



Nebraska Grand Chapter

June 2020

The Time to Prepare is Now to Return to Chapter Meetings and Events During Covid-19 Restrictions

- A comprehensive timeline for returning to Chapter meetings, events, and social gatherings has not yet been established. However we anticipate a multi-phase return to meetings. The time to begin preparations is now as we present for your preparation the initial **Phase 1** needs and guidelines. This phased timeline will be fluid, providing for opening, meeting and eventually social gatherings. Conditions will determine when each step becomes safe and also if stepping back from a phase might become necessary. Included is the current vision for **Phase 2** guidelines. However these guidelines are tentative. Conditions and CDC directives are fluid. As an opening date is determined, final guidelines will be confirmed based on conditions at that time.
- The process of preparation is very important. We are investing careful thought in recognizing how our current actions not only affect our membership but may also affect our future situations and opportunities.
- Please give time and thought to your unique situations within your membership, location, building, and your applications of these guidelines while adhering to federal, state and local government restrictions. Although the guidance, direction, and information provided cover a wide range of topics, it is impossible to address every situation chapters will face. When there is an absence of direction for unique circumstances, it is recommended that chapters refer to local restrictions, plan accordingly, and let common sense prevail.
- An inherent risk of exposure to COVID-19 exists in any public place where people are present. COVID-19 is an extremely contagious disease that can lead to severe illness. Failure to adhere to appropriate safeguards could result in the continued spread of the virus. (Nebraska DHHS) As we begin to look ahead and consider federal, state, and local loosening of the standards for gathering together, we provide guidelines for how to begin in person participation when that time is right in your unique situation to gather again. These guidelines are designed to assist in creating and structuring as safe of an environment for meetings and events as is possible with current science and knowledge; **however when attending a meeting or event you voluntarily assume all risks related to potential exposure to COVID-19.**
- Realistically, this pandemic will be with us for some time. We need to develop awareness, solutions and skills that help us maintain and promote good public health while supporting the sound individual health of our members. How we conduct our meetings and events should be a model for safety, intentionality, and effectiveness. If a chapter feels uncomfortable opening on the date giving permission for opening, that decision will be supported. Individual member attendance is voluntary.

Let us demonstrate common sense and practicality while preserving the protocol of our meetings and transactions. Let us reflect our Obligation, acting with charity, responding in truth, and engaging loving kindness as we negotiate the public health crisis of Covid-19.



Nebraska Grand Chapter

Guidelines for the Return to Chapter Meetings and Events During Covid-19 Restrictions

Phase 1 Guidelines

The following guidelines are not permanent. They shall be in effect until local and/or national health officials and governments modify the CDC restrictions relating to the coronavirus pandemic.

The following guidelines are important for all events and gatherings, not just stated meetings.

- For clarity and continuity, we will act unified as a Jurisdiction, yet we acknowledge that not all chapters are alike. Please exercise practicality and common sense with the details and their application within your individual chapter and for your members. **Please refer any questions or needs of your chapter or your facilities directly to the Worthy Grand Matron.**
- Additionally, it would be desirable that members are able to express their confidence and comfort regarding their health and safety to attend a meeting before the decision is made to hold meetings. Members and officers who are not comfortable should exercise their choice to not yet gather with their chapter, and know they are respected, supported and will receive information and communications so that they can remain actively engaged and aware of their chapter, plans, and events.
- It is important to establish and maintain an atmosphere of understanding and inclusion. We are a membership reflecting a variety of individuals, generations, perspectives and needs. We need to be sensitive to all and judgmental of none.

In **Phase 1**, please refrain from social gatherings or organized fellowship prior to or following your meetings.

- At this time CDC guidelines direct us that it is important to keep contact and time together to a minimum. It is believed that longer exposure is significantly more dangerous. Therefore, at this time we will begin with gathering for our meetings and not lengthening our exposure by including social time as a group.

At the door to your building, keep to a minimum door handle exposures.

- Station one person who will handle the door for those who enter and then again upon exiting while maintaining a safe distance.
- It is essential for the safety of those attending meetings that their arrival and departure be managed in such a way as to prevent interaction between parties. Appropriate steps should be taken to dismiss and pace the departure of those present at the conclusion of the meeting so as to prevent the interaction between parties at distances less than six feet. (Nebraska DHHS)

Communicating these guidelines to your members prior to your first meeting is critical.

