



# Pandemic Response Plan

## Spring 2020

A Pandemic Response Plan offers a framework to guide the difficult decisions for when to close and when to reopen the Synagogue building in order to contain the spread of infection and protect the health of our community.

The purpose of the Pandemic Response Plan is to provide awareness, education and training in order to minimize the number of illnesses, reduce the spread of infectious disease, minimize disruption to programming, and preserve continuity of essential functions.

**Our guiding principle for the decisions at each stage is the long valued Jewish value of *Pikuach Nefesh*, preserving life. Our decisions will therefore rely on our ability to best protect the health and well-being of our congregants, staff, clergy and community.**

Public health guidance and mandates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), state and local health departments will be considered at each stage of decision-making for closing and reopening. Any re-gatherings under each phase will require appropriate notification and approval after consultation with the Executive Board. Emphasis should be placed on clearly communicating with the Board of Trustees, staff and congregants on actions being taken to protect their health.

In all the below stages, congregants, staff and visitors should self-monitor for symptoms of the pandemic infectious disease (COVID-19) per public health guidelines. Anyone who has been diagnosed or presenting with symptoms of the pandemic infectious disease (COVID-19) should avoid attendance at synagogue or other Temple events until they have met CDC guidelines to discontinue home isolation. In addition, anyone who has had personal exposure to COVID-19 should avoid attendance at synagogue or Temple events and follow prudent and proper CDC guidelines for their exposure.

Staff also should maintain a record of visitors/vendors who come to the facility along with contact information.

Prior to the implementation of any of these phases, staff and clergy should be trained so that they are clear as to the requirements and expectations as to the upcoming phase. Moving from one phase to another requires the majority vote of the Executive Board along with input from clergy and staff.

Finally, this Pandemic Response Plan cannot cover all recommendations including for cleaning and disinfecting areas after possible exposure to an infectious disease. Again, reference is made to guidelines established by the CDC and other local and state public health authorities which should be regularly consulted during the course of a pandemic.

The Pandemic Response Plan is a progressive response plan consisting of the following phases:

Activation

**PHASE 1**

Activation of Infectious Disease Response Plan/Education and Communication

**PHASE 2**

Social Distancing/Sanitation and Personal Protection Measures

**PHASE 3**

Synagogue Closures and Virtual Worship and Programming/Suspension of All In-Person Programming and In-Person Religious School

Reopening

**PHASE 1**

No In-Person Gatherings/Reopening with Significant Restrictions

**PHASE 2**

Significantly Limited Gatherings

**PHASE 3**

Moderately Limited Gatherings

**PHASE 4**

Unlimited Gatherings with Some Protections

This plan outlines the specific actions and protocols that Temple Israel will implement and the relevant public health indicators which trigger those actions. This Pandemic Response Plan is to be implemented after discussion and vote of the Executive Board with the opportunity for input of clergy and staff. Prior to moving from one stage to another the full Board of Trustees should be notified of the Executive Board's intent to modify the phase.

*It should be noted that this Pandemic Response Plan is a fluid document and additional considerations, when appropriate, may be used by the Executive Board and clergy to respond to an infectious disease outbreak.*

## **Stages of the Closing of Synagogue in Response to a Public Health Emergency**

### **ACTIVATION - PHASE ONE**

**Monitor media for information regarding ongoing public health concerns in the Akron and Northeast Ohio area and reports from local health departments as well as the CDC.**

**Monitor the health and wellbeing of congregants and families and report concerns regarding communicable disease outbreaks to the Rabbi and Executive Board.**

**When deemed appropriate by the Executive Board, an emergency Executive Board meeting will be held to initiate activation of any phase of the Pandemic Response Plan.**

**In the event any visitor to Temple Israel has been diagnosed with an infectious disease, the Executive Board will immediately proceed to Phase Three.**

