



Health & Reintegration Guidelines



As of June 23, 2021

Dear Nuevas Fronteras & Ministry Partners,

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1). So begins the account of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church in the book of Acts. As we celebrate the liturgical season of Pentecost, we understand that it may not be possible for the members of our congregation to be “all together in one place” this summer. While some restrictions are being lifted in some places and for some people, the ongoing threat of the Covid-19 global pandemic will require that we return to church in a way that is measured and mindful of the needs of the most vulnerable among us. While some may begin to attend public worship in person, we know that some will need to continue to worship at home for some time.

We give thanks, then, for the promise of our faith—that the Lord God will bless and keep us, the risen Christ is with us, and the Holy Spirit connects us with believers near and far. We take comfort and inspiration from the example of the earliest believers, who “spent much time together in the temple” and “broke bread at home . . . with glad and generous hearts” (Acts 2:46). As we anxiously track the news in these times—with numbers of new cases, numbers of persons who have died, and numbers of those who are recovering—we remember the good news of the gospel: “And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

As Nuevas Fronteras begins to resume public activities, please know that we will do so through a careful process of discussion and discernment, with an abundance of caution and concern for those who are most vulnerable, upon consideration of the best scientific knowledge at our disposal, in the spirit of constant prayer, and with full trust in the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

We may make mistakes along the way. There will surely be awkward moments as we adjust to new protocols and practices. There will be times of frustration, disappointment, and grief. We will have countless opportunities to exercise the spiritual gifts of patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control.

But there will also be blessings. There will be wonderful surprises, great celebrations, and moments of deep satisfaction. We will get to see glimpses of the new thing God is doing, even now. We will have opportunities to savor the spiritual gifts of love, joy, peace, generosity, and faithfulness.

Let us be faithful, then—to God and to one another—as we receive the gifts and work through the challenges of this time in the life of our congregation and world. Let us be guided by the Word, responsive to the Spirit, and open to the grace of God. Let us remember that nothing can separate us from God’s love in Christ Jesus.

The Charge

COVID is responsible for the deaths of up to 900,000 Americans, and long-term health consequences for millions more. Although vaccination and improved medical care have eased the consequences of the pandemic, **it is not behind us**. Our faith calls us to resist the temptation

to assume that being vaccinated means our actions are without consequence to those we claim to love the most. Let us build up the Body of Christ with wisdom: by using growing scientific knowledge together with our best theology and pastoral practice. We can gather more people in physical space, more safely now. Let us continue safe practices so that we can be part of a global effort to subdue this coronavirus.

We are extremely grateful for the many ways you continue to be patient and responsible as we confront this global pandemic. The Session of La Iglesia Presbiteriana Nuevas Fronteras charged a group of individuals to form our **Health & Reintegration Team**. The Health Team is developing guidelines for a smooth and safe transition to in-person ministry. We are entering a hopeful time as the weather warms, numbers of coronavirus cases continue to decline, and vaccinations become more readily available. This is all very encouraging news as we mark one year since the pandemic impacted our community. As a result of these encouraging markers, public health guidelines from the CDC and state of New Jersey continue to be updated.

We will update our *Health & Reintegration Guidelines* with the understanding that this is a hopeful time, but also a vulnerable time with a number of variants being experienced. As scientists and epidemiologists remind us, we are very close to a more normal summer season if we can continue to hold on to our health protocols this summer and for the rest of the year.

The following new policy/protocol is developed **for the most vulnerable**. Meaning that our focus should be on protecting those who are not vaccinated such as people with health issues and **CHILDREN** who are not vaccinated yet or cannot be vaccinated until sometime in the winter.

Also, please know that we are actively creating a reopening plan for our community of faith that also includes conversations with our Ministry Partners using the facilities at 170 Watchung Avenue, North Plainfield, NJ.

We look forward to a newly defined “normal” season ahead!

