

YESHIVA DERECH HATORAH SCHOOL REOPENING PLAN JULY, 2020

Part A - Responsibilities within the Yeshiva Derech HaTorah family

As a member of our YDH family, every student, teacher, and staff member has a fundamental right to be valued and cared for, and that includes the expectation of physical safety. While it is possible that students, teachers, or staff members will be exposed to COVID-19 over the course of their work or studies, everyone is entitled to expect that every effort and reasonable precaution will be taken to prevent this from happening.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this means complying willingly with rules and policies designed to keep our community safe and healthy. This includes thinking of others, appreciating that their risk tolerance might be lower than ours, and adjusting our behavior with sensitivity and respect, even when inconvenient to ourselves. We expect our respect and sense of responsibility to others to be visible in myriad ways, including the following

- **All students, faculty and essential visitors to our school must wear masks, wash and disinfect their hands frequently, and mind physical distancing norms.**
- **All students, faculty and essential visitors to our school must follow self-screening guidelines for symptoms of illness (as per the CDC list of symptoms) and refrain from coming to the school when symptomatic.**
- **All students, faculty and essential visitors to our school must comply with self-quarantine rules regarding exposure to COVID-19 and recent travel to COVID hotspots.**
- **All students, faculty and essential visitors to our school must take responsibility for maintaining a healthy environment by showing respect and concern for safety for all school staff members including teachers, office staff, administration, maintenance staff, bus drivers, and school nurse.**

To navigate this unprecedented public health challenge, mutual respect, trust, and a deep sense of our reciprocal obligations to one another will be essential.

Part B: Health & Safety Introduction

Above all, our most important principle is to prioritize student, faculty, and staff health, safety, and well-being. To that end, we have taken three important steps to build our school wide strategy of safety.

- 1. Guidance Committee:** We have formed a guidance committee composed of school administrators, medical professional, lay representatives from our Executive Board, and executive office professionals to guide us in the process of reopening.
- 2. Expert Medical Consultant:** We are working with a scientific professional, who is expert in microbiology and immunology. He will be guiding us towards preparing appropriate safety and hygiene protocols. We will train our staff to ensure protocols are implemented effectively.
- 3. Director of Health & Safety:** To ensure protocols are adhered to, we will be appointing one person to lead and ensure compliance with this initiative throughout our facility.

Part C. Safety Strategy

Yeshiva Derech HaTorah's approach to safety:

- 1. Social Distancing and Reducing Student Density**
- 2. Health Screening and Preventative Hygiene**
- 3. Return to School Policy**
- 4. Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting**
- 5. Communications, Training, and Coordination**
- 6. Transportation**
- 7. Security and Building Access**

Each of these critical areas help shape our approach to ensure that our policies and protocols provide the necessary conditions to mitigate risk of exposure to COVID-19.

1. Social Distancing and Reducing Student Density

Infectious disease experts have promoted social distancing as an essential strategy in the containment of COVID-19. By their nature, schools are high-density, which can promote disease transmission. We recognize that to effectively reduce the risk of infection, we must implement the following effective social distancing policies:

- In grades 1-12, polycarbonate barriers will be installed on each student desk
- Large common areas like the gym, cafeteria and auditorium will be limited to use by small groups only
- Masks will be worn by staff at all times when social distancing is impossible.
- Teachers will be required to maintain 6 feet of distance between themselves and the students unless protected by a mask
- Masks will be worn by students in hallways and at arrival and dismissal
- Students will not be allowed to share school supplies

- There will be no field trips or assemblies

2. Health Screening and Preventative Hygiene

Recommendations by health care professionals involve mandating health screenings and preventive hygiene, which begins with hand washing and use of masks. Coupled with physical distancing, these are the most effective strategies in containing COVID-19:

- All staff at YDH will be tested for COVID-19 before the beginning of the school year to ensure that our buildings will be COVID-free on the first day of school.
- YDH will require individual temperature and symptom screenings prior to entering the buildings each morning.
- Symptomatic children and adults will not be able to enter our buildings. Included in the health screenings will be our employees, security guard, parents, delivery people and vendors
- Everyday hygiene practices will be enforced. As has been well-documented, hand washing many times daily with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is critical. In addition to hand washing, frequent use of alcohol-based hand rub with formulations containing 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol is a simple yet effective way to prevent the spread of pathogens and infections
- If a student or adult develops symptoms while at school, the individual will be moved to an isolated room. The individual will be cared for by one employee, who will wear the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and follow infection control practices designed to decrease the risk of transmission. We will call parents and arrange for the child to be picked up.
- Lunch will be served in classrooms

3. Return to School Policy

- With a positive COVID test, the student must be quarantined 10 days minimum from the onset of symptoms, 7 days minimum of continuing improvement, and fever free for at least 3 days. They need to be cleared to return by a pediatrician and we suggest a checklist form for the above criteria and signature by the pediatrician.
- With symptoms of any illness, the student must have complete resolution of symptoms, have a clear non-COVID source of the illness, be fever free and have a clearance note from the pediatrician. If there is not a clear source for the resolved fever and/or illness, a negative COVID test is also required in addition to the above requirements. All siblings exposed to the index child will need a note from a pediatrician stating that the index of suspicion for COVID in the index child is extremely low and that the siblings are cleared for return to school. Should the index child prove positive, siblings will need a two-week quarantine followed by a negative COVID test before being allowed to return to school.

