



**The Grand Chapter of Connecticut  
Order of the Eastern Star, Inc.**  
*Organized August 11, 1874*

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February 22, 2021

**To:** Secretaries and **Worthy Matrons** of Connecticut Subordinate Chapters

**Subject:** Reopening - It is important that you pay particular attention to Paragraph A under Reopening below.

Hello Sisters and Brothers,

This has really been a trying time. We hope all of you are doing well and staying safe. No one could have imagined this pandemic would occur and keep us from being together. We are now on our way to getting back to some type of normalcy. Hopefully many of you are able to get the vaccine which will help us get back together.

The Board of Directors has been working with Jurisprudence to come up with ways to enable us to get back to our meetings. To allow time for planning purposes and to safely reopen your chapter, you can reopen any time after March 1, 2021. We are extending the timeline for your Annual Meeting for Elections and Installation of Officers to be completed by May 31, 2021. Below are the guidelines which will enable you to reopen.

These guidelines have been prepared by an ad hoc committee and have been approved by the Board of Directors and Jurisprudence Committee. We hope that these guidelines clarify any questions you may have on reopening your Chapter and conducting normal business. These temporary procedures will remain in effect until notified of any changes by the WGM and the Board of Directors. As things progress and restrictions lessen in the state these guidelines will be revised and you will be notified of such changes. If you should have any additional questions please contact the Grand Secretary, preferably by email ([oesctgs@gmail.com](mailto:oesctgs@gmail.com)) with the subject line saying: "**Reopening Chapters**".

Fraternally,

The Board of Directors  
Grand Chapter of Connecticut – Order of the Eastern Star



**Attachments**

- I. Guidelines for Reopening Chapters as of February 2021
- II. Chapter Meeting Health Check Form
- III. Guidelines – Video Conferencing to Conduct Essential Chapter Business from the MWGM dated August 2020 enclosed in letter dated August 26, 2020
- IV. MWGM-4.8.20-Communication-Installations-Elections
- V. MWGM Communication 09-23-2020 (1)
- VI. In person Install COVID Guidelines UPDATED January 2021 MWGM 1.18.21 (2)

**I. Reopening:**

**A. How to decide:** There are three ways you can re-open your Chapter as per the Meeting Options below. One of these methods should be chosen by your Worthy Matron, Worthy Patron, Secretary, Associate Matron and Associate Patron, after taking a survey of your Officers and Chapter members, by the most convenient means, such as phone calls, letters, Virtual Meeting, etc.

You must notify all your members of your decision as to how you will hold your meetings and the frequency. Send a copy of this communication, under seal of the Chapter, to the WGM, WGP and Grand Secretary. A dispensation is not needed.

**B. Meeting frequency:** If your Chapter normally meets twice a month, you can decide to meet only once a month, by vote of the Chapter. In the minutes for meetings you are not holding, place a page in the Minute Book that the meeting was canceled due to COVID 19 pandemic.

**C. Introductions:** Introductions may be omitted, however if desired, they should be conducted by recognizing dignitaries in place in order to prevent negation of social distancing during escorting procedures. Honors may be given as necessary while dignitaries are in place.

**D. Food and Beverages:**

1. Indoor: No Food and beverage maybe offered or shared.
2. Outdoor: You can bring your own food or beverage, but no sharing is permitted.

**II. Meeting Options**

**A. In Person Meetings at your normal meeting place:  
(see attachments I & II)**

1. You must select a Program Administrator and alternate, who must Certify with the state to follow COVID guidelines. Information is attached (see Attachment I) - Recommended even if you choose not to meet in person right away.
2. Designate a person who will sign people in and take temperatures.
3. Masks are mandatory.
4. Social distancing is mandatory.
5. No singing is permitted.
6. Must obey State Guidelines for how many people can gather inside.
7. You must have a quorum (seven members of the Chapter including one of the first four officers).
8. You can do all types of business.
9. You can hold Election of Officers and Installations, using the modified in-person guidelines, as per the Most Worthy Grand Matron (See attachment IV & VI).
10. You can hold Annual Meeting.

**B. Outdoor Meetings:**

1. Must be a secure area where the public is not present and can observe or hear the proceedings.
2. Social Distancing is mandatory.
3. No paraphernalia is required.
4. No singing is permitted.
5. The Pledge of Allegiance and prayers are appropriate.
6. Must have a quorum (seven members of the Chapter including one of the first four officers).
7. No ritualistic work can be performed (opening, closing, secret work and Initiations) as per the Most Worthy Grand Matron.
8. You can vote on business.
9. You can hold an Annual Meeting.
10. You can hold Election of Officers.
11. You can hold Installation of Officers (Using the abbreviated version, that the Most Worthy Grand Matron outlined, see attachment VI).

