

# **Safety practices for Reopening the Congregation Beth El building in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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## **PURPOSE**

Congregation Beth El seeks to provide a safe and healthy environment for all congregants, staff members and visitors who participate in its programs and activities. By implementing the below safety practices, the goal is to protect all children, workers, congregants, volunteers and guests of Beth El from COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and to enable as meaningful an experience as possible given existing public health concerns.

As a Jewish organization, we will be guided by the values of:

- Pikuach nefesh – “Safeguarding Life”. We will prioritize the safety of staff, congregants, and visitors, and the safety of those most vulnerable to infection, as well as the general public health, in accordance with this core Jewish value.
- Savlanut – “Patience.” We will “open up” as slowly as we need to, even though our hearts yearn for connection. We will cultivate patience as we walk this path.
- Kol Yisrael arevim zeh l'zeh – “We are responsible for one another”. It’s our job to look out for the mental and physical health and safety of one another. Those that have resources need to give tzedakah to help others and to sustain our institutions. Our congregants are connected to others outside our community, and our policies and activities affect the broader rate of infection.
- Hesed – “Profound Love and Kindness” – Decisions around our operations and the risks involved create uncertainty, grief, and anxiety, and we must act with tremendous love and kindness towards the members of our families, our congregants, communities, and the world at large.

## **SAFETY PRACTICES**

These safety practices are based on the CDC recommendations for reopening Community and Faith-Based organizations (See References), and federal, state, and local recommendations and are subject to change at any time due to various factors, including but not limited to, changes in the CDC and/or other governmental recommendations and the specific event at issue.

### **Phases**

- Re-opening the Beth El Building will proceed in phases and will be subject to change based on changing circumstances
- Phase 1: Outdoor service with not more than 40 people

- Phase 2: In-Door service with not more than 25 people
- Additional phases including lifecycle events, classes, increased capacity for services, etc: TBD

### **Health Standards**

- Any person with symptoms of COVID-19, cold, or flu must not enter the synagogue building.
- Those who have traveled domestically or internationally within 14 days must not enter the synagogue building.
- Those who believe that, on account of their age or a health condition, they are in a vulnerable population, or have underlying health conditions (see Appendix 1) are strongly discouraged from entering the synagogue building and should consult with their physician before entering.

### **Entry Screening**

- Each person must pre-register to enter the synagogue.
- Each person must sign a waiver to enter the synagogue (one time and kept on file).
- Each person must answer the following questions one day before entry into the building. (Yes to any question means no entry)
  - Have you had any fevers or been ill or sick in the last 72 hours?
  - Have you been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the past 10 days?
  - Are you waiting for the results of a COVID test?
  - Have you been exposed to someone with COVID 19 in the last 14 days?
  - Have you traveled domestically or internationally within 14 days to a state or country on the current COVID watch list?
- A temperature check will be done at the door with an infrared thermometer. No one will be admitted with a temperature greater than 100.
- A single entrance of the synagogue will be used to ensure all temperatures are checked
- The synagogue will designate individuals responsible for the temperature check, ID check if necessary, and confirm entry forms.
- Each person must sanitize hands upon entering the building
- Attendance will be monitored for contact tracing purposes.
- Attendance records will be kept confidentially in the Synagogue Office.
- This entry screening process applies to anyone that enters the building including congregants, staff, and visitors.

### **Masks/Face Coverings**

- Masks/face coverings must be worn at all times within the synagogue building. The mask should cover both the nose and the mouth at all times.
- The exception is when leading all or part of a service. If the leader is not wearing a mask, they must wear a face shield.
- Under Phase 1 and 2, children under 2 years of age are not allowed in the building or premises.
- Everyone must bring their own face masks/coverings or face shields. No masks will be provided.
- People failing to comply with wearing a face mask will be asked to leave the building or the premises.

### **Hand Sanitizer and Hand Washing**

- Proper use of hand sanitizer upon entering the synagogue building is mandatory. A table with hand sanitizer will be available inside the entry doors.

