



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER SHARES RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS AND FAITH-BASED SERVICES
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Stockton, CA – (April 9, 2020) Springtime is a season with many celebrations and faith-based gatherings. Because of the COVID-19 outbreak worldwide, this year's events will require that we make some adaptations to our routines. As of today, there are 238 confirmed cases and 14 deaths related to COVID-19 in San Joaquin County. These numbers are continuing to rise. We have implemented mitigation strategies in an effort to flatten the curve, protect the public from further spread of COVID-19, and reduce the impact of COVID-19 illnesses and deaths in our county.

In order to reduce COVID-19 transmission, San Joaquin County currently has a Stay at Home Order in effect. This means that all county residents are directed to stay home or at their place of residence and avoid all public and private gatherings of any number of people, unless they are providing or receiving essential services. With celebrations for spring holidays starting this month, including Easter, Passover, and Ramadan, San Joaquin County Public Health Services reminds residents and congregations to stay committed to social distancing and avoid in-person gathering with anyone other than those who reside within their home. There have been examples of congregations continuing to meet, leading potentially to widespread transmission of the virus and devastating effects.

Recommendations for Families

- Postpone visits to see family members and grandparents. Instead, connect using phone or by writing letters or cards and sending in the mail.
- Celebrate with family via video chat or a web-based meeting.
- Check your place of worship's webpage and social media for virtual services.
- Cook traditional foods at home to enjoy the familiar tastes and smells of the holidays.
- Consider a smaller celebration with your immediate family now, and hold a larger celebration at a later time.

Recommendations for Faith Communities

- If you are setting up remote or virtual worship, make sure to communicate with your congregation on how to get connected.
 - Email out the bulletin and song lyrics ahead of time and post them on your webpage or social media.
- Implement alternative meeting and service options.

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- Mailed newsletters, prerecorded messages from trusted leaders on a designated call-in telephone number, and printed copies of daily teaching guides may be options, especially to reach those without internet access.
- Please refrain from “drive-in” services where attendees would drive up in their car and participate in service from their cars.
- Consider the needs of persons at higher risk of severe illness and those who may be more impacted socially or economically. Identify ways to ensure the safety and social well-being of groups that may be especially impacted during the holidays.
 - Ensure availability of meal programs and other assistance for the people you serve. Delivery options may be considered, but avoid distribution of food or other household essentials in settings where people might gather in a group or crowd.

“Remember, we are all in this together and we can all do our part to help prevent the spread of COVID-19,” encourages Dr. Maggie Park, San Joaquin County Public Health Officer.

For more information, please visit the San Joaquin County Public Health Services website at www.sjcphs.org. In addition, a video message can be found on the San Joaquin County Public Health Services YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/zT4bnhOrrL8>

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