

It is widely known that the parish hall is the center of numerous parish activities, including luncheons following funerals, wedding receptions, anniversary dinners, fish fries, and other social engagements where food and beverage are essential elements. During the summer months, many of these activities are outdoors, such as a parish picnic or festival.

It is recognized that these are important gatherings and are part of parish life. They provide opportunity to strengthen the social and financial well-being of parishes by bringing together large numbers of people, including those who provide hospitality and those who receive it.

Since large numbers of persons attend these events, it is important to note that certain precautions must be observed with proper diligence before, during, and at the conclusion of a social activity or event with regard to safe distances between persons; the proper preparation and serving of food and other refreshments, as well as how it is able to be consumed.

Appropriate Planning Should be Made for Each Activity

These guidelines provide the minimum steps/measures to be taken. Each parish should have a committee that will formulate a plan that takes into account the goal/purpose of each social activity and the concrete steps that need to be observed to safeguard everyone's health and safety.

The planning committee should be in contact with local resources for advice in formulating a plan to guard against problems and to be able to act quickly in response if someone at an event is suddenly ill and the proper response needs to be made.

It is recommended that one designated person should be on sight during each social event to monitor the implementation of all elements needed for a safe experience. If it is a lengthy event (all day or longer), more than one person should fulfill that function so that there is a "go to" person on sight at all times.

This person could also function as an ambassador of hospitality who greets and welcomes people (both volunteers and visitors), thus gaining their trust and cooperation in observing all the safety measures that should be in place.

If "hospitality" persons are used to greet and welcome people to the event, they should be provided with a face mask and sanitizer since they will be in close contact with guests.

Safe Distancing

Current state guidelines for counties in Pennsylvania in the "green zone," indicate the maximum number of persons for a gathering within a confined space is 250. State guidelines do not distinguish between indoor or outdoor gatherings. Local fire safety and zoning regulations (and insurance standards) may determine a lower number.

At all parish social activities inside a hall, and at all outdoor activities where people will be in a confined area, the regulations concerning the maximum number of persons should be observed. As weather allows, seating people outdoors is strongly encouraged, keeping in mind the concern for safe, social distancing.

Current social/safe distancing guidelines issued by the PA Department of Health remains 6 feet while waiting in line or while seated at tables.

Face masks should be worn by all staff, volunteers, and persons attending the dinner or social activity.

Persons who are waiting in line for seats, should wait outside the hall so that the total occupancy number is not exceeded.

Safe distancing also applies to servers and those who are involved in cleaning and setting tables, and carrying out other functions. They should observe the 6 foot rule.

Whenever people are waiting in line, whether inside or outside, they should be 6 feet apart as they take their turn for service. It is advised that roped lanes and "X" markers on the ground can help to provide safety and good order.

In order to maximize the number of persons participating in a dinner event (e.g. Fish Fry), a drive-through or pick-up option should be considered since seating will likely be reduced.

Games and entertainment should be arranged so that participants are able to observe the 6 foot safe distancing rule.

Redundant signs with directions and safe distancing reminders should be displayed throughout the area of the event (both inside and outside).

Food and Beverage Preparation and Service

All persons who have experienced symptoms such as runny nose, sneezing, or coughing prior to the event should excuse themselves from any food and beverage handling, preparation, or serving.

All persons involved in preparing and serving food and refreshments are to wash their hands frequently and apply sanitizer. They are to wear a hair net or cap; and a face mask or clear face shield. Disposable gloves and aprons are to be used.

In order to avoid cross-contamination, persons involved in food preparation and serving should not be involved in multiple tasks (e.g. cleaning).

Disposable food service items (utensils, dishes) are recommended. If disposable items are not feasible, all non-disposable food service items are to be handled with gloves and washed with

dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher. Employees should wash their hands after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items

Individually wrapped food items are recommended during Bingo or festival type functions. Beverages should be poured by a server, or bottled/pre-packaged individual servings should be used.

If the social gathering is a more formal affair, the following are recommended:

- Depending on the number of persons in attendance and the number of volunteers available to assist, two (2) ways of serving food at a “sit-down” dinner
 1. Persons take their turn through a line, (keeping the standard distance of 6 feet) and they may select from various choices, but the food will be placed on their plate by someone trained for that task.
 2. Servers will bring the food to persons already seated at table.
- Self-serve food and drink options should not be offered (e.g. self-serve buffet, salad or dessert bar, beverage stations).
- The recommended arrangement is for salads to be plated by one person, with another person applying the salad dressing.
- Another person or persons plate the main course and hand it to the patron. A limit on the choice of entrees and side dishes saves time and unnecessary handling of food items.
- Bread, rolls, and desserts may be individually wrapped, or individual servings may be plated by a server.
- Beverages should be poured by a server, or bottled/pre-packaged individual servings should be used.

Additional Safety Actions

All volunteers who are responsible for games, entertainment, food, beverages, and other aspects of social events should receive safety training. It should be emphasized that this is for their own well-being as well as those who are served at these social events.

It is highly recommended that the training include the following:

- Volunteers/staff should disqualify themselves from assisting in the event and notify the event leaders that they are experiencing symptoms such as fever, cough, or persistent sneezing
- Frequent hand washing and use of hand sanitizer; covering coughs and sneezes; and use of face mask or shield at all times.
- Awareness of and reporting needed replacement of soap, hand sanitizer, hand wipes, paper towels, and tissues if those items are running low. (The parish should have an adequate supply at all times.)
- Constant cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces (e.g., door handles, workstations, tables, countertops, etc.) between uses.
- Proper methods for washing, rinsing, and sanitizing food contact surfaces, food preparation surfaces, and beverage equipment after use.

- Cleaning and sanitizing equipment/items used for games/entertainment (e.g. microphone, podium, game equipment, etc.).
- Use gloves when removing garbage bags or handling and disposing of trash and wash hands afterwards.
- Avoid using food and beverage containers or utensils brought in by customers.
- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible such as by opening windows and doors.
- Take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., drinking fountains, coffee urns, etc.) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of diseases associated with water.
- Volunteers/staff are to call EMS, Police, Fire, etc., if someone becomes ill during a social event. Volunteers/staff should err on the side of calling professional resources so as to safeguard the safety/well-being to oneself, the public, or any individual who has taken ill. Preventing/mitigating the spread of infectious disease is a priority.

These directives are subject to revision based on changes in local circumstances and updates issued by public health officials.