- All absences will need a doctor's note before return, unless for an approved, acceptable, non-medical reason.

4. Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting

- We will implement a strict routine for frequent cleaning of classrooms, hallways, common areas, doorknobs, railings etc. when school is in session along with a rigorous night-time disinfectant routine.

5. Communications, Training and Coordination

- We will establish clear expectations for our YDH community, with a structure that is both sustainable and flexible to adapt to changing realities.
- We will implement signage in school with our protocols, hygiene and social distancing reminders. We need all members of our community to accept new responsibilities within this changed culture.
- We will reduce contact by placing marked floor direction in hallways and stairways

6. Transportation

In the event that the Office of Pupil Transportation is able to provide busing this Fall, all students will be required to wear a face covering at all times while riding a bus. In the event that OPT is unable to provide busing, we will establish a staggered schedule for drop-offs and dismissals so that we can maintain a safe system of social distancing.

7. Security and Building Access

- At this time non-essential visitors will be restricted from school buildings until we can ensure our new protocols have become standard and routine. Essential visitors include approved vendors, package delivery vendors, and facility specialists.
- Essential visitors will need access for entry through our security, which will incorporate a temperature and symptom check prior to entry.

- Signage at the entrance will indicate our health hygiene policy, including masks and hand sanitizing upon entering the campus.

Part D: Models of Learning and Scenario Planning

In anticipation of ongoing and evolving challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, YDH has developed two models for learning. These models take into account the principle of providing face-to-face learning in place of remote learning whenever it is safe to do so. These learning models acknowledge the critical role face-to-face interactions play in a child's learning while implementing physical distancing norms that reduce student density. Our learning models are as follows:

1. **Face-to-Face Learning - for Low Risk Situations**
2. **Distance Learning - for High Risk Situations**

1.Low Risk - Face to Face Learning

Face-to-Face Learning Model: This is a traditional school experience with students attending school in person five to six days a week with our facilities operational. This model will be used when the risk level is determined to be low. External indicators would need to support our confidence in opening our campus to full density and usage. Preventative hygiene policies will be implemented in combination with realistic physical distancing guidelines.

To limit the risk of infection, we will not allow students to go on trips or to participate in live interscholastic activities until the risk of infection has been mitigated in the general public.

Cohort Model

- Our classes will become cohort groups based upon the room square footage and the Room Use Calculator provided by NYS.
- There will be no contact between cohorts, and sufficient supplies will be provided in each class to ensure no cross-contamination.

The advantage of a cohort model is that if reinfection occurs, only the infected cohort has to be quarantined while the rest of the school can continue to operate. If a cohort must be quarantined, it will continue to learn via distance learning for the duration of the quarantine period.

- We will be installing polycarbonate partitions within classrooms that would enable us to maintain social distancing in larger class sizes
- Students in grades 1-12 will be required to wear masks in all common spaces within the school building.

2.Distance Learning Model - High Risk

This is the same model our community experienced in the final months of the 2019-20 school year: our campus will be closed but school will remain open through our remote learning experiences. This is the model of learning which will be used if it is deemed unsafe to have even half of our students in our facilities at one time. We have learned a great deal about how to best deliver Distance Learning from our experiences in the Spring of 2020 and would use that knowledge to refine the experience in the Fall. Classroom learning would be conducted remotely through the Zoom platform for live instruction, and both synchronous and asynchronous work will be delivered via Google Classroom.

Conclusion:

The YDH Reopening Guidance Committee is committed to reopening school this fall. Our guiding principle is to **provide face-to-face learning whenever it is safe to do so**. We continue to consult our medical/scientific advisors for direction on how best we can maintain the safety measures needed to provide face to face learning for our students. We also are in touch with our advocacy agencies such as Torah Umesorah, Agudath Yisroel, TeachNYS and other groups to be sure our needs will be met.

As we continue to pray that our students be restored to the norms and fullness of their religious, educational, and cultural experiences, we at YDH are fully committed to implementing all relevant State guidelines so that our staff and children will remain safe throughout the duration of this pandemic.