

First things first:

This document is provided to help Kentucky Baptist churches work within guidelines provided through the Center for Disease Control and the Governor's Office of the State of Kentucky. This is not an endorsement of any particular group, rather a help in planning through the details related to regathering Sunday School and age-graded ministries during this current phase of reopening. The KBC recognizes many churches will choose to wait until guidelines are relaxed before regathering.

Regathering Groups Guidelines

Kentucky Baptist Convention

Kentucky Baptist Convention churches believe Sunday School and small groups for all ages to be an essential part of ministry and the discipleship process for believers. There is great excitement and anticipation for groups to regather now that our churches have been given opportunity to meet in person for worship.

The Center for Disease Control and the State of Kentucky have provided guidance for churches to regather Sunday School and age-graded ministries beginning on Monday, June 15, 2020. For more detail and clarification, please see the State of Kentucky's Healthy at Work documents for Places of Worship and Requirements for Childcare Programs (<https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-covid19>).

The purpose of this document is to provide detailed summary of the guidelines and questions to consider when regathering small groups and age-graded ministries. The churches of the Kentucky Baptist Convention are autonomous. The guidelines shared here are not intended as mandates or policies. They are simply an explanation and interpretation of the guidelines coming out of the Governor's office as they apply to small groups and age-graded ministries returning to in person services following this COVID-19 pandemic. Regathering Sunday School and age-graded ministries have many more complexities than reentry for worship services.

As churches are allowed to provide childcare and age-graded ministries beginning June 15, they may consider combining multiple adult groups in the worship center utilizing the same guidelines in the Places of Worship document while opening rooms to age-graded ministries with a maximum of 10 per room. However, Governor's Office has posted that it will allow groups of 50 or more to gather beginning June 29. Churches may consider waiting until this date to regathering under those specifications.

It is essential that we consider what is best for others in this unique time. Keep in mind Paul's words:

Everyone should look out not [only]
for his own interests, but also
for the interests of others.

Philippians 2:4, CSB

Sunday School and Other Small Groups

The following 10 questions will guide your church as adult and student (middle and high school) groups regather on your church campus.

Starting Date

When can we return to Sunday School/small groups in the church building?



There are several issues needing consideration to respond to that question.

1. Do you have the volunteers and appropriate resources (chemicals, gloves, etc.) required to clean classrooms, restrooms, hallways, and other areas as well as providing masks and gloves for attendees?
2. Will you plan to begin adult groups before the guideline of not regathering childcare before June 15?
3. Do you have enough space for expected attendance in classrooms allowing for social distancing?

Planning Well

What do we need to do to prepare for return to the building?



1. Gather a planning team (10 or fewer) to pray and plan together.
2. Take your time to do things right rather than react to pressure.
3. Ensure you have the cleaning supplies for thorough preparation of the space before and after each usage.
4. Determine a target date for regathering of Sunday School in church space.
5. Talk with each group leader to see if they are willing to return for the target date; ask each group leader to contact all group members to ask if they are willing to return for the target date (keep a list).
6. Consider each group that meets, expected attendance, and meeting space options (whether original classroom, fellowship hall, a home, or online on Sunday or another day of the week): Will the space accommodate expected attendance while ensuring 6' social distancing?
7. Enlist volunteer team members required for cleaning, registration, ushers, etc.
8. Communicate the date, plan, and steps to the congregation.

Questions to Consider

- Who can meet in person to put together a plan for regathering safely and well?
- When can you have the volunteers enlisted and resources needed to do this well?
- How much time will you need to communicate the plan? What methods for communication will you use?

Registration Helps

Why is registration needed?



It is important to know in advance who will attend each group in order to provide a space option that will accommodate group size with 6' social distance. To maintain healthy practices, set up to do the following before entry into the church building:

1. Welcome
2. Check in all attendees while verifying that no classroom will have more people than can be accommodated safely for 6' social distancing
3. Ask simple health questions
4. Take temperatures
5. Provide masks to any needing one

Questions to Consider

- How can you do these things safely and quickly while providing warmth in your greeting?
- What is your plan for registration on rainy days?

In the Classrooms

What guidelines do we need to follow in our classrooms?



The oversimplified answer is to maintain 6' of social distance between each family unit (individual, couple, parent with child, etc.). All rooms should be cleaned thoroughly between usage. Check out Sunday School at Social Distance to view classroom sample configurations.

Questions to Consider

- What groups need to be moved to a different space?
- If you moved the location for any group(s), can you provide greeters/ushers to lead participants to the new space(s)?
- Who will remove all unnecessary furnishings from classrooms to reduce the amount of cleaning before each use?
- Who will set up each space (chairs) for expected attendance with numbers on the chairs for order of seating?

Maximum Occupancy

What are options when a classroom cannot accommodate 6' social distancing for expected attendance?



