



New York State COVID -19 Interim Guidance for Jewish High Holidays Observances

September 16, 2020

Planning for Services and Observances

- We continue to recommend that indoor occupancy be restricted to the minimum number of individuals necessary to conduct the service but no more than 33% of the capacity of the space, or the limit of the number of people that can fit within the space while maintaining a social distance of at least 6 feet at all times, and 12 feet if there is chanting or singing, whichever is the fewer number of people.
 - Gatherings in sukkahs can be considered outdoor religious events limited by the number of people who can fit at least 6 feet apart under the Sukkah roof. Social distance must be mandated during meals in the Sukkah and should be used to determine the number of attendees at congregational meals. Ventilation and outdoor air flow should be maximized to the greatest extent possible.

- Social Distancing Indoor and Outdoor Services
 - All seating should be separated by at least 6 feet; 12 feet if there will be singing or chanting, irrespective if the services are indoors or outdoors.
 - Do this by removing seating or blocking off in between seats.
 - Only members of the same household can be closer than 6 feet.
 - Prevent congregating at closer distances by blocking off areas where people tend to gather, especially areas where children or teenagers tend to gather unsupervised.
 - Place 6 feet or 12 feet markers in standing areas and aisles to help individuals stay socially distanced.
 - When possible make aisles and staircases one direction only. If only one stairway is available, only one person should be on the stairway at a time.
 - Small spaces such as elevators should be limited to 50% capacity.
 - Holding or shaking hands, or other close physical contact, among people from different households during services or prayers should be strictly prohibited.

- Face Coverings During Indoor and Outdoor Services
 - Face coverings must be worn at all times except while seated, provided all individuals are 6 ft. apart except for immediate household members, however individuals should be encouraged to wear them at all times during services or prayers even when seated. If singing or chanted is involved then a face covering must be worn even while seated.

- Acceptable face coverings include but are not limited to cloth, surgical masks, and face shields when worn with a face mask underneath.
- Suggestions for Reducing Interpersonal Contact
 - Limit in-person presence when possible.
 - Hold services outdoors when possible.
 - Offer multiple service times, including separate designated times for vulnerable populations.
 - Prioritize activities that allow for social distancing over those that do not.
 - Offer only self-served individually wrapped food and drink; provide enough space for attendees to be at least 6 ft apart when they eat or encourage attendees to take the food with them when they leave (e.g. whole apples not slices and packaged individual honey, challah rolls not passing a large challah).

Services and Observances

- Screening of Attendees Prior to Entering the Building
 - Encourage attendees to take their temperature each time before leaving home/before holiday begins.
 - Anyone with symptoms or a temperature above 100.0⁰ F should stay home.
 - Implement mandatory health screening assessments asking about:
 - 1) COVID-19 symptoms in the past 14 days,
 - 2) positive COVID-19 test in the past 14 days,
 - 3) close contact with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case in past 14 days; and
 - 4) recent travel to a state listed on the NYS travel advisory, or to another country.
 - A person who answers yes to any of the screening questions symptoms must not be allowed to enter the gathering place and must be sent home with instructions to contact their healthcare provider for an evaluation and testing.
- Encourage Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Hygiene
 - Regular hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds should be done:
 - Before and after eating
 - After sneezing, coughing, or nose blowing
 - After using the restroom
 - Before handling food
 - After touching or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated
 - After using shared equipment and supplies
 - Before putting on and after taking off a face covering
 - If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
 - Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or the corner of elbow.

- Dispose of soiled tissues immediately after use.
- Sounding the Shofar Safely
 - Individuals gathering to hear the shofar must be at least 12 feet away from the shofar blower at all times, and must be 6 feet apart from each other.
 - Shofars should be blown outdoors whenever possible.
 - When it is not possible to be outdoors, place a surgical mask over the wide end of the shofar and set the building ventilation system set to “maximal fresh air without recirculation.” An alternative is to sound the shofar through an open window with the shofar blower inside the building facing out the window.
 - One shofar should not be used by multiple people and shofars should not be passed from person to person to hold.
- Suggestions for Reducing Interpersonal Contact
 - Consider offering several different meals at designated times to limit the number of attendees at each meal (e.g., community break the fast during or in community Sukkah).
 - Ask families to bring their own meals or offer only self-served individually wrapped food and drink.
 - Encourage families to limit holiday meals to household members.
 - Do not encourage communal dancing unless social distancing can be maintained, and face coverings are worn.
 - Consider alternatives ways to honor the traditions and intentions of Simchas Torah. Avoid hand holding, strenuous activity such as dancing in large groups in close spaces, passing items from person to person, and handing out treats. Safer practices include socially distanced group walk through building or neighborhood with designated Torah carriers, limited number of participants in socially distanced dancing, and prepackaged treat bags.

After Services

- Routine Cleaning and Disinfection
 - Regularly clean and disinfect the location and ensure high risk areas used by many individuals or that are frequently touched are cleaned and disinfected more frequently.
 - Cleaning and disinfection must occur at least after each service.
 - Examples of priority areas for cleaning and disinfection include:
 - High contact surfaces that are touched by many different people such as chairs, tables, light switches, handrails, and doorknobs/handles
 - Restrooms
 - First aid station / health office
 - Restrooms
 - Dining areas
 - Shared equipment or items

- Routine cleaning, including tasks such as vacuuming of high traffic areas or dust- and wet-mopping or auto-scrubbing floors, should continue to occur on a periodic schedule as operational considerations allow, which may range from at least daily to up to 72 hours.
- Cleaning and Disinfection
 - Cleaning removes germs, dirt and impurities from surfaces or objects. Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces or objects. Individuals do not need to wear respiratory protection while cleaning or disinfecting but should use personal protective equipment (e.g. gloves) as recommended on product labels.
 - Step 1: Cleaning
 - Always clean surfaces prior to use of disinfectants in order to reduce soil and remove germs.
 - Step 2: Disinfection
 - Use the DEC list of products registered in New York State identified as effective against COVID-19. If those products are unavailable, disinfect surfaces using an EPA- and DEC*- registered disinfectant labeled to be effective against rhinovirus and/or human coronavirus. If these commercial products are unavailable, it is also acceptable to use a fresh 2% chlorine bleach solution (approximately 1 tablespoon of bleach in 1 quart of water).
 - Step 3: Disposal
 - Place all used gloves and other disposable items in a bag that can be tied closed before disposing of them with other waste. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds immediately after removing gloves or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.