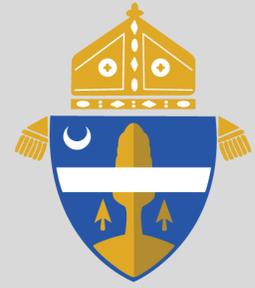


Guidelines for PSR & Youth Ministry 2020 - 2021



Here are the current guidelines and recommendations (August 2020) from the Office of Faith Formation for children's catechesis, middle school youth ministry, and high school youth ministry for the Catholic Diocese of Wichita, KS.

Main Points

- 1. We encourage either in-person PSR and youth ministry, or a faith formation/catechesis that is home-based for the parents to lead in their homes.**
- 2. We discourage virtual PSR and virtual catechesis/youth ministry during this time.**
- 3. For in-person PSR, youth ministry, and faith formation, all students should wear masks, maintain social distancing, limit group sizes, and wash hands frequently. Rooms and desks should be cleaned before and after each meeting. Students, catechists, and youth ministry leaders should have temperature checks at the door. Catechists and youth ministry leaders should also wear masks or face shields.**

PSR Guidelines

Masks should be worn at all times by students and chaperones inside church buildings and classrooms while continuing to maintain 6 feet social distancing. Masks are strongly encouraged for outdoor activities/classes and strict 6 feet social distancing needs to be maintained.

Physical contact between individuals is prohibited (i.e. handshakes, hugs).

Disinfecting and Cleaning Measures:

- All commonly used areas will be cleaned and disinfected regularly by parish cleaning staff or volunteers, including bathrooms and kitchen areas.**
- Frequently touched objects and surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected regularly (door handles, desks, chairs etc.), especially before and after each PSR session.**
- Avoid sharing another person's belongings (books, writing utensils. etc).**

Personal hygiene:

- Temperature checks will be done on each individual who enters the church building/classroom. If any student's temperature is 100.4 degrees or more, they will be sent home immediately. All students/catechists must be fever-free without medication for 24 hours before participating in each PSR session.**
- All participants should clean their hands upon entering the church building/classroom with hand sanitizer, or preferably wash their hands with soap and water immediately. If the classrooms have a sink in the classroom, soap and water should be used one at-a-time for all students when they enter the classroom. They should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after PSR.**

- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Washing hands with soap and water is always superior to hand sanitizer, so hand sanitizer should not be the exclusive means of hygiene.**
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.**
- Cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze with a tissue or the inside of their elbow.**

If a participant becomes ill or experiences symptoms on-site, the area they were exposed to will require being closed off for 24 hours before any cleaning and disinfecting can take place.

Catechists should monitor themselves before beginning any PSR classes, and should cancel if they have been sick, or have had any symptoms.

If a child is sick, they must stay home. If they are sick with symptoms of COVID 19, they must be symptom-free for 14 days before returning.

Parents who wish to have their children participate in PSR must inform the catechist, DRE, or pastor if they or their child have a family member at home who has COVID 19 symptoms or has tested positive. Those families should refrain from participation in in-person PSR and other parish activities until the CDC guidelines of 14 days. If more family members in the same household show symptoms or test positive, the 14 day time starts over. Once a household is symptom-free for 14 days, the child may return to PSR. A doctor's clearance to return to gatherings, or negative COVID19 tests will also suffice.

If it is revealed after PSR that someone was positive during class (aware or not at the time), then only that particular student's class, catechist and students, will wait two weeks before meeting in-person again. The DRE will contact all parents and inform them of the positive case. At-home catechesis can take place during those two weeks, with the catechist(s) checking in by phone. The pastor and the local county health department should also be notified.

Parents must inform the catechist, DRE, or pastor if they or their child have had contact with someone who has tested positive. If they have done so, the child should refrain from participation until either a negative test, or 14 days has passed.