- Each member must be informed, prepared and have time to determine if they will choose to attend during **Phase 1**.

Retain the contact information of all people who attend.

- This is essential should contact tracing become necessary.
- *CONTACT SHEET* is enclosed see page 8 to be utilized for every meeting and event.

Items of Business, Communications, Social Purposes (regarding electronic media):

- No Chapter business, ceremonies, or ritual shall be conducted via electronic or social media.
- Electronic and social media are appropriate for social interactions and communications.
- Zoom is available for chapters to use for social purposes and communications.
- Zoom meetings are also appropriate for committee work.
- Please contact the Grand Chapter Officer to schedule a meeting at no expense to your Chapter.

❖ Prior to the opening of your building and set up for a meeting:

- Maintain a printed copy of the Guidelines available at each meeting.
 - Sanitize all surfaces that have been touched or might have been, in accordance with CDC guidelines.
 - Be sure that you have an adequate supply of disinfectant cleaners before you begin having onsite meetings and events.
 - Wipe or spray down seating with disinfectant.
 - Please note: It is virtually impossible to sanitize cushions or padded chairs adequately, so cushions should be removed. You may want to consider hard surfaced seating like folding chairs to replace upholstered seating.
 - Disinfect all doorknobs and any bathrooms that are available.
 - Disinfect microphones that have been held and paraphernalia or receptacles used.
 - It is strongly recommended each member wash their hands immediately after coming into the building to help stop the potential spread of the virus.
 - Members' properly wearing face masks is strongly recommended.
 - Members are strongly encouraged to maintain social distancing, utilize proper hand sanitizing/washing and consider wearing eye protection.
 - Members are not to shake hands or give hugs.
 - Members who are feeling ill or demonstrating symptoms must not attend meetings. Anyone engaged in a quarantine period should not attend meetings.
 - Members who feel uncomfortable or have concerns for their health and wellbeing should not attend meetings.
 - Those who are in the high-risk group should not attend meetings until it is considered safe by health experts to do so. Those at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are:
 - People aged 65 years and older and people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility.
 - People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled including
 - Chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma;
 - Serious heart conditions;
 - Diabetes;
 - Chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis;
 - Liver disease;
 - People who are immune-compromised which includes cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications (source: [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/)).
- ## ❖ If a member develops symptoms after attending a meeting:
- Anyone who attends a meeting and begins displaying symptoms of COVID-19 within 48 hours should seek medical advice and alert the Worthy Matron and Secretary.
 - The Secretary will contact and alert those who attended the meeting of their exposure potential.
 - If a COVID-19 test is administered, the member is asked to inform the Worthy Matron and Secretary of the result, and they will update those members effected.
 - The identity of the symptomatic member will be considered confidential information.

❖ Guidelines for Chapter Meetings

Chapter Room Setup:

The following are required for Chapter Room setup:

- Altar in the center of the Chapter Room. Bible placed upon the Altar.
- Pedestals at the Star Point Stations with emblems.
- Signet placed.
- American Flag (Flag of your nation) placed in the east.
- Charter visible.
- Please assign one or two people to set up the Chapter Room and sanitize. If possible, it would be helpful to have the room set up in advance. The Flag should be placed in the East when setting up the Chapter.
- Printed material for distribution to the Chapter can be placed in chairs/seating to designate social distancing. Practice transmission safety in printing and handling materials distributed.

Entering Chapter Room:

- During this time of unusual circumstances, it shall be acceptable for the Officers to enter the Chapter Room informally and take their stations.
- Chapter Officers, members and visitors must be seated with a minimum of six feet of separation.
- In a small Chapter Room, it may be necessary for the Officers to be seated on the sidelines six feet apart, with the exception of the WM and those Officers whose stations are typically six feet from other members in the Chapter.

Seating in the East:

- The WM and WP chairs shall be six feet apart. In a small Chapter Room, it may be necessary for only the WM to be in the East and the WP to be seated at her left on the sidelines six feet from others.

Seating in the West:

- The AM and AP chairs shall be six feet apart. In a small Chapter Room, it may be necessary for only the AM to be in the West and the AP to be seated at her left on the sidelines six feet from others.
- The Warder shall be seated six feet from the AM in the West, next to the door and not next to the AM.

