



GUIDE TO RE-ENTERING THE MJC

as of September 15, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Our community and our world are slowly emerging from a crisis that none of us could have imagined or prepared for. No aspect of our lives has been untouched by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our physical health, psychosocial, financial and spiritual well-being have been put to the test. There are many stories of great tragedy but there are as many stories of great heroism, acts of kindness and wonderful innovation as families have prevailed through months of self-quarantine.

The Merrick Jewish Centre, under the loving support and guidance of our Rabbis and lay leadership have continued to reach out and provide Shabbat, minyan, and Yom Tov services, numerous classes, and personal touchpoints to our congregants and friends. We have all learned how to ZOOM and YouTube. Now, under New York State and Nassau County phased re-opening plans the Merrick Jewish Centre is ready to re-emerge as strong and vibrant as ever. We will need to start slowly at first and re-adjust plans as needed. This document covers the first phase of re-entry estimated to be occur during the summer of 2020.

WE CARE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

Your health and safety and that of our clergy and staff is paramount. While many of us are eager to return to the MJC building, others are more hesitant and cautious. As there is no right answer, each individual and family must do what is right for themselves. We are taking many steps to ensure the healthfulness of the building and to prevent the spread of the virus as best as we can.

However, we cannot do it without your help. We need to be partners in keeping each other safe. This means following the guidance of our Health & Safety and Security teams. Please understand that these guidelines were not determined easily or haphazardly, rather the thoughtful collaboration of many professional, clergy and lay leaders based upon most current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) guidance and recommendations.

Even with us all following these important guidelines and implementing best practices to prevent the spread of virus, the Merrick Jewish Centre cannot guarantee that there will be no exposure to COVID-19 or any other communicable diseases as we make our gradual re-entry to the MJC building.

ATTENDING IN-PERSON SERVICES AT THE MERRICK JEWISH CENTRE

The procedures below apply to attendance at all services and may change at any time in response to guidelines and advisories issued by the CDC and the NYSDOH, Governor Cuomo, Nassau County and the Town of Hempstead.

Anyone who enters the MJC building, including the premises adjacent to the building, such as the parking lot, sidewalks, staircases and landings, and grassy areas, agrees to fully adhere to this Guide.

There will be no exceptions to this Guide to Re-Entering the MJC. Failure to follow guidelines places other congregants and staff at risk and cannot be tolerated and anyone in violation will be asked to leave the building.

Capacity Controls

Although we would love nothing more than having a Sanctuary filled with our congregation, current physical distancing requirements significantly limit the number of members who can be safely accommodated for services. We ask for your patience and understanding, and help to protect the health and safety of all of our members and guests, by reviewing and adhering to the guidelines below:

At this time, pre-registration is required for all services taking place inside the MJC building. Without a confirmed registration, you will not be admitted into the building.

Social distancing as outlined below must be strictly adhered to. Pre-registration is required for services when a simcha will be celebrated such as B'nai Mitzvah or Aufruf. Celebrating families will be permitted to have a limited number of guests. Guest lists are required no less than one week prior to the event. In order to enable comfortable seating while ensuring social distancing, we ask that guests lists be prepared to indicate "family units" so that members of a single household can be safely seated together.

Outdoor minyanim do not require pre-registration, but strict adherence to face covering and social distancing rules is required. Bring your own chair if you will wish to sit during outdoor services. Please also follow the health restrictions as listed below.

Health Restrictions

For the protection of all congregants and guests, it is of paramount importance that you do not attend services if you, or any member of your family, are experiencing symptoms of illness, including but not limited to a cough, sore throat, or fever, even if you have pre-registered to attend.

CDC-acknowledged symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

For more information, visit CDC website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>)

If you had or think you may have had COVID-19 please do not attend until at least 14 days after symptoms have resolved and you have been fever-free (i.e., under 99.5) for at least 14 days.

If you have recently traveled from another state with significant community spread of COVID-19, you are required to self-quarantine for 14 days once returning to New York and will not be permitted into the MJC building.

For a current listing of restricted states visit:

<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory>

Are You at High Risk?

Attending services in-person for individuals who are in COVID-19 **high risk** health groups is strongly discouraged at this time. For your reference, the CDC has defined high risk groups for COVID-19 as follows:

- People 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including:
 - People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
 - People who have serious heart conditions
 - People who are immunocompromised
 - Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications
 - People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
 - People with diabetes
 - People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis

- People with liver disease

If you are in a high health risk group, we implore you to worship with us from home, by electronic means. We will continue to livestream services to accommodate those who do not wish to, or are unable to, attend services in person.

Please refer to MJC emails for information on accessing our livestreamed services.

Parking

The capacity of the parking lot for most services will be limited to 50%. Please leave an empty parking space on each side of your car.

Entering and Exiting the Building

In an effort to reduce the number of casual contacts between congregants, we are establishing “one-way” routes throughout the synagogue.

