

Bethesda Friends Meeting COVID Safety Guidelines

BFM’s COVID Advisory Committee is charged with determining reasonably safe practices for the Meeting’s in-person gatherings. The following guidelines describe what the committee takes into account in making these determinations. While these guidelines are meant to be helpful and provide a degree of transparency in the decision-making process, it is important to recognize that the COVID pandemic is continuing to evolve, and new thinking about the pandemic and new information sources continue to emerge. These guidelines represent the Advisory Committee’s thinking as of April 2022, and may be subject to change at any time depending on the pandemic situation.

The baseline considerations are the rules imposed by government agencies or Sidwell Friends Lower School. If Montgomery County or the State of Maryland imposes any restrictions on gathering or other COVID-related requirements, the Meeting must at a minimum follow those restrictions. Similarly, the Meeting must follow any requirements or limitations imposed by the school for use of the campus.

With these as a baseline, the Meeting may decide to impose stricter practices, considering the demographics of our community and the specific nature of a given activity.

To help decide what is reasonably safe, the COVID Advisory Committee considers two basic sources of information about COVID-19 conditions in Montgomery County:

1. The CDC’s COVID-19-by-County web page at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>. This site provides a county-specific, basic community COVID level of **Low**, **Medium** or **High** along with suggested guidelines for activities.
2. Montgomery County’s COVID-19 Data Dashboard at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/data/>. This site provides a wealth of data for our area, including trend graphs and level status for eight different indicators. BFM will consider seven of the indicators; we will not consider “Percent change in new cases per 100.000 during the last seven days compared to the previous 7 day period” for purposes of determining Risk Level in the matrix below.

With the above in mind, the committee recommends the following practices:

Risk Level	Indicators	Safety Measures
5	National, state or county-wide shutdown of all activities. Closure of SFS Lower School campus.	All in-person activities suspended.

4	<p>EITHER of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CDC community level High. 2. More than half of Montgomery County’s indicators High. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-person Meeting for Worship outdoors only. - No food or drink permitted. - First Day School activities restricted to outdoors only. - Child Care suspended. <p>In-person requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks and social distancing required. • Full vaccination including booster required for age groups where vaccination is available. • Self-screening for COVID symptoms required. • Sign-in with contact information required. • Prompt notification of a positive COVID test within 3 days after attending required. BFM will provide notice to others who attended the same meeting.
3	<p>EITHER of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CDC community level Medium. 2. Two or more, but fewer than half, of Montgomery County’s indicators High. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-person Meeting for Worship in the Meetinghouse. - No food or drink allowed. - First Day School activities may be indoors or outdoors. - Child Care provided in space below Meeting room. <p>In-person requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks required. • Social distancing required in Meeting for Worship. • Full vaccination including booster required for age groups where vaccination is available. • Self-screening for COVID symptoms required. • Sign-in with contact information required. • Prompt notification of a positive COVID test within 3 days after attending required. BFM will provide notice to others who attended the same meeting.
2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CDC community level Low, and 2. No more than one of Montgomery County’s indicators High. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-person Meeting for Worship in the Meetinghouse. - Food and drink permitted during fellowship after Meeting for Worship. - First Day School activities indoors or outdoors. - Celebrations may be held with food and drink. - Child Care provided in space below Meeting room. <p>In-person requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks strongly recommended indoors. • Full vaccination including booster required for age groups where vaccination is available. • Self-screening for COVID symptoms required.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign-in with contact information required • Prompt notification of a positive COVID test within 3 days after attending required. BFM will provide notice to others who attended the same meeting.
1	<p>1. CDC community level Low, and 2. None of Montgomery County’s indicators High.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-person Meeting for Worship in the Meetinghouse. - Food and drink permitted during fellowship after Meeting for Worship. - First Day School activities indoors or outdoors. - Child Care provided in space below Meeting room. <p>In-person requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full vaccination recommended. • Self-screening for COVID symptoms required. • Sign-in with contact information required • Prompt notification of a positive COVID test within 3 days after attending required. BFM will provide notice to others who attended the same meeting.

For each week that an in-person activity is planned, a member of the COVID Advisory Committee (as chosen by mutual agreement among committee members) will check the indicators and report any needed change to the rest of the COVID Advisory Committee and the committee(s) responsible. A notice will be sent to bulletin@bethesdafriends.org by mid-day Thursday for any change that must take place immediately.

The members of the COVID Advisory Committee are Susan M., Indira M., Jabez M., Melissa M., Cynthia O., Doug S., and Jillaine S.

You can reach the COVID Advisory Committee by using their confidential email: covid.committee@bethesdafriends.org.

The update to the May 5th Guidelines were approved at BFM’s Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business on December 4, 2022.