

GUIDELINES FOR US PROJECT SITES AND TEAM LEADERS DURING COVID-19

(rev. March 2021)

Our first General Rule as United Methodists is to “do no harm.” This extends to our mission relationships. We want to “do no harm” to our volunteers or the ones they serve. Our goal as United Methodist Volunteers In Mission is to minimize COVID-19 infections spread by United Methodist activity.

The United Methodist Volunteers in Mission leadership understands that many project sites rely on teams to assist in serving the community. These teams may come from nearby, from another state, sometimes from another country. Each individual situation will be different. Some local mission partners or missionaries may have contracted and already recovered from COVID-19. Some may have been vaccinated already. Some may be asymptomatic carriers of the virus. Some are not infected. Some live with family members who are immuno-compromised. All want to serve. Yet one of the worst unintended effects of mission work throughout the ages has been the spread of infectious disease. Remember that we bring other things with us when we bring the Gospel. We must be careful.

The federal disaster declaration includes every state and territory with most states restricting large gatherings and promoting social distancing guidelines. These guidelines are designed to assist teams and hosts in determining when and how to prepare the site for future teams. All sites should adhere to public health and safety protocols in order to protect employees, homeowners, and missionaries.

All missionaries are strongly advised to get a COVID vaccine when it is available. Project sites or annual conferences may require each missionary to get a vaccine. Bring a copy of your vaccine record with you if possible.

For the latest updates in regard to COVID-19, please visit - [Centers for Disease Control.](#) Pay particular attention to the CDC's [travel guidelines.](#)

Responsibility for adhering to these guidelines is shared by the Team Leader and the Project Site. This requires frequent communication and cooperation between both parties.

General Guidance for International Service

The State Department issues travel advisories based on health and safety concerns. Travel to countries at a [Level 4 travel advisory](#) is prohibited. Team insurance is not available for mission service in these countries.

Travelers may be required to quarantine before or after travel to countries with advisories at Level 3 and below. All travelers entering the United States are required to produce a [negative COVID-19 test result](#) within three days of arrival.

General Guidance for US Project Service

Based on [CDC guidelines](#)

- **Suspending teams**
 - Make this decision based on the guidance of your governor, bishop, and state, municipal, county, and tribal health authorities. Pay attention to directions about school closure, stay-at-home orders, and the size of gatherings that are allowed.
 - Make this decision with the guidance of your board of directors or other governing body.

- **Hosting teams**
 - Know the quarantine rules. Some states require travelers to quarantine or provide proof of a negative COVID test before or after arrival. Have a plan to ensure compliance.
 - Follow CDC guidance on cleaning and disinfecting your facilities. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
 - Post reminders for hand washing, awareness of symptoms, etc.
 - Improve air circulation in all common areas. [See CDC guidelines for best practices on interior ventilation.](#)
 - Provide prevention supplies:
 - hand sanitizer

- disposable facemasks
- eye protection
- cleaners and disinfectants
- Gloves for food preparation and cleaning
- Other considerations
 - Avoid buffet-style meal service. Have kitchen crews prepare dishes. This includes sack lunch preparation.
 - If the dishwasher does not meet standards for sanitation, consider asking teams to bring paper products (not Styrofoam) to be discarded after each meal. Provide adequate trash receptacles.
 - All touch surfaces should be thoroughly wiped down when the team arrives and as they prepare to leave with approved cleaners. <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>
 - Work should be done on exterior projects only. Make accommodations for port-a-potties so teams do not have to enter a home.
 - Consider ways to assure safe distancing on the work site, in the dorm, dining area, and meeting space.
 - If possible, provide washer and dryer facilities for laundering expectations.
- Daily screening protocol
- Full [symptom check](#) for each missioner
- Ask about general health
- Ask if missioner has been in contact with anyone who had COVID-19
- Wipe down all surfaces prior to welcoming teams.
- Arrange for outdoor projects to assure minimal contact between homeowner and team members (painting, deck or ramp building, landscaping, roofing). Make accommodations for rest room facilities so team members do not have to enter the home. (i.e.: port-a-potties)
- Indoor projects should only be undertaken with extreme caution. Adhere closely to indoor gathering limits and ventilate the

space using outside air. Gloves and masks should be used at all times when indoors on a project site. KN-95 masks are preferred.

- Childrens' ministry (VBS) should be suspended until more guidance from CDC and the local officials is available.
- Have a plan in place to safely transport a team member who develops symptoms of COVID-19.
 - Provide space for isolation if someone reports symptoms.
 - The team member exhibiting symptoms should contact his/her health care provider as soon as possible.
- **Leading Teams**
 - Follow the guidelines of the CDC for travel both inside and outside the U.S.
 - Follow your local guidelines from your governor, bishop, and state, municipal, county, and tribal health authorities. Also make sure you know the local guidelines in the place where you intend to serve. Where guidance from different authorities conflict, follow the more restrictive protocols.
 - If it is determined that it is safe and lawful to serve, continue to make arrangements for proper social distancing and PPE for team members, and sanitize surfaces and equipment wherever you go.
 - Make sure each team member has [proper medical insurance](#). For teams serving in the U.S., UMVIM offers temporary coverage for missionaries. (Policies and terms of coverage vary by jurisdiction). For teams serving internationally, UMVIM offers travel medical and accident insurance coverage for the duration of your service. COVID-19 treatment is covered if contracted during your period of service. Check with your jurisdictional coordinator for specific information.
 - Each team member will sign the [Medical and Emergency Form](#).
 - Know the health infrastructure in the area where the team intends to serve and the location of the nearest hospital.
 - Have a plan for canceling the journey or sending team members home if any team members are uncomfortable with the enforcement of safety protocols.

- Consider donations to the partner organization and organizing a virtual mission if it is not appropriate to physically travel to the project site.

Even though [vaccines are now available to the public](#), full distribution will be months away. We expect to continue taking measures to interrupt transmission of the virus for the protection of our volunteers and those we serve, even if (1) antibodies are proven to protect against re-infection, (2) tests are widely available to the general public and all team members have recently tested negative, or (3) vaccines are widely available and all team members have been vaccinated.

Questions or concerns? [Contact your annual conference UMVIM Coordinator or your Jurisdictional UMVIM Coordinator.](#)