Until the Parking Lot Entrance becomes accessible, **only the Henry Street doors** will be used to enter the building.

When exiting, only the Simcha Room doors will be used.

Entrance Checkpoint Procedure

Our Security Team will remain vigilant to protect our congregation from a wide range of potential safety threats, including but not limited to COVID-19.

Our focus on your safety and security remains undiminished during the current health crisis. Please comply with the instructions of the Security Team if you are asked to open all bags and purses, or if you are asked to remove items for closer inspection. No member of the team will touch your personal belongings.

A member of the Checkpoint Team will **check your temperature** with a contactless thermometer to ensure it is below the recommended safety threshold of 99.5° F. Anyone with a temperature at or greater than the threshold will not be permitted to enter and must leave the area immediately. You will also be asked a few questions about any recent signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or recent travel.

The Checkpoint Team will maintain strict capacity controls by monitoring the number of people entering the building. For services with additional guests, the reservation list will be strictly adhered to. Only those who have pre-registered or are on guest list will be permitted to enter the MJC building.

Non-Sanctuary Areas are Restricted

The Sanctuary and restrooms are the only areas currently accessible by the congregation. All other areas in the building are restricted from access at this time.

If you wish to take a break during services, please do not wait in the lobbies. Except for rest room visits, you must immediately depart the building after leaving the Sanctuary.

Physical Distancing Requirements

Please maintain a minimum distance from other congregants and guests of six feet or more when waiting at the entrance checkpoint, inside the synagogue, and while departing.

Congregating within the building will not be permitted. We realize everyone is looking forward to seeing friends and neighbors however, under the circumstances, you will be asked to return to your seat or leave the building.

Everyone must wear a facemask or cloth face covering before entering the Merrick Jewish Centre grounds, including the parking lot and sidewalks outside the building. You must keep the face covering on when approaching the entrance checkpoint, and at all times while inside the building even while davening. Congregants or guests who do not wear a facemask will be asked to leave the premises at once.

At this time, children below Bar/Bat Mitzvah age should not attend in-person services. The reasons for this include:

- Children tend to not be tolerant of wearing face covers for a significant amount of time
- We are still learning about how COVID-19 affects children and Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome
- There are no other areas of the building open at this time for play or distraction

Hand Sanitizers

We encourage you to bring sanitizing wipes or a container of hand sanitizer with you into the Merrick Jewish Centre. There will also be hand sanitizer stations in the lobbies and wastebaskets in which to dispose of wipes.

Gloves are not recommended by CDC or NYSDOH and are strongly discouraged. Frequent effective hand hygiene using hand sanitizer or washing with soap and water for 20 seconds is strongly encouraged.

Restrooms

Restrooms will be cleaned frequently during and between services and are limited to a minimum number of people so as to practice social distancing. Disinfecting wipes will be available and we ask that you wipe down high touch surfaces you have touched such as doorknobs and faucets.

Coat Check Room

The coat check room in the parking lot lobby is closed. You must bring your jackets, umbrellas, and other personal items with you into the Sanctuary and place them on the unoccupied seat immediately beside you.

Kippot and Tallaisim

Please bring your own kippot, tallaisim and head coverings to services. If you do not own a tallis, you will be issued one, and then will be responsible to take care of it and then have it dry cleaned and returned to the MJC after the pandemic is over.

Rituals & Customs

Mezzuzot – Please DO NOT kiss any mezzuzot upon entering or anywhere inside the Merrick Jewish Centre.

Aliyot - There will be no bima aliyot during Torah reading and no ark openings; nor will there be any Torah processions around the Sanctuary.

Plexiglass partitions have been installed on the bimah to safely partition the Rabbis, Cantor and Torah reader in order to prevent droplets due to singing or public speaking to reach the congregation.

Prayer Books - Please bring your own Siddur or Chumash if you have them. Siddurim and Chumashim will be available and we will be rotating them every 2-3 weeks to ensure you receive a clean one for use during services.

Cleaning

The Sanctuary, lobbies, restrooms, doors, bimah, and other surfaces will be sanitized after each service following CDC guidelines as to cleaning products and methods.

Exiting Merrick Jewish Centre

The Simcha Room doors will be used for exiting the building. Once out of the building, please move away from the steps and the sidewalk outside the building. Do not congregate at the exits and please do not socialize in the parking lot after the conclusion of services.

Please wear your facemask until you have entered your car. Discard facemasks or personal protective equipment properly, and do not leave them on the sidewalks, parking lot, or on the property of our neighbors.

Thank you for your adherence to these protocols which are designed to protect all of us!

Respectfully,

Health & Safety Committee:

Michelle Goldenberg, RN, co-chair
Andrew Rotjan, Nurse Practitioner, co-chair
Eric Barth, MD
Harriet R. Feldman, PhD, RN

Anita Cohen, DDS
Josh Diamond
Jonathan Schwartz