



Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities

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Table of Contents

Part 1 Raising Awareness

Foreword

Acknowledgements

Becoming a Person Centered Organization

Preface

Chapters 1 Getting Started

2 Becoming Aware

3 Barriers to Inclusion

4 Evaluation and Assessment

5 Visioning Session

Part 2 Roadmap to Inclusion

Chapters 6 Becoming an Inclusive Organization

7 Employment Practices and the Americans with Disabilities Act

8 Social Inclusion

9 Inclusion in Worship Experiences

10 Early Childhood Education

11 Day and Supplemental School Education

12 Adult Education

13 Bar and Bat Mitzvah

14 Youth Group Inclusion

15 Recreation and Leisure Inclusion

16 Disability and Legal Issues

17 High Incidence Disabilities

18 Disability Awareness Overview

19 Disability Awareness Training Workshop

20 Disability Awareness Training for Grades 5-12

21 Understanding Challenges: The Impact of Disability on the Family

Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities

Preface ii

“For my house shall be a house of prayer for all people.” Isaiah 56:5

Having a disability should never be a reason to exclude someone from involvement in his or her Jewish community. When someone with a disability is included and involved in meaningful ways, we are blessed with their gifts as a community. We are not whole until all of us belong. Everyone in your organization, professional staff, lay leaders, members and volunteers has a role to play in inclusion. We hope that the Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities will help you see that Inclusion can be woven into every single aspect of your organization.

The Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities was developed by the Minneapolis Jewish Community Inclusion Program for People with Disabilities to help synagogues, schools, and agencies in these areas:

- To engage and move Jewish organizations towards self examination and change;
- To analyze your organization’s inclusion achievements and develop a plan to address challenges;
- To provide specific and practical ideas that can be adapted to the needs of your organization;
- To help your organization understand how a disability too often keeps those who desire participation outside;
- To provide simple and effective tools that will not tax the resources of your organization.

We have created the Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities to help Jewish organizations become more inclusive and welcoming of people with disabilities and their families. The Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities is designed to help you develop your organization’s unique roadmap to creating a warm and welcoming environment where all people have access to Judaism’s rich tapestry of traditions, practices and community. May you be enriched by your journey.

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Minneapolis Jewish Community Inclusion Program for People with Disabilities

Using the Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities

This is the recommended process to achieve the most success from your efforts. If you follow this process, you will identify unmet needs and priorities, and create a plan with a timeline. It includes a checklist of items that you will want to consider before you begin.

Checklist for Your Journey

If You Already Have an Inclusion Committee

If you have an Inclusion Committee in place, the Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities will give you direction and guidance to develop processes and structure to address unmet needs and priorities. You can begin as soon as possible.

If You Do Not Have an Inclusion Committee

The Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities is designed to support the efforts of your Inclusion Committee. You need to give serious consideration to creating your Inclusion Committee.

Evaluation and Assessment

This is a critical step toward understanding the unmet needs of your organization. You will be able to pinpoint where challenges to inclusion exist in order to address them successfully. Evaluation and assessment results will help you prioritize.

Chapter 1—Getting Started 1

EVEN MOSES NEEDED A VOICE

A Jewish Heritage of Inclusion

Centuries ago, the Jewish people followed a powerful leader from Egypt into the wilderness and a new future. Little did they know that without G-d's inclusion, Moses might never have been chosen.

In Shemot (Exodus 4:11) when G-d spoke to Moses and told him that he would lead his People out of Egypt, Moses replied that he could not accept this role for he was slow of speech and heavy of tongue. Moses' self-assessment caused G-d to be angry and G-d said: "Who made man's mouth? Or who makes one mute, or deaf or seeing or blind. Isn't it I, G-d?"

G-d made it possible for Moses to fulfill his destiny by providing Aaron to speak for Moses. It was, in fact, a way of leveling the playing field or providing an accommodation. Moses could now do the work that G-d had commanded him to do. He would survive many more tests of faith and strength to lead His People.

G-d chose Moses because of the personal vision and strength he possessed. His speech disability was insignificant in G-d's plan.

When we understand that each of us needs our faith community, regardless of our abilities, all of us will be nourished by our traditions, our community and our participation. We must learn to accept that when one member of our community is left behind, we are not whole.

To welcome all is a Jewish tradition. ...

As we open our hearts and our minds to every individual we meet, let us look upon them and know that they are preceded by angels. May we remember that each of us is created in the image of G-d. Like Moses, may our strengths overcome our challenges so each of us can contribute to our community in our own unique way. Like Abraham and Sarah, may we find ways to welcome and accommodate those who yearn to be part of our community. And like the community of Miriam, may we recognize the Divine Presence in each person we meet, knowing that we are not whole until all of us move forth together. May we go forth, each of us, and do our part to ensure that people with disabilities and their families enjoy meaningful participation in our Jewish community. If there be among you a needy person, you shall not harden your heart, but you shall surely open your hand. Deut. 15:7.

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Jewish Community **Guide to Inclusion** of People with Disabilities

- **Step-by-step guide for establishing an Inclusion Committee**
- **Comprehensive assessments and strategies**
- **Resources to create a plan of action**
- **Disability awareness training**
- **10 things to know about raising a child with special needs**
- **Information and resources**

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