

# Am Shalom Congregation Covid-19 Policy

Policy approved by board: August 25, 2021

## Rationale

It is the position of the Board and Religious Leadership of Am Shalom Congregation that the Covid-19 virus represents a real threat to the lives and long term health of our members, staff, students, tenants and guests Hereafter noted as “visitors”.

The Board of Am Shalom Congregation is legally required to ensure the safety of the staff, members, students, visitors and tenants under its responsibilities. The congregation is also morally responsible to ensure the safety of everyone under its authority by the commandment of *shmirat ha-nefesh*.

This guideline is to provide health and safety guidance for the operation of the Am Shalom Synagogue, and to demonstrate our commitment to safety. This policy applies to all employees, members, visitors, contractors and students. This program does not replace other health and safety policies and procedures currently in place.

## Guiding Principles

1. Maintaining healthy environments with enhanced safety measures
2. Providing an environment that meets all the requirements established by the Ministry of Health’s reopening guidance document, all public health directives and the Occupational Health and Safety Act.
- 3. We recognize the need to reevaluate our policies and procedures frequently to adjust to the changing nature of the pandemic.**

## How Does COVID-19 Spread?

The coronavirus is most commonly spread from an infected person through:

1. Respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing
2. Close, prolonged personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
3. Touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands

## Hierarchy of Control

The Public Health Agency of Canada has stated that the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is through frequent hand hygiene, physical distancing (2m), self-isolating and to avoid touching mouth, eyes or nose with unwashed hands. The board will take all reasonable precautions under the circumstances for the protection of anyone entering the building, including protection of workers from exposure to COVID-19. The type of measures that will be put into place will be based on the risk of exposure and the type of work being performed.

Types of controls include:

- Elimination - removing the hazard from the workplace. It is one of the most effective ways of preventing exposure to COVID-19.

Therefore prior to anyone entering they are asked to self-screen according to the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) guidelines prior to entering the building. Also to aid in eliminating Covid-19 aerosols in the building we enhanced our HVAC and keep the circulation/fan on during services.

- Substitution - when a hazard is replaced with a less harmful hazard. This is not applicable as it relates to COVID-19.

- Engineering Controls - the process of isolating people from the hazard.

Seating is therefore limited so it can be by family bubble and 2 meters apart.

- Administrative Controls - administrative processes e.g., limiting the number of staff and member contacts, procedures, training and signage, that are put in place to restrict or reduce an individual's exposure to a hazard.

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - PPE protects the worker. It is considered the last form of defense against a hazard.

Masks must be worn when in the building. Am Shalom will supply masks for those who do not have their own. Hand sanitizer will be provided at all entrances.

### **Self-Monitoring / Self-Screening**

It is the responsibility of all entering the premises to self-screen. Anyone who screens positive or is experiencing new or worsening symptoms consistent with COVID-19 must not attend. Signs will be posted at all entrances to the synagogue to remind members, staff, students, tenants and visitors of screening requirements.

### **Code of Behaviour**

As a condition of attending services and using the facilities of Am Shalom, attendees must follow all safety protocols. Any person not following protocols will be instructed to do so. Attendees will be informed that there is a zero tolerance policy with respect to following safety protocols. If anyone refuses to follow protocols, they will be told to leave the building.

Am Shalom shall designate board members to watch over attendees and enforce the protocols. There should be signage and printed and electronic communication explaining the protocols and behavioural expectations to our members and guests.

### **Daily Records**

Daily records must be kept of anyone entering Synagogue premises.

Daily records may include:

- Member/Visitor log in/out sheets
- Staff/Contractor log in/out sheets

Log in/out sheets Information collected will include:

- the individual's name,
- contact information,
- time of arrival and departure\*, \* only if departure is not at the end of service.
- confirmation that they have read the self-screening document (COVID-19 Screening Poster)
- that they do not have any symptoms of COVID-19.

Daily records are collected and will be stored in accordance with SMDHU and Am Shalom's privacy policies/procedures.

## **Privacy**

Am Shalom will follow the directions from Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) in terms of what medical/health information related to staff, members, visitors and their families that can be shared.

## **Vaccine Passports and Proof of Vaccination**

When the Federal or Provincial governments issue a Vaccine Passport, Am Shalom will have the legal justification to demand that all people who can be vaccinated **must** be fully vaccinated and **prove** they are fully vaccinated to enter the Synagogue.

