



September 15 PM – JRAN Email

Dear JRAN Community:

This weekend we will ring in 5781 with the traditional apples and honey, round challah, and family Zoom call. The new year is a time for looking back so I've done some reflecting on the Federation's Jewish Response and Action Network (JRAN) —where it started, where it's gone, and where we might go in the future.

The Federation started JRAN back in January where we set an agenda to cover security and disaster resiliency and highlight community partners involved in this work. We began with 44 people and hosted our first meeting on January 22, 2020. Our second JRAN meeting was on March 5th. It was supposed to be on the Nonprofit Security Grant Program and the ADL but we pivoted and mainly concentrated on COVID19. In our follow-up email that afternoon we sent a draft pandemic response plan and promised to keep our organizations updated as we received information and resources that might be helpful as we manage this uncertain time. We sent a JRAN update on March 11th, 12th, 13th... .

Since then, we have sent daily—and sometimes twice daily—emails with critical information for our Jewish institutions. We saw organizations begin to shut down and suspend in-person operations, cumulating with a Harris County stay at home order on March 25th. As time went on and we began to understand COVID19 and its impacts in our community, we shared JRAN emails twice a week, fulfilling our promise to only send an email when there is new or helpful information for our Jewish institutions.

I would like to point out what turned into one of JRAN's most popular sections...In Other News! On April 2nd, we saw the mental toll COVID19 was having on our community. In order to end things on a positive note, I added a link to some Zoom backgrounds and a funny story about a person who accidentally turned themselves into a potato for an entire video call. The feedback from the community was fantastic and my amateur comedy and YouTube curator career began!

Six months later, we have grown to 151 people and the JRAN emails are forwarded to many more. We are living in our “new normal” and looking forward to slowly reopening our beloved Jewish institutions. Our society has figured out that the key to living with this virus is to wear a mask, practice social distancing, and wash our hands frequently. We are emerging from our COVID19 isolation bubbles, cases are going down, and our hospital system is within its capacity. So, where does JRAN go from here?

Beginning next week, I will be sending out a weekly JRAN update on Thursdays covering COVID19, Hurricane Season 2020, and security. The Federation will continue to monitor government orders and relevant information. If there is breaking news that we feel affects our Jewish community and

institutions, we will send an email immediately (i.e. a another stay-at-home order, a major storm approaching Houston, etc).

The response from you—our Jewish communal leaders—has been incredible. How you all have shown up for our community, putting science and health above institutional interests, is the very definition of *pikuach nefesh*.

We of course owe a debt of gratitude to our resident infectious disease expert and card-carrying member of many medical advisory committees, Dr. Ed Septimus. Your care, compassion, and *chesed* have helped guide the Houston Jewish community since the beginning of the pandemic and we will forever be grateful.

COVID19 – Brief Update

Open Texas – for areas where the hospitalization rate for COVID19 is under 15%, beginning Monday:

- All industries currently operating at 50% (i.e. offices, retail, museums, restaurants) can open to 75% capacity so long as they continue follow best health practices
- Nursing homes may open to essential caregiver visitations if there is no COVID19 outbreak (*beginning next Thursday to allow time to prepare*)
- Hospitals may proceed with non-essential elective surgeries
- Bars to remain closed

If your congregation is looking into opening its doors for in-person service, please fill out the [Interfaith Ministries/Greater Houston Partnership survey](#). *It is due by 5 pm tomorrow!*

[HISD announced](#) they will proceed with in-person class on October 19th. Parents must choose in-person or online instruction by September 25th. Those who do not make a choice by then will automatically be enrolled for in-person learning.

We will go over the rest of the COVID19 updates next week.

In Other News... (ear buds in, volume up!)

For Rosh Hashana, our favorite Jewish acapella group is busy working from home and releasing new music. Their latest video, [Bashana Haba'a](#), is a song filled with hope for the New Year.

Take care and I hope you have a sweet, happy, and healthy New Year.

Shana Tovah!

Jackie

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