
COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Barbara Kirshenblatt

Samantha Levenson

Gary Mansfield

Sheldon Rotman

Joe Sussman

Rabbi Adam Cutler

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BACKGROUND

In January 2015, Beth Tzedec Congregation applied for and was accepted into the first cohort of the USCJ Ruderman Inclusion Action Community. Seventeen congregations from across North America participated in this initiative, sponsored by the Ruderman Family Foundation and the USCJ, with the goal of making our communities more inclusive and accessible for individuals with disabilities. Rav Adam took the lead staff role. In that capacity, he represented Beth Tzedec at meetings in New York City and together with Sheldon Rotman in Schaumburg, IL at the USCJ Biennial Convention. Rav Adam also convened an ad hoc Inclusion Committee to develop an Action Plan for consideration by the Board of the Governors. The committee limited its research to the following five areas of synagogue life:

- A. Auditory Accessibility
- B. Visual Accessibility
- C. Physical Accessibility
- D. Congregational School
- E. Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Areas A, B and D are detailed in this report with the expectation that areas C and E will be added in forthcoming updates.

The recommendations are colour coded based on the following implementation timelines.

Green	0 – 6 months
Blue	6 months – 2 years
Orange	2 – 5 years

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. An Inclusion Committee be struck as a permanent committee of the Board of the Governors.
2. All synagogue staff receive a minimum of two hours of training twice yearly with respect to inclusion.
3. A staff member be assigned to carry the Inclusion portfolio.
4. All programmatic marketing materials contain language indicating that Beth Tzedec is committed to Inclusion. A phone number and email address is provided for accessibility requests, which should be provided no less than 24 hours before a scheduled program.
5. A dedicated inclusion/accessibility email address be established and regularly monitored.
6. An Inclusion and Accessibility Policy be developed and publicized indicating Beth Tzedec's commitment to inclusion and the parameters of its responsibilities.
7. Ongoing participation in Shabbat Itanu.
8. Bulletin articles be written highlighting inclusion 2-3 times per year.
9. Accessibility needs be surveyed as part of membership application and renewal.
10. An Inclusion Specialist be hired on a part-time or full-time basis.
11. The creation of a Shabbat buddying program wherein older youth are paired with younger youth. Many of these younger youth will have disabilities.
12. Permanent signage be posted through the building indicating directions to most frequently utilized spaces.
13. Ushers be trained annually to assist individuals with disabilities.
14. Investigate feasibility of intentionally hiring someone with a disability.
15. Develop action plan for supporting families dealing with mental health issues.
16. Update Inclusion Plan Biennially.
17. An annual budget of no less than \$10 000 be committed to inclusion initiatives.

AUDITORY ACCESSIBILITY

Inclusion Efforts to Date

- a) Beth Tzedec provides a limited number of FM receivers, available for pick-up in the cloak room, for use in the Hendeles Chapel and Main Sanctuary. A recently acquired portable FM system is available for use in other venues. There are occasional complaints about the quality of the sound produced from the FM receivers.
- b) Congregants are informed of the availability of FM receivers through the Bulletin.
- c) New FM receivers have been purchased but are not yet installed for use in the Banquet Hall.

Recommendations

18. ASL interpreters be made available for services and major events.
19. Seats should be reserved towards the front of the sanctuary for High Holy Day services enabling those who read lips or understand ASL to be within reasonable distance of the signer and speakers.
20. Annual training be provided for regular cloak room staff pertaining to distribution and operation of hearing assistive devices. Written instructions be provided that are always available for consultation.
21. Provisions be made for distribution of assistive devices in the absence of cloak room staff.
22. Replace the FM system in the sanctuary and install newer equipment in the main sanctuary and in the larger halls.
23. Provide closed captioning for all audio or video on synagogue website.
24. Investigate possibility of rooms with a large blank wall where slides or computer output can be projected for real-time captioning.
25. Provide congregants with transcript of scripted Rabbis' sermons within 48 hours of delivery. Additionally, printed transcript to be provided in advance of delivery.

VISUAL ACCESSIBILITY

Inclusion Efforts to Date

- a) Availability of large print *siddurim* in the chapel.
- b) Welcoming of guide dogs to all programs including prayer services.
- c) Purchase of bright projector and a large screen.
- d) Ongoing maintenance of parking lot limiting the development of potholes.

Recommendations

26. Ensure that larger print siddurim, humashim, mahzorim etc. are available in sufficient numbers.
27. Purchasing of 2 Braille versions of all books used in ritual matters where available.
28. Increasing the light intensity level in the building especially in rooms or sections of rooms where reading or fine work takes place such as the sanctuary, chapel, library, and offices.
29. Acquisition of Large Print, Braille, and Audio-Books books for the library at quantities proportionally relevant to need.
30. Development of Braille signage.

CONGREGATIONAL SCHOOL

Inclusion Efforts to Date

- a) UJA and Beth Tzedec's Herman Fund fund special needs assistance (tutors). There is no hard cap on financial outflow nor number of shadows employed.
- b) Elevator access to the 2nd floor.
- c) First floor accessible washroom, which requires adult escort for access from school wing
- d) Students with hearing impairment provide the teacher with a microphone so the child can hear better.
- e) A newsletter is sent to keep the parents informed about the program including inclusion efforts.
- f) Repetitive learning making it easier for children to learn.

Recommendations:

31. One hour per month of teacher training for students with special needs.
32. A scope and sequence unit of study on inclusion for each grade (a study unit on Jewish text).
33. Development and implementation of communications strategy promoting Beth Tzedec Congregation School as Inclusive environment.
34. Integration of inclusion training in Professional Development days on a yearly basis.
35. Creation of accessible bathrooms on 2nd floor.
36. Creation of accessible hallway doorways with push button control and wider doors to classrooms.