



2020 FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMMING GUIDELINES

The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist parishes in the planning of re-opening faith formation programs for youth and adults during this period of uncertainty around the progress of this global pandemic. The various re-opening scenarios are meant to provide examples that can be adapted to your parish context. All programming must be flexible and adaptable in order to adjust to the rapidly shifting reality in our state and local community.

STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS COVID-19 GUIDELINES

If physical gatherings are to be utilized in your fall programming, they must be in compliance with the State of Massachusetts [Reopening Requirements](#). Check with your local town or city government for any additional requirements that may be imposed.

PASTORAL CONSIDERATION

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed a great deal of stress on families. The goal and mission of parish faith formation is to make disciples, and during this time the Church should be a place of comfort. Keep track of your families and make note of those who are not connecting to be sure that they are okay. This is not a time to hold them accountable, but to hold us accountable for their well-being. Give parents resources that help them to share their faith in simple ways. Parents need a sense of healing from the stress of living in the new reality of a pandemic and they should find such peace in their relationship with the parish.

MODELS OF FAITH FORMATION

In consultation with parish catechetical leaders, three models are recommended for reopening in the fall: **At-home faith formation; In-person gatherings, and hybrid model encompassing both at-home and in-person.**

At-Home Model

- Identify a platform that can be used to transmit faith formation instruction either live or through recorded sessions. See resources for potential platforms
- Live sessions that are offered on a virtual platform should be scheduled in consideration of other virtual meeting obligations for school or work.
- Live sessions should follow protocols for appropriate communication with youth.
- Record sessions to post on the website for students access when convenient.
- Provide hard copy of materials for those families that have limited access to web-based programming. Arrange for safe pick-up of packets at the parish.
- Design a learning experience that engages both student and parent. Over-reliance on independent work does not replicate the valuable experience of an adult sharing faith with a young disciple.
- Vary the content delivered to students and build in a variety of means for demonstrating their understanding by utilizing the multiple intelligences approach to learning (writing, speaking, music, artwork).
- Bi-lingual materials should be offered in communities where needed.

In-Person Gatherings at the Parish

- Parish must be able to comply with all State and Diocesan safety protocols in order to offer in-person gatherings.
- Staff, volunteers, children and families may not participate in parish faith formation if they exhibit Covid-19 symptoms.
- Staff, volunteers and families must exercise hand washing or sanitizing.
- Mask-wearing and social distancing must be enforced.

- Size of parish facility will determine size of the group.
- Keep records of attendance for contact tracing in the event of a positive Covid-19 test by an attendee.

Hybrid Model

- Hybrid models involve both at-home learning and in-person gatherings in the parish. All in-person gatherings must comply with the regulations for safe distancing, mask wearing, hand sanitizing and contact tracing.
- Parishes may offer in-person gatherings for sacrament preparation for grades 2 and 9 or 10 and at-home formation for grades 1, 3-8.
- Parishes may offer retreat experiences in-person.
- Parishes may offer parent and child gatherings in parish church or hall that will allow for compliance with the above regulations.
- Parishes may stagger the in-person meetings according to grade to limit the number of students present while offering at-home learning for the students in between meetings.

CATECHISTS

- Catechists have an important role in every parish faith formation program and should remain an important part of whatever model the parish utilizes.
- Catechists whose health is compromised or who are uncomfortable with serving at an in-person gathering should be given the opportunity to take part in another way and to be asked to return in the future.
- Enlist catechists to be the connection with families to assess their needs and to help them to remain part of the parish community.
- Catechists that are adept with on-line learning platforms should be trained to provide virtual learning.
- Catechists that provide virtual learning in live sessions must be Safe Environment compliant.
- Catechists must not meet one on one with a child in a virtual setting unless another Safe Environment compliant adult is also present in the session (Rule of Two) or if a parent is present with the child.

- Offer training to catechist for on-line curriculum and learning platforms being utilized.
- Identify a catechist to serve as a Master Catechist for each grade level to be responsible for recording weekly lessons that can be made available on the parish website.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

- All catechists, volunteers and staff must be Safe Environment trained and CORI'd in accordance with the Office of Safe Environment guidelines.

Circle of Grace (COG) should be incorporated into the faith formation curriculum. This can be done in one or two sessions on-line or at a live session if using a hybrid model. If any catechist needs assistance in incorporating COG they can reach out to the DRE or the Office of Safe Environment

- Parents should be informed of the date that COG will be offered.
- COG has many resources for parents but the curriculum should not be taught by parents to maximize the opportunity for youth to talk about their concerns.
- Send “The Common Questions of Parents” before offering the COG curriculum.
- Record the date and methodology used to implement the COG curriculum on the eApps database.
- Contact the Office of Safe Environment with any questions or concerns.

CURRICULUM

- Most publishers now offer a digital learning platform or e-books for their curriculum.
- Utilize publishers’ webinars or training opportunities to learn how to facilitate an on-line learning experience. Contact your publisher representative for information.
- Provide Parent and Family components of the curriculum.

SACRAMENTS

- First Reconciliation and First Eucharist can be scheduled according to the Diocesan plan for safe return to Mass.
- Confirmation is to be arranged between the pastor and Bishop. Dates should be submitted to the Bishop's office before scheduling.

MASS ATTENDANCE

- Families should attend Mass either in-person if feasible or through live stream. Resources for following the Mass should be provided as part of the faith formation curriculum.
- Not every parish is equipped to provide Mass via live stream. A list of parishes that provide this can be found on the [Diocesan website](#).

RESOURCES

Virtual Learning Platforms Examples

- Google Meet
- Google Classroom (Paid Subscription)
- Zoom
- Facebook
- Seesaw (Free)
- Sutori (Free)
- ClassDojo
- Edmodo
- Skype (classroom)
- Woodclap

Virtual Resources

- Pastoralplanning.com: Resources for Coaching Parents to Share their Faith; Faith Stories for Parents to Share with their Children
- Magnifikids: Mass/Liturgy based weekly handouts
- Alpha Youth-Sidekick

- My Catholic Faith Delivered
- Catholic Brain
- Constant Contact: Bulk email and registration program.
- Flocknote or Mailchimp: communication platforms that allow safe texting option and bulk email.