



Infectious Disease Outbreak Manual

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1.0 INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAK

1.1 Notification of local, community outbreak

Follow the guidelines from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as any further guidance from your state and local health department. In a state of emergency, such guidelines may differ from the following policy: If the local health department has declared that the community is experiencing an outbreak of an infectious disease spread by droplets and has not recommended temporarily suspending gatherings of 10 or more, the following steps should be followed in order to reduce the spread of the disease.

- 1.1.1** Temporarily adopt customs to minimize personal contact, for example: Find substitutes for shaking hands or hugging. Encourage people to keep a personal distance of three feet from each other.
- 1.1.2** Know the symptoms of the infectious disease outbreak.
- 1.1.3** If a congregant is coughing, has a fever, or any other symptoms, keep a distance of six feet. Avoid close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections.
- 1.1.4** Encourage the vulnerable people you serve to seek out a specific person who will check on and help care for them if they get sick.
- 1.1.5** Consider postponing or canceling mass gatherings and have an action plan in place ready to implement, if necessary.
- 1.1.6** Encourage frequent hand washing to staff and church attendees. Install hand sanitizer at entrances and exits to the sanctuary, on the aisles or rows of your sanctuary, at check-in locations for nurseries and children ministries, and around any other high-touch surface areas.
- 1.1.7** Use bleach-based or hospital-grade cleaning products to routinely clean frequently touched surfaces. Be prepared to provide hospital grade cleaning to your facilities if necessary and communicate with your church family your cleaning practices.
- 1.1.8** Actively encourage your congregation to stay home, if they are unwell.
- 1.1.9** Require your employees and volunteers to stay home if they are not fully well. Establish procedures to send staff that become sick at work or serving within the scope of their employment home as soon as possible. Keep sick staff separate from healthy people until they can leave campus. In conjunction with the Center for Disease Control and the local health department, implement policy and procedures. Communicate to all staff

and members of the congregation about when a self-quarantined individual may return to public gatherings at the church.

- 1.1.10** Create a plan that allows employees to telecommute when necessary and possible. If staff must be present on campus for necessary business operations, consider staggering their entrance and presence on campus.
- 1.1.11** Develop information-sharing systems with partners, including local churches, schools, and health officials, to share disease surveillance and response efforts. Engage state and local health departments to confirm channels of communication and methods for disseminating local outbreak information.
- 1.1.12** Determine if, when, and for how long your church should be closed in order to stop or slow the spread of disease if an employee or congregant tests positive for the infectious disease.
- 1.1.13** Plan to minimize exposure between staff, congregants, and the public if public health officials call for social distancing. Explore whether you can establish social distancing strategies such as: live streaming or online learning to increase physical distance and allow congregants to participate in worship from home or staff to work from home.
- 1.1.14** Identify essential business functions required to maintain operations. Plan for how your church will operate if there is increasing absenteeism or programs are interrupted. Consider whether your church should be hosting conferences or traveling to annual meetings, especially in outbreak regions.
- 1.1.15** Restrict your staff's hospital visits, nursing home visits, and visits in parishioners homes in accordance with the recommendations from the CDC and your state and local health department.
- 1.1.16** Consider how you will provide funeral services during the pandemic, and consider how you will provide bereavement counseling as well.
- 1.1.17** Consider ways to support and engage your healthcare workers, food supply workers, law enforcement officials, and others in service on the frontline of the pandemic.

1.2 National or International Pandemic

- 1.2.1** Remind members and staff to stay home, if they have any type of symptoms of coughing, sneezing, fever, nausea, achiness, or flu-like symptoms. If the Center for Disease Control and Prevention requires or encourages more stringent measures, comply voluntarily.

- 1.2.2** Do not sponsor mission trips to regions where the Center for Disease Control has a Level 2 or 3 Travel Alert in effect. Cancel or postpone mission trips in accordance with the Center for Disease Control and your local health department's recommendations.
- 1.2.3** Consider whether you should or should not sponsor religious visas for ministerial workers.
- 1.2.4** If mission trips are still planned, send parents, students, adult attendees, and staff informational letters identifying the worldwide risk noting the region's affected status. Document your church's ongoing efforts to track the spread of the virus and emergency plans in case infections occur in the region. Conduct ongoing monitoring of the worldwide and regional outbreak. Update travelers on any change. Waivers or releases for the church-sponsored trip abroad should describe the risk of the infectious disease and provide that the church cannot guarantee a participant's safety. Churches should require the guardians of attending minors to sign assumption of risk forms that outline involved risks and require the participant to assume these risks voluntarily. Hold mandatory orientation for participants and parents of minor students and discuss the trip's risks and recommended vaccinations. Document attendance at the meeting.

2.0 Employment & Labor Law Implications during an Infectious Disease Outbreak

On March 27, 2020 the Families First Coronavirus Response Act was signed into law. In pandemics, new legislation impacting non-profit organizations may be passed on both the state and federal level. This new federal law creates new requirements for entities subject to the Family Medical Leave Act. Your ministry should consider the following:

- 2.1.1** Permit eligible employees to use Family Medical Leave Act leave related to public health emergencies.
- 2.1.2** Provide new paid sick leave entitlement to impacted employees.
- 2.1.3** Provide tax credits to employers paying out FMLA or sick leave benefits.

At this time, we recommend you take a headcount of employees, taking into account part-time and any potential lay-offs, to determine which provisions of the bill would apply.

Consider whether your state and local jurisdiction have passed any further laws intended to provide relief to employers and employees during the emergency. Your organization may be entitled to an emergency small-business loan backed by the state.

3.0 Emergency Leave Policy during Infectious Disease Outbreak

Draft or adopt an emergency-leave policy that outlines Family and Medical Leave Act and sick leave rights. (See page 35 of the Christian Law Association’s *Employment Law Guidelines*). Ensure that your policy aligns with your ministry’s leave of absence, sick leave, and paid-time-off policy. Work with your bookkeeper or accountant in preparation to account for the new paid Family Medical Leave Act and sick leave entitlements. Consider potential fluctuations in staffing levels during this calendar year and plan accordingly. Consider whether there are any applicable state and local laws that provide parallel or overlapping leave and paid-time-off requirements.

4.0 Workplace Safety during Infectious Disease Outbreak

- 4.1.1** Communicate with your employees that your organization is monitoring the Center for Disease Control and Prevention alerts. Appoint a point of contact for staff to address regarding all concerns about the infectious disease and how it relates to the workplace.
- 4.1.2** Encourage sick employees to stay home. Require self-quarantining in accordance with the Center for Disease Control’s recommendations.
- 4.1.3** Encourage workplace hygiene. Provide hand sanitizer throughout the office. Encourage hand washing of 20 seconds or more with soap and water. If an outside contractor provides cleaning service and restocking of supplies, review the contract provisions and ensure timeliness of delivery of hand sanitizer, soap, and paper towels.
- 4.1.4** Require social distancing.
- 4.1.5** Discourage or disallow nonessential travel.
- 4.1.6** If an infected employee infects another employee, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (hereinafter “OSHA”) requires an employer to record it as a work-related incident, if one of the recording requirements is met. (See page 58 of the Christian Law Association’s *Employment Law Guidelines*). If an employee is infected, the employer must require the employee to stay home, or OSHA may cite the employer under the general duty clause for directing or allowing the employee to come to work.