### **Social Distancing**

- Social distancing standards must be maintained at all times. A minimum distance of 6 feet between people must be observed in the building.
- Capacity shall not exceed state executive orders under any circumstance.
- Physical guides such as tape on floors, signs on walls or designated chairs for minyanim/services will be posted and must be followed to ensure social distancing is maintained
- Do not congregate after services, meetings, and classes. Leave the premises immediately after the event has ended.

### **Food/Drink**

- The water fountain will not be available for use.
- People will be asked to supply their own water and beverages. All beverages must be certified Kosher.
- No food may be brought into the synagogue with the exception of synagogue staff who may bring their lunch or snacks. No food/snacks will be supplied by the synagogue.
- Kitchens, and the appliances within, are not available for use.

### **Ritual Practices**

- Mezuzot
  - Refrain from touching and kissing all synagogue Mezuzot.
- Kippot and Tallitot
  - Bring your own! A limited supply will be available if needed. Used Kippot and Tallitot should be placed on the "Used" book table; see below.
- Siddurim (Prayer Books):
  - Upon arrival to Minyanim/services, pick up a book from the "Clean" Table.
  - Upon leaving, place book on the "Used" Table.
  - All books will be sanitized between uses.
  - Refrain from kissing Siddurim.
- Torah Handling and Reading:
  - No kissing or touching of the Torah.
  - Only the Rabbis/Leaders will handle the Torah and there will be no processional
  - Those with Aliyot will remain at their seats and rise to recite the blessings.
- Tzedaka Box
  - The Tzedaka box will not be available. Please make (generous) donations using the Beth El website.
- Singing
  - For Phase 1 and 2, with the exception of the leader, no singing is permitted in Minyanim/Services. The leader has to face away from the congregation when singing.

### **Personal Belongings**

- The coat room will be unavailable for use until further notice. Carry all personal belongings such as coats, pocketbooks, and umbrellas at all times.

- Umbrella bags will be available for use. An umbrella bag stand will be placed near the hand sanitizer table inside the entry doors.

### **Restrooms**

- Only the restrooms in the new building (rotunda area) will be open.
- Doors in the lobby restrooms must remain open at all times.
- For Phase 2, one (1) person in each restroom at any time.
- Frequency of restroom sanitization will be increased

### **Signage**

- Signs will be posted in highly visible locations that
  - Promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs
  - Indicate social distance parameters for different regions of the synagogue
  - Promote that a person must stay at home if you are sick or have had close contact with a person with COVID-19 (posted near the entrance).

### **Cleaning, Disinfection, and Ventilation**

- Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected at least once daily and shared objects will be cleaned in between uses following the CDC Guidelines (see Reference).
- A schedule of increased, routine cleaning and disinfection will be followed
- Items that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected will not be used.
- The ventilation system will be upgraded including installation of UV-C lights.

### **Staffing and Training**

- Staff and volunteers will be trained in the safety actions described in this procedure.
- Training records will be maintained in the synagogue office

### **Enforcement**

- A properly trained staff member or volunteer will always be on the premises to enforce the safety practices of this policy.
- The Board will have authorized these staff members and volunteers to enforce these policies.
- Congregants, visitors, or staff members that do not comply with the safety practices will be asked to leave.

### **Checking for Signs and Symptoms**

- If someone is in the building and exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 and if they are unable to leave on their own, they will be placed in a separate area of the building until they can be safely transported to their home or a healthcare facility.
- A Co-President or duly appointed Executive Team member will notify local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility and communicate with staff and congregants about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required by the “Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)”.
- The Synagogue will advise those with exposure to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to contact his/her doctor and following his/her doctor’s advice about how to receive care and otherwise deal with the virus (including but not limited to self-monitoring and self-quarantining.)

- The staff will close off the area used by the person who has appeared to show symptoms of the virus and not re-open it until after cleaning and disinfection.
- Staff and congregants with symptoms of COVID-19 or who have tested positive for COVID-19 will not be allowed to return to the facility until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation.

