



# Interim Guidance for Passover Observance During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

April 5, 2020

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**STAY HOME. STOP THE SPREAD. SAVE LIVES.**

## **Purpose**

This New York State Department of Health (DOH) guidance urges religious leaders and celebrants to avoid in-person gatherings for any purpose, practice alternative forms of worship if possible, and use necessary precautions to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the community during the upcoming observance for Passover.

Suspending in-person gathering will help save lives in your community and in communities across New York. Consistent with directives issued by both rabbinic authorities and the State of New York, Passover Seders and prayers must only be held with immediate family members in attendance. Together, religious leaders and celebrants should urge neighbors and friends to stay home as much as possible and only travel for essential purposes to reduce the spread of COVID-19 during the Passover holiday. Older adults and people with serious medical conditions, such as lung disease, heart disease, and diabetes, are most susceptible to COVID-19.

## **Guidance**

Pursuant to [Executive Order 202.10](#), all non-essential gatherings of individuals of any size for any reasons (e.g. worship services, parties, celebrations, or other social events) are canceled or postponed, effective March 23, 2020 to, at least, April 22, 2020. This prohibition may be extended as the public health emergency continues to develop and may be enforced by local authorities.

**Individuals should not gather in houses of worship, homes, or other locations for religious services until the end of this public health emergency.** If possible, religious leaders should consider alternative forms of worship, replacing in-person gatherings with virtual services, such as phone or conference calls, videoconference calls, or online streaming.

**Congregate services within houses of worship are strictly prohibited.** Houses of worship may only be used by individuals and only where appropriate social distancing of, at least, six feet between people can be maintained.

**Houses of worship must adhere to DOH cleaning and disinfection guidance**, including routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces and areas of greatest risk of transmission (e.g. restrooms, kitchens, first aid/health station).

All individuals, including religious leaders, should practice and encourage proper hand and respiratory hygiene, which is an effective preventative measure against COVID-19.

Hand Hygiene:

- **Signage** with handwashing procedures should be posted in prominent locations promoting hand hygiene.
- Regular hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds should be done:
  - Before and after eating.
  - After sneezing, coughing, or nose blowing.
  - After using the restroom.
  - Before handling food.
  - After touching or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated.
  - After using shared equipment and supplies.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
  - Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers by children should always be supervised by adults.

Respiratory Hygiene:

- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or the bend of elbow.
  - Dispose of soiled tissues immediately after use.

## **Background**

In December 2019, a new respiratory infectious disease called Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) was detected. Recently, community-wide transmission of COVID-19 has occurred in the United States, where the number of both suspected and confirmed cases is rapidly increasing. In New York, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo has taken aggressive action to combat the spread of the virus by imposing sweeping measures to protect public health, including restrictions on gatherings and businesses through **Executive Orders**. These restrictions are designed to reduce public density and slow the rate of COVID-19 transmission among New Yorkers.

For additional information, please visit:

New York State Department of Health's COVID-19 Webpage  
<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 Webpage  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>