



To protect, nurture and advance
the health of our community

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Safer at Home and Faith-Based Gatherings

Oneida County, WI – On March 24th Governor Evers' issued a Safer at Home order, allowing travel for essential activities only. During this time, government and faith communities throughout Wisconsin need to work together in slowing the spread of COVID-19.

Safer at Home allows individuals to leave their homes for limited essential activities, including shopping for groceries, obtaining medicine, and caring for a family member in another household. Essential businesses and operations are also allowable, though physical distancing and other safety measures are required to keep employees and customers safe.

The order does not allow for gatherings of more than 10 people in a room or confined space at a time. A confined space is not only limited to indoor gatherings, but also includes any defined space, including parking lots and festival grounds. This includes religious gatherings, drive-in services, weddings, and funerals. Any gathering with fewer than 10 people must still adhere to physical distancing requirements by staying at least six feet from others and staying home if you are sick. It is also important to limit gatherings only to people living within the same household to avoid transmitting the virus through social networks.

While we understand that this is a holiday season for many, we want to reiterate the importance faith-based communities have in helping us slow the spread of COVID-19. Physical distancing is our only defense against this virus. Community, faith- and spiritual-based organizations have an important role in slowing the spread of COVID-19, especially among high-risk populations. Often Faith-Based Organizations nobly serve those who are most vulnerable, such as older people and those with serious underlying health conditions, like heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes, who are at higher risk for developing severe COVID-19 illness.

"I know it is hard not to have the congregation physically together during this time and we appreciate that faith communities continue to support the Safer At Home order by offering religious services in ways that do not bring people together physically," said Linda Conlon, Oneida County Health Officer. "For many in our communities, coming together to practice our religious and spiritual beliefs provides hope, strength and social connectedness. We look forward to the day we can again allow in-person gatherings to take place. In the meantime, we ask that you stay connected with one another through phone calls, video chats, text messages, and other ways."

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Monday– Friday 8:00AM-4:30PM

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Thankfully, with modern technology there are many creative options available for staying connected and nurturing spiritual health during this challenging time. Many churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and other places of worship are offering services through television, radio, podcasts, and livestreams on the Internet. “Individually, and as families, taking time to be mindful, meditate, and pray is important for spiritual health while we all do our part to keep our community safe while staying safer at home,” says Linda Conlon, Oneida County Health Officer.

Religious and spiritual leaders should continue to stay up-to-date on information related to the pandemic and actively disseminate accurate and timely information. This includes developing information-sharing systems with partners, including local health officials, and communicating this information to regular attendees, people being served by the organization, and the broader community.

We sympathize with congregants of faith- and spiritual-based organizations that miss the services and fellowship, but the goal is to keep everyone safe and healthy by following the practices put in place by the Safer At Home order.

If you have questions or immediate needs related to COVID-19, call 211, text COVID-19 to 211-211 or visit:

- WI DHS COVID-19: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/disease/covid-19.htm>
- CDC COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Oneida County Public Health: <https://publichealth.co.oneida.wi.us/>
- Follow [Oneida County Health Department](#) on Facebook

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