



RE & YM Social Distancing Guidelines for the Diocese of Green Bay Fall 2020

These are the guidelines for Religious Education and Youth Ministry events in our diocese. Please follow all federal, state, county and local directives and guidelines related to safety and to the mitigation of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ability of RE and Confirmation preparation and of youth ministry events to be held in person will be subject to the guidance and recommendations of federal, state, county, and local health authorities. If there are subsequent waves of COVID-19 before an effective vaccine is developed, we will need to revise these guidelines significantly and with little notice.

The following applies to Catechetical Leaders, Youth Ministers, Catechists, Volunteers, Chaperones, Parents/Guardians (or any other adults involved in RE or YM related activities) and to students.

Criteria for Religious Education and Confirmation Preparation Reopening

We encourage all Religious Education (including Confirmation preparation) programs that are able to do so, to resume in person classes this fall, at their regularly scheduled times. The only restriction on the number of students and adults involved in your program (parents, catechists, etc.) gathering in person will be:

- (i) Your ability to have everyone social distance 6 feet away from each other.
- (ii) Your ability to sanitize your meeting space(s) before people arrive and after people have left.
- (iii) Your ability to make sure that the meeting space(s) are well ventilated.
- (iv) Your ability to ensure that frequently touched surfaces are cleaned as often as necessary.
- (v) You are able to ensure that restrooms are sanitized periodically during the time the building(s) is/are being used.
- (vi) You are able to make sanitizers and disinfectant wipes readily available in all classrooms and common areas.
- (vii) You have sufficient catechists and volunteers that are not most vulnerable to COVID-19 (those 65 years and older and those with underlying conditions).
- (viii) As much as possible, are able to arrange your classroom seating so that everyone, including the catechist is facing in the same direction.

Recommendations and best practices for RE, Confirmation prep and YM

1. ***If your parish shares meeting space with a parish school or a system school***, a plan is needed to sanitize the building – If your program meets in a day school you and parish leadership will need to partner with the principal or other senior staff at the day school to come to an agreement on who will be responsible for sanitizing before and after RE (including Confirmation prep and youth ministry). One possibility is that the school sanitizes at the end of the school day and RE at the end of RE for that day. Or RE sanitizes before the start of RE classes for that day and the school sanitizes before the school day begins. The Office of Catholic Schools is recommending to all their parish and system schools that the Catechetical leader be part of the ReOpening Planning Team. Please plan on participating.
2. Face coverings are strongly recommended for everyone over the age two (parish employees and volunteers are required to wear a face covering).
3. All employees and students should minimally wash or sanitize their hands as appropriate. Hands should be scrubbed with soap for twenty or more seconds. Hand sanitizers and/or disinfectant wipes should be readily available in all classrooms and common areas.
Adults must make certain younger students are using these properly. The high alcohol content of hand sanitizers means younger students cannot be licking or chewing on their hands. If a student, catechist, or aide leaves a classroom, he or she needs to sanitize their hands when reentering the classroom if they have not already done so.
4. Catechist and aides should consider evaluating the way students are sent to the restroom to limit the number of people in the small space at once.
5. The building(s) in which you meet should ideally be deep cleaned once a week. Parishes may consider using a fog chemical that is safe for accomplishing this deep clean.
6. Employees should try to limit physical contact with students and other staff (no handshakes, high fives, fist bumps etc.).
7. Students need to be instructed that they should do their best to always cough or sneeze into a tissue (discarded) or their elbow. At all times, this needs to be modeled well by parish staff, catechists and other volunteers.
8. Instruct students on proper hygiene of blowing nose or coughing. The student should discard the used tissue and wash or sanitize their hands. Adults working or volunteering in the program must model this practice.
9. Catechetical leaders and youth ministers should post appropriate sanitary methods for the students to have a visual reference on how to stop the spread of germs. Consider holding mail and packages for 72 hours.
10. Be aware: Some parents and employees will be very sensitive to cleanliness. Anything that looks disorganized or dirty will translate to unclean in their minds. Every classroom and work area should be kept tidy.
11. Ventilation systems should be reviewed to determine if adequate air supply is occurring in the classroom. Building filters should be checked and cleaned as appropriate.
12. Establish controlled entrances and exits as needed.
13. Programs should consider developing procedures to limit the number of students passing in a hallway.
14. Evaluate the need for guest speaker(s) and whether there is another way to achieve the same outcome including a virtual presentation.

