

Diocese of San Angelo
Faith Formation Protocols
for in-person/on-site Religious Education/Faith Formation/Youth Ministry
Phase Two
February 14, 2022

In the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic, effective upon promulgation, religious education/faith formation and youth ministry in the Diocese of San Angelo can be held through in-person catechesis, home-based/family catechesis, or virtual/online catechesis.

For pastoral reasons, if a parish is offering in-person catechesis, it is recommended that a parish or mission also offer online and/or home-based/family catechesis as an alternative.

For more information regarding online or home-based family catechesis, please contact the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

In-Person Catechesis

1. If a Religious Education/Faith Formation and Youth Ministry program cannot maintain the safety requirements in this document, then the pastor is not to allow in-person sessions to take place.
2. The pastor is to appoint a COVID-19 Compliance Coordinator and assure that this person is trained. The responsibility of the COVID-19 Compliance Coordinator is to assure that the program is fully compliant with all diocesan protocols. The COVID-19 Compliance Coordinator is not the DRE/CRE/CYM. The COVID-19 Compliance Coordinator is accountable to the leader of the program (DRE/CRE/CYM).
3. The pastor is to designate a team of volunteers and/or staff to assist in monitoring compliance with parish and diocesan protocols for in-person gatherings (this is in addition to the DRE, CRE, CYM, or catechists).

Vaccination

4. For all eligible individuals, vaccinations for COVID-19 are encouraged but not required. No one should be expected to show proof of vaccination.

Facemasks

5. Under current conditions and capacities, facemasks are not required but are optional. If any person chooses to wear a facemask for their own personal reasons, their choice is to be respected and there is to be no mocking nor bullying for anyone who chooses to wear a facemask. The diocese will continue to monitor the public health situation, and changes are possible in response to changes in the pandemic, government guidance, or other mitigating factors.
 - a) If facemasks are used, messages or images on the facemasks must not be contrary to Catholic faith and morals.
 - b) Facemasks are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms.

- c) According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the coronavirus is spread mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets. The facemask acts as a barrier to prevent the droplets from traveling.
- d) In accordance with CDC guidelines, we recommend:
 - Proper fitting facemasks covering your nose, mouth and chin with a nose wire to aid in closing gaps.
 - Facemasks should always be worn according to manufacturer's directions.
 - Consistently wear the most protective mask you can. The CDC recommends masks in the following priority:
 - N95 & KN95 facemasks
 - Double layered disposable Procedure Masks (sometimes referred to as surgical masks)
 - Double layered cloth facemasks.
 - Double layered gaiter masks,
 - Single layered facemasks.
- e) You can increase effectiveness and protection by wearing two masks in any combination

Social Distance

- 6. Out of charity for others, all participants are encouraged to maintain 3 feet of social distance from others. When this is not possible, they are encouraged to wear a facemask. All participants are to be respectful of those who choose to maintain social distancing.
- 7. **Overnight retreats, conferences, and travel:**
 As a possible resource for any sponsoring organization, Religious Education/Faith Formation program, Youth Ministry program, parish or other entity involved in sponsoring, hosting, or transporting participants to an event, the diocese has developed an optional Overnight Room and Travel Assignment Form. The form can be used as a resource to aid in organizing room and travel assignments. If the form is used, it should be kept with all other pertinent registration and medical release forms.
 - a) The optional Overnight Room and Travel Assignment Form will have these options: a participant's preference for a private room (additional costs may be incurred) and private travel, or rooming/traveling with a particular person, or rooming/traveling only with a fully vaccinated person(s), or if they have no preference and will room or travel with anyone assigned to them. If the participant is a minor, the selection(s) regarding the above options will be decided and signed by their parent or legal guardian. If the parent or guardian does not make a selection, the event organizers will make the decision based on the best available information.
 - b) For overnight stays where groups sleep in a large community setting (such as gymnasium, classroom, or youth center) attempts should be made to provide good ventilation and good spacing between participants.
- 8. **Religious Education Classes, Youth Group Meetings and Non-overnight retreats and conferences:**
 Regarding facemasks and social distancing, it is recommended that religious education classes, youth group meetings, and other local/parish level conferences, retreats or events follow the facemask and social distancing protocols for the local public school district in which the activity is located.
- 9. Frequent **hand washing** is to be practiced; hand sanitizers are to be made available throughout the class period. They should be readily available in each space where children/youth are meeting.

