



jkidACCESS

Guide Training

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Introduction

Welcome to our jkidACCESS Guide training. jkidACCESS is Jewish Learning Venture’s new online platform to provide parents and educators with resources about engaging in Jewish rituals, values and holidays for children with a range of disabilities.

Our curriculum and training provide you with resources to create family engagement programs that are inclusive and accessible. Each unit will guide you on how to vision, create and implement changes around inclusion and accessibility that can better support all of the families in your community.

More and more, synagogues and Jewish organizations are creating ‘family engagement’ programs that are designed to meet families raising Jewish children wherever they are in terms of Jewish identity, practice and affiliation. These programs may take place in a Jewish space like a synagogue, Jewish museum or JCC--or in any kind of public space like a museum, coffee shop, or playground. Through Jewish Learning Venture’s family engagement initiative [jkidphilly](#), we have learned that it is essential to plan for inclusion and accessibility in order to reach **all** of the potential families in our Jewish communities.

More than anything else, considering disability inclusion is a mindset...and one that grows stronger and becomes more ingrained with practice. Some of us are people with disabilities or family members of people with disabilities; others of us may have little experience with the early intervention and special education systems that are an integral part of the lives of families raising children with delays and/or disabilities. This curriculum will support your learning, wherever you are starting from. There is always more for all of us to learn about inclusion and accessibility and we hope that you will continue this important dialogue with us.

Sincerely,
Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer
Chief Program Officer, Jewish Learning Venture



Family Engagement and Inclusion

Objectives in this unit:

- Define disability inclusion
- Assess your community's baseline of inclusion

Materials:

- Types of disabilities you may encounter slide
 - Whole Community Inclusion Baseline Assessment
-

Introduction

Before we consider ways to create inclusive family engagement programs, we want to be clear about what is meant by *disability inclusion*.

According to the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#):

“Including people with disabilities in everyday activities and encouraging them to have roles similar to their peers who do not have a disability is *disability inclusion*. This involves more than simply encouraging people; it requires making sure that adequate policies and practices are in effect in a community or organization.”

In this guide, we'll share ways to create the policies and practices that will welcome and support families raising children and teens with disabilities into your family engagement programs--whether they take place within the walls of a synagogue, outdoors at a camp or in any public space setting.

We know that 1 in 5 children has some kind of disability--whether it is developmental, cognitive, physical, learning, related to mental health and/or a combination of disabilities. While our attitude towards those children and their families may be one of inclusion, without putting policies and practices in place that support their participation, they may not be able to access our family engagement programs. This can impact entire family systems--starting with the child but also



including their siblings, parents and also grandparents; all of whom may want to participate in our programs but can't do so if one family member's needs are supported.

While significant work has taken place across the Jewish community related to creating inclusive Jewish education, less focus has been placed on making family engagement programs inclusive. In some ways, family engagement programs contain unique challenges--these programs may have less structure than a traditional classroom setting, they may be held in an unfamiliar setting for the child and they may be led by professionals or volunteers who don't have any special education background or training.

Despite these challenges, with attention and intention, we believe that you can put policies and practices into place that will make your family engagement inclusive of all children--and their families.

To consider:

What kinds of disabilities might you encounter in your communities?

- Autism/Sensory Integration Differences
- Intellectual Disability
- Mental/Behavioral Health
 - Anxiety
 - ADHD
- Learning Disabilities
- Physical/Mobility
- Visual Impairment/Blindness
- Deaf/Hard-of-hearing

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As we consider inclusion and accessibility, it helps to consider the different kinds of disabilities that you may encounter in children, parents and grandparents who are the audience for your programs.

Often, people may assume that if you aren't seeing one type of disability that it doesn't exist in your



community. We have heard comments such as, “We don’t offer ASL interpretation because we don’t have any people who are Deaf in our community.’

Keep in mind that by increasing the supports and accommodations that you offer and by spreading the word about your accessibility efforts, more people may learn about your family engagement programs and be encouraged to check them out.

To do:

The following assessment can be completed by members of a synagogue or organization professional staff. After each staff member completes it, discuss your answers together as a group. Notice the areas in which you haven’t yet addressed inclusion and also where inclusion is being implemented successfully.

Whole Community Inclusion Inclusion Baseline Assessment

Attitude	Agree	Working Towards It	Disagree	Not Sure
Our synagogue has a welcoming attitude towards people with disabilities.				
Our synagogue has an inclusion committee or people in leadership representing inclusion				
Our synagogue staff and lay leaders have been trained in disability awareness				
Our website includes a statement about our inclusion policy				
Our membership application asks about accommodations for people with disabilities				
Our synagogue participates in Jewish Disabilities Awareness, Acceptance & Inclusion Month programs				

What else is important to share about attitudes towards inclusion at your synagogue?





