

UUCY COVID-19 Guidance Document

Overview

The UUCY COVID Task Force recommends a process for resuming in-person activities guided by information about the risk of COVID-19 infection in York County. This Guidance Document sets forth the principles, strategies, and metrics being used to monitor COVID-19 in York County and determine when and what activities can take place at UUCY. Definite dates and other details will be determined using these guidelines. Activities and in-person gatherings may need to be scaled back when the metrics indicate that transmission is increasing.

- Smaller, non-public events and in-person meetings will resume first.
- Large, public gatherings will resume last.
- Outdoor events are less risky than indoor events and may resume first.
- Masks will be required for all indoor events until further notice, but at least until children younger than 5 can be vaccinated.
- Remote access to worship will be available.

Plans for resuming full religious education (RE) and music programming (including choir rehearsals and singing in worship) will be developed with key staff.

Guiding Principles

In all matters of public health, UUCY will prioritize protecting and providing for the most vulnerable in our community.

We recognize that children under 5 are not eligible for vaccination and that some members of the community may be immuno-compromised or otherwise more vulnerable to bad outcomes if exposed to COVID-19. We also recognize that isolation is a public health concern and is detrimental to some members of our congregation. At a minimum, UUCY will follow all restrictions and guidelines from government authorities. The current scientific consensus is that the primary risk of contracting COVID-19 is from airborne transmission of the virus. Guidance and strategies provided by the UUA have been used to develop strategies for UUCY. The following are some highlights of the strategies:

- Masks do help prevent transmission (must cover the mouth and nose).
- The risk of transmission outdoors is low.
- Risk of transmission indoors is higher.
- Crowded spaces indoors with poor ventilation are highest risk.
- Singing and yelling are higher risk activities.
- Vaccination for COVID-19 helps prevent severe disease and death.

Ground Rules

The following ground rules* will also help us remain in good relation with each other as we adjust to the “new normal” for gathering at UUCY:

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** developed by Carol Gay, UU Congregation of Cleveland and adopted and modified by the UUCY COVID Task Force*

In gathering together, we promise to:

- Gain consent before touching or hugging others.
- Wear masks in shared spaces until it is determined masks are not needed.
- Find ways to be inclusive of adults and children who cannot be vaccinated, or who are more vulnerable.
- Give and accept reminders of these ground rules gracefully.
- Prioritize the safety of the whole community over our own sense of what is safe for us.
- Take seriously the obligation to think about the safety of the whole before our own sense of what is safe for us.
- Assume good intentions, but also accept that policies and these ground rules will guide our actions.
- Respect the authority of the UUCY Board making policies.
- Respect the expertise of the UUCY COVID Task Force developing the guidance and recommendations.
- Not attend in person gatherings if we are not feeling well or if not vaccinated and have been exposed to COVID-19.

Strategies for Safe Worship at UUCY

Strategy 1: Continue to Offer Meaningful Engagement Online

Congregational leaders should be attentive to the impacts of multiplatform plans on ministers, staff, and volunteers, and to make space to meet the needs of individuals and families at higher risk.

UUCY currently offers online worship services and will continue this after in-person services are allowed to provide an option for those who are not able to or who do not wish to attend in person.

Strategy 2: Promote Vaccination

- Vaccination for COVID-19 helps prevent severe disease and death.

Vaccines are the first and best line of defense against COVID-19*. However, children under 5 are still not eligible for vaccines, and vaccines are not available or are less effective for people who are immunocompromised. We encourage everyone who is able to be up-to-date with vaccination ([Vaccine Information](#)).

* Vaccinated individuals can become infected and spread COVID-19, and wearing a well-fitting mask remains an important tool for mitigating the spread of COVID-19 for indoor events.

Strategy 3: Require Masking for Attendance at Indoor Events

The COVID task force is recommending wearing masks for indoor events until further notice, and at least until children younger than 5 can be vaccinated.

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- CDC recommends to wear a close fitting mask you will keep on and wear properly
 - N95, KN95, and KF94 masks provide the most protection
 - Surgical masks are good
 - Cloth masks provide the least amount of protection

Strategy 4: Employ Rapid-Testing for Worship Leaders and Singers

Masks can get in the way of clear sound for speakers and singers, and facial expressions are not able to be seen, which can also be important for speakers during services. The primary ways to protect each other while not wearing a mask:

- Physical distance: this needs to be greater for singing
 - Singing transmits approximately **ten times** more volume of aerosols than speaking does—therefore congregations and music professionals should approach singing with great care. Additional information is available on the UUA website [here](#).
- Negative rapid antigen testing the morning of service

Strategy 5: Invest in Ventilation

Because COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through the air, it is important to improve air quality and circulation to make indoor gatherings safer for everyone. Poorly-ventilated spaces can only safely be occupied by small numbers of people for short times, even with mask wearing.

