Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Health

THE NEW NORMAL

Guidelines For Places of Worship

June 2020

Volume 2 (with effect from 22nd June, 2020)

Contents

Contents....2

Acknowledgements....3

1. Background....4

2. Objective of these Guidelines....5

3. Legal and Policy Framework....5

4. Guidelines for Places of Worship....6

4.1.1 General Attendance....6

4.1.2 Sanitation of Facilities....7

4.1.3 Personal Hygiene....7

4.1.4 Staff Member or Congregant....8

4.1.5 Physical Distancing....9

4.1.6 Sharing of Worship Materials....10

4.1.7 Use of Music....11

4.1.8 Use of Technology for Sharing of Worship Materials....11

5. Implementation of the Guidelines....12

6. Monitoring and Evaluation....12

7. References....13

8. Appendices....14

Acknowledgements

The Ministry of Health would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following officers for the information and research compiled for these Guidelines:

1. Dr. Roshan Parasram, Chief Medical Officer;
2. Dr. David Ibeleme, Specialist Medical Officer, Insect Vector and Control Division;
3. Mr. Farz Khan, Chief Chemist and Director, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division;
4. Ms. La Donna Gulston, Director (Ag), Health Education Division;
5. Mr. Lawrence Jaisingh, Director, Health Policy, Research and Planning; and
6. Ms. Cindi Siewdass, Research Officer II, Directorate, Health Policy, Research and Planning.

1. Background

Pandemic outbreaks such as COVID-19 have the potential to destabilize and disrupt health systems and may have a profound effect on all aspects of a country's economy and the mental and physical health of the population.

On March 11th, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic and as at June 8th, 2020, there were 6,931,000 confirmed cases with 400,857 deaths across 213 countries (WHO Situational Report No. 140).

In Trinidad and Tobago, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on March 12th, 2020 and as at June 8th, 2020, there were one hundred and seventeen (117) positive cases and eight (8) deaths, with over three thousand, four-hundred (3,400) tests conducted. The key objectives of these protocols are to educate, engage and empower people to change their behaviour to ensure the transmission of COVID-19 is adequately controlled - the communities would be educated, engaged and empowered to adjust to the "new normal" utilizing the following protocols:

- Wear masks when you go out in public;
- Keep your distance from others (6ft);
- Stay home if you are ill;
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based sanitizer;
- Cough into a tissue or into the crook of your elbow;
- Avoid touching your face; and
- Clean then sanitize surfaces (e.g. table tops, door knobs and cell phones).

The Places of Worship Guidelines were sourced from the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for COVID-19. The key source documents were derived from the following links:

i. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fphp%2Ffaith-based.html

ii. https://www.who.int/publications-detail/practical-considerations-and-recommendations-for-religious-leaders-and-faith-based-communities-in-the-context-of-covid-19

Further, Guidelines were submitted by several religious bodies that informed these general Guidelines including:

i. Guidelines for the Restoration of Public Masses in Archdiocese of Port of Spain;
ii. Guidelines for Re-opening Places of worship by the Association of Independent Ministers (AIM) and the Trinidad and Tobago's Council of Evangelical Churches (TTCEC);
iii. Return to Corporate Worship Post COVID-19 by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church; and
iv. Gaps and Spaces in the line of Congregation by the Asja Ulamaa Council of Trinidad and Tobago.

2. Objective of these Guidelines

To provide Guidelines to minimize the risk, spread and interrupt the transmission of COVID-19 in places of religious worship;

3. Legal and Policy Framework

On January 31st 2020, the proclamation of COVID-19 as a dangerous infectious disease under the Public Health Ordinance, Chap. 12 No. 4, in order to trigger the special provisions under the Ordinance and the Quarantine Act Chapter 28:05 that are pertinent to the curtailment and management of infectious diseases such as notification, special inspections and offences (Legal Notices Nos. 34 and 35 and excerpt from the Quarantine Act 7(1) appended). Also, the adherence to the 2004 Occupational Safety and Health Act, Chap. 88:88[1].

[1] https://rgd.legalaffairs.gov.tt/laws2/alphabetical_list/lawspdfs/88.08.pdf

4. Guidelines for Places of Religious Worship

The Guidelines apply to all Places of Worship and Religious Services, and all services and activities therein including weddings, funerals and wakes. It is the responsibility of Heads of Religious Organizations to communicate these Guidelines to their members or congregants; via announcements, signs, bulletins, websites and social media. The Head of the Religious Organization is required to ensure all staff members are trained, virtually, or in-person, on the following Guidelines:

4.1.1 General Attendance

1. Attendance shall be calculated for each building based on a measurement of 36 square feet per person. For instance,

    - 1,000sqft = 27/25 persons;
    - 2,500sqft = 69/60 persons;
    - 4,000sqft = 111/100 persons;
    - 7,500sqft = 208/200 persons; and
    - 10,000sqft = 278/250 persons.