15. All Visitors (including parents) permitted inside must wear a mask while in the building.
16. Smaller rooms (bathrooms, offices, maintenance work areas, etc.) should be limited based on total space. The practice of wearing a mask in a small space is advised.
17. Programs should consider having students sanitize their hands when sharing books, materials, or equipment.
18. Whenever possible, hold ice breakers or games outside. Catechetical leaders and youth ministers should plan for best practices in 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.
19. Students will wash or sanitize hands before and after any meal or snack.
 - a. Students should be socially distanced in line.
 - b. Food must be served by one or two designated individuals.
 - c. Students should not serve themselves.
 - d. Those serving must wear masks and gloves.
 - e. If possible, students should sit with one seat in between the next student and stagger across from each other. (a zig-zag pattern)
 - f. Avoid shared salt and pepper shakers, water pitchers, condiments, etc. Consider Obtaining individual condiment packages.
 - g. All dishes, utensils, etc. must be thoroughly cleaned after each use.

All the other COVID-19 guidelines and best practices for safety and hygiene apply.

Indicators that parents should keep their children at home

It is the responsibility of the parent (guardian) to check their child's temperature and make certain a child is healthy and able to attend school. Parents should only send their child to in person RE, Confirmation prep or a youth ministry event if they have answered NO to all of the following questions:

- (i) Have you been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
- (ii) Have you had a fever in the last 48 hours?
- (iii) Have you had new loss of taste or smell?
- (iv) Have you had muscle pain or chills?
- (v) Have you had a new headache?
- (vi) Have you had nausea, vomiting or diarrhea?
- (vii) Do you have a temperature above 100 degrees?

If, during RE, a student appears to have an illness, the catechetical leader or other appropriate parish staff will help the student and also 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 and parents immediately notified.

Specific restrictions for Youth Ministry and other Youth gatherings

Until further notice, in keeping with the recommendations of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC), all youth ministry events, whether indoors or outdoors, will be limited to a total of no more than 50 people (adults included) with the required social distancing of six feet. If your youth ministry gathering is indoors then the limit to the number of persons in a room will be determined by the number of people who can be in that room safely 6 feet apart. All the other COVID-19 related guidelines below apply.

<https://www.wiaawi.org/Portals/0/PDF/Health/Covid/WIAA-Reopen-School-Sports-Summer.pdf>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>

The possibility of having to adjust numbers or suspend in-person classes and events

The ability of RE and Confirmation preparation and of youth ministry events to be held in person will be subject to the guidance and recommendations of federal, state, county and local health authorities. If there are subsequent waves of COVID-19 before an effective vaccine is developed, we will need to revise these guidelines and to significantly reduce or the number of people that can gather for in person for RE, Confirmation preparation and youth ministry. We may even need to cancel all such in-person gatherings. A best practice would be to have an online or other distance learning options for such an eventuality. Online resources to assist in your planning can be found at: www.gbresources.org/athome.html. This has recently been updated.

Homeschooling option for RE and Confirmation prep

For those students whose parents who do not wish their children to participate in live instruction due to safety concerns; and for those students with underlying health issues, homeschooling is a workable and viable alternative to RE or Confirmation classes.

The following are guidelines which allow for these families and parishes to work collaboratively.