### **SYNAGOGUE PROTOCOLS UNDER PHASE ONE**

- Begin education when a significant infectious disease concern is reported in the media and/or local health departments
- Educate staff and congregants to promote awareness
- Institute policies for staff and congregants, to:
  - a) Recognize and report the signs of illness
  - b) Stay home when sick, seek appropriate medical care
  - c) Utilize proper hygienic techniques for coughing, sneezing, tissue disposal
  - d) Avoid physical contact such as handshaking and hugs
  - e) Avoid touching eyes, mouth, nose with unwashed hands
  - f) Clean surfaces with approved products
  - g) Hand sanitizing stations inside doorways, Religious School and sanctuary
  - h) Avoid ritual touching of mezuzah, Torah or other ritual objects

- i) Elimination of communal kiddush and motzi
  - j) Obtain available vaccinations (If applicable)
- o The education program will utilize one or more of the following communication tactics:
    - a) Targeted messaging via official email, website, and social media platforms
    - b) Visual communication via signs and posters
      - At building entrances
      - Inside classrooms, lobby and social hall
      - Inside restrooms
    - c) Oral presentations can be made in one or more of the following methods:
      - To students in classrooms
      - To staff at meetings
      - To parents of educational program participant

## ACTIVATION - PHASE TWO

**Social Distancing is implemented to reduce person-to-person contact and limit the spread of disease.**

**Sanitation and personal protection measures are increased to reduce the transmission of communicable disease amongst staff, congregants and visitors.**

### PUBLIC HEALTH INDICATORS FOR ACTIVATION PHASE TWO – SOCIAL DISTANCING

One or more cases of a pandemic infectious disease are reported within local counties.

### SYNAGOGUE PROTOCOLS UNDER PHASE TWO

- o Institute work-from-home policies for employees where possible
- o Replace in-person meetings with conference calls or Zoom meetings
- o Increase student-spacing in classrooms
- o Suspension of large-group gatherings to include all Life Cycle events
- o Suspension of choir or musical ensemble
- o Increase Sanitation and Personal Protection Measures

- a) Increased cleaning frequency in widely-used areas by custodial staff
  - Classrooms
  - Bathrooms
  - Copy Room
- b) Increased frequency of anti-bacterial, anti-viral cleaning of door-handles, faucets, restrooms and kitchen by custodial staff utilizing approved products
- c) Mandatory participation of staff and other personnel in additional hygiene practices
- d) If possible, increase percentage of fresh air content and circulation by HVAC units
- e) Staff, clergy and essential visitors wear masks when in public areas

## **ACTIVATION – PHASE THREE**

**No In-Person Gatherings  
(Stay-at-Home/Most Businesses and  
Institutions Closed)**

### **PUBLIC HEALTH INDICATORS FOR ACTIVATION PHASE THREE**

Cases of the pandemic infection have been confirmed in the county or when advised by local health officials, or in conjunction with announcements from the local school districts. An individual known to have visited Temple is confirmed to have contracted the pandemic infectious disease.

### **SYNAGOGUE PROTOCOLS UNDER PHASE THREE**

- Minimal synagogue staffing, all non-essential personnel work from home or remain home
- Suspend all religious schools and institute remote-learning opportunities when possible
- Cancel scheduled events and programming at Temple

- Request synagogue partners cancel all gatherings, events and programming outside of religious services
- Gift shop is closed
- Kitchen is closed
- Virtual worship, live-streamed or recorded
- Torah Study, meetings, small groups, social gatherings via telephone or online
- Pastoral care via telephone or online
- Emphasis on connecting with all congregants to assess needs as well as compassionate care within the framework of established safety protocols
- Initial assessments of economic impact on members of the congregation and wider Jewish community along with preliminary adjustments to Temple Israel budget and finances

# Phases of the Opening of Synagogue in Response to a Public Health Emergency

Our synagogue and clergy respond to the abrupt end to public worship and community gatherings with creativity, goodwill, and compassion ... now we must prepare ourselves for different stages of gathering. The following is a plan for gradual, rephased reopening of our synagogue, sanctuary and activities, understanding that this plan must, at times, be fluid and must be executed with continuing guidance from civic authorities and religious leaders. This plan will also hinge on the behavior and cooperation among our congregants and community. The hard reality is that we may not be able to meet all needs of all congregants at every stage of this plan.