Until this legal requirement is met, Am Shalom will ask that only those fully vaccinated for at least 14 days attend but will not ask for proof of such vaccination. Am Shalom will demand that all people entering the Synagogue **must** go through the self-assessment procedure and **must** follow the rules and regulations governing behaviour in the Synagogue. (ie. masking and social distancing). Am Shalom will emphasize that vaccination is the absolute best method to protect both the individual vaccinated and the rest of the congregation and everyone who can be vaccinated **must** be fully vaccinated before entering the synagogue.

Those who are unvaccinated will be accommodated through our virtual service.

## **SAFETY PROTOCOLS**

### **Hand Hygiene**

The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends that regular hand hygiene is one of the primary ways to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. Hand hygiene is a general term referring to any action of hand cleaning. It may include using hand soap and water and/or an alcohol-based hand rub. Hand washing facilities with soap and water are available at all washrooms and is the preferred method of hand hygiene, as it is the most effective method for cleaning hands and is the least likely to cause harm if accidentally ingested. Instructions on proper Hand Hygiene will also be posted above all sinks.

Alcohol based hand rub, with a minimum of 60%, will be provided at:

- In classrooms
- In the offices and common areas

- At the entrances to the building

## **Hand Hygiene in Hebrew School**

Alcohol based hand rub, also known as hand sanitizer, is considered to be a hazardous product. Hebrew School Staff will be required to:

- Store hand sanitizer out of reach of students when not in use
- Always supervise students when they are using alcohol based hand rub to prevent accidental ingestion

When to Perform Hand Hygiene Staff and students must perform hand hygiene:

- When they arrive at school/work and before they go home
- Before and after any transitions within the school/site (e.g. to another classroom, indoor-outdoor transitions, moving to on-site childcare, etc.)
- After using the washroom
- Using soap and water whenever hands are visibly dirty
- After cleaning tasks
- Before and after putting on PPE
- Before and after play/use of equipment
- Before and after handling paper (handouts, student work, etc.)

## **Respiratory Etiquette**

Members and Students should:

- be properly masked at all times inside
- Cover their cough or sneeze with their arm or a tissue, throw the tissue in the garbage and wash their hands.
- Refrain from sharing any food, drinks and unwashed utensils or other personal devices.

## **Physical Distancing**

The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends that individuals maintain a distance of 2 meters (6 feet) apart from other individuals to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Members should sit in family/friend bubbles socially distanced

## **Food Etiquette**

- Any food being consumed should be prepackaged individually
- Until SMDHU allows unrestricted indoor dining there should be no eating indoors other than a symbolic Kiddush.
- Outdoor dining is allowed as long as physical distancing is maintained.
- Rental of SMDHU approved eating spaces and arrangements will be considered.

## **Singing, Shofar and other Wind Instruments**

The nature of blowing is to create aerosols, often with substantial force, propelled in the air. The shofar and other wind instruments should be used outside when possible. For our High Holidays: a quick Covid-19 test will be performed on those participating in choir prior to services so that the choir and shofar blowing can be done safely indoors.

## **Hebrew Classrooms**

If we are returning to school in the conventional model, where possible all attempts should be made to organize the classroom in a manner that maintains 2 metres of physical distance. Students should enter and exit the building through the lower level door and children are expected not to come up to the upper level. Hebrew school is encouraged to place furniture, remove loose classroom rugs and place desks so that as much distance as possible is between students and to allow teachers as much teaching space as possible. Desks should face forward rather than in circles or groupings. The counter in classrooms with sinks must be kept clear of all items with the exception of hand soap and paper towels. Reusable rags are not permitted at this time. Student paperwork that has been brought in from home should be placed aside for 24 hours before handling. If the student paperwork has not left the school, there is no need for quarantining the paperwork. Staff should perform hand hygiene before and after handling student papers. Student belongings should remain with them at their desk. Backpacks may be put on the back of chairs and if needed when students leave their desks on the seat of their chairs. Backpacks or students' personal belongings are not to be placed on the floor.

