

Federation's Disability Inclusion Planning Toolkit

Worship & Ritual Discussion Guide

We are all created in the image of God.

Guided by Jewish values and traditions, this section explores the attitudinal and structural changes needed so that all will feel welcome attending services and engaging in Jewish learning. As with all disability inclusion work, the voices of those with disabilities are essential to this process.

Additional information about advancing disability inclusion can be found on [Federation's Community Resource website](#). Please contact Lisa Handelman at 301-230-7278 or at lisa.handelman@shalomdc.org for questions or to share additional resources.

Toolkit Legend

W "Welcoming" questions and comments refer to changes that may involve modification in attitude, but do not necessarily require additional funding.

A "Accommodating" questions and comments focus on specific accommodations that may require minimal additional resources, long-term planning and/or significant funding. Some costs are ongoing while others involve initial structural changes followed by less expensive maintenance.

Awareness & Communication

- W** **Have the spiritual needs of individuals with disabilities, family members, siblings, and caregivers been explored?** Do individuals with disabilities feel welcome, are they invited to participate in services, encouraged to celebrate life-cycle events, take on leadership roles and are individuals with disabilities called up to the Torah?
- W** **Is disability inclusion talked about from the bimah by clergy and lay leadership?** If the worship includes visual activities and movement or when announcing a location of a room, is detailed descriptions provided for individuals who are blind or partially sighted and has the congregation been sensitized to behaviors and noise tolerance during services?

Training

- W** **Does training for all those involved in services such as ushers/greeters and lay leaders include how to welcome individuals with a range of disabilities?** Does training include working with individuals with visible and hidden disabilities, as well as individuals with mental health conditions? Does training include sensitivity to caregivers or support personnel who may accompany an individual with a disability?
- W** **Is training provided to those who plan worship/ritual programs, so they design activities that support meaningful inclusion?** Are there accommodations for life-cycle events (*B'nai Mitzvah*, etc.) so all can celebrate these important rituals?



Accommodations and Physical Access

- W** **How can you remove possible stumbling blocks?** Are *tallitot* and *kippot* easily reachable for everyone, is the Torah accessible to people with physical challenges and/or people of short stature? If lighting is decreased (using candle light or dimming the lights during the program), is additional support provided to individuals with limited sight? Is there a procedure for requesting reserved seating, ALS interpreters or other accommodations and if food is included, have specific dietary needs and allergies been taken into account?
 - A** **Do you provide a range of accommodations, so all can participate?** Is the *bimah* physically accessible, are there alternative prayer books (large-print, braille, and books with picture communication symbols)? Are there lightweight copies or reading stands for people who need assistance handling books and other materials? Are assistive listening devices and an amplification system provided at services, special events, and educational programs? Is there a way for an individual who is blind or partially sighted to access audio versions of material? Are there comfortable places to which people can easily retreat where they can still follow along if sitting still or staying quiet becomes difficult?
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Budget

- W** **Is there a strategic budget with a clear timetable to provide the changes necessary to support individuals who want to engage in all aspects of worship and ritual?**
- A** **Are accommodations that support worship and ritual covered by your budget?** Accommodations should be provided in a seamless manner without additional cost to individuals, families or guests attending life cycle events or other special programs?