

The Pelham Jewish Center



451 Esplanade, Pelham Manor, NY 10803

July 28, 2021

Dear PJC Congregants,

Continued evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic requires that we continuously update our policies. In consultation with PJC member Dr. Deborah Korenstein, we would like to address several questions related to COVID management.

For those who may not be aware, Dr. Korenstein has spent the pandemic leading policy-making and process development for all employees of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center regarding COVID-related issues. We feel that she is extremely qualified to provide advice for the health decisions your Board and the Rabbi makes on behalf of the PJC community.

Context: Amidst widespread vaccination for COVID-19 among PJC congregants and in the region, our approach to the pandemic continues to evolve. The combination of high vaccination rates and more infectious strains of the virus is leading to some breakthrough infections among vaccinated individuals. Most of these infections remain mild. In a group in which all are vaccinated, the risk to vaccinated individuals remains very low. However, the possibility of mild breakthrough infections in these individuals may mean that some transmission is possible within our community, particularly to those who cannot be vaccinated, including children.

Masking and Social Distancing

Effective immediately, all visitors to the PJC – including congregants, staff and Learning Center personnel – ***will be required to wear a mask while in the building.*** For those individuals who are immuno-compromised, we recommend that an N95 mask be worn while in public, including while at the PJC.

At this time, we are not requiring vaccine verification for people who enter the shul, but ***all people who are eligible to be vaccinated must be vaccinated to enter our synagogue.*** We continue to set up the sanctuary for services in a socially distanced manner, and we are providing an outdoor, tented area for those worshippers who prefer to not be inside for services. Doors and windows will also be opened, to provide greater air ventilation.

Testing

While the Board is not mandating a policy of testing for COVID-19 at this time, ***all potential visitors should avoid coming to the building for any reason while newly sick with an acute respiratory illness.*** Individuals with COVID are most infectious before becoming symptomatic and during the first few days after the onset of symptoms. It is imperative that people with active symptoms avoid coming to the PJC, to decrease our shared risk.

Approach to the High Holidays

All High Holiday services and programs are scheduled to be held outdoors, in an open-sided tent. This will allow for a lower risk of infection spreading. All children's activities are scheduled to be held outside, as well.

We hope that sharing our updated policies to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic helps alleviate your concerns about participating in our services and programs, both on a regular basis and throughout the upcoming High Holidays. Should you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to either one of us at any time.

Rabbi Benjamin Resnick & David Haft, Board President