

Protocols for Responding in the Event of a Confirmed or Presumptive COVID-19 Diagnosis at your Parish

Definitions:

“Affected Individual”- the individual with the confirmed or presumptive COVID-19 diagnosis

“Close Contact”- coming within 6 feet of the affected person for a minimum period of 15 minutes whether masked or unmasked.

Objective:

Each parish administration must be prepared to respond quickly and consistently when learning of either a confirmed or presumptive COVID-19 diagnosis involving the parish. The protocols provided in this document address when the affected individual becomes symptomatic or learns of a positive test result **while on campus**, as well as protocol for when a person self-reports a confirmed or presumptive COVID-19 diagnosis while **away from campus**. Regardless of the circumstances, the parish response needs to address five key areas:

1. Meeting the needs of the affected individual or employee
2. Identifying individuals, whether co-workers, volunteers or others, who have come into close contact with the Affected individual and meeting their specific needs
3. Determining the required actions for suspending operations in part or whole for the parish
4. Issuing the appropriate communication(s) to the parish community
5. Determining the appropriate protocol for cleaning and sanitizing the affected areas of the building.

On Campus or Attending Activity Protocol

Step 1 Addressing the “Affected” Individual’s Need

- A. Promptly separate the affected individual from others in the building or from those participating in the activity.
- B. Arrange to have the affected individual transported either home or for medical care. This can include the affected person driving themselves home if physically able and safe to do so.
- C. If feasible, ask the affected individual if they are aware of having come into close contact with any other individuals while on campus or participating in the activity.
- D. Provide the affected individual guidance as to the requirements that must be met in order for the individual to return to campus or resume participating in parish activities. (Please see Appendix A)

Step 2 Identifying Close Contact Individuals

- A. Based upon information learned from the affected person, along with any observations by parish administrators, begin the process of identifying if any individuals came into close contact with the affected person. It is critical that as part of this process the identity of the affected person is not shared with others, except members of the parish leadership responding to the matter.
- B. Once identified, it is necessary then to remove these individuals from the parish as well.
- C. Those individuals identified as close contacts must be provided information on the requirements that must be met in order for them to return to the parish. (Please see Appendix A)

Step 3 Continuing with Operations

- A. The parish administration must evaluate the circumstances and determine the following:
 - areas of the facilities impacted
 - whether the areas are to be removed from use
 - if areas are to be taken out of use and are occupied by others, whether to relocate the remaining individuals or to suspend their activities
 - if significant portions of the facilities are to be taken out of use or key parts of the facility are to be taken out of use, consideration must be given to suspending all operations pending completion of a thorough cleaning and sanitization.

Addressing the above questions requires evaluating where within the building the affected individual has been during that day. If the individual has an office, immediately went to that office, remained in that office and did not go to other parts of the building until such time as they began to experience symptoms, then that office can be closed off from use till it can be cleaned and sanitized. If you have a person that was in a number of offices, attended a meeting in a conference room and was present in a number of other areas, then the parish will need to close off all of these areas. When evaluating those areas impacted, keep in mind the affected person had to have **occupied** the area for a short period of time. So if an affected person moves through an area, such as a hallway or lobby, unless they stopped and occupied that area for a period of time there is no need to remove those areas from use.

Step 4 Communications

- A. Having progressed through addressing the needs of the individuals directly impacted, along with determining whether operations can continue or need to be suspended, the parish must then provide a communication to those impacted by the event. A decision will need to be made if the communication is to go out to a small targeted group, such as in a case where there are few individuals impacted and there is no impact to parish

operations. If, however, at the time the affected person came forward, there was a significant number of individuals on the parish campus or the parish operations have been impacted, a communication needs to be issued as soon as practical advising the parish community of the presumptive or confirmed COVID-19 circumstances. The communication needs to address the following:

- when the affected individual was on campus
- the fact that individuals having close contact with the affected person have been identified and are being notified.
- a reminder to those who were on the campus at the same time who were not in close contact that they merely need to self-monitor for symptoms. Of course if they wish, they can contact their medical provider or proceed with being tested if they so choose.
- if necessary, any alterations to parish operating hours or cancellations of any activities or services.

A template letter is included as part of this protocol packet. Please customize to the specific circumstances as presented at your parish.

