



Central East Region
of the Unitarian Universalist Association
cer@uua.org * www.uua.org/cer

Rev. Dr. Megan Foley, Regional

Summer Institute 2025 Covid and Masking Policy

The Summer Institute Covid and Masking Policy has been adapted from the thoroughly vetted UUA [General Assembly 2025 health and wellness policy](#). Over the past few years, Summer Institute has adopted the same annual policy as General Assembly, since it takes current disease conditions into account. See below for details on the rationale and adaptation that leads to the Summer Institute 2025 Covid and Masking Policy.

This policy is grounded in the [2024 Action of Immediate Witness](#) that calls Unitarian Universalists to center Love throughout the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and to shield those who are most vulnerable. Since 2020, the UUA has consulted public health experts, advisors within the Association, and published guidelines for other conferences and large group events such as GA. While health risks have changed significantly over recent years, those advisors and experts noted that ongoing measures greatly reduce both collective and individual risk.

With attention and commitment towards [safer gathering](#), this policy for in-person attendance at Summer Institute (SI) is rooted in layers of protection to shield the most vulnerable and make gatherings as accessible as possible for all attendees. UUA advisors all agree that vaccines remain one of the most important and effective measures for reducing transmission and the long-term impact of COVID-19, as well as the range of other highly communicable diseases like the flu and measles. As ever, air quality and circulation are essential for lowering the risk of spread of every airborne infectious disease. Oberlin College and First Church of Oberlin have different levels of filtration in their various buildings. Conducting testing in advance and encouraging anyone with symptoms to opt out of group events is another critical tool to reduce risk of infection. Finally, making masking with well-fitting respirator masks (N95/KN95/KF94/elastomeric) both accessible and comfortable helps protect the most vulnerable.

Given these shared understandings, the Central East Region's policy for in-person attendance at Summer Institute is as follows:

- All attendees are required to have had a full course of COVID-19 vaccines (unless they have a verified medical exemption).
- Attendees must take a rapid COVID test prior to traveling.

Attendees who are showing symptoms of illness at any point prior or during SI should not participate in person and should instead participate online. Decisions about next steps will be made on a case-by-case basis.

- Attendees are encouraged and expected to test for COVID if symptoms emerge during the week at SI.
- While awaiting test results, and in the case of a positive test, attendees are required to isolate to prevent further exposure, and in rare cases where isolation is impossible to mask

with a well-fitting respirator (N95/KN95/KF94/elastomeric) that covers both nose and mouth in all public spaces at all times if they are experiencing symptoms of illness.

- **Well-fitting respirator masks (N95/KN95/KF94/elastomeric) that cover both nose and mouth are required at all SI indoor activities that take place within the First Church Sanctuary and Stevenson Dining Hall when in transit.** Masks may be removed when actively eating or drinking and in small groups outside of these locations by collective consent.
- **Well-fitting respirator masks (N95/KN95/KF94/elastomeric) that cover both nose and mouth are also required at any other event of any size when someone in the group is wearing a red lanyard and/or requests that the group mask for any reason.**
- **Masking is strongly encouraged in all other indoor spaces where participants are not specifically required to mask and no one is wearing a red lanyard.**
- Masking outdoors is optional but encouraged. Whether indoors or outdoors attendees are expected to seek consent around physical proximity and touch, and to engage in social distancing and masking if requested.
- SI will ensure that air filtration is provided in our most crowded spaces and encourage those who can bring air purifiers to do so, in order to help lower the risk in their personal spaces.
- Well-fitting respirator masks (N95/KN95/KF94) and COVID tests will be available for attendees.
- Attendees are encouraged to engage in regular handwashing and use of hand sanitizer to limit the spread of communicable bacteria, viruses, and disease.

It is important to note that the virtual option for the theme speaker and worship is a key part of our commitment to accessibility and safety. While our policies apply to SI attendees, we cannot apply them uniformly to others who share spaces with us, including employees of Oberlin College and First Church, and other private or independent affiliated events onsite. In addition to issues of economic accessibility, we also know that travel itself carries major risk to exposure, and that health status can change quickly. We encourage taking precautions as outlined above prior to and during travel to SI. We do this out of a depth of care for and commitment to our most impacted communities during this time of overall risk and trauma.

For more specific science-based public health recommendations, we recommend viewing resources from the Peoples' CDC including this page on [Safer Gatherings](#) and the importance of layered protections, and the [Urgency of Equity Toolkit](#) for schools and communities.

Questions about this policy should be brought to Central East Regional Lead, Rev. Dr. Megan Foley, at mfoley@uua.org.