 Event Planning Checklist for Accessibility

When planning an event either at Congregation Har HaShem or at another location, please consider the following to ensure it as accessible to all.

# **Planning Ahead**

* Give ample notice for the upcoming event, which allows people to arrange transportation or other accommodations or supports they may require. Indicate start and finish times.
* If needed, reserve sign language interpreters, real-time captioning, note takers, attendants, or other supports in plenty of time to ensure availability. Ask those helping with accommodations what they need to do their job. Contact [Alan Halpern](mailto:ah@harhashem.org?subject=event%20accessibility) to set this up.
* Set aside some money in the event budget early in the planning process for accessibility, communication supports, and accessible formats (e.g., large print materials, closed captioning for videos, etc.)
* After reserving a date for the event, reserve a date for training volunteers. Training will cover how to respectfully assist people with disabilities, how to respond to any accessibility issues that may arise, and emergency evacuation procedures. Contact [inclusion@harhashem.org](mailto:inclusion@harhashem.org?subject=accessible%20event%20staff%20training)to set this up.

# **Publicity and Registration (Communication)**

* Make sure the registration form and other materials are posted in an easy-to-read font and accessible to all through snail mail or email. If someone is unable to register through either of these means, provide the option of calling the front office to register. (Be sure the front office is open to this.)
* Provide space on your registration form or on the event notice for people to identify their accommodations or accessibility needs and dietary restrictions, including airborne allergies and allergies that produce an anaphylactic response. Provide contact information (phone number and email address) so that attendees can contact you with their needs.
* On the registration form, state “We will do our best to accommodate everyone’s needs. Early registration or response will give us more time to try to meet individual needs.”
* Follow up with people who request accommodations in a timely fashion to:

1. Identify their needs.
2. Brainstorm with them, and other parties if necessary, about accommodations that can be provided.
3. Explain what accommodations they can expect.

* If a need cannot fully be met, respond with the following four components:

1. Specifically acknowledge what you could not do.
2. Respectfully apologize.
3. Explain why a need could not be accommodated.
4. Thank the person for sharing their needs and asking for accommodations. (If appropriate, explain that we hope we can provide additional accommodations in the future.)

* On posters or information sheets, include accessibility symbols if your event and facility meet the requirements of using them. See <https://www.graphicartistsguild.org/tools_resources/downloadable-disability-access-symbols>.

# **Parking and Accessibility**

* Make sure there are adequate designated accessible parking spaces.
* The north and south buildings at Congregation Har HaShem have designated accessible parking spaces in front of each main entrance area. If an event is being held at a different location, indicate the number of designated parking spaces available at that location on publicity and registration information.
* Make sure that wheelchair access is via the main entrance. Alternatively, post clear, legible signs at the main entrance showing alternative, safe and accessible entrances.
* The main floors of both the north and south buildings at Congregation Har HaShem are considered accessible to all. The basement in the north building and the second floor of the south building are accessible by stairs only.

# **Logistics to Consider Prior to Booking an Event: Indoor Room and Outdoor Space Set-Up**

* Make sure all visitors can safely and easily travel through the venue (e.g., firm surfaces for wheelchair users, avoiding deep gravel and grass).
* Make sure a ramp is available for a step of more than 13mm.
* Allow for easy movement for wheelchair and scooter users (you may need to rearrange furniture). For instance, choose a room with wide aisles and plenty of space around tables.
* Include accessible seating areas interspersed throughout the room where possible: front, middle and back.
* If a stage is being used, ensure it and any projection screens are easily visible.
* If possible, arrange for provisions for assistive listening devices (e.g., an FM system).
* Provide reserved seating for people who are deaf, deafened, hard-of-hearing, vision impaired, or who need mobility assistance.
* Make sure accessible washrooms are available within a reasonable distance.
* Cover electrical cables or cords that cross over aisles or pathways so wheelchair users, as well as people who use canes and walkers, can traverse easily and safely across them.
* If the front doors to the event are heavy or difficult to open, assign a volunteer to assist with opening the door.
* Make sure people with disabilities can reach all areas used at the event independently or with assistance from your volunteers, e.g., the registration desk, auditorium, breakaway rooms, stage.
* Post clear and easy-to-read signs showing locations of accessible washrooms, elevators, phones, etc.
* Make sure that volunteers are easily identifiable (use name tags or other identifiers).

# **Food**

* Offer a variety of food options available to accommodate different dietary needs (e.g., kosher, nut free, gluten free, dairy free, vegetarian).
* For self-catered events, assign staff or volunteers to help attendees who may need help.
* Clearly label food options (e.g. meat, vegetarian, gluten-free or free of other allergens) and serve them on separate platters.

# **Content, Presentation, Handouts**

* Produce materials in large print (16-point type or larger) and have materials available electronically in case of a request for such a format.
* Ask presenters to verbally describe contents of videos, or any written materials, including overheads or chalkboard notes for audience members.
* Encourage presenters to use captioned videos.

# **Evaluation**

* Include questions about inclusion and accessibility on event evaluations. For instance: Were there any barriers to accessibility or inclusion that limited your participation? How might we make future events more accessible and inclusive?
* If you do not plan to have a formal evaluation, consider soliciting informal feedback from individuals with disabilities about their experience at the event and any suggestions for improvement.