



COVID-19 Protection Framework – Guidelines for places of worship

The Covid-19 Protection Framework (traffic lights) outlines the settings being used in New Zealand to manage COVID-19. It has three settings Green, Orange and Red.

This guidance is provided to support places of worship to operate safely. It is correct as at 29/11/2021

It outlines the minimum settings that need to be applied to places of worship under the three settings of the COVID-19 Protection Framework. Places of worship are also encouraged to consider what additional measures they may want to put in place that suit their communities.

This guidance will be updated over the coming weeks and months as the government response to Covid-19 continues to evolve.

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Overview of the settings for places of worship

Places of worship can operate at all framework settings (Red, Orange, and Green).

If your place of worship carries out activities that fall under categories of activity other than events and gatherings, for example runs a café or a shop, you need to apply the rules for these activities. Detailed guidance on the rules for food and drink activities, retail and venue hire can be found here [COVID-19 Protection Framework — business.govt.nz](https://www.business.govt.nz/covid-19-protection-framework)

Under the framework a **gathering** is defined as:

- a group of people who are intermingling.

This does not include people who remain at least 2 metres away from each other so far as is reasonably practical. Services at a place of worship, or a prayer group in an individuals home are an example of a gathering.

Under the framework an **event** is defined as an activity organised by a business or service:

- that takes place at a commercial or private indoor or outdoor premises or a publicly owned premises hired for that purpose
- that has controlled access of customers or clients via ticketing, fee paying on premises, registration, or other practicable means of controllable entry
- unless that activity is an outdoor community event or a gathering.

Ticketed concerts held at places of worship are an example of an event.

A summary of the event and gathering rules as they apply to places of worship follows



	With My Vaccine Pass	Without My Vaccine Pass
Green	Record keeping/scanning required	
	Gatherings at a place of worship (e.g. weddings, funerals) no limits. Events no limits.	Gatherings at a place of worship (e.g. weddings, funerals) up to 100 people based 1m distancing. Events (indoor/outdoor) – up to 100 people based on 1m distancing, seated and separated for service of food and drink.
Orange	Record keeping/scanning required. At gatherings, face coverings are required for workers and volunteers.	
	Gatherings at a place of worship (e.g. weddings, funerals) no limits. Events no limits.	Gatherings at a place of worship (e.g. weddings, funerals) up to 50 people, based on the maximum number of people who could occupy the space if each person was 1 metre apart. Events cannot operate
Red	Record keeping/scanning required. At gatherings, face coverings are required for workers and volunteers.	
	Gatherings at a place of worship (e.g. weddings, funerals) up to 100 people based on the maximum number of people who could occupy the space if each person was 1 metre apart. Events – up to 100 people based on 1m distancing, seated and separated for service of food and drink.	Gatherings at a place of worship (e.g. weddings, funerals) up to 25 people, based on the maximum number of people who could occupy the space if each person was 1 metre apart. Events cannot operate.

Operating safely under the COVID-19 Protection Framework

Operating with and without My Vaccine Pass

A place of worship can switch between activities operating with My Vaccine Passes and operating without My Vaccine Passes as long as;

- spaces are cleaned between groups
- there is no intermingling of the two groups
- spaces being used are ventilated
- it is made clear to all involved (attendees/staff/volunteers) which activities are using My Vaccine Pass and which are not.

Advice on cleaning can be found here [Ministry of Health – cleaning and disinfection advice](#).

Places of worship must display posters or signage indicating to attendees whether or not a My Vaccine Pass is required. These can be downloaded here [COVID-19 protection Framework – posters](#)

Operating multiple activities at the same time

If you have multiple defined spaces in a venue, you can operate multiple activities at once.

A defined space is:

- an indoor area that has no direct airflow to another indoor area that is being used;
- or an outdoor area that is separated from other outdoor areas by 2 metres.

Separate spaces must be managed so that groups do not mix entering, leaving, or using the premises, for example, in entrances, exits and toilets.

This includes operating activities in different defined spaces with and without My Vaccine Pass at the same time.

For example, at Orange, a place of worship can run a service operating with My Vaccine Pass without capacity limits at the same time as a separate service operating without My Vaccine Pass with up to 50 in a separate defined space. No intermingling is allowed by groups (including in entrances, exits and toilets).

