



COVID-19 Health Note #2 **REVISION**

What Should You Do If Someone has COVID-19 within Your Parish?

*"So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous
right hand." Isaiah 41:10*

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METROPOLIS OF
SAN FRANCISCO



What Do You Do If...



PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide is a revision of the initial booklet designed to offer recommendations to our parishes in the areas of preparation and response to the COVID - 19 pandemic.

FOCUS

If someone in your parish (or you) test positive for COVID – 19, or are having COVID – like symptoms, what should your parish do?

These materials are intended to provide helpful information to clergy and parishioners within parishes under the jurisdiction of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Metropolis of San Francisco. They are in no way a substitute for actual professional advice based upon your unique facts and circumstances. While this content has been derived from the CDC guidelines, situations and regulations do change depending on the pandemic's circumstances and emerging medical research. The information provided is not intended or offered as legal, medical or other professional advice. *You should always consult with all local, state and federal guidelines when finalizing your parish plans.*



What do you do if one of your parishioners has COVID-19?

1. Notify your Parish Health Officer and inform him/her of the situation.
2. Form a parish team (typically comprised of the Priest, the Parish Council President, the Parish Health Officer, and the Reopening Team Lead) to discuss your parish's options and plans on how to respond and guide the process.
3. Continue to your parish plan to help ensure the health and safety of others in the parish and to reduce the likelihood of additional transmissions.
4. For confirmed cases, inform the Office of the Chancellor so an incident report may be completed in an effort to track situations throughout the Metropolis.
5. Maintain confidentiality of any infected person(s).
6. Confirm tracking information is maintained and filed for all parish events.
7. If the person attended services while being contagious, inform those who also attended that they may have *potentially* been exposed (see script – page 6).
8. Positive COVID-19 test results will be reported to your local health agency by your testing agency. As such, you will not need to report cases to the local health department.
9. Check to see, if the person is quarantining, if they need any assistance (food, prescriptions, etc.)
10. Offer prayers for their physical recovery, emotional strength and the support of their family and friends who may be concerned or afraid.



Key Questions



1 How long should a parishioner quarantine (stay away from church) if they have COVID-19, or has been in close contact with someone who has?

General Rule: 10 days

Definitions.

- ❖ **Parish Safety Protocols:** Health screening of every parishioner prior to any service; masks worn; social distancing of 6 feet; hand sanitizing; attendance tracking.
- ❖ **Exposure:** “Close Contact” typically refers to household contacts or maintaining contact with an infected person within 6 feet for greater than 15 minutes.

Scenarios. Parishioner is:

Experiencing COVID-19 symptoms but has not been tested:

- 10 days passed since symptoms first appeared **AND**
- 24 hours with no fever or symptoms without use of medications

Experiencing COVID-19 symptoms with positive COVID-19 test:

- 10 days passed since symptoms first appeared **AND**
- 24 hours with no fever or symptoms without use of medications

Asymptomatic (no symptoms) but with positive COVID-19 test:

- 10 days from positive test results

Exposed and has close contact to someone who is COVID-19 positive:

- 7 days from last contact if parishioner **tests negative** and has no symptoms
- 10 days from last contact if not in contact with infected person

Exposed to non - household (not close contact) positive COVID-19 test or symptoms

- 2 – 14 days monitor for symptoms
- OK to continue attending services following parish safety protocols

Living in household and member has/suspected of having COVID-19 but no symptoms

- 14 days if remaining with individual
- 10 days from last contact if not in contact with infected person



Key Questions



2 Should we notify parishioners, using our attendance tracking, if someone who attended the service subsequently reported they had COVID-19 while attending?

Short Answer:

If your parish is using all safety protocols and parishioners are following them, it is unlikely COVID-19 will be spread during a service, especially when held outdoors.

However, out of an abundance of concern for our parishioners, it is strongly recommended to **inform all those who attended the service of the situation** during the period of exposure (see calculation next page).

Key Tips:

- ❖ Confidentiality must be respected and adhered to; the name of the infected person cannot be shared.
 - ❖ Consider using the provided script as a reference.
 - ❖ Reinforce the message that the likelihood of a spread, since the parish does adhere to all recommended safety guidelines, is unlikely.
 - ❖ Do not provide any medical advice to any parishioners. Should they have concerns regarding their health, or that of a family member, recommend they monitor for any symptoms and contact their health provider.
 - ❖ Ask for prayers for the healing of anyone infected.
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3 Should our parish cancel services if a parishioner who attends a service has COVID-19?

Short Answer:

Again, if your parish is using all safety protocols and parishioners are following them, it is unlikely COVID-19 will be spread during a service, especially when held outdoors. Hence, continuing to offer services, in compliance with local, state and federal guidelines, should be considered.



What Do You Do If...



If a parishioner is identified as having COVID-19 either via a positive test OR symptoms, it is recommended that anyone who attended services in the exposure window be notified of the possible exposure.

Calculate the exposure window:

- a) Date symptoms began: _____
- b) 14 days prior to (a): _____
- c) Date of positive test/confirmation: _____
- d) (b) to (c) = **exposure window**

What dates did infected parishioner attend service WITHIN the exposure window?



“NOTICE OF POSSIBLE EXPOSURE”

Parish Communication / Discussion Script

Once the parish office, or the Priest, is informed by a parishioner who attended a recent service was, or probably was, COVID-positive while attending, it is recommended to inform those who were also in attendance that they may have been exposed to the virus. It should be remembered, that the reason our parishes have been following such strict guidelines (check-in, masks, distancing of seating, hand sanitizing, etc) has been for such a situation. We have been doing this to reduce the risk of exposure/spread. However, out of an abundance of caution, using your parish’s attendance tracking system, it is strongly recommended to call each person who attended the same service to alert them of a *possible* exposure.

It is recommended that the person making the call be very informed of the parish protocols and should not provide medical advice on behalf of the parish. If medical questions do arise, please encourage the person to contact their health provider or visit the CDC website.

Here is a script which may help in the discussion:

“We were informed today, [DATE], that a parishioner who attended Liturgy [or other service], on [DATE] tested positive for Covid-19 on [DATE].

The identity of anyone reporting to us is kept confidential. The parishioner is doing fine, thank God! For safety precautions the parishioner has self-quarantined [share only information you are comfortable with, ensuring confidentiality and is accurate information].

Our parish safety protocols are designed to reduce exposure, even if some who is positive attends our services. This is a reminder of the importance of wearing of masks properly, covering both the nose and mouth during our worship services and properly distancing from fellow parishioners should you visit following services.

Should you have concerns regarding your personal health, the CDC recommends that if you’ve been exposed to Covid-19, the best time to be tested is 5 or 6 days after exposure. If you have additional questions or concerns, you should review the guidelines from the CDC on their website. If you are experiencing symptoms or have medical questions, you should contact your health care provider immediately.

If you do you test positive for Covid-19, please notify Fr. [NAME]. Again, all communications will be treated as confidential.

Where are things headed? We’ll continue to monitor the parish and local trends closely. Our goal is to maintain a safe and loving environment for our parish family. We will continue to comply with local and state guidelines to lower the risk of transmission in our parish.

Thank you for your vigilance and attention to being safe. Through the prayers of the Ever-Virgin Mary and Protectress of the faithful, may our Lord have mercy upon us all.”



REFERENCES

These guidelines were adapted from recommendations from the Centers for Disease control and prevention (CDC).

For more information please visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/notification-of-exposure.html>