Seating for Other Chapter Officers:

- The Chaplain and the Treasurer shall be seated six feet apart.
- The Marshal shall be seated six feet from the Secretary.
- In a small Chapter Room, it may be necessary for these Officers to sit on the sidelines six feet apart, except the Warder who shall be seated by the door six feet from others.

Opening Chapter and Closing Ceremony:

- Speaking parts of Officers:
- If it is necessary for the Officers to be seated in their stations on the sidelines to maintain social distancing, they may stand and give their speaking parts from the sidelines.
- The Opening and Closing Odes are to be shared with masks worn, as singing is higher risk for virus spread.
- During Phase 1, Odes are to be spoken.

Order of Business

- A stated meeting shall include:
 - 1) Opening Ceremony, 2) Reading of minutes 3) Approval of minutes, 4) Closing Ceremony
- The Warder and Sentinel should maintain a distance greater than 6 feet during their spoken exchange.
- Short form Opening to be used during Phase 1.
 - *Additional items of business should be structured as needed by the chapter for your transaction of business, however at this time we would encourage items of business to be as brief as appropriate for the needs of the chapter. We would encourage that Words for the Good of the Order be given priority. We have been a part and miss each other. While in a safe, clean and appropriate social distancing situation allow for members to share what has been going on in their lives and the opportunity to reconnect with each other.*

During Phase 1 Guidelines: Please refrain from Balloting, Initiation, and all escorts during Introductions

PHASE 2 Guidelines

Specific Guidelines and Date of Implementation Not Yet Determined
Phase 2 Guidelines will include:

- ❖ **Phase 2** Guidelines and their date of implementation have not yet been determined.
 - Like **Phase 1** and any other guidelines that may need to be addressed, **all Guidelines are temporary**. We are not altering the Book of Instruction, we are adapting to a national emergency and public health crisis in the safest way to restart our meetings. Guidelines shall be in effect until local and/or national health officials and governments modify or lift the CDC restrictions relating to the coronavirus pandemic.

Balloting: The ceremony of Balloting is essential to our Order.

- Please ensure members use a hand sanitizer before casting their ballot.
 - If each member does not have their own sanitizer with them, have sanitizer available to them and encourage use just prior to the ceremony of balloting.
- During these uncommon times, the AC should present the ballot box by extending it toward the voting member as far as comfortably possible to maintain social distancing. Those handling the balloting box and those casting their ballot should protect the safety of all members by using hand sanitizer. Worthy Matron can direct all members to hand sanitize just prior to the ceremony of Balloting and then again at the conclusion of Balloting.

Initiation: The ceremony of Initiation is essential to our Order, followed by being kind and loving to each other, and making our presence known in our communities by our charitable giving.

The ceremony of Initiation is a portion of our Ritual where it is not possible to practice physical distancing. It is critical that every possible effort be made to protect the health and safety of our members and the candidate(s).

- All people involved shall wear face masks, observe proper hand cleanliness and observe all other common-sense precautions to safeguard the health of all.
- Members shall not become lax in observing social distancing when and where it is possible during the ceremony of Initiation.
- The Chapter must inform the candidate(s) that their initiation is a ceremony where physical distancing is not possible. It is necessary, as well as right and proper, to explain this to them so they can be given the option of not being initiated at this time.
- It is recommended the candidate be directly asked if they feel comfortable being initiated knowing social distancing is not possible.
- If choosing to be initiated during restrictions, it is recommended the candidate be directly asked if they would prefer being seated on the sidelines rather than being escorted through the ceremony. This would allow greater distancing. Candidate can follow Conductress rather than being escorted, allowing for social distancing.

Escorting and Introductions: Escorts and Introductions are not essential activities of our Order.

While a preferred method of demonstrating our respect, gratitude and regard, our existence does not depend on introductions and escorting. Reducing the ways people come in close contact with each other should be the goal for Chapter meetings at this time. Refrain from Escorting in Phase 2.

Escorting does not meet these criteria. It is not possible to have extensive introductions and escorting and observe proper social distancing

- It is acceptable to introduce members from their places in the Chapter Room.
- It is acceptable to give Grand Honors to those entitled to receive them when they are introduced from their seats in the Chapter Room.
- At this time, it is not recommended to escort members for introduction.
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Other Items of Business and Transactions:

- A quorum (7 present) is necessary to open your chapter and transact chapter business.
- Visitors may attend and help you reach your number of attenders required for a quorum but they may not cast a vote or ballot.
- Members from other chapters are available and eager to travel to assist a chapter in reaching a quorum. Included in those willing to assist as available are District Grand Supervisors, Grand Officers, and Past Grands.

