



Office of Lifelong Formation  
3525 South Lake Park Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60653  
[pvm.archchicago.org/lifelong-formation/](http://pvm.archchicago.org/lifelong-formation/)

August 16, 2021

Dear Religious Education/Youth Ministry Families,

We look forward to welcoming you and your children into a new year of religious education (RE) and youth ministry (YM) programs soon!

When we provided safety protocols and operational guidance a few weeks ago, we noted that we will continue to follow the same protocols set forth by the Archdiocese's Office for Catholic Schools and that there was a potential for adjustments as the course of the pandemic remained unpredictable. We must now update our protocols to align with new developments. As you know, Governor Pritzker has announced a mask mandate for all public and private schools in Illinois requiring all individuals to wear a mask while indoors. Masks are not required for outdoor activities.

We will comply with the State of Illinois mandate to help keep everyone safe. Therefore, masks must be worn by everyone participating in our RE/YM programs (teachers and staff, parents, students, participants, volunteers, etc.) while indoors, regardless of vaccination status. We will take advantage of opportunities to conduct RE/YM activities outside when practical to do so.

We will monitor mandates and guidance from civil officials and public health authorities to help determine potential changes to our masking policies and other protocols. We know many parents have expressed a preference for masks to be optional for those who are vaccinated. When conditions allow, our preference is to transition to a policy under which vaccinated individuals will not be required to wear a mask indoors.

We are pleased that many other protocols that were in place last year will no longer be in effect. As we communicated previously, we will return to near-pre-pandemic operations. These include:

- No division of classes into cohorts
- No pandemic-related arrival/departure requirements such as wellness checks and staggered arrivals/departures

For additional details on our 2021-22 RE/YM guidance, please refer to the [RE/YM Operating Framework](#).

We would like to highlight three topics as they represent the most frequently asked questions.

## 1. Masking

- Pursuant to the State of Illinois mandate, masks will be required for all program participants (inclusive of all students/teachers/volunteers/staff), regardless of vaccination status in all archdiocese facilities to start the RE/YM program year.
- No masks are required outdoors, regardless of vaccination status.

## 2. Isolation and Quarantine Procedures

All individuals must remain at home when sick or experiencing any symptoms to minimize the chance of



spreading COVID-19 or other illnesses. COVID-19 diagnoses and close contact cases must be reported to your RE/YM program coordinator. Please see below for examples.

#### **COVID-19-specific quarantine guidance:**

##### **Quarantine Procedures for Close Contacts**

- Pursuant to CDC guidelines, participants who are masked and maintain 3 feet of physical distance from the positive individual in session do not need to quarantine. This should result in far fewer people quarantined.
- Vaccinated participants do not need to be quarantined if they are asymptomatic and have submitted proof of their COVID-19 vaccination to their parish office.
- Unvaccinated participants who are close contacts to positive household members, including siblings, must be quarantined.

##### **Quarantine Procedures for Symptomatic or COVID-19-Positive Individuals**

- All symptomatic participants must remain home, regardless of vaccination status.
- If symptoms last longer than 24 hours, individuals must receive a negative COVID-19 test or alternative medical diagnosis prior to returning to Religious Ed/Youth Ministry programs.
- Any participant who tests positive for COVID-19 must isolate for 10 days from the date symptoms first appeared or the date of a positive test result.

We will continue to monitor updates to the quarantine guidelines and communicate them to our Religious Ed/Youth Ministry community.

### **3. Travel**

We are following the [City of Chicago Travel Advisory](#) for all RE/YM programs, whether they are located in Chicago, Lake County or Cook County. The Advisory currently includes the following requirements.

- Domestic Travel
  - Fully vaccinated participants do not need post-travel COVID-19 testing or self-quarantines as long as they are asymptomatic and provide proof of vaccination.
  - Unvaccinated participants must follow the prevailing post-travel quarantine recommendations when traveling from states and territories under a City of Chicago Travel Advisory. This currently means a 10-day quarantine OR proof of a negative test no earlier than 72 hours prior to returning to the Chicago area (or any time post return, though an individual must quarantine until a negative test result is received). A negative test requires no quarantine period.
- International Travel
  - The CDC currently requires a negative COVID-19 test or proof of recovery to board a plane to the United States. Because of this negative test, there is no required quarantine upon arrival, regardless of vaccination status.

We join with Pope Francis, Cardinal Blase Cupich and our bishops in encouraging vaccination for all eligible individuals, including faculty, staff and students 12 years of age or older.

We know this setback in controlling the COVID-19 pandemic is discouraging, but with your cooperation, we will be doing our part to limit its impact on our communities. This is a time when we have the opportunity to look beyond our individual preferences and act to promote the common good.