



VBS COVID-19 Vaccination Policies Updated December 8, 2021

****Please note, this policy and the relevant underlying guidelines are subject to frequent change with the introduction of additional public health guidelines from local, state and federal authorities, and in ongoing consultation with the VBS Medical Advisory Committee and VBS Leadership.****

INTRODUCTION

In the wisdom of the Jewish tradition, the body is as much a creation of God as the soul. For that reason, the Torah holds us responsible for protecting our physical health as it does for nurturing our spiritual lives. This has been our motivation for observing strict safety protocols during the COVID pandemic at VBS. We want our members, children, staff and friends to take home deep learning and warm feelings from Valley Beth Shalom. We want no one to take home COVID. We are delighted to welcome you back to VBS for our services, programs and community life. We want all of our members and guests to enjoy those moments in comfort while maintaining our adherence to the latest safety protocols.

It is upon the following principles that we operate:

1. ***Uv'chartem b'chaim. Choose life.*** Our first responsibility is to protect the life and well-being of all who are part of us -- students, congregants, teens, toddlers, seniors, guests, staff, educators, employees, and everyone who passes through VBS. All decisions are in consultation with medical authorities, and in observance of governmental directives. The well-being of our community is our top priority over anything else.
2. ***Asu li mikdash. Build a sacred place.*** Our next responsibility is to protect the institution of the synagogue, its schools and affiliates. We must protect the synagogue from liability. We must protect its capacity to fulfill its mission of elevating life. We must protect its integrity and its reputation in the community. We must protect its most precious resource -- its people.
3. ***Kedoshim ti'hiyu. Strive for holiness.*** Our synagogue community exists to elevate lives through Torah, Avodah, Gemilut Hasadim, and Hevra. Our responsibility is to find ways to accomplish this mission despite the obstacles presented by the ongoing pandemic.
4. ***L'shomrah U'ovada. To nurture and protect.*** Our obligations do not end at the boundary of the building, the list of our members, or even our shared Jewish identity. We have a responsibility to bring Hesed to the community we live in, the nation we cherish, and the world we share.

The health and wellbeing of VBS community members, students, clergy, staff and faculty members continues to be at the core of our policies. With the current expanded availability of vaccines, VBS will institute the following changes to our COVID-19 policies effective January 15, 2022.

RECAP OF CURRENT POLICY – Ends January 14, 2022

Below is a summary of VBS' current protocols for all VBS activities, which will remain in effect through January 14, 2022:

- **For VBS services, programs or events:** Any individual, regardless of vaccination status, is allowed entry. Mask wearing is strictly enforced per VBS and LACDPH requirements.

- **Indoors:** In accordance with County rules, everyone, regardless of vaccination status, must wear a mask in all indoor settings except while actively eating or drinking. Clergy or those leading a service or program may remain unmasked while actively leading a service or program.
- **Outdoors:** For outdoor synagogue events, all individuals must remain masked at all times, except while eating and drinking.
- **For all schools (ECC, ECLC, Day School & OurSpaceLA):** Parents, guardians and guests must provide proof of vaccination in order to participate in either onsite or offsite school meetings, programs and events. Parents are able to apply for a medical exemption and there is no negative PCR test exemption at this time. Mask wearing:
 - **Outdoors:** During school days, children attending the Early Childhood Center are not required to be masked outdoors. Children attending the **VBS Day School** and **ECLC** are still required to remain masked outdoors.

REVISED POLICY – Effective January 15, 2022

Beginning January 15, 2022, the following protocols will apply for all onsite and off-site VBS Synagogue and VBS school programs:

- **In order to attend any VBS and VBS schools’ services, programs or events, whether onsite at VBS or off-site, all individuals 16 and older as of January 15, 2022 will be required to provide proof of full vaccination to attend such events.** For the purpose of this policy, the definition of “full vaccination” is defined as 14 days following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series (currently Pfizer or Moderna vaccines) or 14 days following receipt of the dose of a single-dose vaccine (currently Johnson & Johnson).
- Individuals who turn 16 on or after January 15, 2022 will have 60 days from their birthdate to show proof of full vaccination. In the interim time period, a negative PCR test within 48 hours will be required for entry to VBS and VBS schools events.
- Negative PCR tests will not be accepted as a substitute for full vaccination for attendance at VBS or VBS schools’ events, onsite or off-site for those 16 and older. As stated above, proof of full vaccination will be required beginning January 15, 2022.
- **Unvaccinated individuals between the ages of 5-15 will be required to provide a negative PCR test within 48 hours of an event or service in order to attend a VBS event that is not connected to a school event. Such events include worship services, daily minyan, B’nai Mitzvah, counseling center visits, etc.**
 - VBS School students that are tested weekly at VBS will be able to use their latest PCR result for synagogue events.
- **VBS Schools:**
 - All students currently enrolled in the **VBS Day School, ECLC** and/or **OurSpaceLA** are encouraged, but will not be required to be vaccinated at this time, however **all VBS Day School and ECLC students (not ECC students)** will need to be PCR tested weekly as arranged by their schools.

