

ORDER OF THE HEALTH OFFICER OF THE COUNTY OF MERCED  
PROVIDING DIRECTION TO STAY SAFE TO STAY OPEN

**DATE OF ORDER: August 4, 2020**

UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE SECTIONS 101040, 101085, AND 120175, THE HEALTH OFFICER OF THE COUNTY OF MERCED (“HEALTH OFFICER”) ORDERS:

1. This Order repeals and replaces all previous Stay at Home and Stay Safe orders issued by the Health Officer of Merced County. This Order does not supersede any conflicting or more restrictive orders issued by local governments, the State of California, or the Federal Government.
2. This Order incorporates and implements the California State Public Health Officer Order issued on July 13, 2020, viewable at the following link: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/C/OVID-19/SHO%20Order%20Dimming%20Entire%20State%207-13-2020.pdf>, as well as Executive Order N-33-20, issued by Governor Newsom on March 19, 2020, the Order of the State Public Health Officer issued on March 19, 2020, and all subsequent amendments and modifications thereto (“Collectively, “State Orders”). Persons under a Public Health quarantine order must comply with such Orders.
3. The current data reflects that community spread of infection of COVID-19 in Merced County is of increasing concern. All members of Merced County play a vital role in ensuring our County moves forward to social and economic recovery. Together the actions of the Merced County Community can save lives and keep businesses open. To promote, protect, and preserve a healthy living and safe environment for Merced County, the following direction is given to the Community.
4. Community Guidance to Stay Safe to Stay Open
  - a. All private gatherings of over 10 people are prohibited, except as otherwise provided by State Orders such as places of worship; refer to the Merced County Department of Public Health’s COVID-19 Worship Services Safe Distancing Rules. Nothing in this Order prohibits the gathering of members of a household or living unit.
  - b. To help stop the spread of COVID-19, individuals should maintain at least six-foot distance from other individuals not from the same household, wash hands with soap and water for at least twenty seconds as frequently as possible or use hand sanitizer, cover coughs or sneezes (into the sleeve or elbow), regularly cleaning high-touch surfaces, and refrain from shaking hands.
  - c. In accordance with direction from the California Department of Public Health and the Governor, all members of the public are required to wear face coverings when in public or common spaces. Individuals should refer to the California

Department of Public Health's requirement for the use of face coverings, viewable at the following link:

[https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Guidance-for-Face-Coverings\\_06-18-2020.pdf](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Guidance-for-Face-Coverings_06-18-2020.pdf) for details including all requirements and exceptions. Face coverings, when combined with social distancing and handwashing, may prevent transmission of COVID-19 by reducing respiratory droplet exposure.

- d. Individuals should self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and stay home if they are sick or experiencing any symptoms. Guidance regarding symptoms of COVID-19 are provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at the following link:

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

CDC guidance regarding what to do if you are sick or caring for someone who is sick can be found at the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html>

## 5. Guidance for Businesses and Organizations

All businesses and organizations in the County shall adhere to the California Department of Public Health and Governor's Orders for direction as to what businesses may operate in the County and any applicable restrictions, this information can be found at <https://covid19.ca.gov/roadmap-counties/>. Businesses and organizations should also reference the industry specific guidance for employee screening and operations required by the State found at <https://covid19.ca.gov/industry-guidance/>.

Employees who are sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 shall be directed to stay home. Guidance regarding symptoms of COVID-19 are provided by the CDC at the following link:

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

Employers shall follow the State's *COVID-19 Employer Playbook for a Safe Reopening* (Employer Playbook) which includes managing COVID-19 positive, symptomatic or asymptomatic cases in the workplace and requirements for return to work at the following link: <https://files.covid19.ca.gov/pdf/employer-playbook-for-safe-reopening--en.pdf>. Merced County will continue to use a 72-hour timeframe instead of the 24-hour timeframe cited in the Employer Playbook for employees returning to work after symptomatic positive status.

6. Pursuant to Government Code Sections 26602 and 41601 and Health and Safety Code Sections 101029 and 131080, the Health Officer requests that the Sheriff and all chiefs of police in the County ensure compliance with and enforce this Order, including facility or business closure, to the extent law enforcement, in consultation with the Health Department, believes that businesses or other organizations are operating outside of Social Distancing Requirements or in an otherwise unsafe manner. Consistent with the views expressed by the Governor, the Health Officer believes that

enforcement through education is preferable but that other means of enforcement may be employed, as deemed appropriate by the law enforcement agency.

Violators of this Order may be subject to a fine in the amount of \$100.00 for a first offense, \$200.00 for a second offense, and \$500.00 for a third and subsequent offense (California Government Code Section 8665).

7. In accordance with California Health and Safety Code section 131080, the Health Officer will follow the guidance of the California Department of Public Health and may modify or extend this Order, or issue additional Orders.
8. This Order shall become effective immediately and continue until it is rescinded, superseded, or amended in writing by the Health Officer.
9. Copies of this Order shall promptly be: (1) made available at the County Administration Building at 2222 M Street, Merced, California 95340; (2) posted on the County Public Health Department's website ([countyofmerced.com](http://countyofmerced.com)); and (3) provided to any member of the public requesting a copy of this Order.
10. If any provision of this Order to the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held to be invalid, the remainder of the Order, including the application of such part or provision to other persons or circumstances, shall not be affected and shall continue in full force and effect. To this end, the provisions of this Order are severable.

**IT IS SO ORDERED:**



Salvador Sandoval, MD, MPH  
Merced County Health Officer

Dated: August 4, 2020

**Merced County Department of Public Health  
COVID-19 Worship Services Safe Distancing Rules  
(Includes Funeral Services Guidance)  
During Effective Dates of Stay Safe Health Officer Order  
*Approval of this guidance is effective July 20, 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](http://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>). Indoor services are not allowed at this time. Outdoor attendance numbers are only limited by the ability to provide for proper social distancing; a minimum of six feet between attendees from different households is required.

#### **Drive-in Worship Services Allowed**

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**

Remote worship services are strongly recommended to assist individuals with the ability to stay at home whenever possible. 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 Counseling Allowed with Restrictions**

Faith-based counseling can reopen within the following parameters:

1. Counseling services are permissible in-person where the service cannot reasonably be practiced remotely.
2. Counseling services shall 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>).