

US health officials quietly release more reopening guidance

May 20 2020, by Mike Stobbe



A woman pays for photo prints from George's Camera during curbside service Tuesday, May 19, 2020, in San Diego. With encouraging results in their fight against the coronavirus, San Diego County supervisors voted Tuesday to ask the state to allow California's second-largest county to be a test case for whether more rapid reopening can safely occur.(AP Photo/Gregory Bull)

U.S. health officials have quietly released more reopening guidance that was created more than a month ago but initially shelved.

As with other recently released guidance, religious organizations were not included. Instead, the document has advice for childcare facilities, schools, day camps, mass transit systems, restaurants, bars and other businesses and organizations that have workers at high risk of becoming sick from the coronavirus.

The guidance discusses different steps organizations can take as they reopen from closures aimed at stopping the virus's spread. On Sunday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention placed the information in a 20-page appendix to a posted by CDC last week—that use traffic signs and other graphics to tell organizations what they should consider before reopening. But it's not a mandate and leaves lots of wiggle room. The phrases "as feasible," "if feasible," and "where feasible" repeat over and over again.

More than a month ago, CDC gave White House officials a more detailed version of decision tools and additional pages of guidance.

Those early versions of the documents included detailed information for churches wanting to restart in-person services, with suggestions including maintaining distance between parishioners and limiting the size of gatherings.



Signs advise visitors to social distance at Joshua Tree National Park in California, Tuesday, May 19, 2020. The park reopened this week after a lengthy closure to help slow the spread of the new coronavirus. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)



Bruce McCall, 5, smiles as he takes hand sanitizer during martial arts daycare summer camp at Legendary Blackbelt Academy in Richardson, Texas, Tuesday, May 19, 2020. As daycares and youth camps re-open in Texas, operators are following appropriate safety measure to insure kids stay safe from COVID-19. (AP Photo/LM Otero)



Parishioners wear face masks as they file out of an in-person Mass at Christ the King Catholic Church in San Antonio, Tuesday, May 19, 2020. San Antonio parishes that have been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic have begun opening their doors to in-person services. (AP Photo/Eric Gay)

The White House initially shelved all the guidance, though news organizations including The Associated Press obtained copies. Since then, the White House authorized release of some of the information. But the faith-related guidance was taken out after the White House raised concerns about the recommended restrictions.

On Wednesday, White House spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany said there was no need for a splashy announcement about the guidance being posted because much of the information "was already out there." She

said initial draft guidance received "constructive criticism" and refinement during an internal government review before it was released.

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