



Sauk County Public Health

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Stay Safe Sauk County by Practicing Religion and Spirituality from Home

Sauk County, WI– On March 24, 2020, Governor Evers issued a **Safer at Home** order, directing Wisconsinites to stay at home in order to slow the spread of COVID-19. This order is in effect until Friday, April 24, 2020, or until a superseding order is issued.

Safer at Home allows individuals to leave their homes for limited essential activities, including shopping for groceries, obtaining medicine, and caring for a family member in another household. Essential businesses and operations are also allowable, though physical distancing of 6 feet and other safety measures are required to keep employees and customers safe.

The order does not allow for gatherings of more than 10 people in a space at a time. A confined space is not only limited to indoor gatherings, but **also includes any defined space, including parking lots and festival grounds. This includes religious gatherings, drive-in services, parking lot services, weddings, and funerals.** Any gathering with fewer than 10 people must still adhere to physical distancing requirements by staying at least six feet from others and staying home if you are sick. It is also important to limit gatherings only to people living within the same household to avoid transmitting the virus through social networks.

Social distancing is our only defense against this dangerous virus. Community, faith- and spiritual-based organizations have an important role in slowing the spread of COVID-19, especially among high-risk populations. These organizations often nobly serve those who are most vulnerable, including people with heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes. These community members are at higher risk of developing severe COVID-19 illness.

“This is an incredibly challenging time for all of us and we have to make big sacrifices for a little while to protect our own health and the health of our communities,” said Tim Lawther, Sauk County Health Officer. “For many of us, coming together in fellowship to practice our religious and spiritual beliefs provides hope, strength and a sense of community. I look forward to the day we can again allow in-person gatherings to take place. But right now we need to stay the course to stop people from dying from COVID-19. We are all safer at home, even during Easter.”

In the meantime, Sauk County Public Health asks that you find other ways to stay connected with one another through phone calls, video chats, text messages, and other creative ways. The Sauk County COVID-19 webpage has some ideas at:

<https://www.co.sauk.wi.us/publichealth/coronavirus>.

Religious and spiritual leaders should continue to stay up-to-date on information related to the pandemic and actively disseminate accurate and timely information. This includes developing information-sharing systems with partners, including Sauk County Public Health officials, and communicating this information to regular attendees, people being served by the organization, and the broader community.

Thankfully, with modern technology there are many creative options available for staying connected and nurturing spiritual health during this challenging time. Many churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and other places of worship are offering services through television, radio, podcasts, and livestreams on the Internet. “Individually, and as families, taking time to be mindful, meditate, and pray is important for spiritual health while we all do our part to keep our community safe by staying home,” says Tim Lawther, Sauk County Health Officer.

We sympathize with congregants of faith- and spiritual-based organizations that miss the services and fellowship, but the goal is to keep everyone safe and healthy by following the practices put in place by the Safer At Home order. It is especially important for people to maintain that distance of 6 feet from other people.

If you have questions or immediate needs related to COVID-19, call the Sauk County COVID-19 hotline at (608) 355-3200. For up-to-date information, please frequently monitor the Sauk County Public Health website: <https://www.co.sauk.wi.us/publichealth/coronavirus>, the DHS website <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/index.htm>, and the CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

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