



The United States Association of *The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*

COVID 19 RETURN TEMPLATE

Before re-opening your atrium, if you are connected to a school or a parish, you should first approach the school principal or parish priest to get their approval to re-open.

Next, it would be wise to approach your current catechists and cohort of parents to see if they are seeking atrium for their children at this time.

If the response from both of the above is a positive one, you then need to consider and review the current health safety guidelines issued by your own State Government and Diocesan Guidelines, to create safety procedures to implement before opening. Please check your diocesan website for updates. All state and local information can be found here at this site that is updated regularly:

<https://www.multistate.us/research/covid/public>

These COVID-19 Safety guidelines have been developed to help you create and maintain a safe environment for you, your catechists and the children and families you serve. We thank our friends in The Association of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (Australia) Limited, for the use of their template. You will find a number of helpful resources on our website here:

<https://www.cgsusa.org/homepage/covid-19-response/returning-to-the-atrium/>

Complete this plan in consultation with your atrium catechists, then share it with parish leadership, your catechists and your parents. This will help reassure your parents and families that they and their children can safely visit your atrium. You will most likely need to update the plan, as restrictions or advice changes.

We will also continue to update resources for children, families, and catechists on our website here:

<https://www.cgsusa.org/homepage/covid-19-response/>

Some things to consider in your planning:

Every space is different. You will need to know and follow your diocesan/ parish/school, state and local government guidelines. We are not giving an endorsement of any product or particular way of doing something. Our purpose is to support catechists, parents, and others in the Church and beyond, as they grow in their understanding of the religious potential of children especially during this pandemic, collaborating with atria in creating policies, procedures and strategies for atria access that foster the overall health of children, catechists, staff, and communities and are based on available evidence.

Any atria re-entry policies and procedures should consider the following key principles:

- They must be flexible and agile in responding to new information, and we must be willing to refine approaches when specific policies and procedures are not working.
- It is critically important to also develop strategies that can be revised and adapted depending on the level of viral transmission in the atrium and throughout the community. This needs to be done with close communication with state and/or local public health authorities and recognizing that there could be differences between parishes, school districts, diocese and local government agencies.
- Policies should be practical, feasible, and appropriate for child's developmental stage.
- Special considerations and accommodations should be included to account for the diversity of the community, especially for our vulnerable members, including those who are medically fragile, live in poverty, have developmental challenges, or have special health care needs or disabilities, with the goal of safe return to atrium.
- No child should be excluded from atrium unless required to adhere to local public health mandates or because of unique medical needs. Catechists, families, and parishes should partner together to collaboratively identify and develop accommodations, when needed.
- Atrium policies should be guided by supporting the overall health and well-being of all children, their families, and their communities. These policies should be consistently communicated in languages other than English, if needed, based on the languages spoken in the community, to avoid marginalization of parents/guardians who are of limited English proficiency or do not speak English at all.
- Finally, we need to acknowledge that COVID-19 policies are intended to mitigate, not eliminate, risk. No single action or set of actions will completely eliminate the risk of Covid -19 transmission, but the implementation of several coordinated interventions can greatly reduce that risk.

We know there is much to consider.

Atrium Name and Address:	
Plan Completed by and Date:	
Approved by and Date:	

Social Distancing Measures	
<p>Requirements: Currently most states have a 6 square foot physical distancing rule. This means that the number of people gathered in a room is limited to the size in square feet of the room divided by six. In some states schools and childcare centres are exempt for the children, however any adults in the room must still comply.</p>	
Action/Suggestions	Your Plan
<p>Determine the size of your atrium floorspace, and then how many people are allowed in that space including your catechists. Once you know the maximum number of people allowed in your room, you will be able to plan your sessions to ensure this is your maximum people in a session, including your catechists.</p> <p>Use the link below to calculate:</p> <p>https://www.omnicalculator.com/other/classroom-spacing</p>	

Arrival, Departure and Record Keeping
<p>Requirements: Parents/Carers are currently not allowed into school premises and for parish atria, parents will not be able enter the atrium room or congregate to wait for drop off and collection of children. Drop off and collection of children procedures will need to be updated.</p>

Also, it is required to keep a record of all names and contact numbers of people in any gathering. For the children we will need to use the parent contact phone number. You should already have these details on file and have a sign in and out procedure in place.

Action/Suggestions	Your Plan
<p>Create a plan and notify parents and carers of where you will meet to collect children before and after atrium session.</p> <p><i>This will depend entirely on your atrium location and will be unique to you.</i></p>	
<p>Adjust your sign in/out sheets to include the parent contact phone number of each child and the catechist's names and contact phone numbers in the session if not already in place.</p> <p><i>You should ensure parents/carers are aware that in the case of a COVID-19 case in a group, this information will be passed on to the relevant health authorities.</i></p>	
<p>Decide how you will organise sign in and out of children.</p> <p><i>Suggested Options: Have the catechists do this to prevent spread via pens. Or have hand sanitiser/wipes for before and after signing by parents.</i></p>	
<p>Children arriving late – how will they notify you of arrival? <i>One option is for the parents to have the contact phone number of the catechists that they could use to text on arrival.</i></p>	

Wellbeing and Personal Hygiene

Requirements: It is important to ensure that anyone who is unwell; catechists, parents and children, are aware that they have an obligation to NOT attend atrium if they are unwell. This means if a parent is unwell, the child should also not attend.
Bathrooms must be kept well stocked with hand soap and paper towels.

