

Subject: Update on Skokie Valley COVID-19 Policies in Light of New Government Guidance

Dear Skokie Valley,

We are writing to update our community on COVID-19 policies in light of the new guidance from the CDC, Illinois Department of Public Health, and Skokie Public Health Department.

The medical committee has reviewed current guidance and as of today, Thursday May 20th, Skokie Valley Agudath Jacob is adopting the federal, state and local public health guidance that masks for fully vaccinated individuals (14 days post second shot or 14 days after a single J & J vaccine) are now optional at all Skokie Valley events, indoors and outdoors.

For individuals who are not vaccinated, all existing policies remain in place: Masking is mandatory at all indoor and outdoor activities except when eating outdoors at a social distance. Children's Shabbat groups will continue to meet outside and masked.

We strongly encourage vaccination for COVID-19, and if anyone needs help finding a vaccine let us know and we will be happy to assist those eligible to find a vaccine, as we have already done for many in our community. We are proud of the incredibly high percentage of adults in our community who are already vaccinated.

Skokie Valley is a diverse community and we expect that we will have vaccinated members of our community who choose to not wear masks and vaccinated individuals who choose to continue to wear masks. All choices are to be respected, and for many reasons one should not inquire as to why someone is choosing to wear a mask. This is a period of transition, and we encourage everyone to maintain sensitivity and compassion towards one another as we figure out our own personal comfort with removing masks, handshakes and touch, distance and more.

Here are a few additional details about what this next stage will look like. A designated masked and distanced seating area during davening will be available for those who would prefer to continue davening in a masked and distanced area. We will also continue to run our air circulation systems at maximum capacity to maintain air flow throughout the social hall. Food at Skokie Valley events will continue to be only served outdoors. We are returning to most of our pre-pandemic ritual practices. Sign ups for tefillah are no longer required. Individuals with COVID symptoms, whether they are vaccinated or not, may not come to any shul activity.

Finally, we all owe a tremendous hakarat hatov, recognition of good, to our medical committee: Dr. Dan Eisenstein, Dr. Ben Katz, Dr. Avery Hart, and Dr. Karen Zimmerman. Their thoughtful guidance, together with the congregation's diligent and sustained adherence, have allowed us to have hundreds of in person gatherings over the last 10 months with no cases of COVID transmission at any Skokie Valley events. The pandemic is not over and we will continue to rely upon the committee to keep us safe, but thanks to their work, the work of public health professionals and scientists around the globe, and our collective diligence in upholding safety practices, we have been able to be safe and strong as a community.

With gratitude and tefillot for the health of all,

Debbie Eisenstein

Rav Ari