

## **Guidelines for US Project Sites and Team Leaders during COVID-19**

The first General Rule as United Methodists is to “do no harm.” United Methodist Volunteers in Mission leadership understands that many project sites rely on teams to assist in serving the community. These teams come from nearby, from another state, sometimes from another country. Some homeowners and missionaries may have recovered from COVID-19. Some may be carriers. Some are not infected. All want to serve. One of the worst unintended effects of mission work throughout the ages has been the spread of infectious disease. Remember that you bring other things with you when you bring the Gospel.

The federal disaster declaration includes every state and territory with most states presenting shelter-in-place and social distancing guidelines. These guidelines for US project sites are designed to assist in determining when and if to suspend teams for the summer and how to prepare the site for future teams. All sites should adhere to public health and safety protocols in order to protect employees, homeowners, and missionaries.

For the latest updates in regard to COVID-19, please visit [Centers for Disease Control](https://www.cdc.gov).

### **General Guidance for International Service**

The State Department still has a Level 4 ban on international travel at the moment. At Level 4, insurance is not available to teams traveling internationally. It is recommended that teams do not travel without travel medical insurance.

### **General Guidance for US Project Service**

- Suspending teams for the summer
  - Make this decision based on the guidance of the governor, bishop, and county health department. Pay attention to their direction about school closure, lifting stay-at-home orders, and the time when small groups are permitted to gather again.
  - Make this decision with the guidance of the board of directors or other governing body.
- **Guidelines for Hosting teams**
  - Follow [CDC guidance](https://www.cdc.gov) on cleaning and disinfecting facilities.
  - Post reminders for hand washing, awareness of symptoms, etc.
  - Provide prevention supplies:
    - Hand sanitizer
    - Disposable facemasks
    - Eye protection
    - Cleaners and disinfectants
    - Gloves for food preparation and cleaning
  - Other considerations
    - Avoid buffet-style meal service. Have kitchen crews prepare dishes. This includes sack lunch preparation.
    - If the dishwasher does not meet standards for sanitation, consider asking teams to bring paper products (not Styrofoam) to be discarded after each meal. Provide adequate trash receptacles.

- All touch surfaces should be thoroughly wiped down with [approved cleaners](#) prior to team arrival and as the team prepares to leave.
    - Consider ways to assure safe distancing on the work site, in the dorm, dining area, and meeting space.
    - If possible, provide washer and dryer facilities for any laundering needs.
  - Screening protocol on arrival
    - Take temperature
    - Ask about general health
    - Ask if the missionary has been in contact with anyone who had COVID-19
  - Provide space for isolation if someone reports symptoms.
  - Arrange for outdoor projects to assure minimal contact between homeowner and team members (painting, deck or ramp building, landscaping, roofing). Make accommodations for rest room facilities so team members do not have to enter the home. (i.e.: portapotties)
  - Children's ministry (VBS) should be suspended until additional guidance from CDC and local officials is available.
  - Have a plan in place to safely transport a team member who develops symptoms of COVID-19.
- **Guidelines for leading a team**
  - Follow the guidelines of the CDC for travel both inside and outside the U.S.
  - Follow local guidelines from municipal, county, and state health authorities. Also, know the guidelines for the locality where the team intends to serve.
  - If it is determined that it is safe and lawful to serve, continue to make arrangements for proper social distancing and PPE for team members, and sanitize surfaces and equipment.
  - Each team member will sign the [Team Member Liability Waiver](#).
  - Protocols for the interruption of transmission of the virus will be followed until (1) antibodies protect against re-infection, (2) tests are widely available to the general public and all team members have recently tested negative, or (3) there is a vaccine available and all team members have been vaccinated.
  - Know the health infrastructure in the area where the team intends to serve and the location of the nearest hospital.
  - Have a plan for canceling the journey or sending team members home if any team members are uncomfortable with the enforcement of safety protocols.
  - Consider donations to the partner organization and organizing a virtual mission if it is not appropriate to physically travel to the project site.