



ARUNDEL CENTER
P.O. BOX 2700 -ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21404
Phone: 410-222-1821 -Fax: 410-222-1155
www.aacounty.org

STEUART PITTMAN
County Executive

EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 23

REOPENING HOUSES OF WORSHIP

WHEREAS, a state of emergency and catastrophic health emergency was proclaimed by Lawrence J. Hogan, the Governor of the State of Maryland on March 5, 2020, and renewed on March 17, 2020, to control and prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the state, and the state of emergency and catastrophic health emergency still exists;

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, County Executive Steuart Pittman issued Executive Order No. 16 proclaiming a civil emergency in Anne Arundel County due to the rapid onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which Executive Order was extended by the County Council on March 20, 2020, to continue for the duration of the Governor's state of emergency proclamation; and

WHEREAS, the effects of COVID-19 require that local officials be vigilant in advising the residents of measures they can take to protect health, safety, and welfare;

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) advises that social distancing is the most effective way of slowing the spread of COVID-19;

WHEREAS, COVID-19 continues to pose serious health risk for the citizens of Anne Arundel County, particularly elderly residents and those who are immunosuppressed or otherwise have high-risk medical conditions;

WHEREAS, on March 30, 2020, the Governor issued Executive Order 20-03-30-01 which ordered all nonessential employees in the State to stay at home for an undetermined period of time in an effort to arrest the increase in the number of residents contracting the virus;

WHEREAS, on May 13, 2020 the Governor issued Executive Order 20-05-13-01 which gave Maryland counties the discretion to review local data and make independent decisions about when it is appropriate to relax certain restrictions;

WHEREAS, at that time Anne Arundel County had met some, but not all, of the criteria that the Governor outlined in his four building blocks to reopen, and with the recommendation of

the County Health Officer, on May 15, 2020, County Executive Stuart Pittman issued Executive Order No. 21, reopening certain businesses to customers with certain restrictions, and on May 28, 2020, issued Amended and Restated Executive Order No. 21, reopening additional businesses, including retail businesses, with certain restrictions;

WHEREAS, on May 27, 2020, the Governor issued Executive Order No. 20-05-27-01, allowing restaurants and certain outdoor facilities to open, with restrictions, and granting local governments the right to issue local orders more restrictive than Executive Order 20-05-27-01 if necessary and reasonable to save lives or prevent exposure to COVID-19;

WHEREAS, on May 29, 2020, the County Executive issued Executive Order No. 22, reopening additional businesses, including restaurants, with certain local restrictions;

WHEREAS, the County's Health Officer has identified certain criteria for determining when the restrictions imposed by the Governor's Executive Order 20-03-30-01 may be lifted, including ensuring adequate hospital capacity to provide care for COVID-19 positive patients; decreasing community spread and deaths due to COVID-19; sufficient testing capacity to test all symptomatic and high-risk asymptomatic individuals; sufficient supplies of personal protective equipment ("PPE"); adequate contact tracing capacity to suppress disease spread; and providing supplemental resources to at-risk populations;

WHEREAS, the County Executive and the County Health Officer have determined that the criteria identified by the Health Officer have been partially met in Anne Arundel County, and that the restrictions on houses of worship imposed by Amended and Restated County Executive Order No. 21 may be further relaxed but with restrictions that are necessary and reasonable to save lives and prevent exposure to COVID-19;

WHEREAS, to save lives and prevent further exposure to the COVID-19 virus in Anne Arundel County, it is necessary and reasonable to issue this local Executive Order that is more Restrictive than the Governor's Executive Order 20-05-27-01, while at the same time providing relief to the many houses of worship affected by the COVID-19 pandemic;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Stuart Pittman, County Executive, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Charter and laws of Anne Arundel County, Maryland, and §§ 1-6-101 *et. seq.* of the Anne Arundel County Code, and pursuant to the authority granted in Governor Hogan's Executive Order 20-05-27-01, and to save lives and prevent further exposure to the COVID-19 virus within Anne Arundel County and the State of Maryland, do hereby proclaim and order on this 3rd day of June, 2020:

1. This Executive Order No. 23 is a Local Order as described in, contemplated by, and authorized by Governor Hogan's Executive Order 20-05-27-01, to modify certain provisions of Section III of Governor Hogan's Executive Order 20-05-27-01.