**C. Virtual Meetings, such as zoom (see Attachment III):**

1. The Virtual meeting must be secure - using the passcode where only the host allows you to join.
2. Participants must make sure they are in a secure place, where non members are unable to hear or observe the proceedings.
3. The Pledge of Allegiance and prayers are appropriate.
4. Must have a quorum (seven members of the Chapter including one of the first four officers).
5. You cannot perform any ritualistic work, as per the Most Worthy Grand Matron.
6. You can vote on business.
7. You can hold Annual Meeting.
8. You can hold Election of Officers (if a ballot is needed to elect an officer, you must arrange to have a place and time where members can vote. All members must be notified of such a vote).
9. You can hold installation of Officers (Using the abbreviated version, that the Most Worthy Grand Matron outlined, see attachment IV).

**III Quorums: If your Chapter cannot meet due to a lack of quorum (seven members of the Chapter including one of the first four officers):**

- A. Notify WGM and follow up with letter under seal of the chapter.
- B. Record it in Minute Book.

**IV Petitions:**

- A. **Virtual Meetings:** Petitions cannot be read, committee appointed and voted upon, per the Most Worthy Grand Matron (see attachment III).
- B. **In-person and Outdoor Meetings:** Petitions can be read, committee appointed and voting upon.

**V. Initiations: Outdoor or Virtual Meetings: No initiations may be performed. Indoor, in person meetings: Must perform full initiation ceremony, per the letter from the Most Worthy Grand Matron (see attachment V - Initiation).**

**VI Audits: Books of the Chapter must be Audited before your Annual Meeting.**

**VII. Demits: Demits should be read and acted upon.**

**VIII. Bylaw Changes: If you need to revise your Chapter bylaws, you may use the normal process (see Blue Book section 95, Rules and Regulations).**

**IX. Election of Officers:** Chapters are in various states from when meetings were suspended. Below are guidelines on how to proceed:

**A. Chapters who held elections and installations last year (2020):**

1. If the Chapter desires to keep officers as is:
  - i. Vote to keep the existing officers in place.
  - ii. No need to have another installation.
2. If the Chapter desires to Elect new Officers you must:
  - i. Hold Elections (Refer to Reopening guidelines).
  - ii. Hold Installation (Refer to Reopening guidelines).

**B. Chapters who held Elections in 2020, but did not install officers:**

1. If the Chapter desires to keep the elections the same:
  - i. Vote to Keep elections from 2020 the same.
  - ii. Hold Installation (Refer to Reopening guidelines).
2. If the Chapter desires to hold elections again:
  - i. Hold Elections (Refer to Reopening guidelines).
  - ii. Hold Installation (Refer to Reopening guidelines).

**C. Chapters who did not have Elections or Installations in 2020:**

1. If Chapter desires to keep existing officers from 2019 as is:
  - i. Vote to keep the existing officers in place.
  - ii. No need to have another installation.
2. If Chapter desires to elect new officers:
  - i. Hold Elections (Refer to Reopening guidelines).
  - ii. Hold Installation (Refer to Reopening guidelines).

## **Guidelines for Reopening Chapters as of February 2021**

There are several guidelines which must be adhered to in order to comply with the State of Connecticut reopening and to assist the Masonic Temple and Building Corporations in maintaining a safe and sanitary indoor environment. As always, attending any OES event or gathering should be left to the individual member's discretion.

### **Chapters:**

- Attendees are limited to the state guidelines.
- Assign a Program Administrator and an alternate from within your membership (requirements described in Program Administrator section below).
- All members are to wear masks upon entering and at all times while occupying any Masonic building. This includes during ritual work.
- All members shall sanitize their hands upon entering the building, have their temperature taken and logged in by a member designated by the Chapter.
- There are to be NO refreshments, served meals, or pot-luck buffets while the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing. This is necessary in order to avoid potential cross-contamination from open food dishes, serving utensils, close-person proximity, etc.
- All members are discouraged from congregating inside atriums, doorways, and similar common areas. Members should proceed straight to the chapter room after sanitizing hands.
- NO SINGING during chapter meetings or gatherings. This includes opening odes, closing odes, ritual songs and the National Anthem. HOWEVER, the Pledge of Allegiance and prayers are appropriate.
- Introductions should be conducted by recognizing dignitaries in place. In order to prevent negation of social distancing. Honors may be given as necessary while dignitaries are in place.
- All ritual paraphernalia, furniture and equipment should be sanitized prior to returning to storage. Basically, if it was touched, sanitize it.
- Program Administrators must sanitize all occupied areas after all members have left the building (doorknobs, bathrooms, horizontal surfaces, etc.).