## REOPENING - PHASE ONE

**No In-Person Gatherings  
(Stay-At-Home Restrictions Are Being Liberalized/Most Businesses Are Re-Opening With Significant Restrictions)**

**If during any re-opening phase, a staff member or visitor to Temple Israel is diagnosed with the pandemic infectious disease, the Executive Board may consider immediately proceeding to Closing Phase Three for a few days for cleaning and disinfection until it is deemed safe to advance reopening.**

## SYNAGOGUE PROTOCOLS UNDER REOPENING PHASE ONE

- Staff may work from the office adhering to social distancing and wearing masks in public areas and when in the same room with someone
- Virtual worship, live-streamed or recorded
- Torah Study, meetings, small groups, Brotherhood and Sisterhood gatherings, social gatherings via telephone or online
- Gift shop remains closed
- Kitchen remains closed
- Pastoral care via telephone or online
- Continued emphasis on connecting with all congregants to assess needs as well as compassionate care within the framework of established safety protocols

# REOPENING - PHASE TWO

## Significantly Limited Gatherings (Some Businesses and Institutions Reopened with Significant Limitations)

### PUBLIC HEALTH INDICATORS FOR REOPENING PHASE TWO

14-DAY CONSECUTIVE DECLINE IN NUMBERS OF PEOPLE TESTING POSITIVE FOR THE PANDEMIC INFECTIOUS DISEASE AND HOSPITALIZATIONS IN SUMMIT COUNTY (DATA FROM SURROUNDING COUNTIES WHERE CONGREGANTS RESIDE WILL ALSO BE REVIEWED)

WIDESPREAD TESTING/CONTACT TRACING AVAILABLE TO TRACK THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS

SUFFICIENT SUPPLY OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

EVIDENCE THAT OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS HAVE SUFFICIENT EQUIPMENT AND ARE NOT OVERWHELMED BY THE NUMBER OF CASES

### SYNAGOGUE PROTOCOLS UNDER PHASE TWO

- Synagogue offices may reopen in spaces large enough for physical distance to be maintained, with the requirement that proper sanitation measures, including masks and 6 feet physical distance, be strictly adhered to and enforced
- Torah Study, meetings, small groups, Brotherhood and Sisterhood gatherings, social gatherings of 10 or under (or a number designated by civic authorities) may re-start in spaces large enough for 6 feet of physical distance to be maintained between people with mandatory masks
- Continued suspension of choir or musical ensemble
- Gift Shop may open by appointment only with no more than three people at a time
- Kitchen remains closed due to physical distancing concerns

- Continued health/safety protocols, including the use of masks at all gatherings and by clergy, staff and visitors in common areas
- Ongoing care for the most vulnerable
- Next level of assessment of pandemic's impact on members of the congregation and Jewish community. Forecasting of necessary long-term adjustments including financial and budgetary effect
- Assessment of upcoming High Holy Days or other holiday worship services as to whether virtual, in-person or some combination. A Task Force consisting of clergy, representatives of Executive Board, Chair of Ritual and Worship Committee as well as appropriate experts in the medical field established to make a recommendation to the Executive Board as to High Holy Days or other holiday worship services
- Virtual worship will still be necessary to accommodate vulnerable populations and larger worshipping
- Pastoral care to those in high-risk categories for contracting the virus remains restricted, particularly for clergy and lay visitors in high-risk categories

## REOPENING PHASE THREE

**Moderately Limited Gatherings  
(More Businesses and Institutions Reopened  
with Fewer Restrictions)**

### PUBLIC HEALTH INDICATORS FOR PHASE THREE

ANOTHER CONSECUTIVE 14 DAY IMPROVEMENT IN NUMBER OF PANDEMIC INFECTIOUS DISEASE CASES (OR NEAR ZERO INCIDENCE) WITHOUT EXPERIENCING A REBOUND, HOSPITALIZATIONS HAVE FALLEN TO NEAR ZERO