2. Elderly persons should be given the option to attend services separately and apart from the normal services preferably early in the morning at 6 a.m.;
3. Where there are multiple services, there should be no less than forty-five (45) minutes between each service to allow for sanitation and cleaning of facilities.

4.1.2 Sanitation of Facilities

1. Establish a housekeeping schedule to incorporate routine cleaning and sanitisation with regular, frequent, and periodic cleaning of worship spaces and shared items;
2. Ensuring cleaning and sanitisation immediately before and after all gatherings and services;
3. Ensure that high-touch surfaces such as door knobs, handles, rails, chairs, benches, countertops, restrooms, podiums and shared spaces are properly disinfected on a frequent or periodic basis using a bleach solution - 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) per gallon of water US 3.8L or 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water or 70% alcohol solutions or other EPA-approved disinfectant;
4. Where possible, set-up hand sanitizer dispensers at specific areas; and
5. Ensure proper ventilation systems for areas of congregation using, preferably natural air in the first instance, and/or limited use of air condition.

4.1.3 Personal Hygiene

1. Post visual alerts (e.g., signs, posters) at the entrance and in strategic locations e.g., waiting areas, elevators, common areas to provide instructions (in appropriate languages) about hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette. Instructions should include wearing a cloth face covering or facemask for source control, and how and when to perform hand hygiene;
2. Provide an adequate supply of 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer or hand washing facilities or stations (fixed or portable), soap and running water for use before and after the service. It would be ideal to have easy open-close taps or pedal actuated or hands-free taps;
3. Provide feet washing facilities with soap and running water for use before and after for places of worship where persons enter barefoot;
4. When footwear is to be removed before entering building, ensure facilities to allow separate storage;

5. Endorse and encourage proper mask etiquette when entering and within the establishment;
6. Encourage persons to bring their personal rugs/ coverings/ fabric where required to worship on the floor;
7. Encourage persons where possible to bring their own worship materials such as religious books, and aids;
8. Endorse and encourage proper cough and sneeze etiquette within the establishment with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow;
9. Anyone who falls ill or exhibits any of the following symptoms (fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, muscle pain, headache, sore-throat, or recent loss of taste or smell) should not attend services;
10. Anyone who is immunocompromised and/or have a vulnerable pulmonary disease should not attend services; and
11. Anyone with a potential exposure to someone exhibiting any of the above symptoms or confirmed case of COVID-19 should not attend services until the period of quarantine ends.

4.1.4 Staff Member or Congregant

1. All persons are required to wear a face covering mask when entering the places of worship and will undergo screening with a contactless thermometer for fever and symptoms consistent with COVID-19;
2. If a person has a temperature < 37.5˚C and otherwise without symptoms consistent with COVID-19, then he/she is allowed to enter into the place of worship;
3. If the patient has a temperature >37.5˚C with fever or strongly associated symptoms consistent with COVID-19, then then he/she is not allowed into the place of worship;
4. Identify an area to separate anyone who exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 during hours of operation, and ensure that children are not left without adult supervision;
5. Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who becomes sick at the facility to their home or a healthcare facility;

6. Notify local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility and communicate with staff and congregants about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required;
7. Advise those with exposure to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to seek the nearest healthcare provider for symptoms;
8. Close off areas used by the sick person and do not use the area until after cleaning and disinfection; and
9. Advise staff and congregants with symptoms of COVID-19 or who have tested positive for COVID-19 not to return to the place of worship untill his/her symptoms cease as confirmed by a Medical Practitioner.

4.1.5 Physical Distancing

1. Pre and post congregations are prohibited within and around the place of worship;
2. Ensure safety briefings are conducted at the beginning of each service for compliance on new normal measures such as wearing of masks; washing/sanitizing hands, maintaining physical distancing, location of wash/restrooms areas, entrance and exits;
3. Use successive row-by-row entry and exit for persons in an orderly manner that facilitates/encourages social/physical distancing as per Public Health Regulations;
4. Signage to have one-way aisles or properly direct congregants to enter and exit the building;
5. Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or walkways and signs on walls, to ensure that persons remain at least 6 feet apart all around in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating “one-way routes” in hallways);
6. Discourage non-essential physical gatherings and organize virtual gatherings through live-streaming, television, radio, social media;
7. If a gathering is planned, consider holding it outdoors. If this is not possible, ensure that the indoor venue has adequate ventilation preferably using natural air in the first instance, and/or limited use of air condition;

8. Regulate the number of person/s attending services to avoid crowding based on Public Health Regulations. Consideration should be given to having multiple services with controlled numbers rather than one large gathering;
9. If the place of worship offers multiple services, consider scheduling services far enough apart to allow time for cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces between services;
10. Adapt worship practices to prevent physical contact between and among worshipers, e.g. replace handshakes and hugs with a bow or a verbal greeting; and
11. Greet people at worship spaces with friendly words and smiles, rather than handshakes or other forms of physical contact.

