



*National Association of
Catholic Chaplains*



Guidelines for Sacramental Celebrations in a Health Care Setting During COVID-19

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Guidelines for Sacramental Celebrations in a Health Care Setting

The Pastoral Care Advisory Committee of the Catholic Health Association, in partnership with the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC), is pleased to offer the following guidelines for the provision of sacraments in a health care setting with attention to public health concerns. Mindful of the dignity and value of those entrusted to our care as well as the unique vulnerabilities of those who are sick, elderly and immune compromised, the guidelines that follow may be more restrictive than local diocesan guidelines due to their greater risk for infection than the general population. These enhanced protective measures are intended to protect those at greater risk of the coronavirus and COVID-19.

In making policy decisions, leadership is encouraged to consider these guidelines along with local diocesan policies and procedures, Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and local infection control guidelines, as well as conversations with their local Ordinary who has ultimate authority over the provision of sacraments in their diocese. We are particularly grateful for the review, questions for clarification and recommended edits of the guidelines by infection control specialists, the USCCB Episcopal Liaison to the NACC and the USCCB Office of Worship

General Guidelines			
	Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
	<i>Phase 1 refers to the period of “surge” or extreme pandemic response.</i>	<i>Phase 2 refers to the short-term recovery phases in which both COVID-19 positive and non-COVID-19 patients are in a facility.</i>	<i>Phase 3 refers to the long-term recovery phase in which a facility may or may not have COVID-19 positive patients but measures are required to mitigate exposure and possible transmission.</i>
Nature of pastoral care visits (in person, routine, by request and virtual)	<p>For C+ patients, visits may be primarily virtual, and ensure families are connected and supported virtually.</p> <p>Support to staff may be in-person and virtual</p> <p>Chaplain support to patients at the end of life is an “essential service” including PPE priority, unless extreme shortage exists.</p>	<p>For C+ patients, visits may be primarily virtual, and ensure families are connected and supported virtually.</p> <p>Chaplain support at the end of life is an “essential service” including PPE priority, unless extreme shortage exists.</p> <p>May limit routine patient visits for others</p>	<p>For C+ patients, visits may primarily be virtual, including family</p> <p>Routine patient visits for others</p>
Volunteer Ministers, CPE students and CPE residents	Restricted, consistent with local and volunteer and education protocols	CPE residents may continue, but CPE intern training may be suspended, consistent with local and volunteer and education protocols.	CPE interns may return, consistent with local and volunteer and education protocols

	CPE residency programs may continue, shifting to virtual engagement where possible	Remain restricted for LTC and eldercare	
Distance	Safe distance enforced	Safe distance	Safe distance OR no restrictions
Ministers	Risk age group – may not be permitted Outside ministers – may not be permitted, except for inevitable emergencies	Risk age group – may be permitted with restrictions Outside ministers – permitted with restriction in emergency situations only	No restrictions Outside ministers permitted as per the needs and policies of the health care center
Holy Water in Fonts, Hymnal, Missalettes	Removed	Removed	Consider individual vials of Holy Water and/or consider chlorination in water Literature permitted with weekly disinfections
Chapel Access	Restricted Signage should be placed on entrance doors asking anyone with fever or flu-like symptoms not to enter the chapel Chapel capacity and chairs reduced for social distance Chapel only accessible with restrictions and disinfection	Chapel (may be streamed) Signage should be placed on entrance doors asking anyone with fever or flu-like symptoms not to enter the chapel Hand sanitizer should be available at all entrances. Entrance doors propped open to limit contact	Chapel (may be streamed) Signage should be placed on entrance doors asking anyone with fever or flu-like symptoms not to enter the chapel Hand sanitizer should be available at all entrances. Entrance doors propped open to limit contact
Safety	Follow institution safety protocols Masks, physical distance, frequent cleaning required	Follow institution safety protocols Restrictions on capacity limits	Follow institution safety protocols

Holy Communion

	Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
	<i>Phase 1 refers to the period of “surge” or extreme pandemic response.</i>	<i>Phase 2 refers to the short-term recovery phases in which both COVID-19 positive and non- COVID -19 patients are in facility.</i>	<i>Phase 3 refers to the long-term recovery phase in which a facility may or may not have COVID -19 positive patients but measures are required to mitigate exposure and possible transmission.</i>
Reception of Communion	Spiritual Communion is preferred. Non-COVID patients may receive Communion with specific parameters and infection prevention procedures.	By request in an emergency or Spiritual Communion Non-pandemic patients may receive Spiritual Communion or Communion with specific parameters and clean procedures in place (see procedures below).	Ensure new clean procedures in place when volunteer ministers of Holy Communion return
Viaticum	Apostolic pardon and Spiritual Communion are preferred. All safety and infection control protocols need to be followed if Viaticum is administered in person.	Apostolic pardon and Spiritual Communion are preferred. All safety and infection control protocols need to be followed if Viaticum is administered in person.	Resume regular process with new parameters in place
Minister	Appropriate staff Chaplains No volunteers Community Priests/Deacons permitted based on the need and following safety protocols	Appropriate staff Chaplains No volunteers Community clergy with proper training and safety precautions	Appropriate staff Chaplains Volunteers permitted with proper training and safety precautions Community clergy with proper training and safety precautions

