



August 4 PM - Jran Email

Dear Jran Community:

Today, we will go over face masks, COVID19 data trends, back to school, and protecting our virtual places of worship and learning.

COVID19

Mayor Sylvester Turner announced yesterday that [face masks are mandatory, and Houston Police will be issuing citations](#). The first citation will be a warning and any following citation will result in a \$250 fine. This is consistent with [Governor Greg Abbott's statewide face covering order](#) issued on July 2nd. Up until now, the City of Houston has been concentrating its efforts on educating people about the importance of wearing a face covering and have not issued citations.

A doctor in South Carolina has made the news because she conducted a [face mask oxygen level experiment](#). She put on an oxygen monitor while she had no mask, a surgical mask, a N94, and a N94 with a surgical mask over it. Her oxygen stayed the same in all four situations, debunking the myth that face masks reduce your oxygen intake.

Data is showing that the positivity rate in the Houston area is trending downwards. The City of [Houston announced that the positivity rate is at 17.6%](#), right around where we were on June 7th. The Texas Medical Center is reporting a slightly [lower rate of 14.1% across all TMC institutions](#). This continues to be an encouraging sign that social distancing and face masks are working, and we need to keep up these efforts to bring the curve down.

City and County officials are encouraging people to get tested if you think you have COVID19 or have been exposed to someone who is infected—even if you do not have any symptoms. The County public sites are free and open Monday – Saturday from 6 a.m.– 1 p.m. Today, [Harris County announced](#) that their stationary sites in Pasadena (San Jacinto College Central Campus) and Cy-Fair (Ken Pridgeon Stadium) will have extended hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4 p.m.-8 p.m. thanks to additional federal and state funds for surge testing.

Schools are continuing to adjust their fall plans. Greater Houston Partnership (GHP) hosted a [Regional Back to School Update](#) with Dr. Pam Wells, Executive Director of Region 4 Education Service Center, and Dr. Rodney Watson, Superintendent of Spring Independent School District. The Region 4 Education Service Area covers Greater Houston and its 50 public school districts and 45 public charter schools. Additionally, GHP continues to update their [Houston-Area School Reopening Plans](#) page, so be sure to check it regularly.

Governor Abbott gave an [update on the State's efforts to distribute personal protective equipment](#) (PPE) to Texas school districts ahead of the start of the fall semester. The State has distributed:

- 59,410,640 masks
- 567,948 gallons of hand sanitizer
- 24,017 thermometers
- 511,294 face shields

Additionally, state officials released a [joint statement reaffirming that only local school boards may chose when to close a school district or individual school](#). The local boards can vote on when and how school can begin in the fall within Texas Education Agency's guidelines. If a school has a confirmed case of COVID19 on campus, the school board can close that campus for up to five days to sanitize.

Safely [opening schools is a community effort](#) that requires each of us to wear a mask, practice social distancing, sanitize our hands frequently, and get tested if we think we have been exposed. We each need to do our part and encourage others around us to do the same.

Security

Fort Bend County Commissioners passed a [resolution denouncing anti-Semitism, anti-Asian bigotry, and all hateful speech](#). This was a result in a spike in hateful speech blaming certain ethnicities and races for the COVID19 virus. We are seeing cases of online hatred soar and Zoombombing has become an unfortunate development during the pandemic.

The Houston Federation has teamed up with the Southwest Division of the ADL to present a Zoombombing refresher ahead of the fall's online school options and virtual High Holiday services. The national team from the ADL will be presenting this webinar. We hope to "see" you there!

This is a great resource for any congregation who will have a "Zoom Master"—whether it is an IT person, volunteer, lay leader, or staff—running the fall's online programming.

You may [register online](#) for the August 11th event.

In Other News...

We keep talking about the importance of mask wearing (Do a mitzvah. Wear a mask.) Even Mah Jongg is appearing on masks. You can read about it [here](#).

Take care today and I hope you find a mask that reflects your inner style,

Jackie

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