

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**APRIL 8, 2020**

## **COVID-19 UPDATES – SPIRITUAL HEALTH**

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**Menominee, Shawano** — Shawano-Menominee Counties Health Department announced today that there is now a total of 4 confirmed cases in Shawano County and 1 confirmed case in Menominee County. All individuals are under isolation as requested by local, state, and federal recommendations. Shawano-Menominee Counties Health Department is in contact with these individuals to assure their health continues to improve and they have the support they need to remain isolated.

“It is still more important than ever to remain at home as much as possible to help slow the spread of COVID-19. We thank all of you who are staying home and doing your part to slow the spread of illness”, said Vicki Dantoin, Health Officer. This is a trying time for our head, heart, and soul. Spiritual practices provide hope and a source of strength and social connectedness. Shawano-Menominee Counties Health Department asks everyone to stay home because we know that is the one thing we can do together to keep our loved ones safe.

Here are some answers to frequently asked questions related to spiritual practices at this time.

### **Are religious services and places of worship considered to be essential?**

The Wisconsin Safer at Home Order does *not* define faith-based organizations or places of worship as essential. The intent of this order is to limit gatherings of people and person-to-person contact to help protect the health and safety of Wisconsinites. The order is not a statement against the essential nature of faith and fellowship. Taking time at home to be mindful, meditate, and pray are great ways to practice spiritual beliefs individually or as a family. You can safely view or listen to religious services through television, radio, online video recordings, live streams, or podcasts.

### **Why isn't Wisconsin allowing religious services when other states may be allowing them?**

Outbreaks in communities across the country have been linked to congregating for gatherings such as religious services, choir rehearsals, funerals, and weddings. This has resulted in serious illness and deaths of multiple members of families and communities. Wisconsin is doing everything possible to ensure the safety of its residents. The goal of Wisconsin's Safer at Home order is to save lives. This is done by making sure there are no gatherings of 10 or more people that take place. COVID-19 is an infectious disease that knows no boundaries or borders and can spread in a population rapidly.

### **If our religious service is less than 10 people, is it exempt from Safer at Home?**

It is strongly discouraged for groups of individuals to congregate no matter the circumstances or location. If a group of more than 10 individuals does congregate in a confined space (indoors or outdoors) they must practice physical

distancing at all times. It is also important to limit gatherings to only people living in the same household to avoid transmitting the virus through social networks. Sick individuals should not leave their home unless obtaining necessary medical care.

### **Can our congregation gather in the church's parking lot if we stay in our cars?**

Wisconsin's Safer at Home order does not allow for gatherings of more than 10 people in a confined space at a time, which includes areas such as parking lots or festival grounds. While an individual may be safe in their car with the windows rolled up, it is extremely difficult to manage these types of gatherings. Areas such as parking lots also have limited access to restrooms, and participants may be tempted to get out of their cars to stretch and enjoy the weather. This could create potential for the virus to spread through interaction.

### **How long will we have to do this?**

The Safer at Home order is currently in effect until 8am on Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, or until a superseding order is issued. Unfortunately, we do not make the timeline, the virus makes the timeline. The best thing we can do is plan for the worst and hope for the best, so that is what we are doing. When we take Safer at Home seriously, we help to reduce strain on our health care system and prevent increased infections and deaths.

### **Is physical distancing working?**

We know that physical distancing is proven to work to slow spread of illness. We are seeing that physical distancing is working in Wisconsin. While the number of cases is increasing, it is doing so in a linear fashion. This means it is a slow increase versus a double or triple increase of cases each day. This is encouraging and shows that we are starting to flatten the curve. People across the state are making the incredible sacrifice to stay at home when it is often very difficult to do so. We know this isn't easy, and we appreciate everyone's sacrifice today to save lives tomorrow.

### **Contact 211 for Non-Medical Questions:**

**Text COVID-19 to 211-211 or Call 211**

### **Local COVID-19 Resources**

Stay up to date with Shawano County case counts:

<https://www.co.shawano.wi.us/departments/?department=5c6edb95d748&subdepartment=5da3aabb05e8>

Stay up to date with Menominee County case counts:

<https://www.co.menominee.wi.us/departments/?department=d5f584c71198>

Or follow Shawano-Menominee Counties Health Department on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/SMCHD/>

### **Other COVID-19 Resources**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/index.htm>

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/outbreaks/index.htm>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>