



The Episcopal Diocese
of Pennsylvania

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go”

~Joshua 1:9

Most if not all of us have the option to stay indoors, stock up on food and supplies. However, there are far too many people where this is not an option. We have brothers and sisters who depend on the community to help them fulfill some basic physiological needs (food, water, clothing, etc).

There are ways to continue your outreach ministries while keeping yourselves, volunteers, and those you serve safe. Per Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine, churches will not be penalized and programs that provide life sustaining services may continue by following guidelines. Here are facts on preventing the spread of COVID-19:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>,
<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Stop-the-Spread.aspx>

{NOTE: When continuing outreach services, it is imperative that all volunteers adhere to the guidelines to ensure we are following the restrictions set by the state and CDC. Our goal is to serve our community while helping to prevent the spread of this virus}

I. VOLUNTEERS (THIS INCLUDES STAFF AND PARISHIONERS):

- Each volunteer should be encouraged to check their temperature prior to arriving to work. 2 weeks isolation is needed for any volunteer with symptoms before they can return to volunteer.
- Anyone who shows symptoms of illness (even if it is deemed a cold) must stay home
- Create a sign in sheet for all volunteers. Make sure the date, name, and contact information is included. This list should be kept confidential. In case a volunteer tests positive for COVID-19 the names on the list should not be shared publicly. The purpose of this sign in sheet is for contact tracing only.
- Those considered high risk should refrain from in person volunteer work. They can contribute by leaving donations outside their front door for pick up or providing a financial contribution for the ministry online
- Schedule volunteers in shifts (e.g. small group to pick up donations, group to prepare the day before, group to help coordinate day of, etc). Keep these groups to bare minimum (no more than 5- if possible)
- Volunteers working in one area should adhere to the 6 foot physical distance rule
- **Everyone must wear a mask**
- No one should enter homes or places of mass gatherings to pick up donations
- Gloves should be worn at all times. If volunteers are handling food (face masks should be worn)

II. MEAL/CLOTHING/NECESSITY PREPARATION



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- The preference is to obtain pre-packaged food versus assembling food. Places such as WAWA frequently donate mass quantities of prepackaged sandwiches. If this is not possible meals should be assembled by volunteers as suggested under section I
 - Avoid food being prepped within personal homes.
 - Alter meals so they require minimal prep work. Examples (but certainly not limited to) pasta, rice, provide mayo/mustard packets for sandwiches in to go boxes, fruits, prepackaged vegetables, etc....
 - If clothing is being distributed, gathering must be avoided. Set a limit on the number of people allowed to collect clothing at one time and set a time limit if needed to prevent long lines from forming.
 - Wear gloves at all times. Wear a mask at all times
 - **If your parish is in need of face masks please contact Canon Smyth OR visit <https://www.deaconess.com/How-to-make-a-Face-Mask>**
- III. **PROVIDING SERVICES:** Any form of program that results in mass gatherings (e.g. people sitting to eat, standing in line, fellowship in groups) should be discontinued until further notice. Anyone that enters the building should wear a mask. Here are some alternative ideas:
- a. Signage and communication to volunteers should clearly indicate the rules: “no congregating in one place, keep a 6 foot distance from one another, only 2 volunteers at a table, one item per person, etc. The language may be far from fellowship nurturing but during these times the safety of each person takes precedence.
 - b. Place markers on the floor/sidewalk that are 6 feet apart to visually show and remind guests how far apart to stand from one another
 - c. Place tables with bagged/boxed meals on multiple tables (outside if possible) spaced out. This will help keep people from crowding one table
 - Guests should take items themselves from tables
 - Keep hand sanitizer at each table
 - d. Schedule times for people to pick up items.
 - You can request people to contact the parish to schedule a time slot to pick up items. Guests can still take items from the table/area when they arrive versus being handed the item.
 - Or you can communicate “items will be available to take at these times”.
 - e. If you do drive up meals:
 - Guests can take items from tables then return to vehicles. If your location makes this difficult, you can place lunches in a large bin (such as a dish bin) and have each vehicle take from bin. This will allow volunteers to keep safe distance
- IV. **SUPPORT AVAILABLE:**
- a. Virtual AA meetings: <https://www.aasepia.org/>
 - b. Virtual NA meetings: <https://virtual-na.org/>
 - c. Virtual MARA meetings: <https://www.mara-international.org/>
 - d. Crisis Line: 215 -685- 6400 DBHIDS
 - e. Need financial support for your food outreach program?: Apply at www.phlccovid19fund.org
 - Your parish must be a registered 501c3 organization



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- If you are not registered, consider partnering with one
- f. Food Distribution /Access sites near you:
- Seniors looking for food assistance can contact:
 1. Philadelphia Corporation of Aging Helpline at 215-765-9040.
 2. They offer meal delivery
 - SNAP benefits available for Food Vouchers: To check if eligible: https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/361#Eligibility_Checker
 - Note for those who serve populations on WIC: They will be closing only because they have switched to a new system to deliver services.
 - WHY Hunger Hotline at 1-800-5-HUNGRY or <https://whyhunger.org/find-food/>
 - <https://www.hungerfreepa.org/>
 - Bucks County Opportunity Council: <https://www.bcoc.org/>
 - Helping Harvest (Berks and Schuylkill counties) <https://helpingharvest.org/>
 - Find free meals for students while schools are closed: <https://www.phila.gov/2020-03-14-find-free-meals-and-safe-spaces-for-students-while-schools-are-closed/>
- g. Financial assistance with burials: Contact tsmyth@diopa.org for list of funeral homes that received Department of Human Services grants to help provide funeral arrangements for those who are going through financial hardship or need help seeking the location of someone deceased.
- h. Episcopal Legal Aid: EPISCOPAL LEGAL AID is open for business, offering FREE legal advice on non-criminal matters to individuals who cannot afford private counsel
1. Phone: 610-709-6665
 2. E-Mail info@episcopallegalaid.org
 3. We are happy to discuss any non-criminal issue, but would especially like to speak with you about • evictions • benefit questions • pending court cases • wills • medical directives
- V. OPTIONS OUTSIDE OF PROVIDING DIRECT SERVICE:**
- a. If you have a relationship with your local police department who conduct welfare visits, they may also be willing to take meals/kits with them.
 - b. Contact the social work department for hospitals as they may have families in need of items where they can help disperse for you
 - c. Here is a list of parishes that are in need of items due to the shortage of donations and places you can refer guests to if they need help. <https://www.diopa.org/news/open-food-ministries-and-shelters>