CONSIDERATION WILL ALSO BE GIVEN TO:  
THE AVAILABILITY OF WIDESPREAD TESTING AND TRACKING  
HEALTH CARE SYSTEM WELL EQUIPPED AND ABLE TO TREAT ALL IN NEED

## SYNAGOGUE PROTOCOLS WITH GUIDELINES UNDER PHASE THREE

- Increased number of persons allowed for public worship and Life Cycle events, according to guidelines set by health officials while protecting staff and congregants who are at higher risk of severe illness and encourage use of options to participate virtually if possible
- Seating should be spaced out to six feet apart for congregants who do not live in the same household and consider eliminating rows of seats
- Continued suspension of choir or musical ensemble. Musical ensemble can be resumed if accomplished with appropriate physical distancing
- Continued physical distancing and masking requirements likely
- Pastoral care, at the discretion of clergy, can resume in person but virtual pastoral care is encouraged for those at-risk
- Restrictions eased on office/classroom gathering, within guidelines
- Torah Study, larger meetings, small groups, Brotherhood and Sisterhood gatherings in-person Religious School and other classes may resume within established public health guidelines including physical distancing restrictions and mask requirements
- Gift Shop open with physical distancing restrictions and mask requirements
- Kitchen open with physical distancing restrictions and mask requirements
- Continued health and hygiene practices including no-touch trash cans, hand sanitizer stations, cloth masks provided for those in need, as well as sanitizing of all frequently touched surfaces at least daily including door knobs, faucets and surrounding areas and shared and ritual objects
- Continued elimination of touching of mezuzah and other ritual objects as well as kiddush and motzi. Encourage congregants to bring their own prayer books or reproduce liturgy by electronic means for the congregation
- All water supply sources including sinks, faucets and drinking fountains should be flushed to avoid Legionaire's Disease, etc. after a prolonged shut down. Kitchen ice machine should be emptied and refilled with fresh water. Reference should be made to CDC guidelines in this area
- Avoid food offerings when shared from common dishes or buffets and consider offering pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee whenever possible
- Continued assessments of pandemic's impact with discernment toward the future

# REOPENING PHASE FOUR

**(All or Most Physical Restrictions Lifted)**

**Unlimited Gatherings with Some Protections**

## PUBLIC HEALTH INDICATORS FOR PHASE FOUR

A VACCINE HAS BEEN DEVELOPED AND IS AVAILABLE TO ALL IN THE  
GENERAL PUBLIC

TREATMENT OF PROVEN EFFECTIVENESS IS WIDELY AVAILABLE

TESTING IS WIDESPREAD FOR VIRUS AND IMMUNITY

## SYNAGOGUE PROTOCOLS WITH GUIDELINES UNDER PHASE FOUR

- No limit to the number of worshipers who may attend, except that those who are known to be infectious, actively sick, or who display any of the symptoms of being ill may not attend. High risk congregants should be encouraged to continue participation virtually.
- Continued virtual worship for those who are ill or who have compromised health
- Worshipers may wear masks throughout the service but masks will not be required
- Community gathering and meeting restrictions are lifted
- In-person Religious School except for those that are known to be infectious, actively sick, high risk or who display any of the symptoms of being ill

# SYNAGOGUE LIFE AFTER A PANDEMIC: CONTINUED ADAPTATION TO A NEW REALITY

A lengthy pandemic will create a new reality at Temple Israel. We must continue to reflect on successes and failures and what worked and did not work about our pandemic plan. We must also realize that life after a pandemic will create certain expectations among congregants that will need to continue to be met. ***These guidelines are not intended as a static document and will require continual evaluation going forward.***

## References:

Pandemic Response Plan DRAFT by Temple Shir Tikva, Wayland Massachusetts  
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CDC Public Health Guidance for Community-Related Exposure <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html>  
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Created 5/20/20 Updated: 5/22/20, 5/27/20