Record keeping

Places of worship must have ways for attendees to record their attendance at all framework settings (Red, Orange and Green).

This can be done by asking everyone to scan in using the NZ COVID Tracer app, or by recording their contact details manually. Your manual contact tracing register must collect people's: full name, phone number or email or other effective means of communicating with them, date of entering the business and time in and out.

Capacity limits

Capacity limits do not include workers or volunteers (paid and unpaid), but do include all other people (adults and children) within the 'defined space'.

Capacity limits are based on 1 metre distancing. This means the maximum number of people who could occupy the space if each person was 1 metre apart. People do not need to stand 1 metre apart.

Serving food and drink

Remember If your place of worship runs a café, you need to apply the rules for these activities. Detailed guidance on the rules for food and drink activities is here [COVID-19 Protection Framework — business.govt.nz](https://www.business.govt.nz/covid-19-protection-framework)

If you are operating as a **gathering**, you can serve food and drink at green, orange or red.

If you operating as an **event**:

At Green

- with My Vaccine Pass you can serve food and drink without additional requirements.
- without My Vaccine Pass, the event attendees must be seated and separated for the service of food and drink.

At Orange

- with My Vaccine Pass you can serve food and drink without additional requirements.
- without My Vaccine Pass events cannot operate

At Red

- with My Vaccine Pass, the event attendees must be seated and separated for the service of food and drink.
- without My Vaccine Pass events cannot operate

At both gatherings and events, workers and volunteers must wear a face covering when serving and handling food.

Hygiene and Safety

The steps below help reduce the spread of Covid-19;

- Stick to capacity limits.
- Clean and sanitise shared surfaces thoroughly before and after use.
- Ensure that spaces being used are well ventilated.
- Encourage those who are unwell to stay home and seek advice about getting a test.
- Have plenty of places for people to wash hands with soap and water.
- Singing and other types of performance can go ahead. Performers are not required to wear a face covering, but can be encouraged to do so.
- Especially at orange and red;
 - minimise the time spent in close contact, especially those working or volunteering (as they are likely to interact with large numbers of people)
 - encourage the wearing of face coverings
 - encourage people to physically distance from one another wherever possible
 - encourage contactless donations instead of a cash collection box
 - consider offering online services.

Cases of COVID-19 and your place of worship

The place of worship will need to work with the health authorities, provide contact tracing information and undertake cleaning.

Generally, good processes to follow include:

- if you have people responsible for Health and Safety within your place of worship; they are usually the best people to have contact with the Public Health Unit (PHU)
- identify spaces that the person with COVID-19 may have spent significant time in and ensure cleaning is undertaken before the space is used again (see [General cleaning](#) for more information)
- specific or additional advice will be given by public health officials of any cleaning requirements based on the extent of exposure
- assist as required with the PHU's [contact tracing process](#) and support any workers or volunteers identified as a contact of a confirmed case who needs to [self-isolate](#) or [stay at home](#)
- follow PHU advice on communication with your [workers and volunteers](#) and [community/attendees/customers](#)
- follow PHU advice on any additional requirements that are specific to your place of worship.

Any decision to close should be made on the advice of a public health official based on information on the extent of the exposure.

Useful links:

- General advice for contacts of cases [Ministry of Health - actions contacts need to take](#).
- Information on the processes to follow if an employee, volunteer, attendee becomes a confirmed or probable COVID-19 - [Ministry of Health Guidance for workplaces](#)
- COVID-19 cleaning Frequently asked Questions – [Ministry of Health ovid-19-general-cleaning-and-disinfection-advice](#)

Using My Vaccine Pass and the Verifier App

My Vaccine Pass is an official record of your COVID-19 vaccination, or exemption, status for use within Aotearoa New Zealand. A purple vaccination card or vaccination confirmation letter cannot be used as proof of vaccination status. A negative test result is not a substitute for My Vaccine Pass.

The Ministry of Health has a free verifier app that can be used to scan the official QR code that is embedded into a customer's My Vaccine Pass. It is called NZ Pass Verifier and is available on the App Store and Google Play. The Verifier app can be downloaded onto a smart phone or tablet.