Many groups had attendance at 50-80% of classroom capacity prior to COVID-19. That level of attendance will not be possible while allowing 6' social distancing. Which of these options will work for your groups when classrooms cannot accommodate 6' social distancing?

1. Online. When space is not adequate, encourage groups to continue meeting online.
2. Larger space. Move a group or multiple groups into a larger space (sanctuary, fellowship hall, etc.). Allow enough time for space to be cleaned thoroughly before the next group (such as worship). When groups are meeting in the worship center, they are to follow the same guidelines for worship services.
3. Through the week. If there is more than one larger group, using the larger space options throughout the week may be necessary.
4. Multiple classrooms. Divide the group and use two or more classrooms and enlist teachers to cover each group. (This is a great reason to start new classes!)
5. Parking lot. When the weather permits, have the group meet outside while following 6' social distancing.
6. Home. Consider a home which can accommodate 6' social distancing.

Questions to Consider

- Who will contact group members to see how many are willing to regather?
- Considering all these space options, what is the best choice for each group?
- When is the start date?
- Who will communicate the plan and options to each teacher and each group?

Schedule Adjustments – Cleaning Time

How can we adjust our schedule to allow for cleaning worship and classroom space between usage?



Using each space only once on Sunday will allow cleaning to take place at a convenient time prior to next use. If, however, multiple use of space is required, then time and volunteers will be required to clean between each use. That will likely cause your scheduled to be adjusted. The time required will depend on the size of the space, the number of spaces in need of cleaning, and the size of the cleaning crew enlisted.

Questions to Consider

- How many volunteers will be needed to accomplish the cleaning required?
- How much time between space use will be required to allow volunteers to clean?
- Were you able to enlist the number of volunteers you felt were necessary? If not, can you lengthen the time between schedule usage?

Schedule Adjustments – Transition Time

How will we need to adjust our schedule to accommodate transition time for those who attend groups at church and worship online or vice versa?



Some groups and individuals may choose to attend Sunday School or worship online. Is enough time scheduled between them to allow people to travel from church to home or vice versa?

Questions to Consider

- Will any groups or individuals choose to continue meeting online? How will you find out?
- Will schedule adjustments be required in order to accommodate that choice?
- How will you communicate the decision to adjust the schedule?

Coffee and Snacks

Can we provide coffee and/or snacks?



Until guidelines are relaxed, it will be best for the church not to offer coffee and snacks. There are three reasons: (1) the danger from multiple handling the same items such as coffee pot, (2) difficulty of providing 6' social distancing near coffee and snack areas, and (3) the natural instinct to gather to talk in church areas that do not allow for 6' social distancing.

Questions to Consider

- If this will be a change for your people, who will communicate this change?
- Can you safely allow people to bring in their own coffee, beverages, and snacks?
- How can you add signs to or block off previously used coffee/snack areas?

Wearing Masks

Do we have to wear masks?



In order to care well in the midst of this pandemic, masks are preferred. Churches will want to limit any potential spread of COVID-19 to its members and its communities. Churches may want to provide masks for attendees to pick up on arrival.

Questions to Consider

- Where can you secure masks for any who do not already have one?
- How can you communicate to members that masks are available if needed?

Restrooms

Will we be required to clean the restrooms after each person?



Yes. According to state guidelines, a restroom may only be used by one person at a time, and it must be cleaned after each use. All surfaces touched must be cleaned. What is the best way to do this?

1. Asking adults, students, and children to clean the restroom after themselves has one benefit. They know the surfaces that were touched (door handles, toilet seat, toilet flushing handle, sink area, etc.). But inconsistent quality of cleaning may result.
2. Asking adults, students, and children to clean restroom surfaces before they touch them might work but doing so fights against natural habits that have been developed in using the restrooms in the past. In other words, people may forget to clean before touching surfaces that were used.
3. The preferred method involves a trained volunteer to clean each restroom who will be more likely to do things consistently well.
4. Encourage use of only one restroom stall and sink (with tape and signs) in each restroom to reduce confusion about what to clean.

Questions to Consider

- Who will train the volunteers to limit restroom use to one person at a time and to clean after each use?
- Who will communicate to the church family about this plan?
- Can you reduce the number of open restrooms in order to reduce the number of volunteers needed to clean restrooms and still handle the demand for restroom use?

Regathering Children's Ministry Guidelines

The following six guidelines are to help the church regather its children's ministry groups in conjunction with all other small group ministries at the church.

Social Distancing



The Healthy at Work documents assert that social distancing is the best safeguard against the spread of the virus. Enforcing a 6' separation for some ages will be difficult or even impossible. However, the following guidelines will help ensure a safe environment for children and adult volunteers:

1. All rooms for children should cap attendance at 10.
 - a. This includes the required 2 unrelated adults per room (and a higher adult to child ratio for infants and toddlers).
 - b. Ensure all rooms meet state requirements for square footage for the expected attendance.
2. All groups should remain together through the duration of the gathering.
 - a. Groups should not rotate stations or combine with other groups.
 - b. Utilize outdoor space as available.
3. Centralize registration/drop off and pick up locations.
 - a. Allow volunteers to check in children and walk to rooms.
 - b. Restrict access to rooms for all other church attendees / parents.
4. Avoid common touch and high traffic areas.
 - a. Limit the use water fountains.
 - b. Modify traffic flow to minimize contact for children and volunteers.
 - c. Limit sharing of preschool toys and other items.
 - d. All restrooms should be limited to one person at a time.