Grace and Peace,

Efi Sanchez, Team Leader
Health & Reintegration Team
<https://www.nuevasfronteraspcusa.org/salud-health>

Rev. Dr. Victor Aloyo, Jr.
Pastor/Head of Staff
Pastor.nuevasfronteras@gmail.com

Section I Introduction

The Great Commandment states, “‘Love the Lord your God’... ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matt. 22:37-39). During this pandemic, one way we express love for ourselves is in doing what we can to protect ourselves from getting infected. In the same way, one way we express love for our neighbor is in doing what we can to protect them from getting infected.

In the past fifteen months, this pandemic has dramatically changed our lives and turned our world upside down. The pain and anxieties it has caused around us are real. Additionally, as Christians we grieve the inability to meet in person with our church communities. We deeply desire to gather again. However, we must consider how to do so in safe ways that consider our most vulnerable neighbors and do not fuel the spread of COVID-19.

It is important for us to remember that the Church never actually closed, just the doors to our buildings. As Christ’s disciples, we are learning to live out our calling to worship, pray, encourage, witness, disciple, and serve in creative ways that minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission. We’ve gone online, moved our small groups to video chats, and found new ways to love our neighbors. We are still the people of God; we—not our buildings—are the real church.

Now, we enter a new phase of COVID-19 as restrictions loosen and businesses begin to reopen. Our churches face a set of difficult decisions: when to resume in-person ministries and how to carry out these ministries safely.

Four Commitments for Reintegration

Humility: Humbly examine your possible biases, influences, pressures, and our church’s strengths and weaknesses that could have a negative effect on our ability to make wise decisions.

Love: Follow the biblical call to love your neighbor (Mark 12:31) in how and when we return to in-person ministries so that our actions help and do not inadvertently cause harm.

Persistence: Mentally approach the process of reintegration and helping our church navigate COVID-19 as a “marathon”—not a “sprint”—by keeping a long-term view in mind (e.g., Scripture talks about finishing the race, not being first in the race).

Wisdom: Stay up to date on the latest information and scientific findings about [COVID-19](#), track the number of local cases, and consult [CDC interim guidance](#) for faith communities as well as federal, [state](#), and [local](#) guidelines for guidance.

Prayer

God, guide us into and through this process with your wisdom and peace.

Section 2

Making a Bible-Based and Science-Based Plan

“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:18). This is a time for love put into wise action for ourselves, our families, our neighbors, our community, and our church. In these circumstances, we seek to be guided by God. This means that we must seek out biblical wisdom through the Scriptures to guide our actions. We should also use other means of knowing that God has given us—like science—to guide our COVID-19 reintegration plans.