The verifier app will not store personal data or show any information other than the person's name and date of birth.

Places of worship operating with My Vaccine Passes are required to check attendees' My Vaccine Pass at or shortly after entry. This can be done by;

- sighting the person's Vaccine Pass, or
- scanning the NZ Vaccine Pass QR code with a verifier app.

The only way to confirm the authenticity of a My Vaccine Pass is a verifier app. This will give greater assurance that only vaccinated people (or those who are exempt) are gathering.

It is recommended that workers/volunteers checking the passes have wording to use if people do not wish to comply.

Places of worship are encouraged to talk with workers and volunteers about how they will handle these situations. This includes making it clear to workers/volunteers when not to continue to request the pass, how to turn someone away and when to seek help from other workers/volunteers or call the Police.

Attendees are responsible for presenting their own My Vaccine Pass. Places of worship are not required to check ID, but they may request it.

People under the age of 12 years and 3 months can be admitted without a My Vaccine Pass, even if the place of worship is operating under My Vaccine Pass rules.

Places of worship are expected to exercise judgement in identifying those under 12 years and 3 months, who are not required to have a Vaccine Pass. This might include asking the child their age, year at school, or student ID if they have it, for example.

Useful links:

- Information on downloading, using and technical support for the NZ Pass Verifier – [Ministry of Health NZ Pass Verifier](#) you can also call 0800 800 606 for technical assistance.
- Information on how the QR code scanner within the Verifier app can be built into existing smartphone apps or ticketing operations - [Ministry of Health Technical information](#)
- Additional resources [Ministry of Health Github](#)

Vaccine mandates for staff and volunteers

Vaccination has been mandated for workers at businesses and venues that must use My Vaccine Passes to operate under the COVID-19 Protection Framework.

This mandate applies to events, hospitality, close contact businesses, and gyms, regardless of whether they choose to operate with My Vaccine Pass, operate at lower capacity limits, or close.

Workers at gatherings are only required to be vaccinated when attendees are required to hold a My Vaccine Pass. This means that workers at gatherings that choose to operate within capacity constraints set out in the COVID-19 Protection Framework, without vaccine passes, do not have to be vaccinated. Workers at gatherings where they must be vaccinated are required to meet the same vaccination timeframes as My Vaccine Pass holders – that is, they must be double vaccinated when the Framework comes into effect at 11:59pm 2 December.

Places of worship must:

- Keep records of their workers' vaccination status.
- If the worker is vaccinated, the record needs to include the name of the vaccine(s) received and the date on which doses were received. This information can be collected through a worker's My COVID Record. This is because My COVID Record includes dates of vaccination and the specific type of vaccine received. A My Vaccine Pass will not be sufficient because it does not include information about type of vaccine received and dates of doses. MBIE will be working with the Privacy Commissioner on guidance for record keeping.

For workers who choose not to be vaccinated, a minimum four-week paid notice period will be provided if their employment agreements are terminated because they are not vaccinated. This change will apply from the end of November.

Employees will also be entitled to paid time off to be vaccinated during work hours. This change will also apply from the end of November.

Workers need to:

- provide information about their vaccination status to their employer. If they don't, their employer can treat them as not being vaccinated.

Other than these two changes, normal employment law will also apply in these situations. This means employers and employees need to work through any employment issues in good faith. Employers and employees can access support from MBIE's employment mediation service to assist with disputes over any employment consequences from Government mandates or vaccination requirements imposed by employers including places of worship. This can be a formal mediation, or using their early resolution service. If a dispute is not resolved at mediation, the Employment Relations Authority or Employment Court can determine it.

Useful links:

- Latest information on the vaccination assessment tool and My Vaccine Pass mandates [Business.govt.nz -Vaccination assessment tool and My Vaccine Pass mandates](#)
- Guidance for employees and employers on COVID-19 vaccination requirements in the workplace - [Employment NZ – Covid-19 and employment](#)
- Information to support workplace conversations about vaccinations [Unite against COVID-19 toolkit for businesses](#)

Enforcement and Compliance

There will be a graduated enforcement model in place to support compliance. This means taking an education first approach to help everyone, including places of worship, work out how best to implement new requirements.

