

Alongside Communicable Disease Community Risk Reduction Strategy

Updated December 14, 2020

Preamble

Ministry inherently involves regular contact with people. Alongside participants who minister either domestically or internationally may be exposed to and/or contract a variety of communicable diseases prior to and/or during their stay at Alongside.

While participation in community activities is a crucial component of the healing process for Alongside participants, occasionally a participant or Alongside staff member may be infected or previously exposed and become ill with a communicable disease that has the potential to spread to the community, disrupting the effectiveness of the retreat process and possibly resulting in significant consequences to community health. In such situations, for the sake of public health and program effectiveness, the level of such a person's exposure to others at Alongside may need to be limited.

Alongside has therefore established the following Communicable Disease Risk Reduction Strategy:

1. At the time of the Initial Alongside Application Process, and again one week prior to arrival at Alongside:
 - a. Applicants will be asked to answer questions about any current symptoms or known infectious diseases they have that may be easily transmitted to others through normal interactions, (such as active tuberculosis, viral diseases, etc.), and their level of exposure to such diseases during ministry life in their location of service.
 - b. Those who reply positively may be asked to consult with an Alongside-designated medical consultant, either in person or via email or online video chat.
 - c. At the medical consultant's discretion, participants may be asked to undergo further medical evaluation prior to entering Alongside properties, to rule out active communicable diseases, possibly in collaboration with a local public health department, as a pre-condition of admission to an Alongside program.
2. If a participant/staff member becomes ill while traveling to an Alongside event:
 - a. The participant/staff member will be asked to consult with an Alongside-designated medical consultant, either in person or via email or online video chat.
 - b. At the medical consultant's discretion, the participant/staff member may be asked to undergo further medical evaluation prior to entering Alongside properties, to rule out active communicable diseases, possibly in collaboration with a local public health department, as a pre-condition of admission to an Alongside program.
 - c. A pre-attendance period of self-isolation at a site other than Alongside may be required.
3. If a participant/staff member becomes ill during attendance at an Alongside event:

- a. The participant/staff member will be asked to consult with an Alongside-designated medical consultant, either in person or via email or online video chat.
 - b. At the medical consultant's discretion, the participant/staff member:
 - i. May be asked to undergo further medical evaluation, to rule out active communicable diseases, possibly in collaboration with a local public health department.
 - ii. May be asked to isolate from the rest of the community:
 1. A participant may be asked to participate in the program remotely or leave the program. If a participant is asked to leave the program, unused program fees will be pro-rated and refunded to those financially responsible for the participant's charges.
 2. A staff member may be asked to remain isolated until cleared by the medical consultant to return.
4. During times of world-wide pandemic, such as the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020:
- a. Participants/staff members¹ who have been in close contact² with someone who has COVID-19³ starting from 2 days before the sick person's onset of illness (or for asymptomatic persons with a positive SARS-2-COV test, 2 days prior to specimen collection) until the end of that sick person's recommended period of isolation must complete a 10 period of symptom-free self-quarantine prior to participation in group gatherings (or return to work in the case of a staff member).
 - i. This period may be shortened to 7 days if the person in quarantine has a negative COVID nasal swab obtained on day 5 or later in the quarantine period.
 - ii. This quarantine period may be completed either prior to or after arrival to Alongside properties. If the scheduled Alongside program commences during this period, participants under quarantine may participate in the program virtually.
 - b. Once the self-quarantine period is completed, symptom-free persons may participate in group gatherings who are maintaining a 6-foot social distancing radius (or may return to work in the case of a staff member).

¹ (excluding those who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and have met the criteria for discontinuation of isolation and are not currently exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms)

^{a.} ² Close contact means

- Being within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more
- Providing care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
- Having direct physical contact with the person (hugged or kissed them)
- Sharing eating or drinking utensils
- Being sneezed on, coughed on, or getting respiratory droplets on you.

³ This means a person who is either confirmed to have COVID-19 via nasal swab or suspected to have COVID-19 based on symptoms.

c. Participants/staff members who have had symptoms consistent with COVID-19, such as:

1. Fever or chills
2. Cough
3. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
4. Fatigue
5. Muscle or body aches
6. Headache
7. New loss of taste or smell
8. Sore throat
9. Congestion or runny nose
10. Nausea or vomiting
11. Diarrhea

...may participate in Alongside group gatherings (or return to work) 10 days after their symptoms first appeared, if they have had resolution of fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications, and improvement of other symptoms.

d. Participants/staff members who had a positive test (nasal swab) for the presence of the COVID-19 virus who did NOT have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 may resume participation in group gatherings (or return to work) at Alongside once ten days have passed since their positive test was performed.

e. All participants in an Alongside Program and Alongside staff will be asked to adopt the following measures:

- i. Wash your hands frequently using the 20-second method and use a paper towel to dry
- ii. Preferably use paper towel to open any door handles, but if not available, wash hands or use hand sanitizer after touching.
- iii. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth
- iv. Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- v. Let us know when you are feeling the first signs of illness
- vi. Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze with a tissue, dispose of the tissue, and then wash your hands
- vii. Practice the '6-foot rule' of maintaining a 6-foot radius with people not part of your immediate family.
- viii. Follow current Michigan Department of Health Guidelines regarding the use of face masks.
- ix. Restrict singing to outdoor settings.