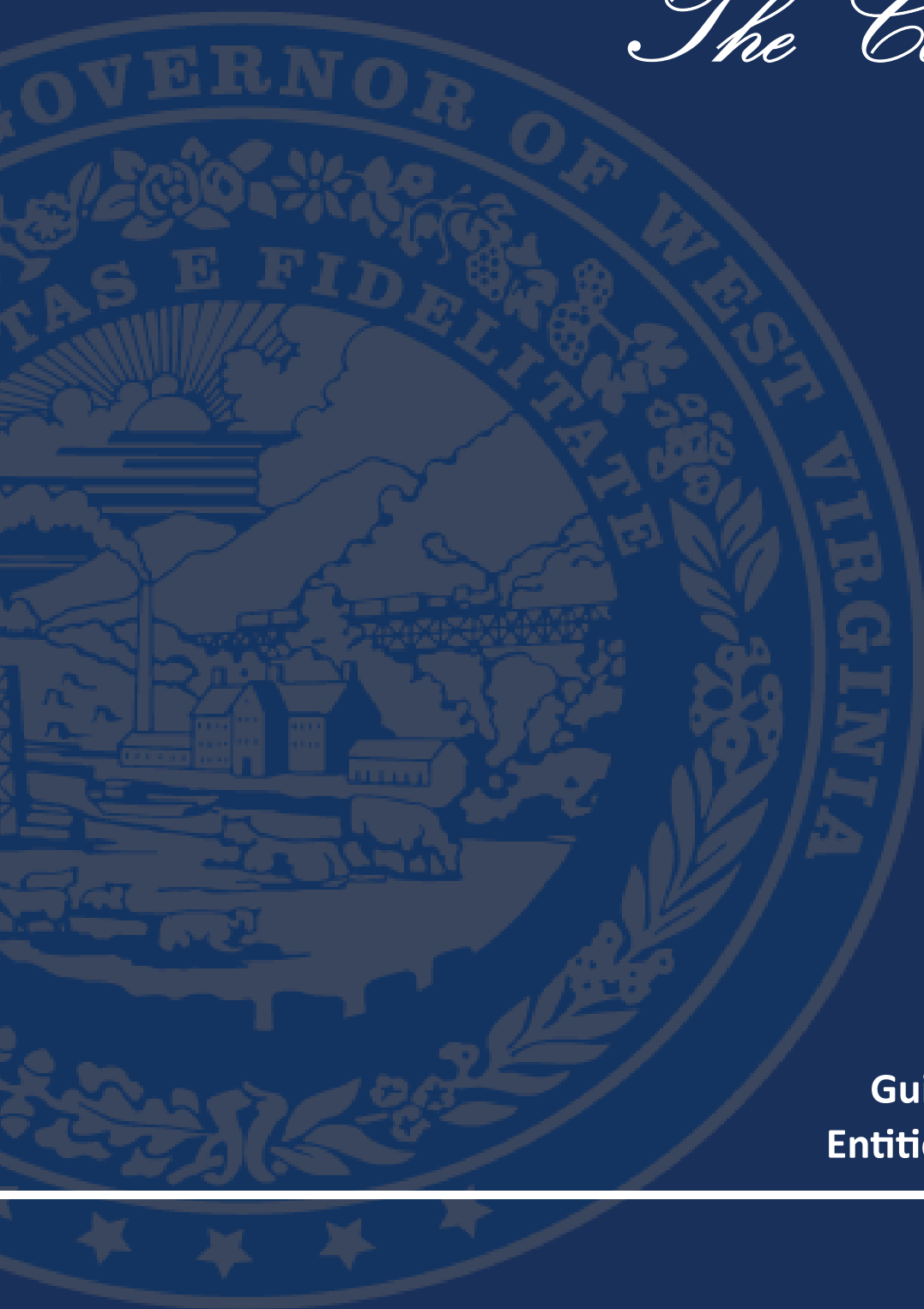


# WEST VIRGINIA STRONG

## *The Comeback*

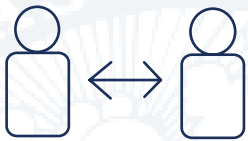


**Guidance for Religious  
Entities and Funeral Homes**

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## Guidance for Religious Entities and Funeral Homes

Per Governor Jim Justice's Executive Order 9-20, religious entities, including religious facilities, entities, groups, and religious gatherings, including weddings and funerals including funeral homes, are "essential business operations" and have been allowed to remain open and serve their community. These religious entities and institutions have, at all times, and will continue to be, urged to practice proper physical distancing.