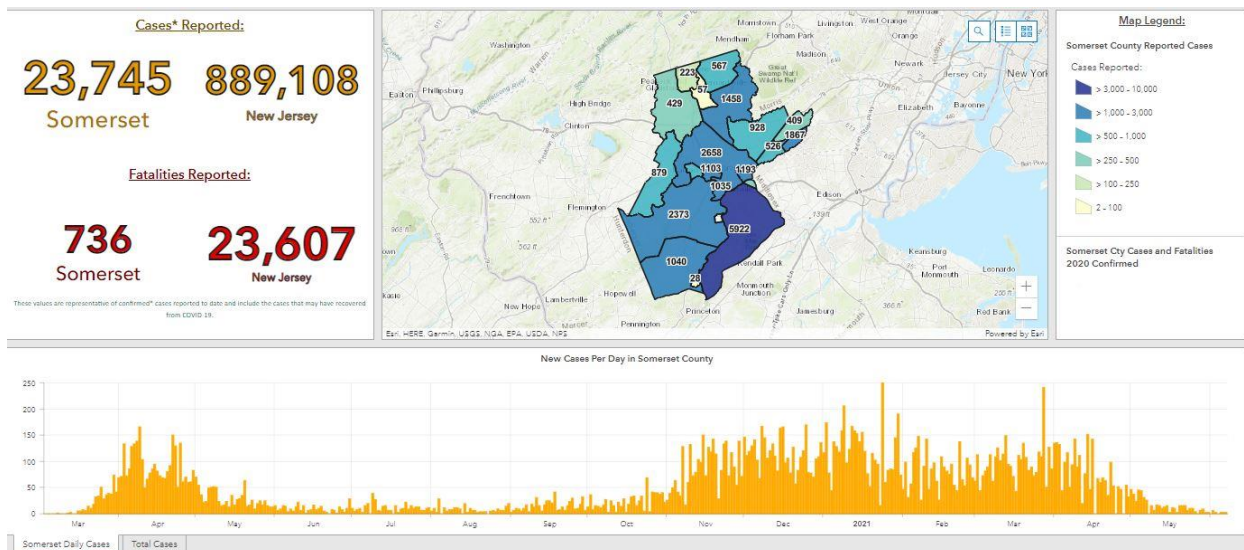
New Jersey COVID-19 Information Hub

<https://covid19.nj.gov/>

Somerset County Data

Somerset County remains committed to providing accurate and timely information on this situation to our communities. Residents can call 908-231-7111 for a daily automated reading of the current coronavirus (COVID-19) case count in Somerset County, New Jersey.

The Somerset County Department of Health ([SCDOH](#)) is the lead county agency to coordinate public health disease response, in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), local hospitals, medical providers, and emergency medical services. Information and resources regarding the new coronavirus can be found [here](#). The following chart is provided as of June 7, 2021.



Though members of our community are getting vaccines, at this time only a small percentage of our community is fully vaccinated. Also, the fact remains that the State of New Jersey continues to have a high number of COVID cases. As of June 1, infections rates in Somerset County leveled off at about 20 per 100,000. This is still above the safest target rate of 1 per 100,000 or less that 5% of Positive Tests. For these reasons, as our community continues to receive vaccines over the next two to three months, we recommend that we still live within fairly restrictive guidelines.

GENERAL SAFETY ACTIONS

Continue to take these steps to reduce your risk of getting and spreading COVID-19:

- Correctly and consistently [wear a mask](#) that completely covers your nose and mouth. Masks will be used among staff, congregants, all participants leasing and renting the church property. [Masks](#) are most essential when social distancing is difficult. Note: Masks should not be placed on children younger than 2 years old, anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, and anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. [Masks](#) offer protection to the wearer and are also meant to protect those around the wearer, in case they are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Stay [at least 6 feet away](#) from others who do not live with you
- [Avoid crowds](#)
- Avoid poorly [ventilated](#) indoor spaces
- [Stay home when you are sick](#)
- [Wash your hands](#) frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or use [hand sanitizer](#) containing at least 60% alcohol)
- [Get vaccinated](#) when the vaccine is available to you
- [Get tested](#) if you have signs or [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, or if you think you may have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19

Even if you and others (including [children](#)) do not feel sick and do not have any [symptoms](#), *you can still spread COVID-19 to family, friends, and community.*

Do NOT be around others if you have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 in the past 10-14 days, if you are [sick](#), or if you have [tested positive for COVID-19](#).

Research¹ has shown church activities contain multiple factors that facilitate airborne COVID-19 spread. Below (see table) is a summary of what is known about how COVID-19 is transmitted, followed by suggested safety actions based on the best available scientific data available. We are using the table below as a starting place (remember, this is not a fully comprehensive list of all possible risk factors or safety actions) to identify possible risks in our church. We will then select from the suggested **specific safety actions** that our Health & Reintegration Team plans on utilizing.

Factor facilitating transmission	Transmission risk in church activities	Specific Safety Actions
Infectiousness of COVID-19 patient	An asymptomatic COVID-19 carrier participating could transmit the virus, but a symptomatic carrier is more infectious	Screen those with symptoms; use face masks (surgical masks or double cloth masks, as appropriate)
Actions producing more respiratory droplets	Singing, laughing, talking (especially loudly), coughing and physical activities that	Use face mask when singing or talking, minimize unnecessary physical activities

¹ Refer to the links found in Section 2

	increase deep and rapid breathing	
Close Proximity (6 feet)	People sitting closer than 6 feet apart or facing each other	Maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet; no face-to-face activity; sit in rows facing one direction; use face masks on all persons in close proximity, particularly indoors (Note: Families who reside in one household can remain in close proximity to each other.)
Enclosed space with limited outside ventilation	Meeting frequently in smaller rooms with low ceiling and no outside ventilation	Use larger rooms with high ceilings; open windows and doors; allow time to vent rooms and sanitize between use; meet outdoors; use face masks
Duration of contact	Meeting for longer than 60 minutes (definition of close contact); longer duration equals more risk	Minimize time by cutting non-essential activities; uni-directional flow for foot traffic; prompt and orderly entry and exit maintaining appropriate distances from one another
Increased Social Mixing	Gatherings including asymptomatic younger people with older people	Keep participants segregated by age groups; some people meeting regularly together reduces mixing.