Classrooms should be set up as follows:

- Desks should be placed at least 3 feet apart (or remain in whatever placement the school has, if classrooms are shared).**
- Students should wear their masks**
- Social distancing must be maintained.**
- Students should stay at their desks during PSR.**
- No school supplies (pencils, scissors, glue sticks, crayons, etc.) should be shared among the students.**
- If possible, classroom sizes should remain at 10 students, and the catechist(s).**
- As always, it is highly recommended that there are two catechists per classroom to maintain safe environment. At minimum, the door should remain open if there is only one.**
- Catechists must wear a mask or face shield.**
- Attendance must be taken at each PSR session.**
- If a parish DRE and pastor allow it, and if the weather permits, socially distanced students and catechists meeting outside within the parish grounds is acceptable.**

Bathrooms should only be utilized by the number of students that matches the number of sinks in the bathroom.

DRE's or a volunteer appointed by the DRE/pastor should act as a "hall monitor" to ensure that lines outside bathrooms maintain social distancing, and that the number of students entering the bathroom does not ever exceed the number of sinks.

If providing food at PSR, pre-packaged food and beverages should be served/provided to each attendee. Students and catechists must wash hands with soap and water before eating, and must do the same after eating. Social distance must be maintained while eating. Buffet style serving should not be done.

We discourage any and all overnight activities/retreats both on and off parish grounds for the foreseeable future.

All attendees must have a completed annual medical waiver to attend any parish gathering for PSR. An annual COVID 19 waiver must also be filled out for every student and every catechist. Waivers for both catechists and students will be provided by the Office of Faith Formation.

Youth Ministry Guidelines

Masks should be worn at all times by youth and chaperones inside church buildings while continuing to maintain 6 feet social distancing. Masks are strongly encouraged for outdoor activities and strict 6 feet social distancing needs to be maintained.

Physical contact between individuals is prohibited (i.e. handshakes, hugs).

Attendance must be taken at each gathering.

Disinfecting and Cleaning Measures:

- All commonly used areas will be cleaned and disinfected regularly by parish cleaning staff or volunteers, including bathrooms and kitchen areas.**
- Frequently touched objects and surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected regularly (door handles, chairs etc.).**
- Avoid sharing another person's belongings (phones, writing utensils. etc).**

Personal hygiene:

- Temperature checks will be done on each individual who attends. If any attendee's temperature is 100.4 degrees or more, they will be sent home immediately. All youth/youth ministers/chaperones must be fever-free without medication for 24 hours before participating in youth ministry events/gatherings.**
- All participants should clean their hands upon entering the church building/youth group space. They may use hand sanitizer if that is all that is available, but washing their hands will be preferred. They should wash their hands frequently, especially BEFORE and AFTER eating, with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.**
- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Washing hands with soap and water is always superior to hand sanitizer, so hand sanitizer should not be the exclusive means of hygiene.**
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.**

-Cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze with a tissue or the inside of their elbow.

If a participant becomes ill or experiences symptoms on-site, the area they were exposed to will require being closed off for 24 hours before any cleaning and disinfecting can take place.

Youth Ministers, chaperones, parents, and youth should self-monitor for any potential symptoms before beginning any youth event/gathering.

If a chaperone or youth is sick, they must stay home. If they are sick with symptoms of COVID 19, they must be symptom-free for 14 days before returning.

Parents who wish to have their youth participate in youth ministry must inform the youth ministry leaders, chaperones, or pastor if they or their teen have a family member at home who has COVID 19 symptoms or has tested positive. Those families should refrain from participation in in-person youth ministry and other parish activities until the CDC guidelines of 14 days. If more family members in the same household show symptoms or test positive, the 14 day time frame starts over. Once a household is symptom-free for 14 days, the teens may return to activity. A doctor's clearance to return to gatherings, or negative COVID19 tests will also suffice.

Parents must inform the youth minister or pastor if they or their teen(s) have had contact with someone who has tested positive. If they have done so, the teen should refrain from participation until either a negative test, or 14 days has passed.

If it is revealed after a youth ministry gathering that someone was positive during youth group (aware or not at the time), then that youth ministry group will wait two weeks before meeting in-person again. The youth ministry leader will contact all parents in the group to inform them of the positive case and the two-week hiatus. The pastor and local county health department should also be notified. Virtual meetups during the hiatus may be helpful to maintain the youth group.

To avoid having to shut down all youth ministry in a positive test, small group gatherings of 10 are encouraged (8 youth and 2 safe-environment certified adults).

