



# RESPECTABILITY

Jewish Inclusion Research: March 9, 2015

Speakers: Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, President and Founder of RespectAbilityUSA, Meagan Buren, VP of RespectAbilityUSA and CEO of Buren Research & Communications, Linda Burger, Chief Executive Officer of Jewish Family Services Houston

Special Thanks To:



# Previous Research

## ❖ Focus Groups

- Capitol Hill- Congressional Staffers
- People with disabilities looking for work
- Parents and providers of PwDs looking for work
- Maryland- Jewish Parents with no personal connection to disability
- Texas- Jewish parents with no personal connection to disability- Special thanks to Joan Alexander and Linda Burger

## ❖ Polls

- [JerusalemU](#)- Young Engaged Jews
- [Disability Community](#)
- [Foundation for Jewish Camp](#) (Laszlo Strategies)
- [Senate Battleground Voters](#)
- Nationwide Voter Survey
- American Jews- Special thanks to Jay Ruderman and the Ruderman Family Foundation

# JU Poll- 2607 Jews

Agree/Disagree with the statement...	Strongly Agree	18-29	Somewhat Agree	18-29	Somewhat Disagree	18-29	Strongly Disagree	18-29	Really not sure	18-29
Jewish events and organizations should be as welcoming and inclusive of people with disabilities as everyone else.	89%	88%	9%	10%	1%	1%	*	*	1%	1%
Raising my children to be Jewish is very important to me.	81%	75%	12%	17%	2%	4%	1%	1%	3%	4%
Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being Jewish.	80%	63%	15%	27%	2%	5%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people.	71%	65%	22%	25%	4%	6%	2%	2%	1%	3%
Having a Jewish spouse/partner is very important to me.	71%	62%	16%	19%	5%	8%	5%	7%	4%	4%
North American and Israeli Jews share a common destiny.	47%	33%	34%	41%	9%	11%	3%	3%	7%	12%

# Even if none are exactly right, which statement comes closest to your views on serving children with disabilities/special needs at YOUR camp? (FJC 2013)

Answer Options	Percentage Response
Including campers with disabilities/special needs is a meaningful and intentional component of our camp community. We value the impact on our staff and campers with and without disabilities.	56%
We see the importance and are interested in doing more but we are not properly staffed or funded and are nervous about what it all entails.	27%
Over the years campers with disabilities/special needs have applied to our camp for a variety of reasons such as our location or sibling attendance. We are trying to properly serve these campers but are not really interested in establishing anything beyond that.	8%
Jewish campers with disabilities/special needs are often more comfortable and served best at a camp that specifically focuses only on their needs.	6%
While it works for some camps, including campers with disabilities/special needs generally has a negative impact on the experience of typical campers and community at our camp.	3%

# Jewish Focus Groups- DC and Houston

- ❖ Parents with children under 15
- ❖ Engaged in Jewish life
- ❖ Children in Jewish school, camp, bar/bat mitzvah
- ❖ Leadership positions
- ❖ How Focus Groups Work: Worksheets- Barriers, Terminology, Messages & Images

# Focus Group Key Findings

# In Their Own Words

- ❖ “I don’t want to write any more checks!”
- ❖ “I just do not think there is a problem within the Jewish community that is tied to disabled Jews... There is no need. But... since the topic did come up, I do think... that maybe Jewish schools do not have programs for disabled kids (autism, physically disabled). Their staff is not equipped for it. My children are at a Jewish day school and I see there is one kid with leg braces and they did accommodate him and provided one dedicated teacher. But at the same school, I know there was a child with severe autism but they were not equipped well enough and did not accommodate him. She had to take the child to public and seek assistance in other facilities.”
- ❖ “A lot of disabilities are specific and need specific ways to be address. It is almost impossible to have a school that handles all of these things. It takes one teacher per child and that’s impossible. It is a lot for Jewish schools to handle.

# In Their Own Words

- ❖ “I have a friend that has a child with a disability. The only reason why I know is because I have been to their house. They are not inclusive. They kind of hide the kid. They don’t want people to not understand his ticks.”
- ❖ “Sometimes parents want to protect the children from being embarrassed.”
- ❖ “Really broadly Jews have overcome a lot of challenges. So, in my perspective, we would tend to be more inclusive than other groups. We are likely better than churches.”
- ❖ “I have no idea of the numbers involved or what kinds of things are involved.”
- ❖ “I would agree that it’s not a huge issue. If my child was one of these kids, I might feel differently. It’s upsetting to my friends who have these issues.”
- ❖ “I think you need to have realistic expectations based on the resources that are available, and an understanding of what is realistic to be able to provide, and what is really just not realistic. So I think we can always raise the bar and improve ourselves in providing access and integration and understanding and some sympathy and some empathy. But I do not think that it is... I don’t think that you can say that it is for everybody, everything, everywhere. At all.”