Questions to Consider

- Will we be able to adequately staff the required number of rooms?
- What is our plan if more than expected children are brought to the service?
- Should we ask families to preregister children?
- How can we modify our drop off and pick up to minimize contact and provide safe social distancing even while parents may stand in lines?
- Will you serve drinks or snacks? Should you provide only prepackaged items?

Staying Healthy



If your church does not have a well child policy in place, this season provides an appropriate time to develop a practical and useful tool to screen children that are sick.

1. Communicate with families the importance of not bringing children that are sick.
 - a. Communicate with all church members and post this information on entry areas.
2. Immediately remove any child that demonstrates symptoms during gathering times.
 - a. Designate a place to safely monitor the child and reunite with their family immediately.
 - b. Families should test for COVID-19 and notify church of positive results. This is an important need for contact tracing of the virus and not intended as an invasion of privacy.

3. Churches should notify all enrolled families if a positive case of COVID-19 has been in the program, while protecting the privacy of the individual.
4. Churches should not transport children to their facilities with church vehicles.

Questions to Consider

- Should children have their temperature checked on arrival?
- What is the procedure when a child is observed to have flu-like symptoms?
- What space will we use and who will care for the child as the parents are brought to the child?
- How will we continue to minister and care for families that previously required transportation?

Staying Clean



Churches should develop a cleaning and disinfecting plan for each space. All spaces (including restrooms) should be cleaned and disinfected between each and every use. Thus, if rooms are used for multiple services on Sunday morning, the rooms should be cleaned and disinfected in between uses.

1. Remove all toys that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected.
2. Cloth toys should not be used. This includes dolls with cloth hair and dress up dolls.
3. Children and volunteers should wash hands upon arrival and frequently through their stay.
4. Encourage children to avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.
5. Provide individual craft bags for disposable crayons and other equipment to minimize sharing.
6. Adults and children over 5 years of age should wear a face mask.
7. Gloves should be worn by anyone preparing bottles or serving food.

Questions to Consider

- Do we have an adequate number of volunteers to clean rooms in between use?
- Do we have a system to remove used toys to disinfect?
- Have we removed toys and other equipment that are unnecessary and are frequently touched?
- Will our church provide face masks for children and volunteers?
- What items from home will you allow a child to bring to class?
- Should children and volunteers remove their shoes before entering their room?

Equipping Volunteers



Churches should recognize that some faithful volunteers may elect to delay regathering with the church until the virus threat further declines. Also, all volunteers will need training in order to provide safe and appropriate care for children.

1. Ensure all volunteers understand the updated procedures for staying healthy at church.
2. Provide training on cleaning and disinfecting procedures.
3. Churches should provide gloves needed for cleaning and care.

Questions to Consider

- How will your church address the noncompliance of a volunteer or parent?
- How will your church ensure volunteers are prepared before the first regathering for children or students?
- How will your church utilize and care for older and more vulnerable adult volunteers?

Caring Well



Churches need to minister well considering the emotional and psychological impacts this pandemic may have caused for children. Do not neglect the significant transition that children will be making after months at home only with family and the potential impact of seeing their church family wearing masks.

1. Equip parents with conversation starters for children and students returning to church.
2. Kneel low to speak with a small child in order that they may see your eyes and recognize your face.
3. Follow up with parents and recognize potential struggles for children and students.
4. Provide additional appreciation and care for volunteers with more complex responsibilities.
5. Equip volunteers with the simple rules to be communicated each time.

Questions to Consider

- What conversations are most helpful and important for parents to prepare their children?
- How will your church respond to a child with anxiety regarding the virus, social distancing, or volunteers wearing masks?
- How will your church limit physical touch (hugs and high fives) that children may request?
- What alterations to the room could your church include to brighten and spark new interest from the children?

Continue Online



It is important to continue your online ministry to children and students during this phase of regathering. As some families will elect to continue to participate with the church from home, consider how your church can promote unity through these multiple methods of interaction.

1. Keep consistency with teaching content and activities for in person and online ministry.
2. Speak often of those participating online to those that gather in person and vice versa.

Questions to Consider

- Will your children and student ministry leadership have the capacity to provide attention to the physical requirements for regathering and continue to provide online ministry?
- Should you include a portion of your children's ministry programming online to include stay at home families?
- What schedule adjustments are needed to accommodate the family attending small groups online and worship in person?
- How will your church continue to care well for those you do not see each week?

