

COVID-19 Compliance Monitoring

Places of worship

The *Emergency Management (Activities) (COVID-19) Direction* put in place to manage the COVID-19 pandemic sets out the requirements for places of worship. These requirements aim to help keep South Australia safe from COVID-19.

What is the role of a COVID Marshal in a place of worship?

A [COVID Marshal](#) is a trained individual who has been nominated by the responsible person of the individual place of worship to apply COVID-19 Directions and restrictions in the premises.

A COVID Marshal's role includes:

- > ensuring that all patrons check in using the COVID SAfe QR Check-in code or manual paper form
- > promoting and ensuring infection control practices (eg frequent hand washing/sanitising) are followed
- > promoting and taking practical steps to ensure all people are wearing a mask, complying with density requirements, and physical distancing at least 1.5 metres apart
- > ensuring that all COVID-Safe Plans or specific policies/protocols in relation to the prevention of COVID-19 are effectively implemented and monitored
- > ensuring that the place of worship has sufficient seating, hand washing facilities and cleaning regimes
- > being present at all times
- > having a COVID Marshal whose duties are dedicated solely for a service where more than 200 people are expected to attend.

COVID Marshals have no formal authority and are not formal authorised persons. But a COVID Marshal does have a positive obligation to issue reasonable requirements/best endeavours to ensure compliance within the place of worship.

The ultimate responsibility of compliance in the place of worship sits with the individual responsible person.

Are we required to wear a face mask in a place of worship?

Yes, face masks covering the nose and mouth are a mandatory requirement for patrons and staff in an indoor public space, including places of worship. Masks provide an additional physical barrier to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Face masks must be worn when:

- > a priest or religious leader is mixing with the congregation, which includes before and after a sermon
- > patrons are attending - including when they are singing
- > a choir is performing - all members must wear a mask.

Face masks do not need to be worn by:

- > a priest or religious leader delivering a sermon
- > a solo singer such as a single chanter or soloist
- > patrons under the age of 12.

A face mask can be taken off momentarily when:

- > a person is receiving communion.

There are circumstances where it might not be possible for a patron to wear a face mask such as a [medical exemption](#). In this situation, the individual must show evidence of a relevant medical condition if requested by the COVID Marshal or by an Authorised Officer from SA Health or SAPOL.

Please be respectful to others as reasons for not wearing a mask are not always obvious.

COVID Marshals should monitor mask wearing compliance closely and take practical steps to ensure all relevant people in the congregation wear a mask properly.

For guidance, the COVID Marshal should be confident to speak to individuals and/or arranging for an announcement to be made to the congregation before or during a service if non-compliance is observed.

What are the density requirements for weddings and funeral services at places of worship?

Weddings and funeral services are considered a 'defined public activity'.

A funeral service includes a funeral mass, commemorative service, memorial service, rosary mass or other similar events.

The density requirements of the wedding or funeral depends on whether the respective activity has a hospitality element to the event.

For a seated wedding or funeral **without hospitality**, the current requirements are:

- > a density of 3 people per 4 square metres
- > masks are required to be worn when singing. This includes attendees and choirs
- > masks must be worn in an indoor space – except for a bridal party during the ceremony
- > masks are not required to be worn by attendees generally in an outdoor space. However, it is strongly recommended especially when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

For a wedding or funeral service **that has a hospitality element**, the density requirements are:

- > 1 person per 2 square metres density for indoor seated hospitality activities. Masks must be worn in an indoor space – except for a bridal party during the ceremony
- > 1 person per 2 square metres density for outdoor seated hospitality activities. Masks are not required to be worn by attendees generally in an outdoor space. However, it is strongly recommended especially when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- > All food and beverage consumption must be seated.

All weddings and funeral services must have a:

- > [COVID-Safe Plan](#) in place
- > contract tracing system in place - QR code and manual form
- > a COVID Marshal to supervise the activity – they must not have any other duties if more than 200 persons are present.

If more than 1,000 people are attending a wedding or funeral, then a [COVID Management Plan](#) is required.

- > COVID Management Plans must be approved by SA Health before the wedding or funeral can be conducted
- > the application process for a COVID Management Plan may take between 4 to 6 weeks.

What are the requirements for baptism ceremonies at a place of worship?

A religious or faith-based ceremony such as a baptism ceremony or official mass are a defined public activity and the same COVID safe requirements apply such as face mask wearing, physical distancing, COVID SAfe Check-In, hygiene practices and density.

