

PRG FAQ

Updated May 19th, 2021

- **What does this newly-shared May 28 date mean for previously stated July 1 local church decision-making?**

According to the new announcement from the Governor, and Executive Order 79 being in effect on May 28th, the decision-making process will change. The date we announced to transition from Approval to Review is to take effect on May 28th. The May 15 announcement from the Conference allowed churches to make immediate changes without District Superintendent notification or approval. Churches should communicate any of those pre-approved steps that they are taking to their District Superintendent as soon as possible, and begin using the M.A.P. and their PRGs to move beyond those steps or initiate new plans after May 28, 2021.

- **Who writes the plan, according to the revised TAM, for after May 28?**

Responding to the change of the Governor's order, we asked churches to activate local church PRG teams. The PRG is to work as a task force for the church council to recommend new safety guidelines for the church. We understand the timeline for writing and implementing plans for each church will be different. We acknowledge that churches may decide to ask their current HCT groups to continue serving as their PRG moving forward. However, we want to encourage churches to consider incorporating new people into their PRGs, to bring fresh perspectives and a wider range of voices and congregational representation to their decision-making process. This will help the local church to rethink and reshape their various ministries, as we prepare to enter a new normal.

- **Why does a church need a PRG team?**

The purpose of the PRG team is twofold. First, the PRG will continue the conversation about safety guidelines for the local church while closely monitoring any changes in the number of emerging cases in their locality. That is why we ask at least 2-3 HCT members to continue to serve on the PRG team. The other important purpose is to help the church 'Rethink & Reshape' its ministry. We envision that each PRG team will function as a thinktank for the church leadership. That is why we ask certain council members to be involved in PRG, but more importantly young and new members to join to help the church to 'Rethink & Reshape.' We understand that some churches will use the church council to work as their PRG. We strongly recommend that the council add new voices, as voting members, in crafting the plan for Relaunch!

- **Who nominates PRG?**

The Pastor of the local church, as the chairperson of the Nomination committee (§ 258.1) shall nominate the PRG members in consultation with the lay leader, as the vice-chair of Nomination. Through consultation the PRG chair should be appointed by the pastor and lay leader, and pastor and lay leader are not advised to function as PRG chair.

- **What is the process of approval?**

For plans effective after May 28, we ask the PRG to draft the plans. The PRG is tasked to make plans on behalf of the church. For the purpose of providing an opportunity for accountability and consensus, we recommend that the church council (administrative board) approve the plan. Upon reaching consensus the plan should be submitted to the District Superintendent for review only, using the google form or M.A.P. word document.

- **Why do plans need to be submitted?**

We ask that plans related to safety/mitigation measures be submitted for review to the District Superintendent for the purpose of accountability. As long as the churches are developing plans that demonstrate careful consideration of safety measures and an awareness of any change in emerging cases in their locality, District Superintendents will not intervene in the decision-making process. In situations where the plan does not incorporate important safety measures for all people, the District Superintendents may provide feedback or ask that the plan be reworked. The review is not intended to restrict the churches, but to assist and support all of our churches in making the best decisions for their members moving forward.

- **What happens if a church has a positive case?**

We require alerting the congregation about the positive case, without revealing the identity of the individual who has tested positive. We ask churches to assist with contact tracing efforts. Reporting the case to the District Superintendent is required. Those testing positive, or those who may have come in close contact with someone who tested positive (attended the same worship service or event), should be encouraged to seek medical guidance and to follow the recommendation of their health care provider with regard to testing, quarantining, etc. Closing down the church is not required at this point, but common sense cleaning measures in keeping with current CDC guidelines, are recommended.

Best Practices

- **Mask Mandates**

Before churches decide to allow unmasking we ask the churches to consider the following

1. We are only able to allow fully vaccinated members to unmask. Although we do not require individuals to show proof of immunity, under an honor system we are asking only fully vaccinated persons to unmask. A number of studies show that fully vaccinated individuals are less likely to have asymptomatic infection or transmit SARS-CoV-2 to others¹
2. Consider that our decision to allow fully vaccinated people to unmask can be hurtful to those who cannot get vaccinated due to medical reasons, or families with children who are not eligible to receive vaccines.
3. Congregations can consider asking everyone to maintain wearing their masks for the sake of others. Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "It is not fair to ask of others what you are not willing to do yourself."
4. Consider and find ways that the church can encourage members to become fully vaccinated. Does the church need to provide more information about the vaccine? Does the church need to offer assistance to help members schedule or physically get to their vaccine appointment?

- **Creating Consensus**

HCTs **were** required to report and receive approval from the District Superintendent to make any changes to their plans. Now the PRG team is asked to submit a plan to the District Superintendent for review only. Then who approves the plan and takes responsibility for the plan?

1. Ideally we ask PRGs to become a taskforce of the church council. We ask the PRG team to have 2-3 members from their current HCT, a handful of council members, and new voices, such as those with young families and new members in the group. The intentional effort to reach and listen to all members of the body will help the PRG team to recommend not only safe guidelines for all groups to return to the community of faith, but also new plans for the church to reach out to the world.
2. PRG teams are to actively seek ways to collect input and listen to the voice of the congregation, by using surveys, Zoom meetings, and listening sessions.
3. The overall plan created by the PRG team, including safety measures and 'Rethinking & Reshaping' of the vision, should be presented to the church council as a recommendation. The church council should then approve the plan. Mitigation Assistance Plan (M.A.P) is a tool to create safety plans.
4. Upon approval of the plan, church councils are asked to submit **ONLY** the safety/mitigation measures of their plan to the District Superintendent for review. The M.A.P. document provides a helpful outline that churches may follow. The Pastor also has the authority to ask that the PRG rework the plan before submission to the District Superintendent if the plan does

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

not properly incorporate current mitigation measures that are still in place..

- 'Rethinking & Reshaping' ministries

We encourage the PRG teams to use this time to 'Rethink & Reshape' the ministries of their church.

1. Use it as an opportunity to revisit the church's vision. If you don't have a vision, it is a great time to start the conversation.
2. If the church is expecting a pastoral transition, please utilize zoom and remote meeting tools to start this conversation with the incoming pastor.
3. Use resources, such as "Chuck Knows Church: Committee" as a tool to start the conversation with members of the church.
<https://chuckknowschurch.com/the-committee/archives>
4. Set up a date for Relaunch Sunday. The date set by the team should not only be a date to invite the members to relaunch ministry, it can also be used as a vision launching celebration.