

Guidelines for Meeting Exception in the Time of Global Pandemic



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Presbyterian Mission

Introduction

In March 2020, the PCUSA implemented a travel and meeting ban and call to teleworking for staff and volunteers in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. These measures were implemented to keep staff, constituents, ministry partners and community safe, and limit our ability to engage in in-person meetings. As vaccinations are taking place and travel in some parts of the world is opening up, the Presbyterian Mission Agency remains concerned about travel and in-person meetings. It is our strong encouragement that meetings continue to be online through the end of 2021, and that travel be limited.

We do recognize that exceptions may need to be made for critical and essential functions. For critical and essential meetings, our encouragement is that the meetings be held in Louisville, KY to minimize the number of variables and risks that must be managed.

The following are the basic guidelines to allow for critically necessary work to continue while ensuring best practice safety measures. These guidelines are anchored in the following values:

- PMA's responsibility as the hiring or sending agency to exercise due diligence and safety,
- Responding to the invitation and expressed needs of a host community,
- Recognizing of the critical nature of the ministry and PMA's role in the activity.
- Minimizing the harm done to the receiving communities.
- Considering the needs of staff and attendees as they seek to respond to God's call.

These guidelines that can permit certain volunteer groups and staff to travel and/or resume in-person work. This exception process is to be exercised only when and where circumstances permit a reasonable likelihood of safety for staff and those attending the gathering. Critical work should be defined by the question, "What is the critical impact of meeting for the host or inviter?"

The form on the next page is for PMA's internal use in evaluating proposals for in-person meetings. The form should be completed by the PMA staff member who provides primary support for the group who wishes to meet. Attach additional pages as necessary to respond to the questions.

Decision process:

Once answers to the above questions have been written, please send them to Barry Creech (barry.creech@pcusa.org) who will submit them for consideration by the Rev. Diane Moffett, President & Executive Director for the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

MEETING EXCEPTION REQUEST FORM

Basic Meeting Information

Name of Committee:
Committee Chair:
Primary Staff to the Committee (Request Submitter):
Dates of Proposed Meeting:
Location of Proposed Meeting:

Participants:

	How many will attend?	
	In-person	Virtual or Unsure
Committee members		
Staff		
Observers / Guests		

Please provide written answers to these questions

1. Please provide an explanation as to why the committee needs to have an in-person meeting at this time. Include an explanation of the critical/essential nature of the committee's request. What percentage of the committee concurs with the necessity of meeting in-person at the proposed location?
2. Will the proposed meeting be in Louisville, KY? (If YES, skip to question 3).
 - a. If not, where would the committee like to meet? Does the committee have an invitation from a host community? What CDC guidelines will the host be following?
 - b. Over the last seven days, what is the average number of daily cases of COVID infection per 100,000 people in this community? (<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>)
 - c. Why is this location urgent?
3. What is the impact if the committee is unable to have this in-person meeting?
4. Can committee members and staff acknowledge that PMA is not requiring participation in this in-person meeting, and that it is the individual committee members' and staff's decision to travel?

5. Please provide a detailed plan for how committee members and staff will stay safe during the meeting and travel, in compliance with CDC/WHO guidelines, which can include vaccination* and mandatory masking.
6. Please describe the committee's emergency plan if a member or staff becomes ill during the meeting?
7. What plans does the committee have for virtual participation in the meeting by any members who are unwilling or unable to travel? Will virtual participants be able to be seen, heard, and engaged in all parts of the proposed meeting?
8. Does the committee acknowledge that the Presbyterian Mission Agency's ability to assist them might be limited should anyone become ill or find themselves stranded, given the global nature of this pandemic?

**It is the individual committee member's responsibility to gain access to vaccination. If you are interested in getting vaccinated and your location of destination does not offer the option, you will need to get vaccinated prior before travel. PMA is not responsible for providing support for individual vaccinations.*

Expectations

If the request for an in-person meeting is approved, committee members, staff and observers/guests will be expected to:

1. Assess the COVID situation for the context/region of the work and report any concerns back to the Executive Director. The following websites can be used as tools.
 - a. <https://www.cdc.gov>
 - b. <https://globalepidemics.org/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression/>
 - c. <https://covid19.healthdata.org/global?view=total-deaths&tab=trend>
 - d. <https://covid19.who.int/>
 - e. <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/region>
2. Be aware of and comply with any local policies/guidelines such as Stay at Home order.
3. Ensure that the receiving community/host site/partner has the capacity to provide safe environment in compliance with CDC/WHO guidelines. (These guidelines are changing constantly. As a result, there will need to be flexibility/readiness to modify/cancel plans as significant guideline changes occur.)
4. Staff and volunteers should acknowledge in writing that the decision to participate is their own and not from any pressure by PCUSA.
5. All plans for travel and/or in-person work must cease and must follow recommended CDC steps before plans can resume:
 - a. If you have signs of COVID symptoms.
 - b. You have come in contact with COVID in the last 14 days.