As we have stated previously during the pandemic, we are not required to do something just because it is allowed. The apostle Paul advises Christians that “knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” and that they should “take care that your liberty does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.” (1 Cor. 8:1, 9). The minimum standard is not necessarily the guide by which the church should operate.

We understand many church gatherings to be somewhat like public transit, where people of mixed vaccine status are together for some time with limited ventilation. The CDC recommendations which suggest there is low risk to gathering indoors without masks, and do not raise alarm about singing, presume a fully vaccinated group. That is not the case in most faith communities – and we would not want to put church leaders in the position of enforcement, needing to check vaccination status in order to admit people to worship. Indeed, this practice can be exclusionary and counter to Christian witness.

*Many members of our communities remain unvaccinated and at higher risk of COVID transmission. Some—particularly children under the age of 12 and medically fragile individuals such as pregnant women or the immunocompromised—have not had the opportunity to be vaccinated. **Such members deserve the highest care and protection of the community, and all deserve to see the example of faithful people expressing the love of Christ in following sensible precautions.*** In our excitement at good news for the vaccinated, let us not commit the sin of overlooking parts of the body. Hastily-implemented practices can exclude “the least of

these” and threaten their health. The vulnerable among us should not be expected to bear the burden of others’ unwillingness to be vaccinated or follow COVID-safe policies.

What We Know About COVID-19

There is a rapidly expanding body of scientific knowledge about COVID-19. Experts agree that COVID-19 will be in the US for the foreseeable future, with fluctuating levels of infection in the community. Some of these recent insights are particularly relevant to churches as we consider how to resume in-person ministries:

- COVID-19 can be transmitted before a person develops symptoms. This explains why the virus spreads so easily and stealthily, greatly complicating efforts to contain its spread.
- Not every infected person will infect another person; factors that impact transmission include: infectiousness of the COVID-19 carrier, actions that increase the release of respiratory droplets and aerosols into the surrounding air, proximity to an infected person (within six feet is considered high risk), time spent in an enclosed environment with limited ventilation to the outside, amount of time spent with an infected person, and type of social network (e.g., intergenerational). In settings where a greater number of these factors are present, the risk of transmission will be higher.
- Because older people are more susceptible to contracting COVID-19 and children are less likely to display symptoms, intergenerational contact should be minimized to reduce COVID-19 transmission. It is important to note that children who have been infected have developed complications from COVID-19, so we must remain diligent to reduce exposure to children as well.
- Younger adults with common chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and autoimmune disease also have an increased risk of serious complications. In fact, nearly 60 percent of COVID-19 hospital admissions in the US are for those under 65 years old.
- Several states have started to lift mask-wearing orders, even though their COVID-19 case counts remain high or have just started to decline. This will lead to an increase in transmission and new cases as individuals begin to resume activities which could increase their exposure. This increase can be mitigated by extensive testing, effective contact tracing, and quarantining of contacts. But no state yet has the testing capacity and the trained personnel to carry out effective tracing and quarantining.
- COVID-19 can spread from one state to another. As long as one part of the country has a poorly controlled epidemic, states that have significantly reduced their cases will remain vulnerable to COVID-19 spread from those areas. The same can be said of spread from one country to another.

⁶“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷ He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it:

‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

Matthew 22: 36 -39

Prayer

God, help us listen intently for what you’re asking us to do and plan realistically for what we can accomplish.

Section 3

A Step-by-Step Approach

“They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh...to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine” (Genesis 41:35-36). Joseph demonstrated wisdom in preparing for and then leading the way through a severe famine. Because of his careful preparation, Joseph could then provide what people needed. Though our focus is not food, a faithful response to COVID-19 involves planning and then managing through different stages of a crisis. Through these recommended steps we can take a faithful approach to assessing needs, being good stewards, and witnessing to God’s love for our neighbors.

