat in between the next student and stagger across from each other. (a zig-zag pattern)
 - Avoid shared salt and pepper shakers, water pitchers, condiments, etc. Consider obtaining individual condiment packages.
 - All dishes, utensils, etc. must be thoroughly cleaned after each use.
- 7. For best practices regarding travel:**
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/testing-international-air-travelers.html>

8. If you or someone in your immediate household has tested positive or has come into contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 please follow CDC guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>
9. A best practice at this time would be to have students transported by their parents or guardians.
10. Make sure that permission forms and waivers are up to date- consider having parents sign new ones designed for the specific event or activity. A “per-event” liability form has been adjusted with COVID-19 wording and can be found at https://www.gbresources.org/uploads/8/4/5/8/8458656/liability_form_event_covid_final.docx
11. **Out of state trips, out of state mission trips and out of state service trips:** At this time, we still discourage these trips. But if you are planning such a trip, check with your parish’s insurer to make sure that there is liability coverage for your specific trip and please pay close attention to the COVID-19 numbers in the area you are going to and in any county in which you plan to stop on the way there and back. If the COVID-19 numbers at your destination are in the equivalent to or are higher than Wisconsin’s “very high” the trip should be cancelled or an area with a lower COVID-19 Case Rate/Burden selected.
12. **BUS TRIPS (INCLUDES VANS or OTHER VEHICLES):**
 - a. Seating on the bus should allow for a minimum of **3 feet of social distancing**.
 - b. Everyone is **strongly encouraged** to wear a mask/face covering while on the bus.
 - c. Try to keep people from the same family/household seated together if possible (if they are part of the same household, they do not need to social distance from each other. We still strongly encourage them to wear a mask/face covering while on the bus).
 - d. Discourage anything that would require folks to remove their mask/face covering (including eating and drinking, unless there is a medical necessity). That may mean more stops so that volunteers and students can eat, get water etc. while observing social distancing.
 - e. Anyone not able to wear a mask or face covering should be discouraged from riding in the vehicle with the group as they would be placing both themselves and possibly others at risk.
 - f. Rigorous use of hand sanitizer, washing of hands for 20 seconds, and sanitizing frequently touched surfaces are all still strongly recommended. That would include sanitizing tools, balls, frisbees, etc. between use by different individuals.
 - g. Require parents to make sure that their children have no COVID symptoms before leaving home. The same goes for volunteers- anyone with COVID like symptoms should stay home.
 - h. All other COVID-19 guidelines and best practices for safety and hygiene apply.
13. If, during RE, Confirmation prep or a YM event a student appears to have an illness, the catechetical leader or other appropriate parish staff will help the student and proceed with a standard medical response like taking the student’s temperature. Any student who seems ill, for any reason, will be placed in a separate area (be sure to be safe environment compliant) and parents immediately notified. Contact your local health department for additional guidance. Also see: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>



Conclusion

Please refer to the Diocese and RE & YM websites for a detailed list of resources. The web addresses are www.gbdioc.org/front-page/covid19response and <https://www.gbdioc.org/front-page/reconnect-to-inspire> and <https://www.gbresources.org/athome.html>.

To monitor COVID-19 numbers in your own county please see our diocesan COVID-19 Dashboard at: <https://www.gbdioc.org/covid19/dashboard>

For more information on masks/face coverings please see:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

For any questions or clarification please contact the Child and Youth Faith Formation Director Maximus Cabey (mcabey@gbdioc.org, or 920-272-8288).