



COMMUNITY GROUPS – COVID GUIDELINES

As the Coronavirus continues to be prevalent across the country, we want our community groups to be a safe environment for people to gather.

Everyone's comfort level about gathering in a group is different. Before you discuss your plans for the fall and possibility of meeting in person, please remember to give grace and reserve judgement if there are differences of opinion.

BEFORE YOU MEET, HERE ARE A FEW THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. Check your state's guidelines for any updates:

CT: <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/Covid-19-Knowledge-Base/Latest-Guidance>

MA: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-massachusetts>

2. Think about how your group wants to meet. Options Include:

Option 1: In-Person Only - Suggested up to **10** people in a private residence.

Have a plan in place should the group have to refrain from meeting in person due to guidelines changing or someone becomes sick.

- Groups of 10 or more, consider breaking into smaller groups.
- Family Friendly Groups: discuss how to handle kids with your specific group. Some ideas:
 - The entire family meets, and you do your best to minimize contact.
 - Your group alternates meetings each week based on gender. Women meet one week, men the next so one spouse is home with the kids.

Option 2: Online Only – using your preferred digital platform (Zoom, FB Rooms, Google Hangouts, Skype, RightNow Media Virtual Groups etc.)

- Goal is to eventually move these community groups to meet in person when it is safe to do so.
- Schedule monthly meet ups in smaller groups and/or encourage CORE groups to form to promote face to face conversations.
- Best Practices Suggested Resource:
 - **No Zoom Pro Account:** Schedule to 40-minute sessions and send out 2 links to your members.

- **Watching a RightNow Media video:** use the virtual groups option for your meeting see link for directions: <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/groups/us>
- <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/how-to-create-engaging-online-small-groups>
- <https://www.lifeway.com/content/lifeway/us/en/special-emphasis/how-to-lead-an-online-bible-study/how-do-i-lead-a-bible-study-remotely.html>

Option 3: Hybrid Groups - Both In-Person and Digital - Plan for in-person and the option for members to be invited via an online/digital platform i.e. Zoom Rooms, Google Hangouts, FB Rooms,

- Best Practices Suggested Resource:
https://www.trainingforchange.org/training_tools/facilitating-hybrid-groups-online/

To determine the best option, you can send a survey to all your group members:

Sample



3. Some recommended guidelines for meeting in-person:

- Meet outside as much as possible weather permitting.
- Encourage your group to observe social distancing during your gathering.
- Eliminate or minimize the use of shared objects.
- Provide or encourage the use of hand sanitizer, especially as members arrive & depart.
- Ask your group members to PLEASE stay home if anyone in their house is sick.
- Hosts/Leaders should be prepared to clean and disinfect before and after the group meeting.

4. Other considerations:

- Realize there are many opinions on our current situation. Seek to operate with discernment and grace towards others. Don't get side-tracked. Avoid political disputes.
- Realize some people in your group may not feel comfortable gathering yet. Seek to encourage and include them but do no pressure them about meeting.
- Many people are anxious to get back together, so consider meeting weekly even if your group formerly met less frequently.
- Utilize a video conferencing option for those not comfortable meeting in person.
- High-risk individuals we encourage to stay home and participate in the group virtually.