

Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth

Protocols for Health and Safety in the Covid-19 Pandemic

The staff of the Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth decided to re-open for ministry on a limited basis starting 30 June 2020. In consultation with Sodexo, our dining services partner, and our resident Jesuit Community, we adopted protocols for health and safety during the Covid-19 pandemic, addressing:

- Personal protection (including, for example, physical distancing, proper hand-washing, etc., for staff, Jesuit Community, and guests)
- Cleanliness of public/shared spaces, as well as guest bedrooms, bathrooms, & shower rooms
- Screening of staff and guests (beforehand, at-registration, and ongoing)
- Kitchen, dining room, & meal service (in collaboration with Sodexo)
- Mass and other common prayer
- Ongoing spiritual direction indoors during cold weather

In light of PA Gov. Wolf's recent added mitigation measures, we have updated these protocols.

Our paramount concern is the safety and well-being of our staff, resident Jesuits and Jesuit guests, volunteers, retreatants, and guests. Accordingly, we require that everyone at the Jesuit Center—staff, members of the resident Jesuit Community, and guests—follow these protocols.

Protecting Our Staff and Guests: Pre-screening of Staff & Guests

Every individual coming to work or stay at the Jesuit Center, must be pre-screened for health and safety reasons. The JCSG administration will ask each individual to read our protocols, consider his/her situation, and make an appropriate decision concerning coming to the Jesuit Center.

For those coming **from outside PA:**

As of 20 November 2020, we require your compliance with the recent *Order of the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health for Mitigation Relating to Travel*: "Individuals traveling into and returning to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania from any other State or Commonwealth or an international location, must produce evidence of a negative SARS-CoV2 (COVID-19) test from a specimen collected within 72 hours prior to entering the Commonwealth, or quarantine for 14 days upon entering." If a retreatant or guest from outside PA is unable to obtain the needed test, we ask that you remain at home and either attend the retreat online or reschedule. If neither of those options suits you, we will refund or transfer your payment according to your wishes. This restriction will remain in effect until further notice.

For all retreatants, guests, & staff, including those coming **from within PA**:

Please answer these questions before coming to work or stay at the Jesuit Center (the answers to both questions MUST BE “No”):

- Have you had close contact (more than 15 minutes) in the last 14 days with anyone who received a Covid-19 diagnosis or was suspected of having a coronavirus infection? Y or N
- Within the last 24 hours, have you experienced fever, chills, shortness of breath, or a loss of taste or smell? Y or N

If the answer to either question is “Yes,” we require that you absent yourself from the Jesuit Center for work or retreat and recommend that you seek a test for SARS-CoV-2. Your deposit (and/or balance) can be refunded or transferred to another retreat according to your wishes.

By communicating our protocols, screening our retreatants, and amending our cancellation/refund policies, we are encouraging guests to act responsibly and opt out of a retreat before it begins.

Protecting Our Staff and Guests: Staff Health

Keeping our resident Jesuit community and our retreatants safe requires that we keep our staff healthy, so accordingly:

- We require our staff to maintain healthy hygiene practices, physical distancing (at least 6 ft), and wearing of masks while interacting with each other and guests indoors.
- If a member of staff or volunteer needs a mask, we provide one.
- Staff members have their temperature taken & answer health questions at the start of the day to ensure they do not have a fever or other symptoms.
- Self-monitoring practices and personal hygiene remain essential to mitigating the threat of Covid-19. We require staff/volunteers to stay home and self-isolate if they are feeling ill or are aware that they have been exposed to someone with SARS-CoV-2 (see questions above and “what if” questions below).

Protecting Our Staff and Guests: Enhanced Cleaning Protocols

Our housekeepers and maintenance staff have implemented enhanced cleaning measures, including using CDC-approved disinfecting cleansers, as well as the following:

- Personal use of protective equipment while cleaning the house and interacting with guests.
- Increased frequency of cleaning high-traffic, higher-risk areas (bathrooms, offices, elevator, etc.) and touch points (door handles, sinks, elevator buttons, etc.).
- Thorough daily bathroom/shower cleaning & disinfection—this is done seven days a week while retreatants are in the house.
- Increased ventilation of rooms and corridors.
- Provision of hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes for guests' use.