**Note:** Effective as of July 7, 2020, all individuals over the age of 9 are required to wear face coverings when in confined, indoor spaces, other than one's residence or while actively engaged in the consumption of food and/or beverage, and when not able to adequately social distance from other individuals who do not reside in the same household, pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order 50-20.

Per CDC Guidance, exempt from this requirement are:

- children younger than 2 years old,
- anyone who has trouble breathing through a face covering, and
- persons who are unable to remove the face covering without assistance.

Religious entities and institutions have been asked, wherever possible, to reduce the number of individuals attending in-person services by holding services online or in parking lots. To date, religious entities and institutions have served their communities well and worked to keep the citizens of West Virginia safe.

Under Gov. Justice's reopening plan, **West Virginia Strong — The Comeback**, religious entities and institutions are urged to keep up their good work. In order to do so, they should continue to conduct as many activities as possible remotely, including worship services and religious education, and to follow federal guidelines when providing services and activities in person. To the extent that any religious entity or institution cannot conduct services remotely, they are asked to conduct services and activities in accordance with federal, state, and local guidance for best practices. These best practices include the following:

- Instruct sick employees, volunteers, and guests to stay home;
- Practice physical distancing by maintaining appropriate distance (at least 6 feet) between people;
- Maintain good hygiene by washing your hands frequently, using hand sanitizer, using your elbow to cover coughs, and not touching your face;
- Implement environmental cleanliness and sanitation practices; and
- Clean and disinfect work areas frequently.

See the CDC guidelines for preparing your community-based and faith-based organizations for COVID-19 at [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov). Religious entities and facilities should also maintain contact with their respective denominational or faith community leaders for any additional concerns or guidance.

## GUIDANCE FOR RELIGIOUS ENTITIES AND FUNERAL HOMES

West Virginia's religious entities and institutions play an important role in helping to slow the spread of COVID-19. Churches and places of worship are specifically vulnerable locations for quick and potentially deadly transmission of COVID-19, and therefore are vital in this effort to continue West Virginia's positive trendlines.

Religious entities and institutions should further consider implementing the following best practices:

- Adding additional service times to facilitate proper distancing.
- Ensuring all attendees sanitize their hands and put on a mask or face covering before entering the building.
- Per Executive Order 50-20, all individuals over the age of 9 are required to use face coverings (masks, bandannas, face shields, etc.) when in confined, indoor spaces, other than one's residence or while actively engaged in the consumption of food and/or beverage, and when not able to adequately social distance from other individuals who do not reside in the same household.
- Equipping ushers and greeters with gloves and masks.
- Encouraging all attendees who are 65 and older to stay home and watch the services online or provide a "senior service" exclusively for attendees 65 and older to attend in person.
- Ask all attendees who have an underlying at-risk health condition to stay home and watch the services online.
- Restricting seating to every other pew.
- Ensuring attendees sit with their immediate family unit, use physical distancing between each unit.
- Clergy should dismiss attendees by family unit in order to maintain physical distancing.
- Staff should sanitize seats and frequently used surfaces between services.
- Consider keeping childcare closed, unless the place of worship can comply with CDC guidelines for childcare facilities.
- Consider refraining from passing collection plates and instead provide a central collection box or encourage online giving.
- Consider how the sacraments can be administered without attendees having to touch the same surfaces and objects.

These guidelines are recommendations to give religious entities and institutions the best tools available to keep clergy and the citizens of the State of West Virginia safe.