

**Diocese of Lincoln Policy for Lancaster County Parishes In Regard to Lincoln
Lancaster County Health Department Directed Health Measure (DHM)
Effective Through September 30, 2021**

Local DHMs have legal force. Pastors are legally liable and responsible for the following of the DHM.

The full DHM is included for your perusal. Here are some of the highlights:

The Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department (LLCHD) has issued a new local Directed Health Measure (DHM). The DHM requires all owners and operators of any building, business, or premises other than a residence to require all individuals to wear a face mask while indoors. Everyone two years of age and older must wear a mask in these indoor public settings, regardless of their vaccination status.

The DHM, which includes the mask mandate, goes into effect **August 26** and continues through **September 30**.

The DHM includes exceptions. Masks are not required for the following:

- Individuals eating or drinking or seated to eat or drink
- Those exercising
- Those engaged in an occupation that prevents the wearing of a mask
- Those obtaining a service or purchasing goods or services that requires the temporary removal of the mask
- A person giving a speech, lecture, or broadcast to an audience as long as six feet of distance from other individuals is maintained
- Those individuals who cannot otherwise wear a mask because of a medical condition, a mental health condition, or a disability that prevents the wearing of masks
- Courts of law; meetings or sessions of the Nebraska Legislature; individuals accessing federal, state, county, or city government services; congregate living settings; group homes and residential drug and/or mental health treatment facilities; or shelters

<https://app.lincoln.ne.gov/city/covid19/index.htm#DHM>

With respect to this new DHM, here are the Diocese of Lincoln Guidelines and Policies for Masses and building use in Lancaster County

(For parishes with schools, please also follow the direction of the Diocese Education Office.)

1. Face coverings are required if six feet of separation from any other individual is not guaranteed.
2. Priests and acolytes are to use face coverings when distributing Holy Communion.
3. It is recommended that the Sign of Peace be suspended.
4. Priests do not have to wear a face covering during the recited prayers of the Mass or when preaching.
5. Hand sanitizers should be made available in all meeting and worship spaces.
6. Pastors are encouraged to take special note of the divisiveness that surrounds the COVID containment practices of the past months, and promote the essential unity of our Church.
7. Our policy will allow at the pastor's discretion: singing at Mass, use of choirs to lead music, absence of ropes or other barriers used to close off pews, use of liturgical books and worship aids to the pews, taking up the offertory collection, use of liturgical ministers on the altar, use of the confessionals, the use of holy water fonts.
8. For parishes with schools, the same precautions put in place for the health and safety of students and faculty at school, including masks, social distancing, etc., be observed carefully when the students attend Mass as part of the school day.
9. For CCD/Religious Education gatherings, adult faith formation, parish gatherings, RCIA and all parish/building related use, wear a facemask unless everyone can keep 6' apart at all times.

Pastors are encouraged to work closely with their parish council and parish leadership so that unity is fostered, protocol is effectively communicated, and the DHM is followed. Pastors are encouraged to take special note of the divisiveness that surrounds the COVID-19 pandemic and to seek solutions that account for the buildup and unity of the Church.

The Sunday obligation is in full effect and the Bishop will not issue a dispensation from the Sunday obligation at this time. Included also is the Bishop's letter from March 31 2021, in regard to the Sunday obligation.