<p>Procedures</p>	<p>Appropriate PPE, hygiene practices</p> <p>Disposable ritual printouts in patient room</p>	<p>Appropriate PPE, hygiene practices</p> <p>Carry only ONE individual Host per pyx, per person into patient's room, pyx is cleaned and repeat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Host is returned to ciborium • Ciborium and Tabernacle are cleaned and disinfected regularly per infection control protocol <p>Safely drop the Host in the hand of the patient without physical touch. The use of gloves may be required in a health care setting based on safety protocols. If patient cannot receive in the hand, consider Spiritual Communion.</p> <p>Disposable ritual printouts in patient's room</p>	<p>Follow Institution safety protocols by either carrying one individual Host per pyx, or when safe, may carry multiple hosts in one container, if approved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Host is returned to ciborium • Ciborium and Tabernacle are cleaned and disinfected regularly per infection control protocol <p>Safely drop the Host in the hand of the patient without physical touch. The use of gloves may be required in health care setting. Used gloves to be incinerated.</p> <p>Communion by mouth may be permitted, with the use of gloves, Disinfect before and after.</p>
<p>Celebration of Holy Mass</p>			
<p>In Person Attendees</p>	<p>Restricted</p>	<p>Limited to number allowing physical distancing of local public health and diocesan recommendations capacity</p> <p>All attendees and assistants are masked</p>	<p>Limited to number allowing physical distancing of local public health and diocesan recommendations capacity</p> <p>Reconfigure space to allow for physical distancing</p>

<p>Communion</p>	<p>Restricted</p>	<p>No physical contact during the Sign of Peace is allowed</p> <p>Spiritual Communion may be preferred in this phase; offer only Spiritual Communion with Mass</p> <p>High risk age group celebrant may defer distribution to minister/s of Holy Communion.</p> <p>Hand sanitizer to be used before, during and after the distribution of Communion. If inadvertent contact is made, the minister of Holy Communion is to stop and re-sanitize hands before continuing to distribute Communion.</p> <p>Communion in health care-based chapels may be required to receive only in the hand. Local diocesan guidelines need to be followed for receiving Communion on the tongue.</p> <p>Communion will not be distributed by the Cup.</p> <p>Celebrant may be required to wear a mask while distributing Holy Communion.</p> <p>Frequently touched surfaces in the church (pews/pew tops, door handles, microphones, etc.) should be cleaned and sanitized per CDC recommendations after every liturgy.</p>	<p>No physical contact during the Sign of Peace is allowed</p> <p>High risk age group celebrant may defer distribution to minister/s of Holy Communion</p> <p>Hand sanitizer to be used before, during and after the distribution of Communion. If inadvertent contact is made, the minister of Holy Communion is to stop and re-sanitize hands before continuing to distribute Communion.</p> <p>Communion in health care-based chapels may be required to receive only in the hand. Local diocesan guidelines need to be followed for receiving Communion on the tongue.</p> <p>Communion will not be distributed by the Cup.</p> <p>Frequently touched surfaces in the church (pews/pew tops, door handles, microphones, etc.) should be cleaned and sanitized per CDC recommendations after every liturgy.</p>
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Anointing of the Sick

	Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
	<i>Phase 1 refers to the period of “surge” or extreme pandemic response.</i>	<i>Phase 2 refers to the short term recovery phases in which both COVID -19 positive and non- COVID -19 patients are in facility.</i>	<i>Phase 3 refers to the long term recovery phase in which a facility may or may not have COVID -19 positive patients but measures are required to mitigate exposure and possible transmission.</i>
Anointing	<p>Rare exceptions – seek assistance from clinical staff in safely donning and doffing PPE and managing elements for anointing</p> <p>Facility visitor restrictions and available PPE may limit access by external non-staff clergy</p> <p>Apostolic Pardon is another option because it may be offered remotely or through physical distance.</p>	<p>By referral</p> <p>Apostolic Pardon is another option because it may be offered remotely or through physical distance</p>	As needed
Minister	<p>Only by Priests on staff or Priests trained on safety protocols</p> <p>Priests in risk group – not permitted</p>	<p>Only by Priests on staff or Priests trained on safety protocols</p> <p>Priests in risk group – not permitted</p>	Any Priest, following all safety and disinfection protocols
Procedures	<p>Disposable oil container, rituals and instrument used for anointing. Used items to be incinerated.</p> <p>Appropriate PPE – including gloved hand</p>	<p>Disposable oil container, rituals and instrument used for anointing. Used items to be incinerated</p> <p>Appropriate PPE – including gloved hand</p>	<p>Consider disposable oil container, rituals and instrument used for anointing.</p> <p>Appropriate PPE/Mask</p>

Sacrament of Reconciliation

	Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
	<i>Phase 1 refers to the period of “surge” or extreme pandemic response.</i>	<i>Phase 2 refers to the short term recovery phases in which both COVID -19 positive and non-covid-19 patients are in facility.</i>	<i>Phase 3 refers to the long term recovery phase in which a facility may or may not have COVID -19 positive patients but measures are required to mitigate exposure and possible transmission.</i>
Minister	<p>Only Priests on staff or priests trained on safety protocols</p> <p>Priests in risk group – not permitted</p>	<p>Only Priests on staff or priests trained on safety protocols</p> <p>Priests in risk group – not permitted</p>	Any Priest following all safety and disinfection protocols
Confession	<p>Only in an emergency</p> <p>General absolution with permission from local Bishop</p>	Facility visitor restrictions and available PPE may limit access by external non-staff clergy	Permitted
Procedures	<p>Minimum six feet distance</p> <p>PPE as needed</p>	<p>Minimum six feet distance</p> <p>PPE as needed</p>	As requested, keeping safe distance