



Outdoor Services / *Minyanim* COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocol for Communal Prayer

This document describes health-related procedures that apply to outdoor Shabbat and Holiday services at Ohr Kodesh Congregation (OKC).

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 prayer services / minyanim. 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 will be fully compliant with all regulations that pertain to its programs to reduce the risk for viral transmission. As with all other OKC-sponsored activities that are supported during the pandemic, the viability of the outdoor minyan 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 prayer services should be kept in mind.

- The Shabbat time slot during which the outdoor prayer services will be held, currently 10:00AM to approximately 11:30 AM, will partially overlap with the indoor Shabbat services currently held in the Main Sanctuary.
- An objective of the outdoor prayer services is to offer a communal prayer option for families with young children as well as people who prefer to attend an outdoor minyan, due to COVID-19.
- Bathroom access will be available only downstairs in the ECC hallway.



- Access to 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 and a count of attendees must be implemented as part of Outdoor Minyan operations.
- Health Captain/s must be identified and accountable for enforcement of all practices in this document.

Location of Outdoor Minyan

The location of the outdoor services / minyan will be in a designated area of the OKC main parking lot.

Maximum Size of Gatherings

Parking Lot Minyan

As of May 7, 2021, Montgomery County currently limits attendance at outdoor gatherings at 100 individuals. To address increasing demand, a letter of exemption can be submitted to the County to increase these numbers, if approved by OKC leadership.

On May 12, OKC received an exemption from Montgomery County to allow up to 200 individuals for outdoor parking lot prayer services. Thus the current limit for the outdoor services in the parking lot is 200 total individuals.

Protocol Prior to Arriving for Communal Prayer

- Attendance is by pre-registration only, signing up using the link on the Ohr Kodesh website.
- All attendees will receive an email on Friday preceding Shabbat welcoming them to the service and reminding each person/family to self-screen for symptoms of COVID-19 and refrain from attending if sick.
- Prior to the service, all leaders, volunteers, and staff must be screened (verbally, or online) using these questions – a sign at the entrance to the outdoor services will be posted for screening purposes:
 - **Are you suffering from any of the common symptoms of COVID-19 (coughing, difficulty breathing, loss of taste etc.)?**
 - **Have you had close personal contact with anybody known to have a positive COVID-19 test or diagnosis over the past two weeks?**
- Any participant with any COVID-19 symptoms, including a temperature in excess of 100.3°F should be excluded from the religious facility until at least 72 hours after symptoms.



Protocol Upon Arriving for Communal Prayer: Outdoor Minyan

- Attendees will arrive at the parking lot entrance closest to the building.
- Attendees over the age of 2 must wear properly fitting masks over their nose and mouth as they approach the entrance.
 - 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.
- Designated Health Captain/s will check in each person/family using the pre-registration list and be available to point out the required COVID-19 health screening questions. (available to all to read on a sign at the entrance to the OKC parking).
- All attendees will be offered hand sanitizer and directed to proceed directly to their seats.
- Families/attendees must position themselves \geq six feet from one another at all times.

Logistics During Prayer: Outdoor Minyan

Seating

- Members of the same household who attend services together can sit in “clusters”.
- Seating will be arranged prior to start of service to reflect 6 feet of social distance between individuals that are not a part of the same household.
- People leading the service, including Leyning and Haftarah, will lead from the front of the seating area one at a time.
- Aliyot and Gabbai'im will perform their activities at a distance from the Torah reader.

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 rack/box in the parking lot.
- 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.

Handling of Ritual Items During Services

- A Torah scroll will be used at the Outdoor Minyan. It will be placed at a table at the front of the service and not circulate throughout the attendees.
- One leynner and one gabbai will be at the table at any one time, distanced to the extent possible.
- Attendees may be called up for aliyot but will stand 6 feet from leynner and gabbai.
- Hagbah and Gelilah will be conducted by two members of the same household.
- Mezuzot: Attendees are not expected to need to enter the building but if they do (e.g., to go to the bathroom), attendees should refrain from touching mezuzot on any door frame in the Ohr Kodesh building (the gesture of a near-touch and kiss is permitted).

Restroom Usage During Communal Prayer

Parking Lot Minyan

- Parking Lot Minyan attendees may use only 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

Two Health Captains for the Outdoor Minyan will be identified each week by the OKC Executive Committee in coordination with a member of the OKC Health Team. As numbers of attendees increase, the number of Health Captains assigned to monitor and enforce these protocols may also increase.

The Health Captains will have the list of registered individuals and names of attendees, and with stickers to record attendance on the list. Stickers are used to record attendance in a Shabbat-observance appropriate manner.

The Health Captains will:

- Arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the start of services
- Confirm via the attendance list that attendees who arrive on Shabbat morning have pre-registered for the outdoor minyan. While welcoming and greeting attendees at all OKC programs is encouraged, Health Captains can elect to identify the attendees without communicating directly with attendees upon their entrance if they know the individuals



by sight. If Health Captains do not recognize an attendee, it is expected that a Health Captain will come up to the attendee(s) with the purpose of greeting them and identifying them on the pre-registered attendee list.

- Make available required COVID-19 health screening symptoms questions – via a sign posted for this purpose at the entrance to the parking lot.
- Monitor at all times to ensure attendees are in the designated areas or using the designated bathrooms.
- **Be familiar with all elements of this protocol and be willing and able to support OKC compliance throughout Shabbat morning and holiday services.**

Restrictions During Communal Prayer: Outdoor Minyan

- **Social Distance** – Attendees/family units must remain at least six feet away from other attendees/family units at all times. No direct-contact greetings are permitted (e.g., handshakes, hugs).
- **Restrooms**
 - **Parking Lot Minyan** attendees may use restrooms only on the lower level of the ECC in the school wing of Ohr Kodesh.
- **Access to other parts of the building** – 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. Attendees, including children may lower their masks to drink if they wish. Masks should be raised back up over mouth and nose immediately after.
- **After Services** –
 - Once the service ends, attendees are encouraged to continue to maintain distance and masking. Health Captain responsibilities end at the conclusion of the service.
 - Parking Lot Minyan attendees are expected to maintain \geq six feet from others as attendees/families, including if they elect to stay for ‘grab-and-go’ Kiddush.
 - There may be individually pre-packaged ‘grab-and-go’ Kiddush food provided. Attendees are encouraged to take their package and either eat at home or at an appropriate distance from others in their vicinity.



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidance

The CDC 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 needs dialysis
 - Liver disease
 - Serious heart conditions

Once fully vaccinated, the risk of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is greatly reduced. Individuals in these groups that are unable to be vaccinated at this time are encouraged to attend the Outdoor Minyan; however, it is understood that these individuals will consult with their health care provider before attending the Outdoor Minyan.

Individuals 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 (this applies to vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals)

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:

- Masked at all times (except if they are less than 2 years old or are taking a sip of water from an individual water bottle)
- Proceed to their seats promptly.
- Do not enter the building during the service for any reason other than to use the designated restrooms, in which case younger children must be accompanied.
- Do not go to any parts of the building during the service other than the designated restrooms.

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

If the Health Captain or another family/attendee observes that a child is not in compliance with the health requirements for safe implementation of the Outdoor Minyan, it is their responsibility to ask parents to remove children from the service. Families should be prepared to remove their children before the Health Captain is obligated to act.

Note that it is not the responsibility nor expectation of the Health Captains to separate children who are masked from each other (nor to alert parents to do so as it is up to parents to determine their comfort with their own children's proximity to other children).

High-Traffic Surfaces

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

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



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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

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.