



Outdoor Minyanim Covid Health and Safety Protocol for Communal Prayer

This document describes health-related procedures that apply to outdoor Shabbat/Holiday minyanim at Ohr Kodesh Congregation.

Statement of Purpose

This document provides recommendations to the Ohr Kodesh shul community concerning protocols that should be followed as the shul is open for limited in-person minyanim under “Phase II” guidelines in Montgomery County. At minimum, Ohr Kodesh is obligated to follow all COVID-19 related guidance that applies to religious organizations in Montgomery County, Maryland. Ohr Kodesh may wish to place additional restrictions on gatherings beyond those that are required by Montgomery County. It is expected that this guidance document will be updated frequently in response to evolving guidance from local, state, and federal officials.

Individuals’ Responsibilities to Each Other

Persons who enter the Ohr Kodesh building or use Ohr Kodesh grounds to participate in communal prayer are expected not only to comply with the protocols that are set forth in this document, but they are also obligated to speak up/point out when other congregants are not in compliance. ***The success of these safety protocols is predicated on individual and communal responsibility.***

Guiding Principle: OKC’s guiding principle for implementation of programs during the pandemic is “compliance plus.” This means that OKC will be fully compliant with all regulations that pertain to its programs plus additional measures that should be implemented to further reduce the risk that programs will provide a platform for viral transmission. As with all other OKC-sponsored activities that are supported during the pandemic, the viability of all outdoor minyanim is predicated on attendees’ acknowledgement of communal responsibility for safety and the obligation to comply with the measures that are set forth in this document.

Several features of the outdoor minyanim should be kept in mind.

- The weekly Shabbat time slot during which the Outdoor Minyan will be held (9:15am to 10:45am) will partially overlap with the indoor weekly Shabbat minyan.
- An objective of the outdoor minyan is to offer a communal prayer option for families with young children as well as people who do not want to attend an indoor minyan.
- Access to bathrooms is a reasonable expectation for OKC-sponsored activities, and it is necessary for hand hygiene.



- Access to (and cycling of) prayer books and tallitot should be available to the Outdoor Minyan if attendees wish to use these resources.
- Security must be maintained.
- A process that permits contact tracing must be implemented as part of Outdoor Minyan operations.
- A “Shabbat/Holiday Health Captain” must be identified and accountable for enforcement of the measures in this document.

Location of Back Patio Outdoor Minyan

- Back Patio Minyan will be held on the patio behind Ohr Kodesh. At this time, it is understood that approximately 2,700 square feet of worship space is available on the patio itself. There is additional space in the playground area.
- Parking Lot Minyan will be held in a designated area of the OKC parking lot, depending on a number of factors.

Maximum Size of Gatherings

Back Patio Minyan

The Back Patio Minyan will be limited to no more than **13 households** when only the patio space is being used. When the playground space is available (during Chagim) the service will be limited to no more than 17 individuals or family units.

Parking Lot Minyan

The Parking Lot Minyan will be limited to no more than **50 households** following Montgomery County’s guidance that requires at least 200 square feet per household for religious services.

Protocol Prior to Arriving for Communal Prayer

- Attendees (adults and children) are advised to take their temperature at home within one hour of arriving at Ohr Kodesh for the Outdoor Minyan.
 - Oral temperature must be no higher than 100.3 degrees.
 - Use of a mercury thermometer is preferred.
 - Questions concerning use of automated thermometers on Shabbat should be directed to Rabbi Fishman.

Protocol Upon Arriving for Communal Prayer: Outdoor Minyan

- Back Patio attendees arrive at the back gate to be screened for entry between 10 and 15 minutes before services begin. Parking Lot attendees will arrive at designated parking lot entrance.
- Attendees must be wearing masks over their nose and mouth as they approach the gate.



- Masks with one-way “valves” that facilitate exhalation are not permitted.
- OKC’s volunteer security team (CSS) may have a staff person on duty in the back of the building or near the parking lot entrance.
 - Attendees may be asked to briefly lower their masks as part of the CSS security protocol.
 - Adult supervision is required for children while children are on the shul premises.
- Only people who have signed up in advance for the Outdoor Minyan will be permitted to enter.
- Families/attendees must position themselves \geq six feet from one another at all times, including while they are waiting to be screened for entry into the area.
- When ambient/outdoor temperature is between 65-85 degrees F, the Health Captain will use an infrared thermometer provided by OKC to take temperatures of all persons entering for the Outdoor Minyan.
 - People with temperatures exceeding 100.3 degrees F will not be permitted to enter the area.
 - Temperatures will not be taken if outdoor temperatures are out of the range above due to inaccuracies in the readings on the infrared devices.
- After temperatures have been taken, Outdoor Minyan attendees will be directed to use hand sanitizer that will be provided at the entry point.
- Following hand sanitizing, attendees proceed directly to the patio and take their seats.