PROMOTING HEALTHY HYGIENE PRACTICES

- All staff, congregants, leasing organizations, and renters are to maintain good hand hygiene, [washing hands](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Nuevas Fronteras will ensure having accessible sinks and enough supplies for people to clean their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes. Supplies include soap, water, a way to dry hands (e.g., paper towels, hand dryer), tissues, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for those who can safely use hand sanitizer), and no-touch/foot pedal trash cans (preferably covered).
- Everyone is to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed.
- Whenever soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be used.
- Continue to encourage all to get vaccinated and help them if they need assistance.

Considering the Four Commitments for Reintegration (Page 2), the Health & Reintegration Team is respectfully submitting the following guidance and recommendations based on the reality that the pandemic is not over yet for we still have much more work to do for the new reality of our post pandemic life.

Phases:

- I - September 1 – December 31, 2021
- II - January 1, 2022 – April 30, 2022

Church Facilities (Phase I: September 1 – December 31, 2021)

1. Iglesia Presbiteriana Nuevas Fronteras will purchase at least 10 hand sanitizing mechanisms with sanitizing lotion as prescribed by the FDA and CDC prior to September 1 and placed strategically throughout the church facilities including the functioning bathrooms.
 2. Although the use of air cleaners alone cannot ensure adequate indoor air quality, appropriate units can be used since there is currently poor ventilation in the sanctuary and the projected HVAC system is scheduled to be installed during the winter. Therefore, Iglesia Presbiteriana Nuevas Fronteras will purchase four Air Cleaners prior to September 1 for the sanctuary as prescribed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency - see [here](#).
- Secondly, that in the revitalization of the property, we consider [iwave](#) or other considerable air filtration system to be included in the air conditioning units.

- Thirdly, we use portable air cleaners to supplement increased HVAC system ventilation and filtration, especially in areas where adequate ventilation is difficult to achieve, such as the Lower Level. Directing the airflow so that it does not blow directly from one person to another reduces the potential spread of droplets that may contain infectious viruses. For more information visit [here](#).
3. That all mission partners include hand sanitizing agents in their particular offices and rooms of service by September 1. That the hand sanitizing agents be stocked and provided for easy access.
 4. That all social service agencies establish their protocols for the clients they are to serve in the church facilities at once. Given the square footage for each room/office, the Health & Reintegration Team recommends not having more than 10 people in their respective spaces including staff.
 5. Request the Mission Partners to maintain an attendance log for contract tracing purposes.
 6. That all Mission Partners submit their protocols, based on these overall guidance and recommendations to the Health & Reintegration Team by August 15.
 7. That the hallway in the Ground Level should not have more than five persons as a waiting area. It is recommended that appointments are provided to monitor the social distance protocols.
 8. The bathrooms on the main level should not have more than two persons at the same time.
 9. The bathrooms on the Ground Level should not have more than two persons at the same time.
 10. Bi-weekly (Saturday mornings: 9am – 3pm) cleaning and [disinfectant](#) be scheduled for the Sanctuary, Parish Hall, Hallways, Vestibules, Lounge, Library, Pastoral Office, Ground Level, and Lower Level areas beginning September 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021. No programs or events should take place in the church facility on Saturday mornings from 9am – 3pm during this timeframe.
- An updated secondary cleaning and disinfectant protocol may be recommended for Phase II: January 2022 – April 30, 2022.

In-Person Worship and Activities (Phase I: September 1 – December 31, 2021)

1. The Sanctuary currently can occupy 280 participants. The Health Team is requiring an occupancy percentage of 50% or no more than 140 people with face masks including children.
2. The Parish Hall currently has an occupancy capacity of 250 participants. The Health Team requires an occupancy of no more than 100 people with face masks including children.
3. That Nuevas Fronteras begin in-person worship on Sunday, September 5 from 10:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. The church building will be opened at 9:00 a.m. to receive the members, friends, and visitors.
4. That all participants wear masks while in the church facilities, particularly in the sanctuary. We do not want to tell someone who is not vaccinated that they should stay home and worship online. Take into consideration those who are not vaccinated or are uncomfortable without the mask. Take it slow. Meet outside without masks. Have thoughtful conversations and communications about wearing masks.
5. That Nuevas Fronteras not hold Fellowship Hour in the Parish Hall until the beginning of Phase II. Set up tents outside on sunny and clear days for refreshments during the autumn

season. Remember that someone may not be vaccinated and is vulnerable to being infected with the virus. We need to focus on how to make ALL people feel welcome and comfortable in attending worship and congregational gatherings.

