

VA'AD HARABANIM RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC

PO BOX 1233 Teaneck, NJ 07666 • (844) 895-RCBC • <https://www.rcbcvaad.org>



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בס"ד

כ"ח אב תש"ף

Dear Friend,

As our community prepares for the reopening of our Yeshivot, the joint rabbinic and educational leadership of our shuls and schools, in conjunction with the medical professionals who have provided us expert guidance throughout this process, wish to communicate the following unified message.

1. **Support:** We are all acutely aware that the many uncertainties surrounding the reopening of our Yeshivot make this particular back to school season a uniquely anxious time for so many within our community. We wish to continue to assist you and your family in every way possible as we navigate these challenging times together.

2. **Shul Groups:** The durability of the reopening of our yeshivot rests heavily upon maintaining the integrity of the cohorts (“pods”) that each yeshiva has carefully constructed on the basis of expert medical guidance in an effort to contain the possible spread of virus. As such, our shuls and schools are partnering in this critical effort, and our shuls will not hold indoor groups for the opening months of the school year. All shul groups will be outdoors and socially distanced. Likewise, community members should be equally conscientious of the import of preserving the integrity of these pods as essential features of our community containment strategy, and ensure that socialization which takes place outside of school and shul is fully compliant with social distancing guidelines.

3. **Smachot:** We all look forward to marking many *smachot* within our school communities this coming year, in particular, Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations. We

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urge all members of the community to be fully aware of the potential for significant amplification of virus at a simcha in which the vital guidelines of social distancing are not observed. While such an event, first and foremost, constitutes a threat to the health of those in attendance, the risk to the institutional health of our community created by such an event should not be minimized. Indeed, even one such event could easily result in the full closure of an entire yeshiva, or multiple yeshivot across our community.

We ask you for your full partnership in ensuring that all of the *smachot* that will be observed this coming year are held in full compliance with social distancing guidelines, **including travel advisories** currently in place in the State of New Jersey for those traveling from locations with high levels of community spread of COVID-19.

In particular, on the basis of our ongoing consultation with medical experts, we strongly encourage members of our community to hold *smachot* outdoors to the greatest extent possible, and for participants to wear masks, in accordance with the guidelines detailed in Governor Murphy's Executive Order 163, Section 1. (<https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-163.pdf>).

Special attention should be paid to ensuring that dancing meaningfully enhances the celebration and does not endanger those present nor, by extension, the community at large. If dancing extends beyond the members of the immediate family "pod", it is especially important that all mitigation measures, including distancing and masks, be utilized.

Finally, as the needs of public health will continue to necessitate smaller in person guest lists, we are confident that the community as a whole will demonstrate mutual understanding with respect to those who are either unable to extend or accept an invitation at this time.

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4. **Quarantine:** In the event that members of the community will be required to quarantine for specific periods of time, due to exposure to COVID-19 or travel, our medical professionals have advised us to issue a clear reminder that those in quarantine should **not** leave their homes unless doing so is a matter of medical necessity. Essentials such as food and medicine should be obtained via delivery, if at all possible, and all social contact outside the home must be avoided. Under no circumstances may someone under mandatory quarantine attend a minyan.

As we approach Elul and the *Yamim Noraim*, we will all surely continue to daven for much needed *siyata d'shemaya* during these profoundly challenging times.

Concomitantly, we fully embrace our singular responsibility to partner with He who is the Trusted and Faithful Healer in securing our own health, the wellbeing of all those around us, and the viability of our communal Torah institutions. We thank each and every one of you in advance for your ongoing cooperation and consideration.

Rabbinical Council of Bergen County

Heads of School of Yeshiva Day Schools

Heads of School of Yeshiva High Schools