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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Stage 2.5 - New Guidelines for Places of Worship, Hair Salons, Barbershops and Curbside Bars

MERCED COUNTY, CA – As Merced County advances through Stage 2 into Stage 2.5 of California’s Resilience Roadmap and continues to open more sectors of the economy, State officials have released industry-specific guidelines that businesses must follow in order to reduce the risk of COVID-19.

Before reopening, all facilities **must**:

1. Perform a detailed risk assessment and implement a site-specific protection plan
2. Train employees on how to limit the spread of COVID-19, including how to screen themselves for symptoms and stay home if they have them
3. Implement individual control measures and screenings
4. Implement disinfecting protocols
5. Implement physical distancing guidelines

Places of worship must limit attendance to 25 percent of the building’s capacity or a maximum of 100 attendees, whichever is lower. Barbershops and hair salons may reopen but will be required to follow the specific protocols to ensure the safety of employees and clients, including universal masking of workers and clients. Further instructions for businesses is available at: www.reopenmercedcounty.com/guidelines or <https://covid19.ca.gov/industry-guidance/>.

In addition to the new business that may open for in-person services, all bars and restaurants holding Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) licenses may sell alcoholic beverages curbside, to go, in sealed containers with secure lids or caps.

Bars may sell curbside alcoholic beverages without selling accompanying meals. However, in-person bar facilities must remain closed. Restaurants with bar facilities can use the floor space of the bar for socially distant table seating, but cannot open the physical bar for seating with sales of alcohol without meals.

	Allowed	Not Allowed
<i>Consumption of alcohol with a meal at a dine-in restaurant</i>	✓	
<i>Curbside alcohol pickup in a sealed container</i>	✓	
<i>Consumption of alcohol at a bar without a meal</i>		x
<i>Consumption of alcohol while waiting for to-go food order</i>		x

If an outbreak or cluster of three or more COVID-19 cases occurs in a local restaurant or other business, the Department is required to publicly report that information in order to identify other people who may have been exposed. Business owners and patrons alike are strongly encouraged to follow social distancing and health protocols to help prevent an uptick in cases.

Information on tools to help businesses reopen safely can be found on REOPENMERCEDCOUNTY.COM

For additional information pertaining to COVID-19, please visit the Department’s resource website at www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus or call the Department information line at 209-381-1180 (English, Spanish, Hmong).

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**Merced County Department of Public Health
COVID-19 Worship Services Safe Distancing Rules
(Includes Baptism Guidance and Funeral Services Guidance)
During Effective Dates of Stay at Home Health Officer Order
*Approval of this guidance is effective May 26, 2020.***

Note these guidelines provided are the minimum requirements that must be enforced. Churches and other worship facilities are able to develop policies that are more stringent if they feel they are necessary to ensure the health and safety of persons using their facilities or participating in their services.

Churches and faith-based organizations are responsible for ensuring compliance of individuals utilizing their facilities and participating in their services. Follow the Merced County website for the most up-to-date information at www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus.

In-person Worship Services Allowed with Restrictions

Follow the State's *Places of Worship and Providers of Religious Services and Cultural Ceremonies* Industry Guidance (viewable at the following link: <https://covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-places-of-worship.pdf>).

*Places of worship must therefore limit attendance to 25% of building capacity or a maximum of 100 attendees, whichever is lower. This limitation will be in effect for the first 21-days of a county public health department's approval of religious services and cultural ceremonies activities at places of worship within their jurisdictions. Upon 21-days, the California Department of Public Health, in consultation with county Departments of Public Health, will review and assess the impact of these imposed limits on public health and provide further direction as part of a phased-in restoration of activities in places of worship.

Drive-in Worship Services Allowed with Restrictions

Follow the State's *Places of Worship and Providers of Religious Services and Cultural Ceremonies* Industry Guidance (viewable at the following link: <https://covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-places-of-worship.pdf>).

Remote Access Worship Services Allowed with Restrictions

It is strongly recommended to assist individuals with the ability to stay at home whenever possible by offering remote worship services. Remote access to worship services is allowed through e-mail, video streaming, or teleconference.

Follow the State's *Places of Worship and Providers of Religious Services and Cultural Ceremonies* Industry Guidance (viewable at the following link: <https://covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-places-of-worship.pdf>).

Faith-based Counselling Allowed with Restrictions

Faith-based counselling can reopen within the following parameters:

1. Counselling services are permissible in-person where the service cannot reasonably be practiced remotely.
2. Counselling services should adopt State guidance on Limited Services, where applicable.
3. This designation does not permit gatherings beyond counselling to members of a single household.

Follow the State's *Limited Services* Industry Guidance (viewable at the following link: <https://covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-limited-services.pdf>).

Funeral Services Allowed with Restrictions

No more than 10 persons, including clergy and technical assistance, shall be present at any given time.

Family shall disclose to clergy if decedent is COVID-19 positive.

Follow the State's *Places of Worship and Providers of Religious Services and Cultural Ceremonies* Industry Guidance (viewable at the following link: <https://covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-places-of-worship.pdf>).

MERCED COUNTY MEETS STATE CRITERIA FOR STAGE 2.5

All authorized businesses must meet 5 state safety requirements *before* opening (with restrictions):

STAGE 2.5

OPEN

NOT OPEN

- Essential Businesses (Stage 1)
- Dine-In Restaurants
- In-Person Retail Stores and Manufacturing
- In-Person Offices (teleworking encouraged)
- Pet Grooming, Car Washes
- Outdoor Museums, Open Gallery Spaces
- Hair Salons and Barbershops
- Religious Services
- Childcare Facilities (Open after May 27)
- Malls and Swap Meets (Open after June 3)

- Movie Theaters
- Bars, Nightclubs, Wineries
- Gyms
- Convention Centers, Sports Arenas
- Zoos, Libraries, Gambling
- Public Pools, Playgrounds, Picnic Areas
- Nail Salons and Tattoo Parlors

MUST Meet the 5 State Safety Requirements and Follow Industry Specific Guidelines

Implement individual control measures and screenings

Train employees on how to limit the spread of COVID-19, including self-screening

Implement disinfecting protocols

Perform a detailed risk assessment and implement a site-specific protection plan

Implement physical distancing guidelines

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AUTHORIZED BUSINESSES AT WWW.REOPENMERCEDCOUNTY.COM