### **Maintain Healthy Operations**

- The synagogue will provide flexible sick leave and flexible policies and practices for staff (e.g. allowing work from home if possible).
- The synagogue will designate a staff person, volunteer, or committee to be responsible to responding to COVID-19 concerns that do not require medical advice. The Co-Presidents will serve in this role until further notice.
- The synagogue will communicate clearly with staff and congregants about actions being taken to protect their health.

## **Procedure for Attending Minyanim, Services, Meetings, Classes, and Life Cycle Events**

### **Phases**

- Re-opening the Beth El Building will proceed in phases and will be subject to change based on changing circumstances
- Phase 1: Outdoor service with not more than 40 people
- Phase 2: In-Door service with not more than 25 people
- Additional phases: TBD

### **Capacity, Attendance and Gathering:**

- Capacity will be dictated by state executive orders but may be reduced at the discretion of the Board.
- Attendance will be monitored for contact tracing purposes.
- Attendance records will be kept confidentially in the Synagogue Office.
- Congregants, staff, and visitors must comply with Beth El safety practices

### **Outdoor Service – Phase 1**

- The service will be held in the parking lot behind the building where the barbecue is held.
- Maximum attendance of 40 people.
- The service will not last more than one hour.
- Congregants need to pre-register.
- The standard entry screening procedure will be employed.
- Please go to your assigned seats
- Wearing a mask is mandatory
- Maintain at least 6 feet social distancing
- For Phase 1, humming or low chanting is allowed, but there is no singing permitted.
- The building will not be open.

- There will be no bathrooms available.
- At the end of the service, please leave immediately
- If the weather is bad, the outdoor service will be cancelled by 3 PM in the afternoon, and everyone will be notified and a regular virtual only service will take place.

### **Indoor Service – Phase 2**

- Applicable to Weekday/Sunday Minyanim, Shabbat Services, and Holiday Services
- Will take place in the sanctuary with a maximum capacity of 25 people including Rabbi/leaders.
- Spaces for seats will be marked. Do not move chairs. The gold, non-fabric chairs will be used.
- Upon entering, please go to your assigned seats or if not provided, fill in the seats from the front of the sanctuary to the back.
- Upon leaving, allow people sitting closer to the doors to exit first.
- If technology allows, Minyanim will be broadcast via Zoom.
- Gabbaiim during Torah reading will stand at designated markings near the Torah table.
- Congregants with an aliya will stand and chant it from their seat

**Meetings and Classes: To be added at a later date.**

**Life Cycle Events: To be added at a later date.**

### **Sign-ups Procedure**

- Required for all services no later than Tuesday of the week of Shabbat.
- First come, first serve by date/time stamp of call/email.
- Register via web site, phone call to Beth El Synagogue 215-493-1707 or email to Barbara Schwartz (Barbara@Bethelyardley.org)
- If not enough people sign up to make a minyan, the in-person service will be cancelled.
- If someone is sitting Shiva or needs to say Kaddish, their attendance will be prioritized, however sign up is still required.
- Attendance for services will be confirmed by email or phone 48 to 72 hours before the service.
- Those unable to participate due to maximum capacity constraints will be given priority at the next available service.
- Those who frequently attend services may be asked to rotate to allow others to attend as needed.

### **References**

CDC Recommendations for Community and Faith Based Organizations  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html>

CDC Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/clean-disinfect/index.html>

Pennsylvania COVID Guidelines

<https://www.governor.pa.gov/process-to-reopen-pennsylvania/>

<https://www.pa.gov/guides/responding-to-covid-19/>

### **Appendix 1: High Risk Conditions**

- People greater than 65 years old
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- People with underlying medical conditions (any age)
  - Chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
  - Serious heart conditions
  - Immunocompromised
    - Cancer treatment
    - Smoking
    - Bone marrow transplantation
    - Immune deficiency
    - HIV or AIDS
    - Prolonged use of steroids
    - Immune weakening medications
- Severe obesity
- Diabetes
- Chronic kidney disease
- Require hemodialysis
- Liver disease