

ENFORCING NECESSARY HEALTH POLICIES TIP SHEET



*Leaders, identified and equipped by the task force, must take responsibility for enforcing necessary policies to create a safe space for people who come into our church buildings to worship.”
(BWC Guidelines for Re-entering Well, p. 4)*

Why?

While it may sound a bit dramatic, the cost of not observing social distancing and other precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 may literally be life or death. In recent weeks, news reports have circulated of churches ignoring social distancing protocols resulting in numerous people getting sick; some of them died. Some countries have recorded a high percentage of cases that can be traced back to faith community gatherings.

It is essential to understand why it is important for participants to obey the following wellbeing protocols:

- Stay home if you or someone you are in contact with feels sick or has a temperature (to prevent the spread of the virus);
- Maintain six feet apart from others not in your immediate family (to prevent the airborne spread of the virus among those who are symptom free);
- Wear a facemask at all times when away from home (to protect others);
- Do not touch your face (to prevent the virus from entering your body); and
- Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds after using the toilet, and use hand-sanitizer to clean hands after exiting using the restroom or after touching other common surfaces (to kill the virus).

When?

Planning should begin now so that once in-person gatherings are deemed safe, your church is prepared.

Who?

Pastors and church leaders should model protocols at all times and speak often about the guidelines to help positively influence behaviors of participants. They should also help the entire gathering understand that we are our sibling's keeper and demonstrate this by helping one another follow all health guidelines.

The Re-Entering Well Task Force should identify and train a team of people, "wellbeing guides," who will ensure that social distancing and other prevention measures are being observed during gatherings. Please note that pastors will not be able to focus on this in addition to their other responsibilities on Sunday mornings and gatherings where they are responsible for teaching or leading.

Ushers and greeters will need to be trained and paired with wellbeing guides who are able to manage potential confrontations with people who do not adhere to the health safety guidelines.

Implementation Checklist

- Select the right persons for this task. The wellbeing guides need to be:
 - Willing to be in position during the gathering to ensure adherence to the policy outside and inside of the building;
 - A non-anxious presence;
 - Calm and reassuring when addressing participants, aware that some people may have anxieties about being in public settings at this time. These anxieties may present themselves in unexpected ways; and
 - Reliable and willing to answer questions people might have.

Implementation Checklist (Cont.)

- Develop a training session to:
 - Review this Tip Sheet
 - Create clear talking points that enforce the fact that we are in this together as we seek to create a safe space for all. Role playing and scenario planning should be a significant part of the training. For example:
 - If someone is leaving their car or standing outside the church without a facemask say something like: "May I get you a mask? One of the ways we show our love and care for one another is requiring everyone to wear one."
 - If someone refuses to wear a mask one might say: "I understand that masks are uncomfortable but they are required for everyone's safety. If you are uncomfortable wearing a mask, please join us virtually. Thanks for understanding."
 - If someone is getting closer than six feet: "One of the most difficult things for me is to remember not to get too close to people. We put the tape on the ground floors and pews and in the seats as a visual reminder. Thanks for helping us keep that protocol in place."
 - Talk with your team about other possible scenarios and create scripts. Be sure to explore worst case scenarios.
 - Communicate strategic locations for wellbeing guides to be stationed during gatherings and schedule guides in pairs for mutual support.
- Consider developing a mechanism whereby wellbeing guides can call for backup if overseeing a large property or if the congregation is likely to be resistant.

Wellbeing guides will play a key leadership role in helping a church do re-entry well. They will also provide leadership that ensures that blame and stigma related to the diagnosis of COVID-19 are avoided within the congregation. Knowing and sharing honest and factual information will enhance success in this role.

Additional Resources

- "Standing Too Close. Not Covering Coughs. If Someone Is Violating Social Distancing Rules, What Do You Do?"

<https://time.com/5819816/coronavirus-social-distancing/>

