

With Changing Covid Regulations, Here's How to Plan for Multiple Bar and Bat Mitzvah Possibilities

By Holly Lebowitz Rossi Jun 10, 2021



What's the most important question a family needs to answer when planning a bar or bat mitzvah during a pandemic?

If you said, "Will we have it on Zoom, in-person, or as a hybrid?" you're right... sort of.

Yes, your top priority is laying out your Plan A. But there is another crucial question you need to be prepared to answer: "What will we do if we need or want to change direction?"

[Get our complete guide to planning and hosting a Zoom bar/bat Mitzvah, or a hybrid in-person/Zoom event, here.](#)

There are myriad reasons a shift to Plan B (or C, or D) might be necessary. Covid-19 case numbers in your community might spike, for example, or you might have a critical mass of guests who are either unvaccinated or uncomfortable attending in person. Conversely, your synagogue might suddenly open up for larger gatherings, or you might get inspired to expand a backyard plan. And then, there's the dreaded "what if it rains?" that has lurked over every outdoor gathering for time eternal.

Fortunately, it is possible — and even low-stress — to make a flexible set of plans that can catch you if you start leaning in a new direction. Just ask families whose bar or bat mitzvahs were scheduled as the pandemic began and everything changed. They found their Plan B. You will, too. Here's our best advice

on how to plan for multiple contingencies.

1. Get vendors on board

Ask any catering, entertainment, photography, or other vendors you're working with what they recommend — and what their policies are — for contingency planning. If you need to change your date, scope, or anything else due to unforeseen pandemic circumstances, you will know how to bring the whole team with you.

2. Moving to all-virtual

This might be one of the most logistically straightforward shifts you may need to make — but it is certainly also the most emotionally weighty if you have planned for a hybrid or in-person bar or bat mitzvah. By now, people understand that a local case spike, a positive test, a close-contact quarantine within the family — or any similar situation — might arise. If that happens, your main job is to focus on setting up your home space for the service, and then to communicate clearly and repeatedly with all your guests to enable them to attend in the new, virtual way.

3. Adding a hybrid option

If you began planning your child's celebration when Covid cases were high and vaccination rates low, you might have anticipated needing an all-virtual experience. But if circumstances have changed for the better in your area, you might want to consider changing either the service or the celebration to an in-person gathering. Your shift could be to a simple backyard lunch or food truck visit for the kids, or a tented celebration with music and catering.

4. Managing RSVPs for limited indoor capacity

Depending on the local rules around in-person capacities, you could find yourself with few slots and lots of loved ones. Create a spreadsheet or use an online platform to track your RSVPs carefully, so you can be ready to reach out to additional guests if some people decline. Even if you used paper invitations, being prepared with a digital version you can quickly distribute if space opens up will help you use your allotted space to its full capacity.

5. Expanding in-person capacity

If there's one thing we've learned during the pandemic, it's that change is the only constant. As case counts drop and vaccination rates rise in many areas, capacity is expanding for indoor and outdoor venues alike. Be prepared with a simple digital communication to send people, and don't be afraid to be honest about why you might be inviting them later than you otherwise would have. Expanded capacity is great news — as is your guests' opportunity to join you in person!

6. Adjusting for weather

Rain, blazing sunshine, or an unexpected chill are just three possible climate contingencies to consider if you are having an in-person, outdoor celebration. A tented space in your yard or driveway — or a covered outdoor space at a restaurant or other venue — is one way to be ready for precipitation. Some families

are even leaning into weather-related angst by providing guests with “swag” umbrellas or fans embossed with their child’s name or bar or bat mitzvah logo.

7. Postponing

If circumstances get too messy, if a special guest or sub-group of guests can’t make it, or if the Covid situation unexpectedly shifts, you always have the option to postpone altogether. Some families might move their service entirely online to give their child the opportunity to lead the service and read the Torah portion they had worked so hard to learn, but postpone the celebration to a future date. Others, particularly early in the pandemic, moved the entire bar or bat mitzvah out in time, for a period of months or even a full year. Discuss your options with your clergy as well as your child to make the best decision for you, and know that you are not alone.

8. Hold flexibility as a value

During the pandemic, families have faced every conceivable reason for needing to change to a Plan B, C, or even D. As frustrating, stressful, and emotionally challenging as that is, it also points to the strengths that can be found in being open and flexible. From asking vendors to commit to a backup plan, to communicating repeatedly with guests as changes unfold, to, yes, choosing to opt out of contingency planning altogether to manage stress — all these options are available, and all will lead you to a meaningful, joyful rite of passage for your child.

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