



Professionals working in Jewish settings have raised a number of questions in response to COVID-19 as they seek concrete answers as to how best to proceed with programming and gathering, policies for staff and students, and ensuring that learners can thrive. At this time, **most people in the United States have little immediate risk of exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19.** Reported illnesses due to infection with COVID-19 have ranged from mild to severe. While many patients experience mild illnesses, it is still critical that we take all precautions to protect members of our community who may be at greater risk.

We have compiled information from the **World Health Organization**, the **Department of Health**, and the **Center for Disease Control** to help you answer your questions related to programming, celebrations and Jewish educational settings. We recognize that this a rapidly changing situation and advise you to keep informed as it progresses.

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The Jewish Education Project is maintaining and updating [Coronavirus COVID-19 for Educators Resources and Webinars](#) as an online guide on how to create and sustain community in the face of coronavirus. Be sure to [check this webpage](#) and be on the lookout for further resources. Use this time to review, update, and implement emergency operations plans (EOPs) for your setting. Additionally, begin to consider the emotional needs of your community and alternative ways to fulfill those needs.





Preventative Measures and Planning Forward

How do I protect myself and how do I protect my community?

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. The CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe
- Get a flu shot- it's still not too late to protect yourself

Read more from the CDC on recommendations to [“Get Your Community- and Faith-Based Organizations Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019”](#). Additionally, the CDC offers free handwashing resources that include [health promotion materials](#), information on [proper handwashing technique](#), and [tips for families to help children develop good handwashing habits](#).

The CDC recommends that you wash your hands for a minimum of 20 seconds- the length of time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice. For a festive alternative, you can sing “Misheh N’chnas Adar” which takes 26 seconds to sing. You can learn the song [here](#).

If you feel the need to self-monitor, click [here](#) to read NYC Guidelines on ways to properly self-monitor.

What do I say when a parent asks about our plan?

Here are some steps to get ahead. This is a great opportunity to reassure your community that you have a plan and that you will be in touch with revised plans should the situation further develop.

Consider:

- Identifying a point person in your institution responsible for communication
- Communicating your plan to your community - Multiple updates are OK in an ongoing situation
- Reiterating your sick policy for students and staff
- Ensuring staff is familiar with your plan
- Ensuring emergency alert systems are in place - Who will send the email as information is received?
- Encouraging families who are medically vulnerable to reach out to their medical professionals for individualized plans and to share recommendations with your institution

[Here](#) are some definitions and guidance that you can consult as you develop your communication to parents.

What should I do if someone comes to programming or Hebrew school exhibiting symptoms of COVID 19? (Defined as: fever, cough, or difficulty breathing)

Questions to ask: Does your organization have an existing sick policy for staff and students?

The Department of Education [recommends](#) that anyone who may have been exposed and exhibits symptoms should, in the absence of onsite medical services (a nurse), be separated from other students and staff until they can be picked up for transport home or to a medical provider. Consider having the student wear a surgical face mask while on school premises and awaiting transportation home or to a medical provider. The Health Department will make further recommendations once the student is in medical care.





My organization has a Convention/Shabbaton in two weeks, should we cancel?

At present, the CDC has not made recommendations towards cancellations, officials may ask you to modify, postpone, or cancel large events for the safety and well-being of your event staff, participants, and the community as the situation develops. The CDC strongly encourages that event organizers and staff prepare for the possibility of outbreaks in their communities. Creating an emergency plan for mass gatherings and large community events can help protect you and the health of your event participants and local community. [Click here](#) for steps that the CDC recommends you take to ensure that you are prepared appropriately.

What can I do or say to ease anxieties of concerned parents in my setting?

Check out [these](#) 5 essential steps to protect your mental health during scary times. And remember, Parents are first and foremost concerned about their children's safety. In general, COVID-19 has been [a mild illness in children](#), manifesting similarly to a cold.

There is a lot of anxiety from parents related to international travel this summer. How would you respond?

The CDC provides recommendations on postponing or canceling travel based on assessment of the potential health risks involved with traveling to a certain area. Access a list of destinations with country specific travel recommendations [here](#).

Confirmed or suspected cases

There is a confirmed case in my community, how should I proceed?

If someone has a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis and has directly encountered your setting, the Department of Health will likely contact you immediately upon confirming diagnosis and will instruct you accordingly. If you are aware of a case directly connected to your setting, and you have not yet been contacted, the New York State Department of Health has established a toll-free Novel Coronavirus Hotline (1-888-364-3065) to be in touch for recommendations for your setting.

What steps should we take if members of our community are peripherally connected? What is deemed "close contact" and does it require additional measures for my institution?

The CDC has prepared a Risk Assessment and Management [flowchart](#) to guide your actions pertaining to those determined to be of high, moderate, low and no identifiable risk. You are encouraged to call the New York State Department of Health's toll-free Novel Coronavirus Hotline (1-888-364-3065) for additional information or to assess an individual case.

What information should I share in communications to my community?

This section outlines what to do if someone you know is suspected of having a case of coronavirus. Before determining what patient information you are allowed to share with family, friends, and your extended community, please consult the HIPAA guidelines for sharing patient information by clicking [here](#).

Who in my local community can I contact for additional information and guidance?

Please use the Directory of Local Health Departments, linked [here](#), to find local health professionals in your area who can help.

Click [here](#) to access the link to the New York State Department of Health Toll Free Helplines, where you can contact local professionals for additional help.