1. Parents will register for Religious Education in the parish and declare their option for home schooling in the proper registration timeframe of the parish.
2. Parents will meet with the parish Director/Coordinator of Religious Education (in person preferably or if necessary by conference call or a video conferencing platform) to discuss their homeschooling program and together create an agreement including but not limited to the following:
 - Name of a textbook that will be used throughout the year that has been approved by the Bishop of Green Bay in order to provide a scope and sequence for learning. This does not exclude the use of supplemental textbooks or resources.
 - The approved number of hours of religious education totaling at least 30-35 hours per year (Policy #6007).
 - Assessment of knowledge and faith development determined by the Pastor and/or Religious Education Director/Coordinator according to the student's year of study (Canon 777)

- Participation in family retreats, family liturgies, diocesan events and youth retreats according to the parish Religious Education Director/Coordinator. However, during this pandemic this can happen if necessary, via streaming and video conferencing platforms.
 - Expectations regarding the reception of the sacraments which are to take place in the parish in which the family is registered.
 - Tuition depending on use of parish resources.
3. Children are to participate in the **immediate** sacramental preparation (classes specifically pertaining to the preparation of the sacrament and the rite) as required or approved by the pastor and Religious Education Director/Coordinator which includes on site preparation, interviews for sacramental readiness, practice for sacramental celebration, retreats, and appropriate rites. However, during this pandemic this can happen if necessary, via streaming and video conferencing platforms.
 4. Parents and parish religious education programs are to teach the truth, beauty, and goodness of the true faith that Christ passed onto the Church.
 5. The pastor or parish religious education director/coordinator should invite the parents to be involved in the catechetical certification process.

ACRE

The ACRE assessment will be waived for 2020-2021 academic year.

Additional guidelines and best practices

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer, especially after touching frequently used items or surfaces.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Sneeze or cough into a tissue, or the inside of your elbow.
- Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible.
- We strongly advise that adults and students use face coverings when around others who are not a part of your immediate household; and especially when around those that are most vulnerable (those over 65 and those with underlying conditions). We especially advise all parish staff members to wear face coverings.
- If you do not feel well stay home. If you exhibit any symptoms of COVID-19 (including cold, flu or allergy symptoms or if you have a fever or a cough) stay home.
- Staggered drop offs of students is preferable.
- Continue social distancing: Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from others who are not part of your immediate household.
- In the course of ministry, avoid contact with those who are most vulnerable to COVID-19 (those over 65 years old and with those with underlying medical conditions).
- 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 self-quarantine (do not participate in person at any RE or YM classes, meetings or activities for 14 days after exposure).
- Avoid being in tight enclosed areas that make social distancing impossible. A best practice at this time would be to have students transported by their parents or guardians.
- 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 www.gbresources.org/dre.html or <https://www.gbresources.org/formspolicies.html>.

- Out of state trips, out of state mission trips and out of state youth trips and service trips are strongly discouraged at this time.
- For travel by bus the limit is 25 people on a bus that can hold 50 or more, allowing for staggered seating so that people are at least 6 feet apart. Temperatures must be taken prior to embarking, and face coverings are strongly recommended. For smaller buses, vans or other smaller vehicles, the number of people will be limited to the number of people that can be safely seated while allowing for social distancing of at least 6 feet between each person if possible. Temperatures must be taken, and face coverings are strongly recommended.
- All these guidelines are in addition to our diocesan Safe Environment and Field Trip policies.

THE NUMBER ONE THING YOU CAN DO FOR RETURNING THIS FALL

If your Catholic School has not already done so, we **highly recommend** that you form a group of staff and parents and parish council members, parish maintenance and if possible someone from the medical field, to meet on a frequent basis to discuss your RE and Confirmation preparation communication strategies. Having input from various groups means that nothing is overlooked and that all concerned parties are represented. We also encourage you to designate one staff member as your COVID Leader so that all communication can flow through them. There is an excellent planning tool on the Diocese Reconnect to Inspire website (<https://www.gbdioc.org/front-page/reconnect-to-inspire>) under the School Resources section from Loyola University Greely Center, Leading with Hope: A Reflective Guide for Catholic Schools in a New Reality. There is also a document created by the Office of Catholic Schools, Guidelines for ReOpening. While these document focus on the more extensive issues for day school there are several resources that will prove helpful information for your RE and Confirmation programs, especially if you eventually have to move instruction online or to a distance learning model.

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>

For any questions or clarification please contact the Child and Youth Faith Formation Director Maximus Cabey (mcabey@gbdioc.org or 920-272-8288) or the Child and Youth Faith Formation Assistant Director, Callie Kowalski (ckowalski@gbdioc.org or 920-272-8285).