

SWC Travel Policy Update - 8/23/2021

Since SWC staff members have been fully vaccinated, they may continue to travel and accept invitations for in person ministry engagements under certain conditions. They may also choose to decline invitations and try to make virtual arrangements if they prefer.

Currently, the vast majority of areas where SWC churches are located are under "substantial" or "high" risk levels. The CDC recommendation is that masks be worn by all people regardless of vaccination in indoor settings at public gatherings. Therefore staff will only visit locations where masks are worn (when speaking - staff will follow guidance of church policy, or stay masked).

The [COVID-19 Event Risk Assessment Planning Tool](#), continues to be useful for staff and congregations to assess their comfort level and responsibility in visiting and planning gatherings. Staff are required to check with the church/pastor on what mitigation strategies are in place by the congregation they are planning to visit. They must abide by the congregation's guidelines at the very least, but may choose to add their own in addition.

Keeping church members and our staff healthy and safe is our priority.

The Southwest Conference recommends that layered mitigation strategies be used in settings visited by staff. These mitigation strategies include attention to Covid-19 Event Risk Assessment Planning Tool to determine whether in person gatherings are appropriate with a level of risk at 25% or less, selecting the ascertainment value at 5. Masking, social distancing, outdoor vs. indoor locations, and hand sanitizing are other important mitigation strategies.

Per CDC guidelines¹ SWC staff are required to space in person visits to local churches and communities at least ten (10) days apart. Handshaking or hugs on the part of SWC staff are not permitted during an in-person visit. We strongly encourage our local churches and communities to observe CDC recommended guideline for [Keeping the Workplace Save](#) during our time with you.

If someone participating in an event attended by a SWC staff member is diagnosed with COVID19 within 14 days of a staff member's visit, event planners need to notify the conference office. That staff member may not travel until cleared to do so by the Conference Minister. Requirements to be cleared for travel will include a quarantine period, and may include testing for COVID19, depending on the circumstances.

If a SWC staff member, or a member of their household is feeling sick within 24 hours of the scheduled event, the SWC staff member may not attend the scheduled event.

When considering an invitation SWC staff are required to discuss this policy with the person extending the invitation. All SWC congregations and communities will receive a copy of this policy on or before Sept. 1, 2021. Thank you for collaborating with us for everyone's health.