### **Program Administrators:**

- One member shall be selected as Program Administrator for each chapter. The selection can be as simple as a verbal selection. No formal voting or assignment of title is necessary. An alternate Program Administrator selection is strongly encouraged.
- Program Administrators must be reliable (i.e. attend meetings regularly). Program Administrators should be the first to arrive at the chapter and will need to be the last member to leave the building.
- The Program Administrator and the alternate must complete the Self-Certification online at the CT DECD website. This task must be completed on-line and no other method is available. Go to the following link to Self-Certify. <https://service.ct.gov/recovery/>
  - For the Question of "Business Sector" – select "Offices" in the dropdown menu.
  - For the "Business Industry" – select "Other Services" in the dropdown menu.
  - For "Business Name" put your Chapter Name + Order of the Eastern Star.
  - For "Business Address" put in the Temple Address or the place you meet.
  - For "Business Email" put your email address.
  - For "Business Number" put your phone number.

- Upon successful completion of the self-certification, you will receive a digital certification number and badge. Once received, send copy to the Grand Secretary at [oesctgs@gmail.com](mailto:oesctgs@gmail.com).
- Once a Program Administrator and/or alternate are established, no other members can perform their responsibilities, unless they are also Self-Certified.
- Ensure all persons entering the building are wearing face masks (have masks available for those who forget them), sanitize their hands, take their temperature and have their name recorded on the "Chapter Meeting Health Self Check" form, for contact tracing. Anyone with a temperature above 99.4 degrees F shall not be allowed to enter the building.
- The "Chapter Meeting Health Self Check" must be retained by the chapter for a minimum of 60 days and then destroyed.
- Prevent members from congregating in doorways, atriums, etc. Close off rooms not required for the chapter event to prevent members from entering.
- After all members leave the room and/or building, sanitize all horizontal surfaces, objects and surfaces touched by members.
- Ensure all air movement systems are operating correctly (i.e. central heating/air conditioning, fans blowing air out of the room and away from members).

#### **References:**

- CT Department of Economic Community Development (DECD), all applicable guidance's pertaining to Offices and Indoor Events, most recent published revision [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DECD/Covid\\_Business\\_Recovery-Phase-2/0721IndoorEventseng.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DECD/Covid_Business_Recovery-Phase-2/0721IndoorEventseng.pdf)
- Most Worthy Grand Matron, Order of the Eastern Star letters of guidance pertaining to COVID-19
- Grand Lodge of the Free and Accepted Masons of CT, Grand Master edicts pertaining to Masonic Temple reopening.
- CT Order of the Eastern Star Worthy Grand Matron guidance pertaining to chapter reopening during COVID-19



## **Guidelines – Video Conferencing to Conduct Essential Chapter Business**

The guidelines below are for the purpose of conducting a simple business meeting in order to complete Chapter business that must be addressed for the good of the Chapter, in particular to meet financial obligations, using Zoom or other video conferencing methods. These instructions do not apply to and are not to be used for in-person Chapter meetings.

### **Using Zoom or other video conferencing to conduct essential Chapter business:**

- Establish that a quorum is present on the call for the transaction of business. Seven members of the Chapter, including one of the first four Officers, constitutes a quorum, unless the Bylaws of the Chapter states a larger number.
- Record the names of the members present on the call that constitute the quorum, as well as other members in attendance on the call.
- Confirm minutes of the meeting are being taken.
- Do not open the meeting ritualistically. The Officer in charge (WM or pro tem) will call the meeting to order, i.e., "I hereby call this virtual meeting of \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter to order."
- Request the reading of the minutes of the last stated and special meeting, if any.
- Ask for corrections, if any.
- Ask for approval of the minutes.
- Request the reading of communications.
- Ask for Unfinished Business (see paragraph below).
- Ask for New Business (see paragraph below).
- Request Treasurer's report.
- Request reading of the bills.
- Conduct discussion, as necessary, and ask for verbal approval to pay the bills.
- Record the verbal "yes" or "no" by the individual's name when asking for approval to pay bills and/or spend the Chapter's money.
- Ask for any sickness and distress.
- Close the meeting. Do not close the meeting ritualistically. The Officer in charge will say, "There being no further business to be conducted virtually, I hereby declare this virtual meeting of \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter closed."