2. Houses of worship, including churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and other similar religious facilities used for worship of any faith in Anne Arundel County (“Houses of Worship”) may open to the general public, provided, however, that the total number of persons permitted in a House of Worship at any one time may not exceed 50% of that House of Worship’s maximum capacity as established by local fire code or other local law or permit, and, provided further, that the use fully complies with the “Guidance for having Services inside Houses of Worship at Stage 1 Recovery, effective June 5, 2020,” attached hereto and adopted by reference herein.

3. The County Health Officer may amend or modify the “Guidance for having Services inside Houses of Worship at State 1 Recovery, effective June 5, 2020” if necessary to save lives and prevent further exposure to the COVID-19 virus in Anne Arundel County.

4. All Houses of Worship that are permitted to be open under this Executive Order shall also comply with:

A. All local Executive Orders (as amended) and all Orders and guidance from the County Health Officer, including the “Order for Public Safety” issued by County Health Officer Nilesh Kalyanaraman on April 14, 2020, to the extent such Orders are not inconsistent with this Executive Order;

B. All State Executive Orders (as amended) as modified by this Local Order;

C. Any applicable directives from the State Secretary of Health;

D. applicable social distancing guidance published by the Centers for Disease Control and the Maryland Department of Health; and

E. All applicable Federal, State and local laws.

5. Except for § III(a) as modified herein, and except as modified by Amended and Restated local Executive Order No. 21 and local Executive Order No. 22, all provisions of Governor Hogan’s Executive Order No. 20-05-27-01 dated May 27, 2020, are unaffected by this local Executive Order and shall apply in Anne Arundel County.

6. This Executive Order shall take effect as of 5:00 p.m. on June 5, 2020, and shall continue until the local proclamation of emergency expires or is terminated.

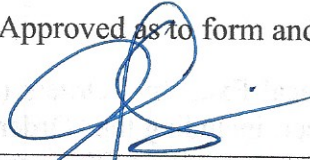
7. The Public Information Officer shall immediately disseminate notice of this Executive Order to the appropriate news media and to the general public.

This Executive Order shall be archived at the Office of Law and remain in existence until altered or terminated by a subsequent Executive Order.

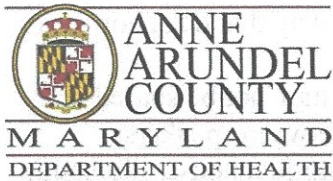


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Approved as to form and legal sufficiency:



Gregory J. Swain
County Attorney



Anne Arundel County Department of Health COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Guidance for having services inside houses of worship at Stage 1 Recovery

This guidance is based on current information known about the COVID-19 (Coronavirus). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the AACO DOH will provide updated guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available. Please continue to check the [CDC](#) and the [AACO DOH](#) websites routinely for updated guidance.

This guidance is intended for all houses of worship in Anne Arundel County no matter what denomination as allowed by County Executive Order 23, based on meeting social distance, large gatherings and face mask requirements. These requirements will stay in effect until further notice.

Guidance for Houses of Worship During COVID19 Social Distancing Limitations

Effective June 5, 2020 @ 5:00 p.m., all houses of worship in Anne Arundel County may hold services inside the house of worship and operate under the following circumstances:

- In this early stage of recovery, the Department recommends religious services be virtual or on parking lots with the congregation in their vehicles during the services;
- For indoor religious services, including worship, weddings and funerals, seating shall be arranged or utilized in a manner to maximize social distancing:
 - Seating shall be at least six feet (6') apart for individual worshippers or families from the same households.
 - Markings on seats are required to show six feet (6') distance and signage is required to close appropriate rows of seating. Faith leaders know their congregation very well and what family members may sit as a group of no more than six feet (6').
 - Every other row of seating shall be left vacant to provide a six feet (6') separation between rows.
- Due to the structural design of some houses of worship, it is difficult to determine a maximum number based on square footage. There may be large open areas that do not include seating, therefore square footage should not be the determining factor. Maximum capacity may not exceed 50% of the facility's maximum occupancy, and appropriate capacity could be less, based on seating arrangement and required social distancing;
- Houses of Worship shall utilize one (1) entrance for the congregation to arrive, and in larger houses of worships a separate single exit, but may not block any existing required exits; Consider having an usher open the door wearing gloves for congregants as they arrive to limit hand contact whenever possible;
- Encourage congregants to exit the house of worship once services have ended. Excuse rows of seating one row at a time to leave ample space for congregants to exit safely using social distancing protocols.
- The Department recommends houses of worship keep any water or oil receptacles used for religious ceremonies or rituals empty at this time;

