

A Guide to Creating Inclusive Events and Programs at CBH

At Congregation Bet Haverim we seek to be responsive to the varied needs that may accompany Jews from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds, interfaith families, Jewish-adjacent family members and friends, LGBTQ+ Jews, Jews of Color, and Jews with disabilities or other accommodation needs. Our events and programs should treat all those who belong to or visit our community with dignity so that they feel welcomed, respected, and included.

To support access and inclusion, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee developed this guide for those planning and/or leading CBH events and programs.

Best practices for achieving inclusion are constantly evolving. We want to continually grow, learn, and improve our capacity to broadly meet the needs of our partnership. We invite the feedback of our community in achieving this goal.

Event Planning

- Model the DEI supportive interactions outlined in the [Welcoming Each Other at Congregation Bet Haverim](#)¹ guide.
- Honor the principle of “*Nothing about us without us*” in event planning and speaker selection. Engage with those being represented for knowledge and resources.
- Provide presenters with DEI-related guidance, such as providing them with a copy of these guidelines, to help ensure an event is consistent with DEI goals.
- If an event includes multiple speakers, seek a range of diversity and lived experience, when appropriate and possible.
- Ensure your planning process incorporates the pertinent guidelines listed below.

Event Announcements and Registration

- Include a statement regarding accommodations such as “*CBH strives to host inclusive, accessible events that enable all individuals to engage fully. We will seek to provide accommodations to the extent that resources allow. To request accommodation or for inquiries about accessibility, please contact...*”
- If using images or photographs to promote the event, seek to use images that reflect our community’s diversity, sending a visual message that all are welcome.
- When utilizing check-in tables, ensure that signs and materials are accessible and readable for all attendees. People staffing a registration table should wear name tags and, if they are comfortable doing so, include their pronouns.

Visual and Auditory Accessibility

- Speakers should use a microphone and, whenever possible, have audience members do so as well when they ask questions or offer comments, to support those with hearing limitations. It is helpful for speakers to repeat the gist of audience questions or comments to ensure the full group knows what was said.

¹ <https://www.bethaverim.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/193/2023/05/Welcoming-Each-Other-at-Congregation-Bet-Haverim.4.23.2023.pdf>

- Projected slides should be accessible for those with visual impairments. Use large enough fonts, with high contrast between text and backgrounds, and color combinations that are accessible for people who are colorblind. See [Make your PowerPoint presentations accessible to people with disabilities](#).²
- Similar visual considerations apply to handout materials. Also consider providing written copies of presentations or speeches to support those with hearing limitations.

Accessibility Considerations

- At larger events, reserve some seats near the presenter(s) for those who need to be close to fully participate (i.e., individuals with visual, hearing, or other disabilities).
- Seating plans should include room for wheelchairs and walkers, but not all in one location, so those using a wheelchair or walker can be next to family and friends.
- When asking participants to stand, dance, or move in any way, offer alternatives. Encourage them to participate however they are able, and in a manner best for them.

Sensory Sensitivities

- Sensory sensitivities can be visual, auditory, or olfactory in nature (e.g. flashing lights, loud noises, and strong scents).
- Avoid the use of strobe lights and quick flashing in any video elements.
- Be thoughtful of volume levels with amplified music and other audio sources.
- Discourage the use of fragrances such as perfumes, colognes, and aftershave by asking for “fragrance free” attendance in advertising or registration materials.
- Remind participants that CBH encourages the use of sensory support items such as headphones, fidget toys, and more by those who benefit from them.

Dietary

- When food is provided or the event includes a potluck, consider providing options for participants with common dietary restrictions or food allergies.
- Use signs or labels to indicate if a food item is gluten-free, dairy-free, vegan, vegetarian, or similar.
- Label ingredients so potential allergens are clearly identified. The most common food allergens are gluten, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, dairy, sesame, and fish.
- CBH has a supply of blank food allergy flags in the social hall kitchen for this purpose.
- See [The Top Nine Food Allergens](#)³ for further guidance on food allergens.

Gender Identity and Equity

- Use inclusive language that helps everyone know that their participation is valued.
- Use gender-neutral language (such as “partners,” “friends,” “spouse,” “children”) instead of gender-binary language (such as “ladies and gentlemen,” “husband/wife,” “sons and daughters”).
- Avoid gendered language and generalizations that are based on gender expectations (e.g. “boys will be boys,” “girls today love ____,” etc.).

² <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-powerpoint-presentations-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-6f7772b2-2f33-4bd2-8ca7-dae3b2b3ef25>

³ <https://www.foodallergyawareness.org/food-allergy-and-anaphylaxis/food-allergens/>

- In programs that include group interactions, consider inviting participants to communicate their preferred pronouns (he, she, they, etc.) during introductions if they feel comfortable doing so.

Race and Ethnicity

- Remember that there are Jews of all races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds.
- Ensure that presentations and events are inclusionary and represent that diversity.
- Never assume that someone is not Jewish based upon their physical appearance.

Jewish Knowledge, Faith Practices, and Interfaith Families

- Keep in mind the diversity of Jewish experience in the group, which may include secular Jews and those who might be more familiar with Ashkenazic, Sephardic, or Mizrahi traditions and practices.
- Show awareness that people may have grown up in or be in relationships with people of different faith traditions, religious identity, or secular world views.
- Strive to use language and include explanations that help everyone in attendance know they are included and that their participation is valued.
- Whenever possible, provide transliterations of Hebrew prayers and songs, either written or on a shared screen, so everyone can follow along.
- Seek to translate Jewish expressions and Hebrew or Yiddish phrases that may not be known by all.
- Not all participants will know the meaning or translation of many Hebrew prayers and songs. When possible, provide a translation or an overview of what the prayer is about.

Ground Rules for Potentially Controversial Topics

- Set the tone for your event by communicating expectations for behavior, emphasizing that participants must treat one another with mutual respect and dignity.
- Communicate ground rules for engagement, including being respectful of differing opinions and active listening to ensure an open dialogue.

Online Videoconferencing

- Recognize that the use of online videoconferencing such as Zoom may be a barrier to participation for some for whom the technology is a challenge and the invisibility of this format can create a sense of being unseen by the group.
- In turn, videoconferencing can also increase accessibility for some, and event organizers are encouraged to consider hybrid models, when possible.
- Consider the use of a “Zoom Greeter” who is identified and available for welcoming virtual participants, answering questions, and helping with technology glitches as this may support making this format feel more inclusive.
- See [Zoom Accessibility Best Practices](#).⁴

(Updated 10-29-24)

⁴ <https://www.colorado.edu/digital-accessibility/resources/zoom-accessibility-best-practices>