

Congregation B'nai Israel
Little Rock, Arkansas

Policies and Procedures

Subject: Worship Services and Life Cycle Ceremonies during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Date: July 28, 2021

Amended: December 14, 2021

Amended: March 15, 2022

Amended: July 21, 2022

Effective: Immediately

Effective until: Revoked or superseded

Background

Since the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic, Congregation B'nai Israel has shaped and articulated its response to the pandemic based on ancient and deeply held Jewish values. All of Congregation B'nai Israel's Covid-19 policies, including this one, are expressions of our religious values.

Policy

Until such time as new vaccinations for COVID variants have been approved and recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the following policy is hereby suspended:

Attendance at all worship services in the Temple shall be restricted to:

1. Persons who provide proof of vaccination to the satisfaction of the President or person(s) to whom the President delegates the responsibility to determine proof of vaccination; and
2. Persons who provide documentation of a negative PCR test for Covid-19 taken within 48 hours prior to the service. Proof of negative PCR test shall be verified by the President or person(s) to whom the President delegates the responsibility to determine proof of negative PCR test. The test is at the expense of the attendee.
3. Those who are ineligible for vaccination.

All attendees must always remain masked while in the Temple building, with the following exceptions:

1. Persons under age two.
2. Persons who are leading the service or any portion thereof, only while leading, and only with proof of vaccination determined by the President or the person to whom the President has delegated the responsibility to determine proof of vaccination.
3. Persons may unmask to eat or drink when food or drink is served by the congregation or with the congregation's consent.
4. At the discretion of the President, on advice of the Covid Task Force, based on local infection rates, masks may be optional.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this policy, if a family holding a life cycle event, including but not limited to any B'nai Mitzvah during regular Shabbat morning worship services, prefers that the Congregation not inquire about proof of vaccination or provide proof of negative PCR tests taken within 48 hours, that service may be held with no more than twenty-five attendees from no more than five households in attendance. The Director of Administration, Education, and Youth Engagement shall enforce these limitations. Persons in attendance at the request of the President—including the Rabbi, the Director of Administration, Education and Youth Engagement, volunteer musicians, and custodial personnel—shall not be counted in the maximum number of persons permitted to attend.

The Covid-19 Task Force may, on the sole basis of scientific evidence, including but not limited to CDC guidelines, limit the total number of persons permitted to attend worship services. The Covid-19 Task Force may set a separate limit on the number of attendees at an event at which food is to be served.

The Covid-19 Task Force may, from time to time, on the sole basis of scientific evidence, including but not limited to CDC guidelines, increase the number of attendees permitted at life cycle events of families who prefer that the Congregation not inquire about proof of vaccination or require proof of negative PCR test. In case of emergency, the Covid-19 Task Force may, on the sole basis of scientific evidence, including but not limited to CDC guidelines, and with the agreement of not fewer than five members of the Executive Committee, decrease the number of attendees permitted at a life cycle ceremony at which the family prefers that the Congregation not inquire about vaccination status.

The Rabbi may not officiate at any indoor service outside the Temple unless this policy is observed as if the service were held in the Temple.

Except for the mask requirement, this policy does not apply to services in the Mendel Amphitheater, graveside services at the Congregation's cemetery, or at outdoor services held in other locations. Should a question arise as to whether a service held at a location not controlled by the Congregation constitutes an outdoor service, the President shall make the determination on the advice of the Co-Chairs of the Covid Task Force and solely on the basis of scientific evidence.