Action/Suggestions	Your Plan
<p>Provide catechists and parents/carers with clearly set out 'rules' of their obligations in regard to the above requirement and have them agree to these rules.</p> <p><i>This could be via email and included with all the current protocols (your plan). You could have parents and catechists reply email to agree to following the rules.</i></p>	
<p>Exclude catechists, children and parents who are unwell from the premises.</p> <p><i>You could decide to use a thermometer to check temperatures of children and catechists on arrival. This is up to you.</i></p>	
<p>Have hand sanitiser or a well-prepared handwashing area in place for catechists and children to use upon arrival, before entering the atrium room.</p> <p><i>Hand sanitiser has risks – see below points and consider these points when creating your plan.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • store hand sanitiser products safely and out of reach of children. • any use by young children should be under the supervision of an adult. • be aware of imported products which may not be clearly labelled and may contain more toxic alcohols such as methanol that 	

<p>make the product more dangerous.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is a safe and effective option. 	
<p>Hand sanitiser or handwashing area should also be available throughout the session and used by anyone who touches their nose or mouth before they continue with another activity.</p> <p><i>In the 3-6 room hand sanitiser should be out of reach. Catechists will need to be watching out for this and helping the child when needed.</i></p>	
<p>Handwashing: Consider representing handwashing to all children in all age groups with special focus on hygiene.</p>	
<p>Ensure bathrooms are well stocked with hand soap and paper towels.</p> <p><i>You could consider cloth hand towels that the children bring instead for bathroom use. If so, consider if they take home to wash or if you will do it.</i></p>	

Cleaning and General Hygiene

Requirements: Clean frequently used areas at least daily with detergent or disinfectant. Clean frequently touched areas and surfaces several times a day.

Disinfectant solutions need to be maintained at hospital grade strength and used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Cleaning safety precautions of using gloves and washing hands thoroughly before and after use with soap and water is required.

Avoid sharing books, drinking cups and other shared objects.

Action/Suggestions	Your Plan
<p>During the first session with all age groups, re-orient the children to the atrium and highlight changes in practise with regard to hygiene. These details will be unique to your situation and decisions.</p>	
<p>With older age groups, present the above as a discussion on how you can all work together in the environment to make it COVID safe for everyone.</p> <p><i>Engage them in the process of decision making.</i></p>	
<p>Books – including bibles, if used during the session could be kept aside instead of packed away. If you rotate your books and bibles, they could be returned to atrium shelves after 3-4 days.</p> <p><i>Consider allocating a space for the children to place used books.</i></p>	
<p>Drinking: Children should bring their own water bottle and take home at the end of the session to avoid drinking from the same cup.</p>	

<p>Handshaking (sign of peace) and touching others should be discouraged.</p> <p><i>Introduce a new way of sharing sign of peace with the children. Model this from your parish practise.</i></p> <p><i>Consider how to have children sitting at prayer time so they are not tempted to touch each other. Discuss the no-touch rule, which is happening in the schools at the moment.</i></p>	
<p>Baptism Font water to be removed and children will need to fill and empty before and after use as required.</p> <p><i>This may require a change in procedure and re-presenting.</i></p>	
<p>Water Source (<i>used for works only – not drinking</i>) needs to be emptied and replaced after each session.</p>	

After Session Cleaning	
<p>Clean and disinfect all used surfaces including tables, chairs shelves, doorhandles, light switches sink and cleaning areas.</p> <p><i>You can use detergent and hot water, or a disinfectant solution spray. You should follow the manufacturer's instructions to ensure disinfecting occurs.</i></p> <p><i>Your session observation notes, will help you identify the shelving/areas used to identify the areas that need a wipe down.</i></p>	
<p>Using your observation notes – clean any materials/works used by the children with disinfectant.</p>	

<p><i>For older age groups you could consider introducing a new “practical life” activity and present how to clean your work (to make it ready for the next person). One of the Montessori schools we approached has done this.</i></p> <p>If you don’t do this, you will need to clean them after the session yourself.</p>	
<p>For small, tricky or soft objects instead of wiping down, spray lightly with a disinfectant spray. This could include Cenacle table pieces, Globe, Relief Map etc.</p>	
<p>Pens, Pencils, crayons etc. Consider having a tub or bucket for pens, pencils, crayons to be placed for cleaning after the session. Then when the session is over you can lay them out and spray them with disinfectant and leave to dry.</p> <p><i>If you don’t do this, you might need to spray all your supply at the end of each session or have wipes for children to wipe these before and after using.</i></p>	
<p>Preliminary Items Replace all beans etc. that are frequently used after 1 to 3 sessions, depending on their frequency of use.</p>	