Logistics During Prayer: Outdoor Minyan

Seating

- Members of the same household who attend services together will be seated together in “clusters.”
 - These clusters will be indicated by markings on the ground and near the fence in the patio area, and on the ground in the parking lot area.
 - Chairs can be moved as needed within each boxed seating cluster.
- The Outdoor Health Captain or a designee will be responsible for ensuring that once families/attendees arrive, seating is arranged such that individuals or family units are \geq 6 feet from one another.
- Shluhei Tzibur will lead from the front of the seating area.
- People who chant the Leyning and Haftarah will do so from their seats.

Prayer Books, Chumashim, Tallitot

- Outdoor Minyan attendees are encouraged to bring their own prayer books, Chumashim, and tallitot.



- OKC will provide these items for Outdoor Minyan attendees as needed, and they will be placed on a designated table inside of OKC.
- At the conclusion of services, attendees who used OKC books, kippot, or tallitot must return them to the box that has been designated for this purpose.

Singing

- Singing is permitted at the Outdoor Minyan. Masks over the nose and mouth are required at all times.

Duration of Services

- Outdoor Minyan services will last approximately 1.5 hours on Shabbat mornings and approximately 2 hours on other holidays.
- No sermons will be given at this time but short Drashas or Divrei Torah may be given depending on the service.

Playground

- Use of the playground equipment inside the OKC property may not be used at this time. Parents and guardians must supervise their children to ensure they do not use the playground equipment in this area.

Handling of Ritual Items During Services

- Torah: At this time, the Outdoor Minyanim will not use a Torah.
- Attendees who are reading the Torah will do so from the Chumash.
 - Readers must either bring their own yad or a similar instrument for reading, or not use one.
- Mezuzot: Attendees are not expected to need to enter the building but if they do (e.g., to go to the bathroom) attendees may not touch mezuzot on any door frame in the Ohr Kodesh building.

Restroom Usage During Communal Prayer

Back Patio Minyan

- Back Patio Minyan attendees may only use the restrooms located on the lower floor just outside of the social hall.
- Restroom access will be through the patio doors.
- Attendees must ensure that only one person or family unit uses the rest room at a time.
- Hands must be washed before leaving the restroom.



Parking Lot Minyan

- Parking Lot Minyan attendees may only use the restrooms located on the lower level of the ECC in the school wing of Ohr Kodesh.
- Restroom access will be through the side parking lot door. Attendees must obey signage indicating which bathrooms are to be used.
- Attendees must ensure that only one person or family unit uses the rest room at a time.
- Hands must be washed before leaving the restroom.

Health Captain: Outdoor Minyan

A Shabbat/Holiday Health Captain for the Outdoor Minyan will be identified each week by Daniel Kazhdan. The Health Captain will have several responsibilities, some of which can be delegated to a second individual if needed:

- Arrive 10 minutes prior to the start of services and position him/herself outside the entrance to welcome attendees and take temperatures (if outside temperatures permits).
- Remain at the entrance until all attendees arrive.
- Confirm that attendees who arrive on Shabbat/Holiday morning have been assigned to that minyan.
- If ambient/ outside temperatures are between 65-85 degrees F, take temperatures of each person as they enter the building.
 - Press trigger to turn on thermometer
 - Hold thermometer less than 1 inch from forehead and press trigger for temp
 - Press trigger to clear thermometer between readings
 - Deny entrance to persons with temperatures of 100.4 degrees or higher
- No temperatures will be taken if outside temperatures are beyond the temperature range above.
- Direct attendees to use hand sanitizer after temperatures have been taken and direct them to an appropriate seating area.
- Be near the book rack after the Torah service and at the end of the service to remind people to place their books in the box designated for this purpose.
- Direct attendees to the designated exit immediately upon completion of services.
- **Be familiar with all elements of this protocol and be willing to ensure compliance throughout Shabbat morning services.**

See Attachment for full details of the role of the Health Captain for the Outdoor Minyan.