4.1.6 Sharing of Worship Materials

1. Adapt worship practices to prevent communal handling of devotional and other objects;
2. Encourage new ways of reverence for sacred and symbolic objects, such as bowing rather than kissing and touching;
3. Consistent with the community's faith tradition, consider temporarily limiting the sharing of frequently touched objects, such as worship aids, prayer rugs, prayer books, hymnals, religious texts and other bulletins, books, or other items passed or shared among congregants, and encouraging congregants to bring their own such items, if possible, or photocopying or projecting prayers, songs, and texts using electronic means;
4. When receiving "blessings", this should be done 6 feet apart and without physical contact;
5. When conducting the communion service, prepacked single service items should be prepared and given out at pre-determined locations within the place of worship to congregant/s;
6. Ensure that meals and religious and ceremonial foods are individually prepacked and distributed to persons when exiting the place of worship as per Food and Safety Guidelines as appended; and

7. Ensure setting up a no touch method to collect contributions where stationary boxes can be used that facilitates/encourages physical distancing.

4.1.7 Use of Music

1. At this time the choir/bands cannot be allowed to assemble to maintain effective physical distancing measures;
2. Ensure that there are limited singers on the podium/platform (altar area); highly recommended solo performers only; and
3. Ensure that microphones and musical instruments are not shared and must be sanitized after each use/service.

4.1.8 Use of Technology for Sharing of Worship Materials

Consider how technology can be used to make services and other faith-based events available online. Consider partnering with other organizations to leverage on-line channels. For example:

1. Video or audio-tape worship services and ceremonies and broadcast or post them on social media;
2. Conduct individual religious and care visits by phone or through social media and video chat platforms;
3. Use a remote or virtual meeting platform or teleconference facilities for meetings or small group interactive prayer; and
4. Expand use of television and radio channels.

5. Implementation of the Guidelines

The Office of the Chief Medical Officer will officially communicate the Guidelines to the Head of the Inter-Religious Organisation, who then disseminate to all places of worship to ensure effective implementation and compliance Thereafter, continuous assessment and reporting on the adherence of these Guidelines should be implemented to ensure full compliance.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Head of the Inter-Religious Organisation, through their respective religious bodies and heads, will provide continuous assessment and reporting to the Chief Medical Officer on the implementation of these Guidelines through continuous site visits and inspection of the places of worship. Self-regulation is recommended to ensure the strict adherence to these Guidelines in order to reduce the threat and mitigate the risk of spread of COVID-19.

7. References

i. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, May 23rd, 2020, Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fphp%2Ffaith-based.html

ii. World Health Organisation, April 7th, 2020, Practical considerations and recommendations for religious leaders and faith-based communities in the context of COVID-19

https://www.who.int/publications-detail/practical-considerations-and-recommendations-for-religious-leaders-and-faith-based-communities-in-the-context-of-covid-19

8. Appendices

LEGAL NOTICE NO. 79

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

THE PUBLIC HEALTH ORDINANCE, CH. 12 NO. 4

CORRIGENDUM

(In respect of Legal Notice No. 34 of 2020)

PROCLAMATION DECLARING THE 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-nCoV) TO BE A DANGEROUS INFECTIOUS DISEASE

IN Legal Notice No. 34 of 2020 published on 31st January, 2020, delete the word "100" and substitute the word "103".

PRINTED BY THE GOVERNMENT PRINTER, CARONI
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO—2020

LEGAL NOTICE NO. 34

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

No. 17 of 2020.

By Her Excellency **PAULA-MAE WEEKES**, O.R.T.T.,
President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

[L.S.]

PAULA-MAE WEEKES
President

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS it is provided by section 100 of the Public Health Ordinance, Ch. 12 No. 4, that the Governor may, by proclamation, declare any disease to be an infectious disease or a dangerous infectious disease:

And whereas it is provided by section 3(1) of the Existing Laws (Amendment) Order, No. 8 of 1962, that any reference in any existing law to the Governor shall be read and construed as a reference to the Governor-General:

And whereas it is also provided by section 5(5)*(b)* of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Act, Chap. 1:01, that any reference to the Governor-General shall be read and construed as if it were a reference to the President:

And whereas Trinidad and Tobago has been advised recently by the World Health Organization of the existence of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV), a highly infectious and dangerous disease which is currently occurring in various locations around the world:

And whereas the Minister of Health believes that due to the speed and ease of international travel, Trinidad and Tobago can ultimately expect the arrival of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) and the devastating effect on its public health:

Now, therefore, I, **PAULA-MAE WEEKES**, President as aforesaid, do hereby declare the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) to be a dangerous infectious disease.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 31st day of January, 2020.