- Baptisms are not recommended at this time;
- At this time, communion is not recommended unless it can be given in a way that does not involve removing face coverings within 6 feet of others;
- Common items such as bulletins, pens, pencils, hymnals and holy books may not be shared at this time. If a microphone is used for services, it shall be disinfected in between speakers;
- The Department recommends that choirs not be active at this time. Singing in a house of worship is not recommended;
- While worshipping in a house of worship all congregants shall continue to practice social distancing and maintain six feet (6') distance from others. The leadership of the house of worships is responsible for enforcing this rule;
- A face mask covering both the mouth and nose shall be worn at all times by congregants, employees and volunteers in accordance with Executive Order of The Governor No. 20-04-15-01, dated April 15, 2020. The leadership of the house of worships is responsible for enforcing this rule; The individual providing the sermon may take off their face covering as long as there is a six(6') separation from all other individuals; Individuals with a medical condition that wearing a face covering affects the condition are not required to wear a face covering; The Department recommends not to engage in the following activities: shake hands, hug, high five, fist bump or the fellowship greeting; Hand touching of any kind is not recommended. Congregants, employees, and volunteers shall continue to practice good hand hygiene and hand sanitizer shall be readily available for anyone in the facility;
- Frequently touched surfaces such as restrooms, and door handles shall be disinfected frequently or at least hourly while services are active;
- After each service and at the end of each day services are held, all surfaces that were utilized by the congregation shall be disinfected such as pews or seating, door handles, and restrooms. Persons conducting this task shall wear disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Use of an approved disinfectant is required.
- Houses of worship should instruct congregants, employees and volunteers to not attend if they are not feeling well; Individuals that are part of a vulnerable population or are immune compromised should worship via virtual services at this time;
- Water fountains with mouth spouts shall be closed and houses of worship should encourage everyone to bring or use their own water bottles;
- Houses of worship shall ensure HVAC systems are in proper working order and filters are changed on a regular basis;
- Each congregant, employee or volunteer shall exercise personal responsibility to protect others from any risk of infection;

Outdoor service will be considered under the following criteria:

- Additional seating may be installed on the premise if the congregation has ownership or permission from ownership to place seating not to exceed 50% of its approved indoor seating;
- All seating shall be spaced six (6') apart from each seat or households may sit together separated by other groups by six feet (6');
- If indoor restrooms facilities are to be used, points of access to restroom facilities shall be provided;

- Outdoor seating may not be more than 500 feet away from the restrooms;
- Any tent over 200 square feet requires a building permit (Permit Center contact 410-222-7700 or email IPMailbox@aacounty.org);
- Any proposed use of electric or plumbing outdoors shall comply with County code requirements;
- Seating areas shall be delineated and separated from any driving areas to protect from vehicles. This can be done with landscape planters, posts, cones, fencing, etc.;
- If outdoor seating includes the parking lot:
 - a. ADA accessible spaces may not be used for seating
 - b. Traffic flow into and out of the site may not be blocked
 - c. Fire lanes for emergency vehicles shall remain unobstructed to maintain adequate clearance to meet Fire Code standards;

Failure to abide by any State or local executive orders regarding public gatherings and other COVID-19 related restrictions will be grounds for the County to revoke authorization of the use of outdoor seating. As previously noted, all County laws that currently apply to a house of worship remain in effect.

This is guidance for services but personal choice may still be to hold services virtually or with parking lot services at this stage in the recovery.

As we start to gather and leave our homes we must remain diligent in our social distancing, face coverings and washing our hands to make every experience a pleasant and safe one for all of us.

Additional Information:

CDC Resources

- [What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions and Answers](#)
- [What to do if you are sick with COVID-19](#)
- [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#)