Step 5 Cleaning and Sanitization Response

- A. Once the impacted areas of the facilities have been left unoccupied and shut off from use for 24 hours or for as close to 24 hours as possible, the parish administration is to begin cleaning and sanitizing the affected areas of the building prior to allowing the resumption of operations.

Self-Reporting Protocol

For those affected individuals who self-report or that are reported by a contact tracer to the parish, the response protocol largely follows the protocols detailed previously with minor variations. Any variations in process are largely contingent on the **lag time** between the last time the affected person was on the parish campus or participating in a parish activity and the date on which they are notifying the parish of the circumstances.

Step 1 Addressing the Affected Individual's Need

- A. A parish receives notification from the affected individual, a family member or friend of the affected person or health department official of a positive or presumptive positive test result.
- B. Upon receipt of the notification, the parish staff member must attempt to secure the following information from the caller:

- Date the “affected person” was last on the parish campus or attended a parish activity
 - If it is **14 days or less between the date the affected person was last on campus or attended a parish function and the date of notification to the parish**, the parish must then inquire of the caller if the affected person has knowledge of their coming into close contact with others while on campus.
- C. Provide the affected individual guidance as to the requirements that must be met in order for the individual to return to campus or resume participating in parish activities. (Please see Appendix A)

Step 2 Close Contact individuals

- A. If as a result of the discussions with the affected person it is determined they came into close contact with another person or persons, the parish then must make a good faith effort to notify any impacted individuals.
- B. For identified close contact individuals they should be advised if the affected person has a confirmed or presumptive positive diagnosis. The individual should then be advised to consult with their medical care provider for guidance. Remember during this discussion you cannot disclose the name of the “affected person”. Under the current guidelines there are no requirements that a parish is required to notify the local health department. If for any reason the parish believes notification to the local health department, the parish is certainly encouraged to reach out to the local health department for assistance.
- C. Those individuals identified as close contacts must be provided information on the requirements that must be met in order for them to return to the parish. (Please see Appendix A)

Step 3 Continuing with Operations

- A. Determine the lag period between when the affected individual was last on campus or participating in a parish activity and the date of receipt of the notification from the affected person to the parish.
- B. If the lag period is 3 days or less, then follow the guidance provided in the previous protocol for evaluating the continuation of operations.
- C. If the period is more than 3 days, no additional action is required.

Step 4 Communications

- A. Determine the lag period between when the affected individual was last on campus or participating in a parish activity and the date of receipt of the notification from the affected person to the parish.
- B. If the lag period is 14 days or less, then follow the guidance provided in the previous protocol relative to issuing a communication.
- C. If the period is more than 14 days, no additional action is required.

Step 5 Cleaning and Sanitization Response

- A. Determine the lag period between when the affected individual was last on campus or participating in a parish activity and the date of receipt of the notification from the affected person to the parish.
- B. If the lag period is 3 days or less, then follow the guidance provided in the previous protocol for addressing cleaning and sanitization.
- C. If the period is more than 3 days, no additional action is required.

Preparations

In the preparation for when a parish is presented with such circumstances, it is essential the parish have in place the following contingencies:

1. The parish should have a location where the affected individual can be isolated till such time as they can be transported home or for medical care. The key is to move the affected individual out of the parish community to limit the potential exposure to others on site.
2. The parish should have a location where those identified as coming into close contact with the affected person can be quarantined from others till they can be transported home.
3. The parish administration needs to have a process in place whereby they can evaluate, either through speaking with the affected person or through their own observations, a means by which to determine who, if anyone, came into close contact with the affected person. Keep in mind you cannot ask others if they came into contact with a particular individual, as that will violate the affected person's right of privacy.
4. Have available the template notification letter provided by the Archdiocesan Office of Communications with appropriate customizations.
5. Have in place arrangement to undertake the cleaning and sanitization by either parish staff or a contracted service provider.

Conclusion

In any situation addressing potential or actual incidents of COVID-19, remember to keep calm and stay in control. Implementing effective procedures to handle sick parish members and employees will go a long way towards reassuring your parish community and staff and keeping your community safe and productive. These are frightening times for many people, and parish administrations will be looked upon by parishioners, employees and others for leadership and guidance. Parishes must maintain regular communications with their community keeping them apprised of relevant developments, while keeping confidentiality in mind