Ventilation improvements also help make indoor spaces better for people with allergies, and prevent the transmission of other airborne infections besides COVID-19.

Strategy 6: Allow Space Between People

- COVID-19 is spread by airborne particles which can linger in the air.
- There is not a set distance between people that is completely safe.
- Creating distance between well-masked people provides another layer of safety.

Strategy 7: Carefully Consider Food and Drinks

Special consideration of ventilation, distancing, and time should be used to determine allowing food and drink indoors at UUCY.

- Eating and drinking indoors is not recommended while masks are required.
 - Eating and drinking are higher risk activities; in instances where this is necessary, we recommend immediately put your mask back on between bites and sips.
- Serving and consuming food outdoors reduces the risk of transmission and may take place.
- Shorter durations of eating and drinking indoors is safer*.

*The CDC has determined that as little as 15 minutes total exposure to COVID-infected respiratory droplets over the course of 24 hours can infect a person.

Overall principles for in-person gatherings:

1. Start with the easy events

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- a. Non-public before public events
- b. Small before large events
2. Move slowly
 - a. Start small and work to larger gatherings based on transmission metrics and evaluation of small events
3. Communicate clearly
 - a. Clearly communicate expectations and restrictions
4. Evaluate
 - a. After action – how did the event go? Did any situation arise that was unexpected? Should our approach be adjusted for that type of event?
5. Look ahead
 - a. Monitor the health metrics
 - b. Prepare ahead of time to scale back events as the metrics indicate

Metrics for Community Spread of COVID-19

To measure the status of COVID-19 transmission in our community and the risk from the virus, UUCY will review data from two primary sources:

- CDC county-level dashboard (<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>)
- Pennsylvania Department of Health COVID-19 Dashboard-review case/death and hospital data for York County

These sources provide county-level information about two key metrics for the virus: daily new case and positive test rates.

Updated guidance of COVID-19 Community levels was released by CDC on 2/25/2022. The basic principles are that community measures should focus on minimizing the impact of severe COVID-19 illness on health and society, preventing medically significant illness, minimizing burden on the healthcare system, and protecting the most vulnerable through vaccines, therapeutics, and COVID-19 prevention.

The tables below show metrics and the associated risk levels. The risk levels will be assessed regularly. The status of each metric and the trend (levels are going up or going down) will be evaluated to determine the risk level for UUCY. Based on the risk level, the UUCY Board, in consultation with the COVID Task Force and Re-opening Task Force, will decide which activities may go forward.

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Transmission Metrics

	Low	Moderate	Substantial	High
New cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days	<10	10-49.99	50-99.99	≥100
Percentage of positive PCR tests during the past 7 days	<5%	5-7.99%	8-9.99%	≥10%

Community Level Metrics

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

New COVID-19 Cases Per 100,000 people in the past 7 days	Indicators	Low	Medium	High
		Fewer than 200	New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population (7-day total)	<10.0
	Percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients (7-day average)	<10.0%	10.0-14.9%	≥15.0%
200 or more	New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population (7-day total)	NA	<10.0	≥10.0
	Percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients (7-day average)	NA	<10.0%	≥10.0%

How to use the metrics:

- The risk level between the 2 different metrics may not always match. It is possible that transmission metrics can be high while the community level is low because of different methods used to calculate the risk level.

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- If indicators suggest different risk phases, we will act according to the higher risk level. For example, if daily new cases are at the low risk level, but the positive test rate is moderate risk, we will consider UUCY at moderate risk level.
- When moving from a higher to a lower risk level, it is recommended that we be in the lower level for 7 consecutive days before implementing changes—i.e., before adding more in-person activities or allowing relaxation of mitigation measures (masks, distancing).
- Because some risk levels cover broad ranges, attention will be given to trend lines. For example, for moderate risk the range is 10 - 49 new cases per day. If the risk is still within that range, but trending up, that may warrant a return to less risky activities/more mitigation strategies.

Work of the UUCY COVID Task Force

The UUCY COVID Task Force began meeting in August 2021 with the goal of developing a plan for resuming in-person activities at UUCY. The task force consulted guidance from various sources, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pennsylvania Department of Health, and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Task force members have had conversations with the UUCY Board; staff, including those involved in children’s religious education and choir, and received feedback from members of the congregation to determine what special considerations might need to be given to those activities. The COVID Task Force will continue to consult with the UUCY Board. Please communicate concerns and questions regarding COVID-19 Guidance with the UUCY Board.

Members of the UUCY COVID Task Force:

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