PRINTED BY THE GOVERNMENT PRINTER, CARONI
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO—2020

LEGAL NOTICE NO. 35

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

QUARANTINE ACT, CHAP. 28:05

ORDER

MADE BY THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER UNDER SECTION 6(1) OF THE QUARANTINE ACT

THE QUARANTINE [2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-nCoV) DISEASE] ORDER, 2020

1. This Order may be cited as the Quarantine [2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Disease] Order, 2020. Citation

2. In this Order, "Health Officer" has the same meaning assigned to it in regulation 2 of the Quarantine (Maritime) Regulations. Interpretation No. 19 of 1944

3. For the purpose of the prevention of the spread of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Disease ("NCV"), the Health Officer may take the following special measures: Special measure

(a) where an infection, which may be NCV, has occurred on board a ship during a period of six weeks immediately preceding its arrival at a port of Trinidad and Tobago, the surveillance of the crew and passengers who have been exposed to the infection, for a period of fourteen days from the last day of possible exposure to the infection; or

(b) where an infection, which may be NCV, has occurred on board an aircraft at any time immediately preceding its arrival at an aerodrome in Trinidad and Tobago, the surveillance of the crew and passengers who have been exposed to the infection, for a period of fourteen days from the last day of possible exposure to the infection.

Dated this 31st day of January, 2020.

R. PARASRAM
Chief Medical Officer

PRINTED BY THE GOVERNMENT PRINTER, CARONI
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO—2020

Minister. In approving any rules, the Minister may make any amendments thereto which he thinks desirable.

Power to make Orders in emergency.

6. (1) When in the opinion of the Quarantine Authority an emergency exists, the Quarantine Authority may by Order direct special measures to be taken during the continuance of that emergency for any of the purposes specified in sections 4 and 5, and any such Order shall have effect notwithstanding anything to the contrary in any regulations or rules in force by virtue of those sections.

(2) An Order made under subsection (1) may be varied or rescinded by Order of the Minister.

Offences and penalties.

7. (1) Any person who—

(a) refuses to answer or knowingly gives an untrue answer to any inquiry made under the authority of this Act, or intentionally withholds any information reasonably required of him by an officer or other person acting under the authority of this Act, or knowingly furnishes to any such officer or other person any information which is false;

(b) refuses or wilfully omits to do any act which he is required to do by this Act, or refuses or wilfully omits to carry out any lawful order, instruction or condition made, given or imposed by any officer or other person acting under the authority of this Act; or

(c) assaults, resists, wilfully obstructs or intimidates any officer or other person acting under the authority of this Act, or offers or gives a bribe to any officer or person in connection with his powers or duties under this Act, or being such officer or person, demands, solicits or takes a bribe in connection with his powers or duties under this Act, or otherwise obstructs the execution of this Act,

is liable on conviction to a fine of six thousand dollars and to imprisonment for six months.

(2) Any person who is guilty of any other offence against this Act is liable on conviction to a fine of six thousand dollars and to imprisonment for six months.

Ch. 4:20.

(3) All offences against this Act may be prosecuted summarily under the Summary Courts Act.

Rewards to informers.

8. The Minister may direct that any part of any fine recovered in respect of any offence against this Act shall be paid to any person who has given information leading to the conviction of the offender.

Recovery of expenses and charges.

9. (1) All expenses and charges payable to the Quarantine Authority under this Act may be sued for and recovered by him before any Court of competent jurisdiction, and a certificate purporting to be under the hand of the Quarantine Authority to the effect that the expenses or charges sued for are due and payable shall be received in evidence and shall be sufficient evidence of the facts therein stated unless the contrary be shown.

(2) Any sum received or recovered by the Quarantine Authority in payment of expenses or charges payable to him under this Act shall be paid into public funds.

Duty and power of the Police.

10. (1) Every member of the Police Service shall enforce (using force if necessary) compliance with this Act and with any order, instruction or condition lawfully made, given or imposed by any officer or other person under the authority of this Act; and for such purpose any member of the Police Service may board any ship or aircraft and may enter any premises without a warrant.

(2) Any member of the Police Service may arrest without a warrant any person whom he has reasonable cause to believe to have committed any offence against this Act.

(3) In this section the expression "member of the Police Service" includes a member of any police organisation constituted by law who has the general powers of a member of the Police Service.