

# Be Inclusive in Your Congregation

- Give the sermon on Inclusion and follow up with a discussion.
- Offer tours of the sanctuary to people who are new or visiting to help them feel comfortable. They can see and touch ritual items, stand on the bimah, hold the Torah, and find a seat where they will be comfortable sitting. Familiarity can help ease some anxiety about a new situation.
- Announce page numbers often. Describe the prayer book and commentary by color and size, in addition to name.
- Ask people with disabilities ahead of time to participate in rituals and prayers during the service. Honor them by being called to the Torah and help them practice the blessings. Ask people with disabilities and their family members to give the d'var Torah, carry the Torah for hakafah, light Shabbat candles and say the Kiddush.
- If your bimah is not accessible, move the reading desk to the main level of the sanctuary so the Torah itself is accessible to all.
- Train ushers to welcome and seat people with disabilities. Make sure they know where working assistive listening devices and large print prayer books are located.
- Have a congregational discussion during services on ways the synagogue can support life cycle events for people with disabilities.
- Encourage families to hold the ceremony for a child with a disability at Shabbat morning services, or as is customary at your synagogue so that your congregation can attend.
- During this month, engage in conversations about inclusion in Torah study and sermons. Extend the discussion to your board and committee meetings.
- Use social media to promote inclusion. Post about your events, quote text that resonates with Jewish values about inclusion. YouTube a short Torah commentary about inclusion. #JDAIM is the hashtag we use in social media.
- Provide prayer books and Torah commentaries in accessible format (i.e. Braille, large print, audio versions).
- Make your worship service accessible to people who have diverse sensory needs, such as sign language interpretation (set seats aside so those worshipers can see the interpreter clearly) and picture schedule of the service order. Include in your service handout the start and stop time of services, the prayer order and the location of restrooms and drinking fountains.
- Start each service with the opportunity for congregants to turn to their neighbors and introduce themselves. Make sure that every person has someone with whom to share this greeting.
- Plan a Shabbat for Inclusion and include people with disabilities on the planning committee.

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