There will be no petitions read, no reports of investigating committees, no balloting and no initiations taking place during virtual business meetings of a Chapter. These portions of our closed meetings are not authorized to be conducted using Zoom or other video conferencing methods because to do so is illegal.

If your Unfinished Business and/or New Business involves petitions, investigating committee reports, balloting or initiation, it will be necessary to postpone this business until it is safe for your Chapter to meet in person.

Please adhere to all government and local authority health and safety guidelines specific to your area regarding Covid for your protection and the well-being of your members.

Marianne R. Shenefelt  
Most Worthy Grand Matron  
August 2020

Mrs. Marianne R. Shenefelt  
Most Worthy Grand Matron  
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Andrea Stamp, PGM  
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**GENERAL GRAND CHAPTER**  
Order of the Eastern Star  
Established November 1876

**To be shared with OES Membership**

**April 8, 2020**

- **Additional clarification of abbreviated Installation Ceremony**
- **Elections**

My Sisters and Brothers,

**Abbreviated Installations**

Grand Chapter Officers who are now serving, and will continue to serve (a year, several months, etc.) in accordance with the decision made by their leadership, do not have to be re-installed. The GGC Red Book states: "It is necessary to install re-elected officers." (GGC Red Book, Book of Instruction, Installation Ceremony, pg. 193); therefore, those who are now serving and will continue to serve do not have to be re-installed.

The installation of Grand Officers of Grand Jurisdictions whose leadership has made the decision to hold elections and will have new Grand Officers to be installed, the abbreviated Installation Ceremony as described in my earlier letters can be used, i.e., having the necessary Installation Prayer, the Obligation of Officers and the Proclamation of the Officers being duly installed. It is essential to do this without violating the current guidelines relating to the very serious COVID-19 pandemic that threatens the health and safety of the majority of our members who are classified as high risk. This abbreviated Installation Ceremony can be accomplished by conference call, video conferencing, a separate phone call to each individual Officer, or any other means that maintains social distancing. It is my intent to have a small measure of ceremony with the official portions of the Ritual, that must be performed, with no danger to the health and safety of those involved.

**Elections**

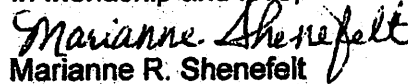
Election of Grand Chapter Officers, as well as Subordinate Chapter Officers, is a complicated issue during these challenging times. With Grand Chapters and Subordinate Chapters adhering to the COVID-19 social distancing guidelines as directed (thank you!) there are no meetings being held; therefore, elections cannot be conducted in person. Due to the restrictions in the duties and powers of the MWGM, it is not possible for me to become involved in the actual governance of a Grand Chapter or their Subordinate Chapters—this includes elections. I encourage you to follow your

Clarifications – Installations; Elections  
April 8, 2020  
page 2

Constitution, Code of Laws, Law Book or similar source for your Jurisdiction as closely as possible; yet, in these unprecedented times it will be necessary to do so with practicality and with the understanding that it's possible none of the usual rules can be applied. These are drastic times. The world will not end if certain rules are not followed. What could end is our beautiful Order if we are not willing to be flexible enough to value our members instead of our rules. This is the most important thing to remember: **nothing** we do is worth putting any member's health and life at risk—no meeting, no gathering, no function or the immediate enforcement of a rule printed in a little book. I am asking you to do the best you can with fairness, compassion and honor.

"Always remember, you are braver than you believe; stronger than you seem; smarter than you think; and loved more than you know." —Winnie the Pooh

In friendship and love,

  
Marianne R. Shenefelt

Most Worthy Grand Matron

copy: Henry S. Martin, MWGP  
Alma Bane, RW Grand Secretary  
GGC Jurisprudence Committee

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**General Grand Chapter**  
**Order of the Eastern Star™**  
**Established November 1876**

**TO BE SHARED WITH OES MEMBERSHIP**

September 23, 2020

My Sisters and Brothers,

I want to thank you for your continuing efforts and dedication to our Order. We've made adjustments and done our best to take these new, perplexing times in stride. Now that some national and local governments have partially lifted Covid-19 restrictions and the WGMs and Deputies in these areas have given permission to return to in-person Chapter meetings, I would like to provide you with the following information.

