

# 9 TIPS TO RE-OPEN YOUR MINISTRY SAFELY

HEALTH & SAFETY



This re-opening process through COVID-19 is new, uncertain, and a big responsibility. As you think about reopening your church and ministries, you may feel overwhelmed with all of the new details that must be in place.

The best thing you can do? *Seek qualified counsel on opening safely and responsibly.* In the meantime, here are **9 things to consider** as you prepare for the transition.

*DISCLAIMER: The following conversation & tips are provided for general information purposes only. You should not rely or act on any information in this resource without seeking counsel from a qualified professional authorized to provide specific advice.*

## 1. Exceed Standards, Don't Meet them

Spend a good, long amount of time reviewing the reopening standards, having conversations and creating your plan. The governing body that is setting standards for my state aren't necessarily passionate about children, parents, teachers, or volunteers. But your church is. So, how can you exceed expectations on these standards? What standards are open for interpretation, and what's not? Have conversations with the church's insurance agency or lawyers. Lean into them for guidance.

## 2. Prepare for Uncertainty

Be sensitive to when families want to return and what services will be available to them at different stages of reopening. Your ministry team can guess and do what they can to poll parents about when they intend to return to church, but you won't know until you see movement, until people actually show up at the door.

## 3. Re-Enforce The Parent's Decision

Understand that whatever call the parent is making—to attend or to participate online—they are making the best decision for their child and family, and each of those decisions are correct. If the parents are ready to attend, great! If they want

to stay home, then figure out a way to keep them connected.

## 4. Think About Your Volunteers & Staff

Be sensitive to staff or volunteers who may be auto-immune compromised. Volunteers or staff who aren't returning to their duties are making the best decision for themselves and should be supported.

## 5. Have a Ramp-Up Strategy

This month, X services are available, and X ministry departments are meeting together, and we'll have X, Y, and Z protocols in place. Next month, XX services are available and XX ministries are meeting together, and we'll have Y and Z protocols in place. Take the ramp-up of your church as slowly as you'd like. Being as safe and careful as possible with the health of your church community is most important right now.

## 6. Learn & Change Quickly

Once you have a plan and enact the plan, then learn from the plan. In those first few Sundays of reopening, make note of where things could go more smoothly, what additional sanitization efforts need to be made, where any traffic is getting clogged up during check-ins. Learn from those first few weeks so that you can make appropriate adjustments along the way.

## 7. Don't Rush It

Expect that things are going to take longer. Check-ins for ministries, bathroom lines, coffee lines—everything is going to take longer and take up more space due to the new standards you're having to meet. Also understand that parents and families are going to want to talk. They're going to want to make sure their kids and students are safe in their classrooms, they will want to know that staff and volunteers are being careful. They'll likely catch up with other parents and families. All of this will take longer than you think it will.

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## 8. Consider The New Attendee

Walk through your space as if you were a new attendee. Think of practical, visible efforts you can make to keep kids and parents safe: Prop open doors so that no one has to touch a handle; Sanitize rooms or bathrooms after every x-number of people; Allow only 10 people in kids small groups, eight kids and two adults; Find a large space for taking temperatures—and have plenty of handheld, no-touch temperature gauges.

## 9. Normalize Normalize Normalize

Use social media to show behind-the-scenes preparation. Show people wearing masks and not wearing masks working together (though distanced). Use social media to normalize that some kids will wear masks and others won't. And the ones wearing masks aren't strange for doing so. Use special signals or movements, like a virtual high-five, that in-person attendees can use toward the live-streaming cameras to help online attendees stay in touch.

### WATCH THE FULL INTERVIEW



[Watch the full interview](#) with Frank Bealer, CEO of Phase Family Center. Frank shares his insights on reopening churches based on his experience reopening Phase Family Center, a daycare, coworking, and portable church space.