**High Holiday Task Force Guide and Checklist 2020**

The year, 2020, will always be remembered as the year of the COVID-19 pandemic and the year that we had to shutter our synagogues. This is not something any of us anticipated. It is quickly becoming clear that the 5781 High Holiday season will look very different from any other season. Synagogue leaders responsible for planning and implementing High Holiday experiences are asking important questions about building re-openings, virtual services, and building community from a distance.

The task force must clearly reflect the size and capacity of your synagogue and reflect your congregation’s unique needs. **The questions are a starting point and we encourage you to make changes so that this document can best meet the needs of your community.**

For more information, please feel free to reach out to your USCJ District synagogue consultant.

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| **Who Is Included in your High Holiday Task Force?** | **Notes** |
| Rabbi |  |
| Cantor |  |
| Lay leaders – Ritual Committee, House Committee, health care professionals etc. |  |
| Education Director |  |
| Program staff |  |
| Executive Directors/Office Administrators |  |
| Youth directors |  |
| Technology IT/AV specialists |  |
| Communications experts |  |
| Chair of High Holiday Ushering |  |
| Head Custodian/Facilities Staff  |  |
| Security |  |
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| **Which High Holiday Planning Scenario Will Work for You?** |  |
| Plan A  | Complete virtual services: live Zoom, livestream or prerecorded |  |
| Plan B | Combination of physical distancing and virtual services |
| Plan C | Buildings open with limited physical distancing and “new normal” policies and procedures |
| Plan D | No live services, provide materials and training for home |
| Questions to think about for virtual programming: * If going virtual, will it be live or pre-recorded?
* What parts of the service are necessary? For how long can we reasonable expect people to stay on a virtual service?
* How can we create a sense of community/connection?
* What does music/singing look like?
* What technology will be used and who can ensure a high production value?
* How will we ensure online security?
* Are you considering using an outside IT company to manage your virtual experiences?

Questions to think about for in-person programming (given that CDC guidelines will not address all of our issues):* Will we require congregants to declare that they are symptom-free and on what basis will we be able to rely on their declaration? Test results?
* Will we be able to ascertain whether a congregant is symptom-free? Will take temperature at the door?
* How will we enforce social distancing? Will we limit bathroom use to one or two users at a time, and how often will they require to be sanitized?
* Will we require congregants to attend services wearing face-masks? Gloves? Bring personal hand sanitizers?
* How will we sanitize our sanctuary? Cover fabric seats with plastic for easier cleaning? Do we need to purchase ultraviolet light equipment, Lysol products, hire an outside cleaning company?
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| **Consider Possible Subcommittees**  |  |
| Budget |  |
| Education/Families/Teens |  |
| Facilities/Operations |  |
| Fundraising/High Holiday Appeal  |  |
| Membership/Member Engagement |  |
| Ritual |  |
| Security |  |
| Technology |  |
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| Questions to think about: * What will happen to Torah processions and aliyot?
* Will we allow congregants to have access to the bimah and open the Ark (if meeting in person)
* How will we manage the common property of mahzorim and tallitot (if meeting in person)
* What procedures will we employ to disinfect the sanctuary after each use (if meeting in person)
* What happens with Yizkor? Can it be done virtually?
* How do we handle selling seats? Selling aliyot?
* How can we create a sense of connection amongst our members? How can we support our members?
* What messaging is being used to encourage membership and High holiday participation
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| **Consider Needs of Different Populations**  |  |
| Adults |  |
| Children |  |
| Disabled |  |
| Families |  |
| Families with young children |  |
| Immune-Suppressed  |  |
| Non-Members |  |
| Other  |  |
| Seniors |  |
| Teens |  |
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| Questions to think about: * What will we do for our children? Will we have to employ a leader from a non-vulnerable group, and will parents supervise social-distancing, patrol hallways and bathrooms?
* Are there any thoughts to offering a centralized-type family services experience to communities? Pre-recorded perhaps?

 Will our congregants who are in the vulnerable population, be willing to come to shul under these extraordinary, stressful circumstances? Or, if going virtual, will they be willing to spend a lot of money on “seats” to a virtual experience? |  |
| **Engage Members who are Experts in Relevant Fields**  |  |
| Education |  |
| Emergency Planning  |  |
| Insurance  |  |
| Law  |  |
| Marketing/Communications |  |
| Medicine/Public Health  |  |
| Technology  |  |
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| **Consider Best Practices**  |  |
| Do fewer things really well |  |
| Plan ahead – start as far in advance as you can  |  |
| Planning takes time – don’t allow a stressful situation to dictate your response |  |
| Practice makes perfect, have dress-rehearsals |  |
| Create multiple backup plans |  |
| Stick to your schedule - reduce frustration |  |
| Get ready to pivot when the unexpected arises  |  |
| Communicate with your members about planning, finances etc. |  |
| Try to increase virtual access to as many members as possible |  |