



Orthodox Union Guidance Regarding COVID-19

March 13, 2:45 PM EDT

Guidance for Shuls and Communities

We recognize the great need for practical guidance for shuls and communities with regard to the continuing situation surrounding COVID-19. With the guidance of our Poskim, HaRav Hershel Schachter שליט"א and HaRav Mordechai Willig שליט"א, we share the guidelines below. Please keep in mind that the situation is evolving at a rapid pace and these guidelines have been drafted with the information and recommendations that we have as of now.

As always, shuls and communities must strictly follow the guidelines provided by local and national authorities, including the CDC and local health departments.

Due to the unique social patterns of many of our communities, where we share daily Tefillah and Shiurim, children's schools and frequent festive events, we may be exceptionally prone to communal transmission. As such it may be appropriate for us to adopt an even stricter standard than the authorities require.

The medical advice we have received and wish to share is as follows:

In communities where there are confirmed cases, it would be prudent to severely limit all public gatherings, and to close shuls.

In communities where there are not as yet confirmed cases, significant restrictions should be placed on how shuls gather. In addition to the known restrictions on attendance for people displaying symptoms of any kind, as well as individuals considered at greater risk, shuls should hold multiple minyanim to avoid large crowds and ensure significant spacing between individuals.

The above guidance is the minimal standard. The communal rabbi and leadership may assess the situation and wish to exercise greater caution and close the shuls.

In communities where schools have been closed by local government – whether or not there are existing confirmed cases – children must not get together in homes, parks, or other venues. In these communities shuls should be closed as well. Not closing the shuls will render the school closures essentially meaningless in limiting communal transmission.

We are not addressing particulars and shuls may want to look to these examples for texts that have been utilized by communities across North America: [Bergen County](#), [Boston](#) & [Lower Merion](#).

The measures that this pandemic have forced us to take are exceptionally painful. We are concerned for the threat to our health, and we are deeply pained by the absence of Torah and Tefillah from so many of our shuls. We encourage everyone to redouble their efforts in these areas, and to seize this challenge as an opportunity to create in our own homes a presence of meaningful Tefillah and shared Torah study.

We pray together that we soon see an end to this crisis.

The Leadership of the Orthodox Union and the Rabbinical Council of
America

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