A gathering after the ceremony involving food and drink is still considered part of the ceremony and the same COVID safe requirements apply.

It is important to ensure the capacity is monitored closely in all rooms and areas utilised after the formal/official ceremony to ensure the density requirement are maintained. If the gathering involves:

- > both standing and seated patrons, the density requirement is 1 person per 2 square metres
- > only seated patrons, the density requirement is 3 persons per 4 square metres.

Face masks are still required but they can be removed when people are eating or drinking.

What should we do if a patron refuses to comply with a request from a COVID Marshal?

COVID Marshals have no formal authority and are not formal authorised persons. But a COVID Marshal does have a positive obligation to issue reasonable requirements/best endeavours to ensure compliance within the business.

In the first instance, it is the role of the COVID Marshal to politely advise the person breaching the direction of their requirement and members of the public are asked to respectfully adhere to this instruction.

If the individual continues to refuse to follow the direction given by the COVID Marshal, the COVID Marshal should assess the situation and if there are safety concerns, they should end the discussion. The COVID Marshal should then report any issues to the responsible person and determine ways to deal with the situation safely.

If there is poor compliance or safety concerns, the supervisor or manager should contact South Australia Police on 131 444 to report the breach of the COVID-19 Directions.

Failing to follow the Emergency Management Directions is an offence.

What are the density requirements for a place of worship?

Each individual place of worship needs to calculate their density requirements.

A place of worship will generally have a density requirement of 3 people per 4 square metres. However, if a ceremony or service requires patrons to stand up and move around for a significant part of the service, then the density must be lowered to 1 person per 2 square metres.

COVID Marshals must monitor the number of people in the venue and ensure that density is not exceeded. They are also asked to encourage unrelated patrons to physically distance at least 1.5 metres apart.

Places of worship need to calculate the areas that will only be accessible to the public. The place of worship must first measure the total area of space of their seating area or pews.

Once they have the total area of space of their seating area in square metres, the place of worship must exclude areas such as aisles, alter areas, rest rooms, furniture, and back of house areas to determine the publicly accessible space.

What are the requirements around COVID SAfe QR Check-in?

All patrons must check in using the [COVID SAfe Check-In app](#), or manual paper-based record.

COVID Marshals and the responsible person are encouraged to remind patrons to check in. This request could be made as people enter the place of worship.

Where possible, COVID Marshals or the responsible person are encouraged to look at an individual's green tick or request the individual complete the manual paper-based record.

COVID SAfe Check-in will support contact tracing efforts and help to keep our community COVID-safe.

Does my individual place of worship require a COVID-Safe Plan?

All places of worship must have an individual [COVID-Safe Plan](#). This plan is used by contact tracers to get in touch with businesses.

It is highly recommended that the responsible person ensures their COVID-Safe Plan is up-to-date, including contact details such as a telephone number and email address.

What advice do you have around COVID-19 signage?

Please check that all COVID-19 signage is visible and well displayed throughout the individual place of worship. This includes COVID SAfe QR codes, density, physical distancing, face masks, and the stay at home if unwell signage.

Please ensure that there are numerous QR codes positioned at all entry points of the place of worship. Having more QR codes positioned throughout the individual place of worship will make it easier and quicker for customers to check in.

What infection control practices do we need in place at our place of worship?

Infection control practices must be in place at your place of worship, including a cleaning regime and having hand sanitiser readily available.

It is recommended that patrons receive communion in their hand rather than directly into their mouth. It is also preferable to have individual communion cups for each patron. Otherwise, the communion cup should be cleaned (not wiped) between each person.

All high-touch surfaces must be cleaned thoroughly and on a regular basis with detergent and disinfectant.

It is recommended that all places of worship maintain cleaning logs, which can demonstrate the date and time cleans were performed as this will enable the responsible person and COVID Marshals to monitor compliance accordingly.

Hand sanitiser should be positioned in key locations around the place of worship. Please encourage your COVID Marshal to ask patrons to hand sanitise their hands before going through the entrance.

Who can I contact if I have a question?

- > Email Health.COVIDCompliance@sa.gov.au
- > Call the SA COVID-19 Information Line on 1800 253 787
- > Visit www.sa.gov.au/COVIDcompliance

Last updated 31 January 2022 © Department for Health and Wellbeing, Government of South Australia.
Please check the *Emergency Management (Activities) (COVID-19) Direction* for any changes to the Direction.
All rights reserved.