10. **High-touch areas** (i.e., doorknobs, tabletops, handles, bathroom faucets, etc.) are to be frequently sanitized to maintain a clean and safe environment.
11. Everyone needs to self-screen for COVID-19 related symptoms and should not come if any symptoms are present.
12. **Ventilation:** When possible, the circulation of outside air into the room should be increased to foster public health in the facilities.
13. The enclosed and insulated interior of a vehicle makes the driver and riders more prone to the transmission of the coronavirus. Therefore, if driving conditions permit, there should be an exchange of air, by rolling down windows or stopping and opening doors periodically.
14. If food is served, it is suggested that it be pre-packaged in individual servings. We also encourage those who are serving food and those who are going through self-serve buffet lines to wear facemasks.
15. **Technology Use:**
 - a. Any video conference or virtual gathering participation from home must take place from public areas (office, kitchen, living room, etc.), not from a bathroom or bedroom.
 - b. Adult leaders may be recorded for a presentation, but minors are not to be recorded.
 - c. At least two adults that are safe environment compliant must be present in presentations with minors.

16. **Outdoor Gatherings:**

Outdoor events and gatherings are encouraged. Currently there are no state limits on outside gatherings; however, pastors, staff, DREs, CREs, and Youth Ministers must monitor and ensure compliance with any county and local limits.

17. **Health protocols** for clergy, staff, and volunteers:

- a. All clergy, staff, and those volunteers assisting with in-person catechesis must be trained on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.
- b. All children, clergy, staff, and those volunteers assisting with in-person catechesis are to self-screen and stay home or seek medical care if they have any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19:

Cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste, loss of smell, diarrhea, feeling feverish, having a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit, or known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19.

- c. A person is to be sent home by the DRE/CRE/CYM or their designee if the person has any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19:

Cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste, loss of smell, diarrhea, feeling feverish, having a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit, or known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19.

- 1) If the person being sent home is a child, the parents/guardians of the child are to be contacted and the child's safety is to be assured.
- 2) They are not to be allowed to return until they have met the criteria in the health protocols. These are as follows:
 - In the case of an individual who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may not attend the gathering until all three of the following criteria are met: at least 5 days (120 hours) have passed since diagnosis; and the individual has no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and an improvement in symptoms (for example, cough, shortness of breath); and the individual must wear a facemask at all times for an additional 5 days.
 - In the case of an individual who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not attend the gathering until the individual has completed the same three-step criteria listed above.
 - c. If an individual has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to participate in the gathering before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis.

Do not allow an individual with known close contact (defined as within 6 feet for a cumulative amount of 15 minutes) to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 to return to attend a gathering until the end of the 5-day self-quarantine period from the last date of exposure (with an exception granted for healthcare workers, critical infrastructure workers, and those who have been fully vaccinated).

18. If a person in the program (staff, volunteer, child, or youth) tests positive for COVID-19, other staff, volunteers, catechists, and parents/guardians of other children/youth in the program must be notified by the DRE/CRE/CYM or their designee only that a positive COVID-19 case is present. To protect their right of privacy, the individual who tested positive is not to be identified by name.

The protocols listed above are to be followed; that is the individual may return when all three of the following criteria are met: at least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications); and the individual has improvement in symptoms (for example, cough, shortness of breath); and at least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

**Optional
Overnight Room and Travel Assignment Form**

Name of Participant: _____

Name of Parent/Legal Guardian if Participant is a Minor: _____

Name of Parish, Sponsoring Organization: _____

Name of Event, Retreat or Conference: _____

Date(s) of Event, Retreat or Conference: _____ **to** _____

PLEASE READ: This form may be used as a possible resource to aid in organizing room and travel assignments. This form should be kept with all other relevant registration and release forms.

ROOM SELECTION FOR OVERNIGHT STAYS WHERE SEPARATE ROOMS ARE AVAILABLE: (Initial Appropriate Choice)

_____ If available, I/we choose a private room. I/we understand that additional charges may be incurred.

_____ I/we choose to room with: _____

_____ I/we have been vaccinated and I/we choose to room with only another fully vaccinated person.

_____ I/we have no preference for room assignment and will room with anyone assigned to me.

TRAVEL SELECTION: (Initial Appropriate Choice)

_____ I/we choose to travel via private vehicle. I/we understand that we are responsible for all travel to and from the venue.

_____ I/we choose to travel with: _____

_____ I/we have been vaccinated and I/we choose to travel with only other fully vaccinated persons.

_____ I/we have no preference for travel assignment and will travel with anyone assigned to me.

If the participant is a minor, the selection regarding the above options will be decided and initialed by their parent or legal guardian.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: I/we acknowledge that there is no complete manner of protection from COVID-19 and any other danger or hazard; I/we also understand that prudent measures to mitigate exposure to known hazards will be taken; and finally, I/we understand that participation in group activities increases the risk of exposure and possible infection to COVID-19.

Signature of Adult or Parent/Guardian of a Minor

Date