## **Restrooms**

In order to maintain 2 metres of physical distancing in the restrooms, the number of individuals in multi-stall restrooms may be restricted during the pandemic period. When determining the capacity for occupants in the restrooms, consideration should be given to the number of stalls, urinals and sinks to ensure maximum distance between individuals. Signage will be placed outside and inside the restroom, reminding visitors of both physical distancing and proper hand hygiene. Restrooms will be cleaned and disinfected as needed.

## **Elevator**

The number of individuals in the elevator is limited to one person or two people in the same COVID-19 Bubble.

## **Doors**

Where possible, and safe to do so, doors should be left open during the day to minimize the number of people who need to open the door physically. Where permitted by the Fire Code, doors will be left open to minimize contact in high touch areas.

## **Signage, Decals and Floor Markings**

Signage consistent with Federal, Provincial and SMDHU signage for COVID-19 will be posted at Am Shalom. Signage, decals and floor markings will be posted at entrances, washrooms, halls and common areas to inform/remind of self-screening, hand hygiene, physical distancing, masking requirements and traffic flow directions, as applicable.

## **Cleaning and Disinfecting Shared Equipment**

Cleaning and disinfecting is an excellent approach used to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Coronaviruses on surfaces and objects naturally die within hours to days. Am Shalom will continue to perform routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces. If items cannot be cleaned and disinfected, they need to be placed in a sealed container for 72 hours prior to going back into circulation (i.e. Tallit).

## **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)**

Properly worn masks should be worn inside at all times until SMDHU instructs otherwise. The masks should cover both the nose and the mouth. Signage should be posted in the building to illustrate the proper method. Designated Board members will circulate to ensure visitors wear masks correctly.

## **COVID - 19 Waiver**

All persons attending services and functions at Am Shalom shall fill out the COVID - 19 waiver. See Appendix A

## Appendix A: Covid Waiver

Dear Members and Guests

As we continue the process of reopening our building, the board of Am Shalom implemented a new vaccination policy to help protect our members against COVID-19 while participating in Am Shalom programs and services.

As of Sunday, August 15, 2021:

- **No one 18 years or older will be permitted to enter the Am Shalom building without first verifying that they have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 at least 14 days prior to entry.**
- Children and teens aged 12 to 17 (or an adult on behalf of such a person), must verify that they have received at least one vaccine for COVID-19 approved by Health Canada at least 14 days prior to entry.
- Children under the age of 12 are not required to verify their vaccine status, they are expected to stay with their vaccinated parent/guardian except for when they are participating in religious school.

In the event that someone cannot provide the required verification that they have been fully vaccinated, they must provide evidence that they tested negative for COVID-19 in the 24-hour period before seeking entry to the synagogue grounds. This does not apply to children under the age of 12.

While these procedures will apply only to those who attend in-person experiences, Am Shalom will continue offering services and programs online for the foreseeable future, including throughout the High Holidays.

We are committed to protect the health and well-being of our community, now and throughout the High Holy Days season, while making the verification process as straightforward as possible for our members.

### **DISCLAIMER - EXCLUSION OF LIABILITY**

**As a condition of attending and using the facilities of Am Shalom, I assume all health risks relating to contracting COVID-19 while using the facilities of Am Shalom and agree that Am Shalom and its directors, officers, employees, agents, volunteers, sponsors and representatives shall not be liable for any illness or other consequences that may be attributed to my attendance and use of the facilities of Am Shalom and I hereby waive all claims against Am Shalom and its directors, officers, employees, agents, volunteers, sponsors and representatives with respect thereto. I further agree that the assumption of risks, agreement and waiver herein shall also apply to any minor person who attends with me and uses the facilities of Am Shalom**

X \_\_\_\_\_.

**Signature**

## Resources

1. COVID-19 Guidance for Commercial and Residential Buildings - <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/8ecd-General-Infection-Prevention-and-Control-Practice-and-Disinfection-Guidance-for-Commercial-or-Residential-Buildings.pdf>
2. COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms - [https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019\\_reference\\_doc\\_symptoms.pdf](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_reference_doc_symptoms.pdf)
3. Covid-19 Self-assessment - <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>
4. Health Canada - <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>
5. Public Health Agency of Canada. (March 19, 2020). Hand Hygiene.- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/healthy-living/hand-hygiene.html>
6. Shofar Blowing Guidance During COVID-19 - <https://kolhacovid.com/article/shofar-blowing-guidance-during-covid-19/>
7. Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit - <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/>