Restrictions During Communal Prayer: Outdoor Minyan

- **Social Distance** – Attendees/family units must remain at least six feet away from other people at all times. No handshaking or other direct-contact greetings are permitted.
- **Restrooms**
 - **Back Patio Minyan** attendees may only use restrooms on the lower level of the building just outside the social hall.
 - **Parking Lot Minyan** attendees may only use restrooms on the lower level of the ECC in the school wing of Ohr Kodesh.
- **Access to other parts of the building** – After screening, Outdoor Minyan attendees may only enter the building to use the restrooms. Attendees are not permitted in other parts of the building.
- **Physical Contact with Ritual Items** - Kissing of the Torah, prayer books, or mezuzot is not permitted.
- **Water fountains** may not be used anywhere in the building. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own water.
- **After Services** –
 - **Back Patio Minyan** attendees should exit the patio through the gate immediately following services while maintaining \geq six feet from other attendees/families.
 - **Parking Lot Minyan** attendees should exit through the designated exits for the parking lot immediately following services while maintaining \geq six feet from other attendees/families

High-Risk Groups that are Strongly Discouraged from Attending Communal Prayer at the Current Time

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has identified groups that are at high risk of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 if they become infected. These groups include:

- Adults age 65 and above
- People who live in nursing homes or long-term care facilities
- People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well-controlled
 - Chronic lung disease
 - Asthma
 - Immunocompromised conditions (e.g. cancer, organ transplant recipients, poorly controlled HIV/AIDS, prolonged use of corticosteroids, etc.)
 - Severe obesity (body mass index of 40 or higher)
 - Diabetes
 - Kidney disease who need dialysis



- Liver disease
- Serious heart conditions

People with one or more of these risk-enhancing characteristics are strongly discouraged from attending in-person communal prayers at this time. People with one or more of these risk factors who desire to attend the Outdoor Minyan may do so; however, it is understood that these individuals will consult with their health care provider before attending the Outdoor Minyan.

Groups that are Prohibited from Attending Communal Prayer at the Current Time

People with the following characteristics are prohibited from participation in the Outdoor Minyan:

- Any respiratory symptoms
 - Cough
 - Sneezing
 - Wheeze
 - Shortness of breath
- Sudden loss of taste and/or smell
- Temperature equal to or greater than 100.4 degrees
- Household member attending minyan with person with fever of equal to or greater than 100.4°F
- Sharing household with someone who:
 - Has active, confirmed COVID-19 infection
 - Has any respiratory symptoms
 - Has fever
 - Is recovering from COVID-19 infection (is less than 2 weeks from active illness)
- History of COVID-19 infection; less than 2 weeks post-recovery
- Persons who have traveled outside the DMV metro area in the last 14 days.
- People who believe they have been in recent contact with someone who has COVID-19 with the exception of medical personnel who maintain PPE and otherwise follow CDC guidelines for medical professionals.

Attendance of Children: Outdoor Minyanim

A key element of the Outdoor Minyan is that it is designed to facilitate attendance by families with younger children. However, it may be difficult for some young children to understand the importance of maintaining social distance during the service. To ensure viability of the Outdoor Minyan, it is essential that parents have their children:

- Proceed to their seats immediately following hand sanitizing.



- Do not enter the building during the service for any reason other than to use the designated restrooms.
- Do not go to any parts of the building during the service other than the designated restrooms.
- Remain in their designated seats for the entire service.
- Direct children to the public playground area outside the gate (instead of the OKC playground area) if children need a break during services.

If parents are uncertain if a child can comply with these infection control measures, we ask that you do not bring the child to the service.

Families will be expected to immediately remove a child from the service to outside the gated area if the child is unable to remain in his/her seat during the service. Families should be prepared to remove their children before the Health Captain is obligated to act. If the Health Captain or another family/attendee observes that a child is not in compliance with the social distancing or other requirements for safe implementation of the Outdoor Minyan, it is their responsibility to ask parents to remove children from the service.

High-Traffic Surfaces

Several shared surfaces will have *relatively* high traffic during communal prayer:

- Interior/exterior door handles at building entrance and patio doors
- Interior/exterior restroom stall doors
- Bathroom stall doors
- Bathroom faucets
- Paper towel dispensers

People who attend the Outdoor Minyan strongly encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water or to use hand sanitizer after touching any of these surfaces.

Hand sanitizer or disinfecting wipes should be placed near the doors to the building.

Cleaning Protocols for Communal Prayer: Outdoor Minyan

- All door handles (see list above) must be wiped down with an EPA-approved disinfectant immediately before and after the Outdoor Minyan.
- A large volume, pump-style hand sanitizer that is suitable for use on Shabbat should be placed outside the entrances and near the designated doors for use by Outdoor Minyan attendees.
- Bathroom doors, stall doors, faucets, and paper towel dispensers in the designated restrooms will be wiped down immediately before and after Shabbat services.



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- All chairs used must be cleaned/disinfected before and after each parking lot service.