

***Office of Christian Formation***

***Office for Evangelization***

**Faith Formation and Youth Ministry Planning for Fall 2021**

**Posted August 18, 2021**

Parish faith formation and youth ministry programming will follow the Office of Catholic Schools guidance tailored after the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the Governor’s public health order for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools. If the CDC or VDH guidance changes, or Executive Orders are put into place that require an alteration of plans, you will find all updates on the [Extranet](https://extranet.richmonddiocese.org/) COVID-19 resource pages.

**The following are key takeaways of the CDC and VDH guidance for parish programs:**

* Masks *should* be worn by individuals (ages 5 and older) that are not fully vaccinated when indoors. The wearing of masks at parish events, and in the presence of mostly adults, will be a personal and individual decision. Masks are strongly encouraged by all at larger parish gatherings, but not required.
* Multiple layers of prevention strategies should be in place to include: handwashing, respiratory etiquette, proper ventilation, cleaning, disinfecting, and incorporating distancing, when possible, particularly in classrooms of students under 12 who cannot be vaccinated at this time.
* All individuals should closely monitor their health and stay at home when they are having any symptoms of infectious illness, including a temperature over 100.4 degrees.
* Parishes will still monitor exposure and positive cases. Contact tracing will be conducted, and quarantining based on current CDC/VDH recommendations for those exposed to and test positive for COVID-19 will be followed. Only individuals directly exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be notified.
* Parishes should notify the diocese of close contact and positive COVID-19 cases via the Employee Extranet, report a COVID-19 Case.

**Additional Information regarding faith formation and youth ministry programs within our parishes:**

Governor Northam instituted a [public health order](https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/governor-of-virginia/pdf/PHE-Order_K-12-8-12-2021.pdf) for the state of Virginia on August 12, 2021 that MANDATES all K-12 schools enforce the wearing of masks by ages 2 and up during indoor, educational settings, regardless of vaccination status. Therefore, when a parish utilizes any indoor portion of a school building for religious education or youth ministry, the public health order must also be followed and masks must be worn.

It is the prerogative of the pastor/administrator and his staff to make decisions or suggestions regarding the use of masks at formation and youth ministry programs. Parish location, the local transmission rate, and parish demographics will help to guide the decision-making process. Additionally, it is acceptable for the parish to have different policies for different programs based off who will be in attendance and the type of event. Religious education can look different from youth ministry which can be different from adult faith formation.

As a reminder, masks are not needed outdoors, unless a person is not fully vaccinated and is in a crowded outdoor setting.

Parishes will continue to not require COVID-19 vaccinations, disclosure of COVID-19 vaccination status, proof of COVID- 19 vaccination, or COVID-19 testing of any individuals.

All parishes are encouraged to continue outreach and support to our families during this time and look for ways to include them in parish life, faith formation, and sacramental preparation. It is vital that we extend grace to all and treat each other with respect.

The Office of Christian Formation is available to assist you at the parish regarding children and adult formation and sacramental preparation questions or resources. Please contact us at cf@richmonddiocese.org or by calling 804-622-5113.

The Office for Evangelization is available to assist you at the parish regarding youth ministry or teen Confirmation questions or resources. Please contact us at evangelization@richmonddiocese.org or by calling 804-359-5159.