Physical Accommodations	Agree	Working Towards It	Disagree	Not Sure
Our synagogue provides ample accessible parking				
Our synagogue provides accessible restrooms				
Our synagogue provides access to the bima for people with mobility issues				
Our synagogue provides accessible Torah reading table				
Our synagogue provides large print prayer books				
Our synagogue provides devices and/or captioning for people who are hard of hearing or Deaf				
Our synagogue provides sign language interpretation				

What else is important to share about the physical accommodations at your synagogue?



Education, Youth and Family Programming	Agree	Working Towards It	Disagree	Not Sure
Our religious school includes disabilities awareness in our curriculum				
Our religious school enrolls children who have IEPs, 504 plans or otherwise need learning or behavior support				
Our religious school has a policy about the inclusion of children with disabilities				
Our religious school has a designated resource room with a teacher/special education professional				
Our synagogue has a youth group that provides support to children/teens with disabilities				
Families with kids with disabilities regularly participate in Tot Shabbat or other family programs that our synagogue offers				
Our synagogue has a calming/quiet space available for families during Shabat or other programming				
Our synagogue asks about whether people need accommodations to participate in family programs				

What else is important to share about the education, youth and family programming at your synagogue?



After completing the assessment:

What patterns emerge from your assessment? What are 1-2 areas that you think your synagogue could improve on in your inclusion efforts?

Your 'inclusion' baseline may impact how inclusive the family engagement programs you hold in your space are.

For example--if there isn't an accessible sanctuary in your building or if there isn't enough accessible parking, it may be hard for grandparents with mobility issues to join in family Shabbat or holiday programs.

If your website doesn't mention inclusion at all, parents of a child with disability may not think that their family would be welcome in your community.

The goal of the synagogue assessment is to help you and the professionals and lay leaders you work with to set priorities around inclusion.

Time to Reflect:

Imagine that you are a parent of a child with a disability and you are looking at your synagogue/organization's website. What images, words and messages make you feel welcome? What might you add to make the website more welcoming and accessible?



Universal Design and Your Programs

Objectives in this unit:

- Define Universal Design
- Name ways that you can make your family engagement universally inclusive and accessible

Materials:

- [Universal Design 101](#)
 - Checklist of universal design program principles
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Introduction

Have you heard of the term *universal design*?

According to the [Centre for Excellence in Universal Design](#), universal design (sometimes also called inclusive design or barrier-free design) is the design and structure of an environment so that it can be understood, accessed, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age or ability.

Universal design helps us to think about how disability interacts with the environment. In this unit, we will consider how we can turn the spaces where our programs occur into barrier-free environments.

Here is an important example of universal design that we can all relate to: curb cuts. Most of us take curb cuts in the sidewalks for granted. Many of us have used them to push strollers around a busy city, navigate a personal shopping cart or have used them if we're walking with a cane or crutches and it's hard to step down from the sidewalk.

But the history of curb cuts in the United States is actually a story of [disability activism](#)--it took enormous efforts to make what is now a commonplace part of sidewalk design.















When environmental accommodations for people with disabilities become used globally, they are no longer seen as accommodations. They just “are.”

As we learn about the concept of Universal Design, we hope you’ll consider things that you could put into place to make all of your family engagement programs inclusive and accessible.

To consider:

Disability can be permanent, temporary or situational. Some people are born with a disability; others may acquire a disability through accident or illness and sometimes a disability is temporary. Think about the families who come to your programs--children, parents and grandparents--as you look at this slide about different situations in which people may need accommodations.

	Permanent	Temporary	Situational
Touch	 One arm	 Arm injury	 New parent
See	 Blind	 Cataract	 Distracted driver
Hear	 Deaf	 Ear infection	 Bartender
Speak	 Non-verbal	 Laryngitis	 Heavy accent

Inclusive
A Microsoft Design Toolkit

To learn more about Universal Design, read [Universal Design 101](#).



To do:

Let's consider how principles of Universal Design apply to your family engagement program set-up and space. Here is a checklist for you to use to make sure that your program is accessible for all kids and their families.

Reflect on a recent program and think about how many items you had in place. Then think about an upcoming program--what planning will you need to be able to check off these items?

- Seating arrangements**--Make sure to have room for wheelchairs, walkers, rollers; chairs available if you're having people sit on the floor (not comfortable for everyone)
- Art supplies**--Have a variety of materials for those with fine motor and sensory challenges (eg brushes for those who may not like to finger paint; different sizes and thickness of crayons, etc.)
- Sensory supplies**--For children with sensory issues, provide a box with noise-cancelling headphones, squeeze toys and calming tools
- Quiet space**--Whenever possible, is there a place where parents can take children if they need some time away to calm down or just take a break from the program?
- Content**--In choosing books for storytimes, consider children's developmental range. For some children, books with fewer words and more pictures are helpful. For children with shorter attention spans who aren't able to sit through longer stories, you could have another quiet activity and helper ready if the child needs to leave storytime.



Time to Reflect:

What changes could you easily implement in terms of Universal Design and your family engagement programs? What could you do with a budget of \$100? \$500? How might those changes support the families you hope to reach?

A large empty rectangular box for writing reflections.