If providing food at youth ministry, pre-packaged food and beverages should be served/provided to each attendee. Youth and chaperones/youth ministers must wash hands with soap and water before eating, and must do the same after eating. Social distance must be maintained while eating. Buffet style serving should not be done.

Gatherings, when possible, should take place outdoors, maintaining social distance guidelines. If not possible, indoor spaces should be large and accommodate social distancing guidelines.

If a youth ministry event or gathering is to happen off-site from the parish, it is strongly preferred that parents and families arrange their own transportation to the location of the event/gathering. If the parish or youth ministry needs to arrange transportation, all necessary completed driver forms and waivers must be in the possession of the youth ministry leader. All youth, chaperones, and youth ministers must wear masks in vehicles. Weather permitting, vehicle windows should be open, or circulation should come from outside the car only.

We discourage any and all overnight activities/retreats both on and off parish grounds for the foreseeable future.

All attendees must have a completed annual medical waiver to attend any parish gathering for youth group. An annual COVID 19 waiver must also be filled out for every youth/youth minister/chaperone. Waivers for both youth ministers/chaperones and youth will be provided by the Office of Faith Formation.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. For Preparation for First Communion and First Confession, we typically require attendance at parish PSR/CCD/Religious Education. How will we be able to ensure the students are adequately prepared if they do at-home catechesis?

A. For at-home preparation of First Confession and First Communion, we recommend the “Blessed” curriculum from Dynamic Catholic. If parents watch those programs and go over them with their children, they will be adequately prepared intellectually for the Sacraments. They will probably need a day to practice for the reception of the Sacraments themselves.

Q. We have many catechists who have been a part of our PSR program for many years, and hope to continue to do so. How can we utilize their gifts during this time?

A. Your catechists have a GREAT opportunity to be people that continue to mold their children by becoming intercessors, prayer partners, and guides for the parents that are teaching the material at-home. We recommend catechists check in by phone a couple of times a month with the parents of each student.

Q. What will that check-in phone call from catechists entail?

A. We recommend that the conversation is brief, but that catechists can be ready for it to take a longer time. Catechists can ask the parents how at-home catechesis is going, encourage daily prayer, and, most importantly, ask if there is anything the family needs the catechist to pray for. Catechists should also pray over the phone with the parents of the student.

Q. If our parish chooses to do home-based catechesis, how do we ensure all of the children are adequately prepared, especially for the Sacraments?

A. These conversations with the catechist can help. Parishes may also choose to do a brief interview between the DRE and/or pastor in the presence of the parent, to ensure that the student wants to receive the Sacrament, know and believe what they are receiving, and want to grow closer to Jesus.

Q. What led to all of the recommendations for cleaning, masks, temperatures, and hand-washing? Why do we need to take these steps for in-person PSR/Youth Ministry?

A. We evaluated summer camps, summer schools, and other church children's ministries throughout the country. Most of those places took some steps to ensure to limit the spread of the virus, but it varied from place to place. Some places that did not take as many precautions had no known spread of the virus, but others were not so lucky. Camps were cancelled, activities were cancelled, students had viral transmission from adults and adults had viral transmission from children. However, every place we evaluated that took the steps we are recommending had ZERO known transmission of the virus. This should not be heard to mean that there will not be any transmission if these steps are taken. Rather, based on the information and experience we have, we believe this will minimize the spread.

Q. Why do you discourage virtual PSR or virtual Youth Ministry at the moment?

A. Because of the widespread experience we had in the spring, and because many of the students will already have to do some form of virtual learning this school year, we wanted to make this experience more distinct, and so we would much rather meet in person or promote at-home catechesis.

Q. What if as a parish, we want to have in-person PSR and sacramental preparation, but we have some parents that would rather not do that?

A. It is impossible to demand what the church does not oblige us to do, when the main thing it does oblige (Holy Mass attendance on Sunday) is dispensed. Because of this, we should not make PSR or youth ministry an added burden on families. If a parish chooses to have in-person PSR but some families want to have at-home catechesis, parishes should make that accommodation.

Q. What if, as a parish, we want to promote at-home catechesis and sacramental preparation, but parents want to meet in-person?

A. No parish should feel obligated to meet those demands if the parish has decided on at-home catechesis. However, the parish should be ready by phone and with materials to assist those parents in partnering with them as primary catechists of their children.