



Temple Israel
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Plan for Reconvening in Person

PHILOSOPHY:

As widespread vaccination both protects individuals and continues to help lower the rate of COVID transmission within our community, we face the ongoing challenge of balancing risk and reward. While effective June 7, NH state and Portsmouth city mask mandates are no longer in place, COVID danger isn't over while a significant percentage of temple membership is **ineligible** for vaccination, due to youth or other factors.

In this environment, organizations and businesses must decide for themselves what personal health information to collect and what standards to enforce. We take "following the science" and "protecting the vulnerable" as our guiding principles. Our plan is to relax COVID restrictions in stages, as we recalibrate to a "new normal." This allows us to remain vigilant against upticks in community virus transmission, as could happen with extremely contagious variants. The good health habits we all have developed, including hand-washing hygiene and staying home when feeling ill or feverish, must be maintained. Increased physical security measures also remain in place.

In line with these principles, we have decided to adopt the guidelines suggested by the Synagogue Council of Massachusetts (see below) which incorporates both scientific and Jewish values. This will replace the color-coding system previously employed based on the CovidActNow website. This updated system will allow us to reconvene safely together while fine-tuning our safety measures based on the Covid-19 caseload in the counties where our members live.

As we move forward through this pandemic together, we are grateful that care and caution have been rewarded by no reported virus outbreaks associated with Temple Israel events. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions.

SYNAGOGUE COUNCIL GUIDELINES:

The Synagogue Council of Massachusetts proposes the following safety measures based on the level of COVID-19 transmission in your local communities. To

understand the science and ethics behind these guidelines, please watch this informative webinar (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkVtrhbHzT0&t=3s>).

At all current risk levels:

- In-person programming can occur. Zoom or other online options will continue to be available.
- Temple Israel will assess the COVID-19 caseload in Rockingham County (NH), Strafford County (NH) and York County (ME) and the TIP membership weighted average for the three counties will be used as the overall level for the Temple.

Level 1 (**GREEN**): Daily case rate <1/100,000 population

It is reasonable to CONSIDER

- Request masks of unvaccinated
- Distancing for those who wish
- No ritual hand-shaking
- Sanitizer easily available
- Otherwise normal interactions

Level 2 (**YELLOW**): Daily case rate between 1 and 2/100,000 population

It is PRUDENT to

- Masks for everyone
- Assure adequate ventilation
- Reasonable to not distance with options available to distance
- Food sitting down only (no self serve)
- No Torah procession
- Sanitize after touching ritual objects

Level 3 (**ORANGE**): Daily case rate between 2 and 7/100,000 population

It is PRUDENT to

- Same as for Level 2 plus
- Distancing with options not to distance
- No food

Level 4 (**RED**): Daily case rate >7/100,000 population

It is PRUDENT to

- Same as for Level 3 plus
- 6-foot distancing including Bimah/Torah interactions
- No food

As of June 29, 2021, the county caseloads (7-day average) of COVID-19 are shown below, giving an overall Temple Israel level of 1.89 or **YELLOW**. This will be updated on a weekly basis (data taken from [CovidActNow https://covidactnow.org/](https://covidactnow.org/)).

County	State	Member Households	New Cases / 100,000
Rockingham	NH	168	1.7
Strafford	NH	55	1.9
York	ME	28	3.0

INDOOR POLICIES:

Masks: In the spirit of our Jewish values, Temple Israel relies on members and visitors to protect one another, especially those currently ineligible for vaccination. At levels **YELLOW**, **ORANGE** and **RED**:

- **All** adults and children (over the age of 2) must wear masks covering mouth and nose when attending services/events in the building and when moving around the building.

- Those who have difficulty wearing masks for extended periods of time for health reasons are asked to leave the Sanctuary or event room to take a private break before removing their mask.
- Rabba Kaya and other fully vaccinated service leaders may be mask free on the Bimah while leading services.
- Fully vaccinated individuals may remove their mask while actively reading on the Bimah (during an Aliyah, when reading Torah), removing it once on the Bimah and replacing it before stepping down.
- **YELLOW** level only: As an additional option for those who struggle to wear masks for extended periods, **fully vaccinated** people may participate in the service from the balcony mask-free.

At level **GREEN**:

- **Unvaccinated** adults and children (over the age of 2) must wear masks covering mouth and nose when attending services/events in the building and when moving around the building.
- **Fully vaccinated** individuals may choose to go mask-free.

Distancing: At all levels **EXCEPT RED**:

- Half of the Sanctuary will retain the 6-foot distancing markers (marked for household units) to accommodate members whose vaccination status or preference dictates some physical separation.
- The other half of the Sanctuary will be open to allow individuals to choose their level of spacing according to their risk and comfort.

At level **RED**:

- The whole Sanctuary will adopt the 6-foot distancing markers (marked for household units).

OUTDOOR POLICIES: Masks do **NOT** need to be worn outdoors, unless:

- Your status is unvaccinated or partially vaccinated **AND**
- You are unable to maintain 6 feet of physical separation from others.

GENERAL POLICIES:

Hygiene:

- A supply of masks and hand sanitizer will be provided at entry/exit points to the Temple and at all events and services.
- The use of bathrooms is permitted. Congregants are reminded of the need for good hygiene practices, especially at this time.
- Congregants are encouraged to use their own books, yarmulkes, tallits etc. for their own protection (though these items are available).

Registration:

- Registration is required for larger in-person events such as b'nei mitzvah celebrations.
- Registration will be open for regular services and events in order to help with planning but is **not** required for attendance.

Refreshments:

At level **YELLOW**, Oneg and kiddush may be served, with the following guidelines:

- Food will be pre-packaged for attendees to collect from a buffet table, or will be served by volunteers or staff (no self-serve buffets).
- Attendees are asked to queue or remain at a table to be served, rather than congregating at food tables.
- Tables will be spaced at an appropriate distance. Congregants who are unvaccinated or at increased risk are encouraged to distance themselves.
- Masks can be removed indoors for the purposes of eating but should be worn at all other times, including when moving around or collecting food.

At level **GREEN**:

- Self-serve buffets are also allowed.
- **Unvaccinated** individuals can remove their mask to eat. **Fully vaccinated** individuals are not required to wear masks.

Building access:

- **Signing into the building** will no longer be required, except to take attendance at events.
- **Fobs** are now activated for members to enter the building between the hours of 7:30 am and 10:00 pm. At other times, the building alarm is on.

Signage:

- Signage about these rules will be posted inside the building at all times, and outside the building for services and other events where visitors may attend.

Children's events:

- The Hebrew School and the Early Learning Center may enact separate policies specifically designed to protect groups of young children, currently ineligible for vaccination.
- Indoor or outdoor events planned for children may have their own specific guidelines, which will be communicated in the event promotion information.

VACCINATION STATUS:

- **At this time, we ask that members and visitors confidentially and voluntarily provide proof of vaccination to the temple office.**
- The benefit of collecting information about the percentage of fully vaccinated members is that it will allow us to further ease restrictions and increase capacity for High Holiday services once sufficient vaccination rate is achieved in the community.
- For proof of vaccination, you can take a scan or photograph of your vaccination card and email to the office, stop by and present the card to Heather, mail or drop off a photocopy of the card in the locked mailbox outside the office door, whatever is most convenient! Emails will be deleted, and documents shredded after status is noted.