World Health Organization

Faith Based Organizations and Faith Leaders

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) and leaders can play a major role in saving lives and reducing illness related to COVID-19. They are a primary source of support and comfort for their members. Often trusted more than governments or health-agencies, faith leaders can share health information to protect their communities that will be more likely to be accepted than from other sources.

By sharing simple steps to prevent COVID-19 faith organizations can promote helpful information, reduce fear and stigma, and provide reassurance to people in their communities. Because faith leaders are integrated into their communities through service and compassionate networks, they are often able to reach the most vulnerable among us with assistance and health information. In short, they are a critical link in the safety net for vulnerable people in their communities.

Advice

Questions and Answers

Recommendations for faith-based organizations (FBOs) to ensure safe gatherings (where permitted)

Follow local, subnational, and national guidance regarding whether large gatherings, such as services, weddings and funerals are permitted based on the spread of COVID-19.

If permitted to proceed with safe gatherings, FBOs should:

- **Gather with a few people, rather than crowded sessions.**

- **Educate their members/communities on key protection measures against COVID-19.**

- **Encourage frequent healthy hand and respiratory hygiene among participants at all times.**

- **Ensure safe distancing at all times – at least 1 meter (3 feet) of distance between community members, including seating or standing of participants in faith services and those entering, attending and departing from worship spaces.**

- **Prevent touching between people attending faith services and the touching of devotional and communal objects.**

- **Frequently clean worship spaces, pilgrimage sites, and other buildings with disinfectant.**

- **Conduct safe ceremonies including safe burial practices.**

FBOs are also advised to conduct faith activities remotely, rather than in-person, using available technology to maintain community and continue worship.

FBOs should strengthen their communities' mental health and resilience by keeping people connected and identifying safe ways that members can help others.

Guidance

Risk Communication and Community Engagement

Mental Health Considerations during COVID-19 Outbreak

These mental health considerations were developed by the Mental Health Department as support for mental and psychological well-being during COVID-19 outbreak.

- Access the publication

A guide to preventing and addressing social stigma associated with COVID-19

Social stigma in the context of health is the negative association between a person or group of people who share certain characteristics and a specific disease. In an outbreak, this may mean people are labelled, stereotyped, discriminated against, treated separately, and/or experience loss of status because of a perceived link with a disease.

The current COVID-19 outbreak has provoked social stigma and discriminatory behaviours against people of certain ethnic backgrounds as well as anyone perceived to have been in contact with the virus.

All visual tools

- **Access the publication**

COVID-19 updates from our partners

Faith and caring for each other in the times of the COVID 19 pandemic

13 March 2020 I World Council of Churches

Statement regarding the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem

20 March 2020 I Church of the Holy Sepulchre,

COVID-19 Guidelines from Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa on Safe Mass Gatherings

21 March 2020 I AMECEA

Catholic aid agencies collaborate to prevent spread of COVID-19 in Africa

23 March 2020 I Catholic San Francisco

Graphics

How to cope with stress during COVID-19 outbreak

When and how to wear medical masks against COVID-19

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