Message from Marianne Shenefelt, Most Worthy Grand Matron:

My Sisters and Brothers, during these unprecedented times, it is of paramount importance that we keep the health and safety of all of our members uppermost in our minds as we cautiously move forward. Thank you for being diligent about protecting them, yourself and your loved ones.

Marianne R. Shenefelt
Most Worthy Grand Matron

NEBRASKA DHHS Guidelines for Protection Against Covid-19

As directed by the State of Nebraska these are 10 actions for Nebraskans to be taking now to slow the spread of COVID-19:

1. Stay 6 feet away from others.
2. Stay at home and only grocery shop once per week alone.
3. Wear a cloth face covering in public (grocery stores, pharmacies etc.) when you can't stay 6 feet away from others.
4. Work from home.
5. Hold conference calls or virtual meetings instead of in person.
6. Stay home if you or someone in your house has a sudden onset of cough or shortness of breath or a fever.
7. Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
8. Wash hands right before you eat.
9. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze then throw the tissue in the trash.
10. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, especially counters, handles, doorknobs, tabletops, remotes and keyboards.

Closing Remarks from the WGM/WGP:

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As we sort through, digest, and consider the application of the information provided by the government and scientific agencies concerning the COVID-19, we do so with the best interest of our Order at heart. The "Guidelines" for opening are thorough and complete. Please know that every decision is made with the welfare of our Nebraska OES Membership and Chapters at the forefront of our thinking, and if we error, we choose to error on the side of caution.

We look forward to the time we can gather more safely; in the meantime we cling to our Faith in God, our Hope for the future, our Love for the Order of the Eastern Star and our Sisters & Brothers. Please stay safe and stay healthy!

Karan Birdsall
Worthy Grand Matron

Bruce A. Baker
Worthy Grand Patron



CHECKLIST

(Condensed Guidelines to serve as a CHECKLIST for opening to Chapter Meetings)

❖ Preparation to return to meeting:

- Communicate Guidelines with all members.
 - Members are strongly encouraged to properly wear face masks, maintain social distancing, utilize proper hand sanitizing/washing and consider eye protection when attending meetings.
 - Members are not to shake hands or give hugs.
 - Members who are feeling ill or demonstrating symptoms must not attend meetings. Members in quarantine shall not attend meetings.
 - Members feeling uncomfortable should not attend meetings.
- Prepare meeting space for social distancing and sanitize surfaces.
- No social gatherings prior to or after meetings.
- Plan entry to building and exit from building with minimal contact to or at the door.
- If additional members of the Order are needed to help ensure a quorum, arrange for visitors to attend.

❖ For the meeting:

- Have available a complete printed copy of the Guidelines and Contact Information Sheets.
- Have viewable or display this CHECKLIST of Guidelines, allowing members to refer to them when attending the meeting.
- Set up and sanitize items and paraphernalia observing social distancing.
- Arrange seating to observe social distancing.
- Printed materials for distribution to the Chapter can be placed in chairs/seating to designate social distancing. Practice transmission safety in printing and handling.
- Members and visitors are strongly encouraged to properly wear masks.
- Members and visitors are strongly encouraged to wash hands when arriving.
- Use short form Opening and keep meeting as brief as possible.
- Speak Opening and Closing Odes.
- Refrain from Balloting, Initiation, Escorts, Introductions.
- Maintain social distancing throughout the meeting.
- As members and visitors depart, structure traffic to observe social distancing.
- Retain list of those attending meeting and their contact information.
- Sanitize surfaces before leaving the building.

Follow up Contact Information – for each meeting/event

What steps should be taken if a member is diagnosed with COVID-19 after a meeting?

- Anyone who attends a meeting and begins displaying symptoms of COVID-19 within 48 hours should seek medical advice and alert the Worthy Matron and Secretary. The Secretary will contact and alert those who attended the meeting of their exposure potential.
- If a COVID-19 test is administered, the member is asked to inform the Worthy Matron and Secretary of the result, and they will update those members affected.
- The identity of the symptomatic member will be considered confidential information.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Chapter Number- Name – City

Meeting Location – Date - Time

Name _____ PHONE: _____

Address: _____ EMAIL: _____

Name _____ PHONE: _____

Address: _____ EMAIL: _____