Protecting Our Staff and Guests: Modified Registration & Guest Services Procedures

While we hope that you will find us as warmly welcoming as ever, we have modified some of our registration procedures:

- Guests must make every effort to arrive inside the time frame given for retreat arrival. We absolutely cannot welcome guests outside of the designated hours when the house is prepared and the reception area is staffed.
- Our check-in procedure has been modified to include: checking in retreatants one at a time in order to maintain physical distancing, screening guests' temperatures and general health on arrival, providing a face mask & brown paper bag if needed, and collecting a COVID disclaimer & emergency contact information if not already provided or on file.
- Once each retreatant has been screened, he/she is given a colored sticker to wear on his/her shirt or blouse. These stickers indicate that they have had their temperature screened and reported no symptoms of illness. After screening, guests are allowed to check into their assigned room.
- Guest room assignments are rotated to allow maximum time possible between guests. Due to this, specific room requests may not be accommodated. Guests are NOT permitted to change rooms without explicit permission from the Registrar.

Protecting Our Staff and Guests: Dining Experience

Working in tandem with our Sodexo Chef Manager, Laura Reber, and her staff, and in consultation with our Sodexo District Manager, we have established health and safety protocols for our Jesuit Center kitchen and dining room. Please see *JCSG Protocols for Dining Room & Meals* and the Sodexo website at <https://www.sodexo.com/home.html> for detailed protocols for a safe and healthy dining experience at the Jesuit Center.

- Sodexo staff are screened daily (health & temperature checks).
- Sodexo has adopted enhanced cleaning protocols for the dining room and kitchen, using a multi-surface peroxide cleanser & disinfectant with a 5-minute disinfection time. This solution is certified as effective against SARS-CoV-2.
- Sodexo staff serve food to staff, guests, and members of the Jesuit Community.
- Dining tables are set to ensure physical distancing (only two places, at opposite ends of each table). Each place setting includes a paper placemat, water glass, coffee cup and saucer, and a small plate. Guests are asked to clear their place completely and leave it empty for Sodexo staff to sanitize the spot and re-set.
- Sodexo staff has been engaged in ongoing education through the pandemic.

Protecting Our Staff and Guests: Retreatant Experience

One of our Jesuit retreat house colleagues jokingly calls silent directed retreats “the original sheltering in place with social distancing”! Be that as it may, the Covid-19 pandemic calls for some modifications in the way retreatants interact with the environment at the retreat house, with staff, and with one another so we can keep one another safe.

- Orientation at the beginning of a retreat includes an overview of new guidelines.
- We affirm the judgment of public health experts: Physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, personal hygiene, wearing masks, and self-monitoring are the most effective ways in which Covid-19 transmission can be reduced. Accordingly, we require mask-wearing for all inside the house and at distances of less than six (6) feet outdoors.

- Each morning of the retreat, all retreatants are required to report to the lobby for a health & temperature check, which is logged. Each guest with a temperature below 99.5 ° will receive a sticker for that day.
- If a guest records a temperature 99.5 ° or above, he/she will be asked to leave. Such a guest will not be penalized for the unused portion of his/her stay. Guests will be strongly encouraged to contact JCSG if they test positive for SARSCoV-2 within two weeks of departure.
- Over the course of a retreat, there are multiple instances where a guest may be screened out and asked to leave.
- We insist on the maintenance of a prayerful atmosphere of silence throughout every retreat at the Jesuit Center. Giving one another the gift of silence by avoiding *unnecessary* conversations with staff members and other retreatants helps us maintain physical distance and good health. (Answering questions about health or seeking assistance in the dining room of course constitute *necessary* conversations.)
- Small specialty rooms for activities and/or prayer (including, but not limited to: African Room, Ignatian Room, Music Room, Parlors, Puzzle Room, Retreatant Exercise Room, St. Genevieve Chapel, St. Nicholas Chapel, etc.) are limited to single occupancy and must be aired after use. The Art Room may have two users seated six (6) feet apart. The Bookstore may have two (2) customers, one in each room.
- We must insist that retreatants stay out of all areas in the building marked “Jesuit Community” or “Staff Only” at all times. This is for the protection of our resident Jesuit Community, comprising mostly elderly priests who are especially vulnerable to Covid-19.

Protecting Our Staff and Guests: Mass & Other Liturgies

We are offering Mass and other common prayer services (opening prayer services and Eucharistic Adoration) during our retreats. We have developed a set of health and safety protocols for these liturgies, available to retreatants on request. These protocols include:

- Those attending Masses and prayer services (staff, overnight retreatants, and Jesuit guests) will have been pre-screened. Members of the Jesuit Community are welcome to attend retreat Masses. *Jesuit Center Masses will not be open to the general public at this time.*