- Currently, vaccinated and boosted Day School and ECC teachers and staff are still testing weekly.
- We have no plans at this time to stop testing students. Unvaccinated ECLC students are also being tested weekly at their respective schools.
- We ask any adult or child with a fever, cold or flu-like symptoms NOT attend any VBS or VBS schools' services, programs or events, whether onsite or off-site, regardless of vaccination or test status. We appreciate your attention to keeping our community safe and our students in the classroom.

What types of exemptions will be considered to the full vaccination policy beginning January 15, 2022?

- **Medical:** Requests for medical exemptions will be reviewed and considered by the VBS medical advisory committee. Each request for exemption, regardless of the reason, will be evaluated individually. Anyone requesting a medical exemption will be required to complete an application and submit documentation from a licensed physician indicating the reasoning for and proposed duration of the exemption. All exemptions must be received **no later than four (4) business days prior to an event** to allow adequate time for review. For more information on this process, and for medical exemption forms, contact Orit Rappaport, Pandemic Response Coordinator, at orappaport@vbs.org.
 - **Past History with COVID-19:** Neither documentation stating that you have had and recovered from COVID-19 nor the submission of a favorable antibody test will be considered or accepted in the medical exemption process.
- **Religious/Personal Held Belief:** Personal held belief exemptions may be submitted and will be reviewed. Nonetheless, VBS Rabbis determine the *halacha* (law) for our community. It is the strongly held belief of the VBS Rabbis that getting vaccinated is **required by Jewish law and tradition** in response to the current state of the pandemic.

Mask wearing:

- **Indoors:** In accordance with County rules, everyone, regardless of vaccination status, must wear a mask in all indoor settings except while actively eating or drinking. Clergy or those leading a service or program may remain unmasked while actively leading a service or program.
- **Outdoors:** For outdoor synagogue events, vaccinated individuals are encouraged, but not required to remain masked. Unvaccinated individuals of all ages **must** remain masked at all times.
 - During school days, children attending the **Early Childhood Center (ECC)** are not required to be masked outdoors; however, children attending the **VBS Day School** and **ECLC** are still required to remain masked outdoors.

How will proof of vaccination be enforced?

- We ask all vaccinated individuals to upload their vaccination proof to our secure site - [Click HERE](#) to upload your vaccination information.

- Upon arrival at VBS, the VBS Security Team will check the vaccination list. If a person is not on the vaccination list, Security will ask to see a vaccination card and ID in order to enter. Those not on the vaccination list and who do not have vaccination proof with an ID, will not be allowed entry. There will be no exceptions made.
- If you're having trouble uploading your vaccination information, please email Maya Aharon at maharon@vbs.org.
- As lists are updated, records may be imperfect and even if you have uploaded your vaccination record, it is highly recommended that you have your vaccination card available to show our security team if needed.

CLARIFICATION FOR SCHOOLS

VBS Harold M. Schulweis Day School, Early Childhood Center (ECC), Etz Chaim Learning Center (ECLC) & OurSpaceLA Students and Families

What is the COVID-19 vaccination policy for VBS students enrolled in a VBS school this 2021-22 school year?

- We strongly encourage all children who are eligible to be vaccinated as soon as possible, however, vaccination is not required at this time.
- Adult OurSpaceLA students are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated. However, OurSpaceLA students have different healthcare needs than students in our other schools so we will leave those decisions to them and their healthcare providers.

What will be the COVID-19 vaccination policy for children 5+ in the future?

- VBS strongly encourages all children who are eligible for the vaccine to be vaccinated as soon as possible. However, at this time, there is no policy requirement for vaccination for children ages 5-15 at VBS.
- We will continue to evaluate our protocols for children ages 5-15 with our Medical Advisory Committee, in conjunction with state and local regulations and best practices.

Will the ECC require students to be vaccinated?

- Similarly, at this time, it is unclear if or when vaccines for children under the age of 5 will be approved. Until that time, we will continue to follow state and local guidelines. We will continue occasional testing and indoor mask wearing for ECC children and we will enforce vaccination for parents coming on campus (or attending off-site temple or school events) per the terms of this policy.

Who should be contacted for more information about COVID-19 protocols?

- **School Families (ECC, Day School, ECLC & OurSpaceLA):**
 - For VBS Day School: Contact Orit Rappaport, Pandemic Response Coordinator, at orappaport@vbs.org or Rabbi Deborah Schuldenfrei, Head of School at hos@vbsds.org

- For VBS ECC: Contact Orit Rappaport, Pandemic Response Coordinator, at orappaport@vbs.org or Renee Kalmanson, ECC Assistant Director at rkalmanson@vbs.org.
- For ECLC or OurSpaceLA: Contact Orit Rappaport, Pandemic Response Coordinator, at orappaport@vbs.org
- **Synagogue Families:** Contact Orit Rappaport, Pandemic Response Coordinator, at orappaport@vbs.org or Matthew Weintraub, Executive Director, at mweintraub@vbs.org.

Signed by:

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