**Masks.** The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) states: "Masks are recommended as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the mask coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. This is called source control. This recommendation is based on what we know about the role respiratory droplets play in the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, paired with emerging evidence from clinical and laboratory studies that shows masks reduce the spray of droplets when worn over the nose and mouth. COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet), so the use of masks is particularly important in settings where people are close to each other or where social distancing is difficult to maintain." (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>)

**MWGM Instruction.** It is my official instruction to the Grand Jurisdictions and Subordinate Chapters directly under the General Grand Chapter that face masks shall be worn in our Chapter Rooms to protect the health and safety of all members and visitors. This instruction shall be in effect until further notice. The virus does not care about all the hullabaloo about wearing a mask, it's just looking for a place to live and thrive. We're going to do our best not let it find its new home with an Eastern Star member!

**Initiation.** In-person meetings may make it possible for the ceremony of Initiation to be held, which is acceptable. There is no abridged form of initiation. The candidate(s) must be given the full ceremony as prescribed in the Ritual. The candidate(s) must be informed that their initiation is a ceremony where some brief contact may occur and physical distancing is not always possible, and face masks will be worn by all involved. It is our responsibility as their future Sisters and Brothers to explain this to them, followed by giving them the option of not being initiated at this time. The candidate(s) shall be directly

asked if they are comfortable being initiated under these circumstances. If their decision is "no," their decision shall be respected and their initiation scheduled for a later date. Additionally, if circumstances are such that there is any question whatsoever about the health and safety for all concerned, the ceremony of Initiation shall not be held.

Thank you again for all you are doing in the best way possible to support your Sisters and Brothers and our Order. These unsettling times are a challenge for everyone. Maya Angelou said, "Hope and fear cannot occupy the same space. Invite one to stay." Sisters and Brothers, I am so proud to know we are inviting HOPE to stay.

In friendship & love,

*Marianne R. Shenefelt*

Marianne R. Shenefelt  
Most Worthy Grand Matron

copy: Henry S. Martin, MWGP  
Alma Bane, RWGS



**APPROPRIATE FOR IN-PERSON OPEN INSTALLATION CEREMONY  
FOR SUBORDINATE CHAPTERS AND GRAND CHAPTERS**

**Guidelines – In-person OES Installations with COVID-19  
Restrictions: Face Masks, Social Distancing, Limited Attendance  
These instructions are a temporary deviation from normal  
Eastern Star procedures due to the coronavirus pandemic**

I hereby issue the following *temporarily* modified guidelines for the Ritualistic Ceremony for conducting in-person open Installations adhering to COVID-19 restrictions. All participants are to wear face masks, maintain social distancing and attendance is to be limited as required by national and/or local health authorities. These modified Guidelines may be used by Subordinate Chapters and/or Grand Chapters wherever in-person meetings are allowed by national and local authorities and the Worthy Grand Matron. *The following instructions are not permanent.*

**Modified In-person Open Installation.** The Installation Ceremony language printed in the Ritual shall be used, adjusting wording as necessary to fit the circumstances (pages 98-126 or 127-151). The floor work shall be modified as follows in order to maintain social distancing. All participants will please wear face masks/coverings.

All Installing Officers shall be in their Stations six feet apart. The Installing Marshal will remain at her/his Station and invite the incoming Officers to enter the Chapter Room. The Officers will enter the Chapter Room carrying their badges and proceed to the Stations where they will be installed. It is possible their Stations will be on the sidelines six feet apart. When the Officers reach their Stations, they will be seated. The Installation Prayer will be given at the Altar or from the Installing Chaplain's Station. The Installing Marshal will read the roll of Officers to be installed. As their name is called, the Officer will stand at their Station and remain standing. All Officers remain standing and face the Altar to repeat the Obligation of Office given by the Installing Officer. The Officers will then be seated at their Stations.

The Worthy Matron-elect and the Worthy Patron-elect shall be seated in the Chapter Room wherever necessary to maintain social distancing. The Installing Officer shall direct the WM-elect to approach the Altar to be installed. At the Altar, she shall put on her badge when directed and then as directed proceed to the East or near East, whichever position maintains social distancing, to receive Grand Honors and be seated. The same procedure shall be used for the WP-elect.

All other Officers shall remain at their Stations, stand when addressed by the Installing Officer to receive their charge, put on their badge when directed and be seated.

At the end of the Ceremony, the Installing Officer shall direct the Installing Marshal to proclaim from her/his Station the Officers regularly installed.

If members and/or visitors are allowed to be present, strict adherence to the COVID-19 restrictions in your area shall be observed.

Marianne R. Shenefelt  
Most Worthy Grand Matron  
UPDATED January 2021