6. We will avoid congregational singing inside until the time we have [data](#) that says it is safe.
7. Although indoor capacity and social distancing mandates are being lifted as of June 4, we will continue to encourage social distancing while inside the sanctuary or indoor fellowship gatherings. We will plan our gatherings for the most vulnerable. Remember Children are not vaccinated yet.
8. In the last 15 months we have been blessed with the development of an online congregation. Develop a “blended” approach to worship including the numerous individuals participating.
9. Child Care during worship: Child care providers are to wear face masks and after worship clean the Crib Room with appropriate cleaning agents. There should be no more than 5 children at once.
10. That the Agrupacion and Choirs prepare for Phase II which begins on January 1, 2022.
11. That the Sunday Studies ministry prepare for the commencement of classes in Phase II.
12. Recommend to the Worship & Spirituality Commission to examine a creative approach to the collection of offering and distribution of Communion elements.
13. Employees: According to the Office of the General Assembly counsel, Nuevas Fronteras can mandate all of its employees (full-time, part-time, etc.) to be vaccinated. The Human Resources Team will deliberate on this recommendation.

Communication

The Health & Reintegration Team recommends the following communication strategy:

1. Send the Session-approved *Health & Reintegration Protocols* to all members/friends of Nuevas Fronteras and the friends of the former Watchung Avenue Presbyterian Church on July 1, 2022. This communique should include an invitation for both an in-person conversation in the Parish Hall (no more than 25) on July 17 and a Zoom conversation on July 18.
2. Send the Session-approved *Health & Reintegration Protocols* to the directors/pastors of all Mission Partners with an invitation for a required in-person orientation meeting on Wednesday, July 21 for social service agencies and July 22 for clergy of the worshipping communities in the Library.
3. If the weather permits, have an outdoor tent gathering on Sunday, August 29 at 10:00 a.m.

National and State resources

“Coronavirus (COVID-19),” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>

“Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Pandemic,” World Health Organization,
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

“National Coronavirus Response: A Road Map to Reopening,” American Enterprise Institute,
<https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/national-coronavirus-response-a-road-map-to-reopening/>

“Public Health Principles for a Phased Reopening During COVID-19: Guidance for Governors,”
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Center for Health Security,
https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/pubs_archive/pubs-pdfs/2020/200417-reopening-guidance-governors.pdf

NJ UPDATES

As of May 28, 2021

The news we have all been wanting to hear was announced by the Governor today. The Masks Mandate (which has been in place since April 8, 2020) is being partially lifted as of Friday, May 28. Those who are fully vaccinated may now go without a mask. Those who are not vaccinated are on the honor system to continue wear a mask until they are vaccinated.

Don't put away the mask yet. Masks will continue to be required in:

- Healthcare settings and long-term care facilities
- Correctional Facilities
- Homeless shelters
- On public transportation – airplanes, buses, trains and other forms of public transit such as cabs and uber.
- In airports, bus, and train stations & other transit hubs
- Public-facing state office, such as Motor Vehicles and other similar offices.
- Worksites that are closed to the public, including warehousing and manufacturing facilities.

Also, Effective Friday, May 28, the requirement for maintaining six feet of social distancing for all indoor and outdoor setting will be lifted.

Effective June 4th, the indoor gathering capacity limits will be lifted.

Mask will continue to be REQUIRED in:

- Child Care Centers and Facilities
- Youth Summer Camps
- Public, Private, or Parochial Preschool Program premises
- Elementary and secondary schools, including charter and renaissance schools.
- Unless participants in small Commission/Committee/Team meetings are fully vaccinated, masks will be required.