- At retreat Masses and other liturgical gatherings, we maintain strict physical distancing and frequent hand hygiene. Any resident, staff member, or guest feeling ill should absent himself/herself from Masses and liturgies.
- Our staff members and/or guests wear masks at Mass.
- We have implemented enhanced cleaning protocols in the Auditorium and Main Chapel, along with chair spacing in the Auditorium and pew reservation in the Main Chapel.
- Presiding priests observe very strict protocols, including *thorough* handwashing, not touching their faces, thorough washing of vessels, etc. The presider will NOT wear a mask during liturgy.
- Congregants must be physically distanced in the chapel at all times.
- We have live music during retreat liturgies, but minimal singing, done while wearing masks.
- Retreatants may serve as lectors. Lectors will NOT wear masks when they are reading.
- There will be NO offertory procession.
- As the U.S. bishops have stated, “Reception of the sacraments is important for the faithful in the midst of this pandemic,” so while “one should generally try to avoid being within 6 feet of others...where necessary, a momentary interaction presents an acceptable risk, especially if other precautions are taken.” Therefore, retreatants are able to receive Holy Communion at Jesuit Center Masses.
- Communicants must leave two arms’ lengths between them and wear masks as they come up to receive.
- Reception of Holy Communion is strictly limited to in-the-hand reception of bread *only*. The presider will NOT place his hands in or near people’s mouths. Due to the vulnerability of the priests, there can be NO exceptions to this.
- *In the case of Masses streamed for at-home retreatants*, only the presider will communicate himself during the Mass. The congregants will then be seated. There will be a suitable interval for spiritual communion with a common prayer or meditative song. The presider should sanitize his hands after Mass and distribute Communion at that time.

Protecting Our Staff and Guests: Amended Policies & Added Protections

- Amended sick-time policies encourage staff to stay home if they are unwell or if the county goes back into shut-down.
- Enhanced cleaning protocols may help reduce transmission of Covid-19 and do help create an environment where guests feel safe coming to the Jesuit Center.
- Hand sanitizer is available throughout the retreat center.
- Masks, paper bags, and disinfectant wipes are available by request.
- Restrooms are specifically designated for staff and retreatants and appropriately marked.
- Guests are forbidden from leaving the property for errands or social purposes once they have arrived and registered. Doing so may result in a guest being asked to leave.
- By amending our cancellation policies, communicating our protocols, and screening our staff and guests, we are encouraging guests to act responsibly and absent themselves from a retreat before it begins if they are ill or believe they pose a risk to others.
- Orientation at the beginning of a retreat will include an overview of these guidelines.

Protecting Our Staff and Guests: Public Access to the Jesuit Center Building and Grounds

- The main doors to the Jesuit Center are presently locked. We only grant access to staff and registered retreatants. Members of the public are not welcome to visit the building, attend services or meals, or use the pool or other facilities at this time. We regret this necessity, but the health and safety of those who live and work here or are making retreat here is our top priority.
- *Those not making retreat at the Center who wish to walk the grounds* at the Jesuit Center may be permitted to do so with the explicit permission of our Facilities Director, Fr. Thomas J. Kuller, SJ. Those individuals (no groups) who seek permission must *walk* (there is no provision for sitting or meeting on our property at this time) and must stay *away from the building*. Visitors should observe silence on the grounds, as silent retreats will be going on all year. Please call Fr. Kuller at 610-670-3601 for initial permission and again each time you would like to walk on the property.

Protecting Our Staff and Guests: What-ifs

1. What if a member of staff contracts Covid-19?

JCSG will identify which members of staff have recently worked with the infected individual and ask them to self-isolate as a precaution. The individuals will be advised to seek out a test and communicate their status to JCSG. Further actions will be determined in due course.

2. What if a retreatant tests positive after coming on retreat?

JCSG will work with the PA Department of Public Health to facilitate contact tracing, enhance sanitization, and implement any other solutions that may be recommended or required.

3. What happens if/when the number of Covid-19 cases rises after PA/Berks County reopens?

The JCSG staff monitors the public health situation and will modify our operation to conform with guidance released by federal and state agencies. Paramount to our operation is the safety and well-being of our staff, retreatants, and guests.

Sources

Consultation with Jesuit Center administrative staff, registration staff, and program staff; consultation with Chef Manager Laura Reber & Sodexo management

Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19 from Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA 3990-03 2020)

Guidelines from the MAR-UNE Provinces' Health Care Office

Ignatius House Reopening Proposal of 27 April 2020 (by Robert Holsten)

RCM&D webinar "Back to Business After COVID-19" (May 2020) and module "Bringing Guests and Staff Back to Your Business after a Covid-19 Shutdown" by Anne Jackson (2 June 2020)

Sodexo Seniors *COVID-19 Guide for Reopening Dining Rooms*, 20 May 2020

US Bishops' Conference: *Guidelines on Sacraments and Pastoral Care*: Working Group on Infectious Disease Protocols for Sacraments & Pastoral Care (28 April 2020): Part III – Phased Restoration of Public Masses

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