



Resources for Child Safety

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INTEGRATING PAST OFFENDERS

This resource is designed to assist you in making decisions regarding individuals who have behaved unethically or inappropriately in the past and are currently attempting to engage or increase their engagement with the community. They may have remained in the community/congregation where the offensive behavior occurred, or they may have moved to a new community/congregation.

PURPOSE

- Create an environment that allows all members, including past offenders, to maintain and strengthen their relationship with Judaism and the Jewish community.
- Ensure the safety of the congregation.

Sometimes, the two goals above conflict, and it may not be possible to allow a past offender to maintain or strengthen their relationship with Judaism within your community while also ensuring the safety of the congregation. When you are unsure whether or not to allow a past offender to engage or increase their engagement with your community, there are some helpful questions you can ask yourself.

QUESTIONS

- What was the nature of the offending behavior?
 - Is there anyone in the congregation who has experienced harm of this nature who could feel betrayed or triggered by the inclusion of this person?
- How did you learn of the behavior: directly from the member or another source?
 - Is it possible you don't have the whole story?
- Are there currently power dynamics at play?
 - If yes, is there a way to remove the power dynamic(s)?
- Are there any ways to reduce risk, such as setting a specific boundary or writing a new policy?
- Is there anything the person can say or do to make you feel more comfortable with their engagement?
 - Have there been or are there opportunities for this person to build trust with you?
 - Can you create opportunities for this person to build trust?
 - Is there a potential bias against this person?

BEST PRACTICES

- Ensure you have the whole story.
- Have a decision-making process in place to include:
 - Alignment with the [RA Code of Conduct](#), particularly section 7.
 - Who is involved in the decision-making process (committee or panel, legal, HR, etc)?
 - Clarifying what is and is not being decided in advance.
 - Decision-making timelines.
 - Proactively communicating the process and outcome of the decision to the past offender.
- Once a decision has been made - continue to monitor/check in with the past offender.
- Have a policy in place for resolving interpersonal issues between congregants.
- Have an anti-harassment policy that applies to congregants, not just employees.
- Have a reporting mechanism, preferably confidential, in place that is easily accessible (information on the website, posters in hallways and/or bathrooms, etc).

