

## UPDATED COVID-19 GUIDELINES

Diocese of Evansville

August 25, 2021

The Diocese and its offices have great concern for the health and wellbeing of the faithful, including parishioners, employees, visitors, and the students, faculty and staff in our 26 diocesan Catholic schools. With the increase in COVID-19 cases in our region, we recognize the need to update diocesan policies to better address this reality.

Therefore, following consultation with priests, school principals and health officials, the Diocesan Reopening Committee has developed a color-coded set of guidelines based on the Indiana State Department of Health's (ISDH) weekly COVID-19 metrics\*. These metrics, which are announced each Wednesday, apply a color code to each county depending on the severity of COVID infection. Initially, the new guidelines will take effect Monday Aug. 30. Thereafter, the guidelines will be updated weekly on Wednesdays following the ISDH announcement, with changes taking effect the following day.

Following this schedule, you will receive an email next Wednesday (Sept. 1) with the current weekly ISDH COVID-19 metrics color code for our 12 counties and any changes to practices that should occur at our Catholic institutions in each county based on those metrics. Any necessary changes will take effect the following day (Sept. 2).

The Diocese will use these guidelines until further notice.

The attached document explains the guidelines, by color, as they relate to:

- Parish liturgical events
- Parish office and non-liturgical events
- Catholic schools and
- Diocesan facilities

### **Public celebration of Masses and other liturgies**

Following are some general guidelines for the public celebration of Mass and other liturgies regardless of the county color code classification:

1. For orange and red counties, masks are strongly recommended.
2. Holy Communion from the chalice for the faithful remains suspended until further notice.
3. Ministers of Communion may continue to wear face masks while distributing.
4. Communion in the hand is encouraged during this time. Ministers should sanitize their fingers if physical contact is made with a communicant's tongue or hand.
5. Parishes wishing to maintain some social distancing may do so at their discretion.
  - a. Sections of churches may be designated for masks/social distancing for use by those who would be more comfortable with these additional precautions.
6. Pastors continue to have the authority to require more strict practices in their parish (such as requiring masks or more stringent cleaning protocols).

### **Catholic schools**

The following information applies to the Diocese of Evansville's 26 Catholic schools:

- Schools located in counties classified in blue and yellow will not have required COVID-19 control measures; however, individual schools may enforce more stringent requirements. Masks, while not mandated, are welcomed. (Local positivity rates within the school should be a determining factor.)
- Schools located in counties classified in orange and red will be required to wear masks (students and employees) throughout the school day (indoors). Social distancing is required to the extent possible given the size of classrooms and the school enrollment.
- Schools located in counties classified in red additionally will be asked to allow only essential personnel in the school building. All extracurricular activities, events and programs should be evaluated to determine the appropriateness of the event given the spread of the virus within the community.

### **Parish Office/Non Liturgical Events and Diocesan Facilities**

The following information applies to parish offices, non-liturgical events and diocesan facilities:

- Parishes located in counties classified in blue and yellow – no required COVID-19 control measures.
- Parishes located in counties classified in orange - masks and social distancing are strongly recommended.
- Parishes located in counties classified in red - masks are required in common areas and areas where social distancing is not possible; social distancing to the extent possible.

We hope these new guidelines, based on the ISDH metrics, will provide some consistency and clarity as our diocese strives to safely and prudently navigate the COVID pandemic. If you have any questions or concerns, please be sure to contact your pastor, school principal or the Diocese.

Let us continue to pray for all those affected by the pandemic, for healthcare workers and public health officials.

### ***\*Indiana State Health Department Metrics***

*The state health department's metrics are based on two scores for each county:*

- *7-Day Positivity Rate (All Tests) – This is a 7-day moving average of test-positivity rates, calculated by taking the total number of positive tests and dividing by total tests administered*
- *Weekly Cases Per 100,000 Residents – This is the total weekly cases in a county divided by the county population and multiplied by 100,000*

*After calculating the individual scores for each of the metrics, the two scores are averaged together to determine the total county score. This score determines a color (blue, yellow, orange, red) for each county.*

## DIOCESE OF EVANSVILLE COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

Measurement: Indiana Department of Health – Weekly Metric Map

Measurement Date: Wednesday

Effective Date: Thursday

Effective Period: One Week

Effective Area: Each county will adhere to the color of their county on the ISDH website.

Location: INDOORS ONLY

County Map Color	Parish - Liturgical Events	Parish - Office/Non Liturgical Events	School	Diocesan Facilities
Blue	No Additional Restrictions	No Restrictions	No Restrictions	No Restrictions
Yellow	No Additional Restrictions	No Restrictions	No Restrictions	No Restrictions
Orange	Masks - Strongly Recommended	Masks - Strongly Recommended	Masks - Required	Masks - Strongly Recommended
		Social Distancing - Strongly Recommended	Social Distancing - Required - to the extent possible	Social Distancing - Strongly Recommended
Red	Masks - Strongly Recommended	Masks - Required (1)	Masks - Required	Masks - Required (1)
		Social Distancing - Required - to the extent possible (2)	Social Distancing - Required - to the extent possible (2)	Social Distancing - Required - to the extent possible (2)
			Only Essential Personnel	
			Extra curricular evaluated on an event by event basis	

- 1) Masks required in common areas and where social distancing is not possible
- 2) Minimum of three feet

PASTORS HAVE THE OPTION TO ENFORCE MORE STRINGENT REQUIREMENTS FOR THEIR PARISH, WHICH WOULD INCLUDE THE SCHOOL.

Effective: August 25, 2021