

FAQ and Addendum to *Safe and Sound: Guidelines and Procedures for Holding On-site Parish Religious Education and Youth Ministry Programs.*

The following are answers to some common questions we have received from parishes regarding *Safe and Sound: Guidelines and Procedures for Holding On-site Parish Religious Education and Youth Ministry Programs*. This document is considered an addendum to the original document.

Arrival, Screening, and Masks

- **Does a parent have to stay until their child clears screening?** Yes. If a parent/guardian drops off a child to religious education or youth ministry, they must stay until that child clears screening, regardless of the child's age.
- **Can we use the screening form instead of asking each individual the screening questions?** Yes. It was originally designed for children who arrive without a parent, but can be used for everyone. It must, however, be kept in a secure place. Temperature checks **MUST** still be conducted.
- **What do we do if a group of young people take a bus to religious education class and one of the students arrives with a high temperature? Other than isolating the young person with the high temperature, do we need to do anything with the other young people who arrived on the bus with that young person?** If the child with the high temperature is tested and found to have COVID-19, then the other children are a direct contact and exposed. The other children should stay home under quarantine until the test results for the young person with the high temperature has been received.
- **Can an adult or young person use a face shield instead of a mask?** No. Face shields do not replace masks in this setting. The virus can get inside the shield through the opening.
- **For larger gatherings, do we have to do the screening and temperature checks, even if it is just adults?** Yes.

Cleaning and Disinfection

- **Can groups use the same rooms prior to young people using them?** Parish groups can use the rooms, BUT they *must be* disinfected after they are used and prior to young people entering them.
- **Where can I find information on the proper way to clean and disinfect rooms?** NY State has provided guidelines for proper cleaning and disinfection. These guidelines can be found here: https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/08/interim-guidance-schools_0.pdf These are updated periodically so it is important for the parish to check the site frequently. Questions regarding cleaning and disinfecting can also be directed to the Office of Risk Management.
- **Where can I get the proper supplies for cleaning and disinfecting?** Institutional Commodity Services can take care of your parish's needs.
- **Is there training for my custodian on the proper way to clean and disinfect?** Training information will be provided in September by the Office of Risk Management.

Room Set-up

- **We have a room in the basement that has an air-conditioner. Can we use this for our sessions?** It depends. Each parish is different. If you are unsure about whether your spaces fall within the regulations, contact the Office of Risk Management whose staff will assist you.
- **Youth Ministry gets to sit young people in a different configuration, can we do that for religious education?** The youth ministry small group layout is only to be used when breakout groups are needed in a large space and are to be used for short amounts of time, eg. 10 minutes or less.

If a Person Gets Ill During a Session or Outside of a Session

- **If more than one person gets sick during a session, do they both stay in the Guardian Angel space?** Actually, no. You will have to designate a separate space for the second young person. You do not want to risk one person getting the illness from the other.
- **If a person gets sick during a session and it proves to be a sickness other than COVID-19 (e.g. allergy, stomach ache), do they still need a doctor's note to return to religious education/youth ministry?** No, they do not.
- **If a person in religious education/youth ministry comes down with COVID-19 between weekly sessions or has an immediate family member who comes down with the virus, what should we do?** This will require a modified response from page 12. As a general rule, anyone who becomes infected or has an immediate family member they are in contact with become infected, that person should not come to a session until they have received medical clearance to do so. However, each situation may present issues that require a response tailored to the situation. You should not hesitate to consult with the Office of Risk Management to assess your situation and determine the best and safest response.
- **If a person gets sick in the session, and it is not known the cause, and the person goes through the prescribed number of days of quarantine without any signs of COVID-19, is it necessary to get a doctor's note before the person can return?** No, they can return without a note.
- **If a person gets sick in the session and the cause of the sickness is unknown, are the parents of in the young people in that group/class alerted that a person was sick but test results for COVID-19 are not in yet?** You can alert the parents that a person became ill but that you have no indication that the individual presented any symptoms of COVID-19. You can share with them, "If the person's medical professional advises the person is to be tested for COVID-19 and the results require us to notify you, we will do so. Any child that was in the same class as the ill individual should self-monitor until the nature of the illness can be confirmed."

Authorization and Responsibility

- **Who is authorized to allow on-site parish religious education and youth ministry?** Only the pastor can authorize on-site parish religious education and youth ministry. It is his responsibility to determine if the parish has the ability follow all the guidelines and protocols in *Safe and Sound: Guidelines and Procedures for Holding On-site Parish Religious Education and Youth Ministry Programs*. He is also responsible for ensuring that the guidelines are being followed.
- **What is the parish's and parish staff's liability if a person gets ill from COVID-19 at religious education or youth ministry?** The Archdiocese is following the guidelines and directives provided by New York State and the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) concerning COVID-19. We will continue to monitor both agencies for additional guidance and any updated advisories. In following these guidelines we are meeting our duty of care to ensure the safety and well-being of all those in our care.

While no one is immune from lawsuits and other legal challenges, if we exercise the required duty of care to those for whom such responsibility is required, a claim for negligence, if made, would be unfounded. The Archdiocese maintains liability insurance to provide coverage for claims made against the Archdiocese, parishes and schools, and those who are its employees and agents acting within the scope of their responsibility.

Disclaimer and Releases

The Office of Risk Management and archdiocesan legal counsel state that it is NOT ADVISED to have any participants, students, staff or volunteers sign a disclaimer or release that attempts to address exposures to COVID-19. Such releases are not effective under the circumstances.