

Health and Safety Committee Reopening Update - June 4th, 2020

The Health and Safety Committee (HSC), at the direction of the Board of Directors, has been meeting to establish guidelines for re-opening Dharma Rain for in-person programming. These guidelines are based on the best, currently available information and will be updated as more information becomes available. [1, 2, 3] Please review the following guidelines to understand how you can participate in these programs.

General Considerations: Phase One

The HSC recommends that Dharma Rain cautiously open in several phases. Because there is no vaccine or cure at this time, the only way to protect everyone's health and safety is if everyone attending a program practices community mitigation techniques. Dharma Rain's community mitigation techniques are based upon federal guidelines [2], which have been proven to lessen the risk of virus transmission [3], and encourage physical distancing, face covering, hand washing, and disinfection.

Although these techniques are powerful tools to lessen the risk of contracting or transmitting COVID-19, no strategy is foolproof and it is important for everyone to recognize that every time one enters a public space that risk of infection increases. For this reason, the HSC encourages everyone to carefully consider when and under what conditions to attend events at Dharma Rain. Also, consistent with federal guidelines [4], we encourage those who are 65 and older, and those with underlying health problems, to be very cautious about attending public events.

For the foreseeable future, Dharma Rain will offer weekday morning meditation, Wednesday Open Classes, and Sunday Services by Zoom. If you want to attend these, or other programs at Dharma Rain in person, you will be asked to wear a face mask and to use hand sanitizer upon entering the sodo. To meet state guidelines that faith-based gatherings do not exceed 25 people, those interested in attending the Wednesday Open Classes and Sunday Services will need to sign up for those programs in advance. Because the weekday morning program does not draw as many attendees, it will not have a sign up.

Signing Up for a Program

The HSC wants everyone who is interested in attending Wednesday Open Classes and Sunday Services to have access to these programs. Sign up for these programs will be available on Thursdays after the email bulletin has been electronically distributed. Although preference will be given to Dharma Rain members for Sunday Services, otherwise sign up for these programs

is on a first-come, first-served basis. Those who send in a request to attend a program will be notified by Saturday morning of their status. To the extent that demand exceeds space limitations, unmet requests will be carried over to the following week's program. Dharma Rain intends to keep these sign-up lists on file for several weeks in case attendees need to be notified of possible exposure to COVID-19. As of the date of this update, there have been no known cases of COVID-19 at Dharma Rain.

Individuals signing up for a program will also be asked to confirm that they will wear a face mask and use hand sanitizer before entering a Dharma Rain facility. Individuals signing up for a program also will be asked to confirm that neither they nor others in their household are currently displaying signs of possible COVID-19-related illness. According to the latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention information [5], signs of such illness include, but are not limited to, the following: fever, cough, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, fatigue, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.

In the event that you believe you have or have had COVID-19, or you have been around someone who has had COVID-19, you are asked to not sign up for a program until meeting criteria established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention[6].

1) *If you have had or believe you have had COVID-19, you may return when you have:* no fever in the last 72 hours, symptoms have improved, and it has been at least 10 days since the onset of symptoms. If you will be tested, you can be around others when you have no fever, symptoms have improved, and you receive a negative test result.

2) *If you tested positive for COVID-19, you may return when you have:* no symptoms and 10 days have passed since the test. Depending on your healthcare provider's advice and availability of testing, you might get tested to see if you still have COVID-19. If you will be tested, you can be around others after you receive a negative test result.

3) *If you have been around someone with COVID-19:* self-isolate for 10 days. If symptoms develop, then wait until you have no fever in the last 72 hours, symptoms have improved, and it has been at least 10 days since the onset of symptoms

Modifications to Dharma Rain Programs

The use of community mitigation techniques means that you will notice changes to the program you are attending. These changes include the following:

- A concerted effort will be made to avoid congestion and close contact when people are

entering, moving about, or leaving the Sodo.

- Social distancing will be promoted before, during, and after a program and seating will allow a minimum of six feet distance from other participants.
- Weather permitting, doors and windows throughout the sodo will be opened as much as possible to increase air flow.
- Sunday sanzen will be offered so as to allow social distancing and greater air flow (e.g., on the porch of the Founder's Shrine).
- Frequently touched surfaces and objects used during a program will be disinfected before and after each program.
- The kitchen will be closed and drinks, snacks, and food will not be offered.
- Library use will be limited to two people at a time and disinfected after each use.
- Bathroom use will be organized to minimize congestion and windows will be opened to increase air flow.
- The use of chant books and indoor chanting will be suspended. Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings will use a recording, on weekday mornings we will chant outside.

What To Expect When You Attend a Program

When you arrive for a program, you will be met by a Guestmaster who will ensure that you are signed up for the program and wearing a face mask. The Guestmaster will ask you to leave personal belongings outside (e.g., bags, day packs, water bottles, etc.) and direct you to use hand sanitizer before entering the sodo and taking a seat in the zendo. Because personal belongings will remain outside the sodo, you are asked to 'travel lightly' and not bring anything with you that you are not willing to leave outside.

If you would like to attend a program in person but do not feel it is appropriate for you to be inside the sodo at this time, you have the option of sitting on the engawa. If you choose this option, please let the Guestmaster know when you check in. The Guestmaster can assist you with sitting supplies from the zendo, or you may bring your own. With the exception of using the bathroom, please commit to remaining outside for the entire program. This ensures that the Guest Master is aware of everyone's whereabouts and helps prevent crowding at entryways.

The HSC Would Like to Hear From You

The HSC members include Julie Burtis, Jyoshin Clay, Nancy Gonzales, Eric Johnson, and Kakumyo Lowe-Charde. Please contact us at hsc@dharma-rain.org with questions or comments.

Training, Implementation, and Phase Two

Staff and Team Leaders responsible for these programs will receive training in order to become familiar with and to implement these guidelines so that they, in turn, can train others who will play a role in these programs. Additional information concerning other programs, upcoming retreats, and Phase Two will be provided in the future.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith (May 23, 2020). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community-mitigation-strategy.pdf>
3. Chu, Akl, Duda, Solo, Yaacoub and Schunemann. Physical distancing, face masks, and eye protection to prevent person-to-person transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19: a systematic review and meta-analysis. The Lancet. Published online June 1, 2020. Available at: [https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31142-9.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(20)31142-9.pdf).
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. People Who Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness. (May 14, 2020). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Symptoms of Coronavirus (May 13, 2020). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>
6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. When You Can be Around Others After You Had or Likely Had COVID-19 (May 24, 2020). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html> *(Although the CDC recommends two negative COVID-19 test results in a row, at least 24 hours apart, to rule out COVID-19 that can be transmitted, the experience of Dharma Rain staff is that health care providers will not administer a second test if the first test comes back negative. As a result, the CDC guidelines have been modified by Dharma Rain to recommend one negative test.)*