## Worksheet Example: Below is a list of statements on why inclusion of Jews with disabilities SHOULD be a top priority for the community. Which three statements are most convincing to you personally? (TOP 3)

**(+7, -1) We are a stronger community when we live up to our values—when we are welcoming, diverse, moral and respect one another.**

We want our parents, grandparents, friends and family with disabilities to be able to fully participate in our community. We won't be able to do everything for everyone, but we should at least try. We should ensure that everyone knows that their presence and participation is welcome and meaningful to us all. Let's strive to be a community where "I" becomes ""we" and "you" becomes "us."

**(+7, -2) As we work to attract the unengaged, we should be mindful that there are many Jews with disabilities who already want to be involved Jewishly.** Yet many Jews with disabilities are having a challenging time gaining access to our agencies, synagogues and community. We spend a lot of time and effort to attract and retain Jews to be engaged in Jewish life. As we do this important work, we can gain much by remembering to make our tent open to those with disabilities and their families who want in as well

**(+4, -3) Through inclusion, we can learn the true meaning of humanity and understand that, though everyone is different, all people were created in the image of G-d, "b'tselem Elokim bara oto."** There is an equal spark of G-d in all of us and we must treat all people equitably. The Torah teaches us that some of our greatest leaders had disabilities-- Moses had a speech impediment, Jacob had a limp, and Isaac became blind.

**(+4, -5) Fully 18.6% of Americans overall have a disability and Jews, because of certain genetic diseases and because we have children later in life than other groups, are at a higher risk for disabilities.** Indeed, the likelihood of mental health issues and Autism correlates with the advanced age of parents. Disability can also come from accident, aging or illness. Chances are high that eventually everyone will at least face temporary challenges such as crutches. Whatever the reason people have a disability – whether it is temporary or permanent – Jewish institutions need a plan, skills and budgets to meet the needs of members of our community who are experiencing disabilities.

**(+4, -6) If we lose people due to the hypocrisy of excluding them because they have different abilities -- or we are too cheap or lazy to make needed changes, we are also hurting ourselves.** When we turn away Jews with disabilities from our community and our institutions, we lose them, their family members, and our own moral standing. Empowering people with disabilities to have equal rights and opportunities – whether it is in America at large or inside our Jewish communities -- is in our own self-interest.

**(+3, -2) Every one of us has our unique way of learning.** Jewish schools and institutions need to make learning and experiencing Judaism accessible to all learning styles and differences. Many of our children face real anxiety from the pressures of school. Whether the issue is enabling highly gifted students to achieve their potential, or children with learning, physical or other differences, it is vital that each person is seen as an individual.

**(+3, -3) Jewish people with disabilities and their families have the same hopes and dreams as everyone else, even if they face different challenges.** We all deserve the opportunity to be a full member of the Jewish community. While religious institutions are legally exempt, the same does not hold true for our moral or religious obligations. Jews with disabilities and their families want to be included, we should not turn them away.

**(+1, -4) Grandparents who need a wheelchair or who have hearing or vision loss should still be able to participate in their grandchildren's bar and bat mitzvahs.** If we are lucky enough to still have our parents, they are aging. The baby boom generation is aging as well. Jews of all abilities should be able to enjoy participating in their grown child's wedding or other simchas as well as High Holiday or Shabbat services. Likewise, children with disabilities – whether it is learning differences, Autism or something else - deserve to be able to participate in Jewish institutions, education, camps and life.

**(+0, -7) Welcoming Jews with disabilities is a lot easier and less expensive than most people think.** Jews were on the forefront of the civil rights movement in Selma, as well as women's rights. That was hard, yet we did it. Inclusion of people can be as easy as giving a child a heads up before transitioning to a new activity or opening the door for a senior citizen. We don't have to become experts in every disability, we just need to ask people what we can do in order for them to participate fully as equal members of our community. Most accommodations for people with disabilities are easy, inexpensive. If we put our minds to it we can have a big tent for all.

# Key Findings

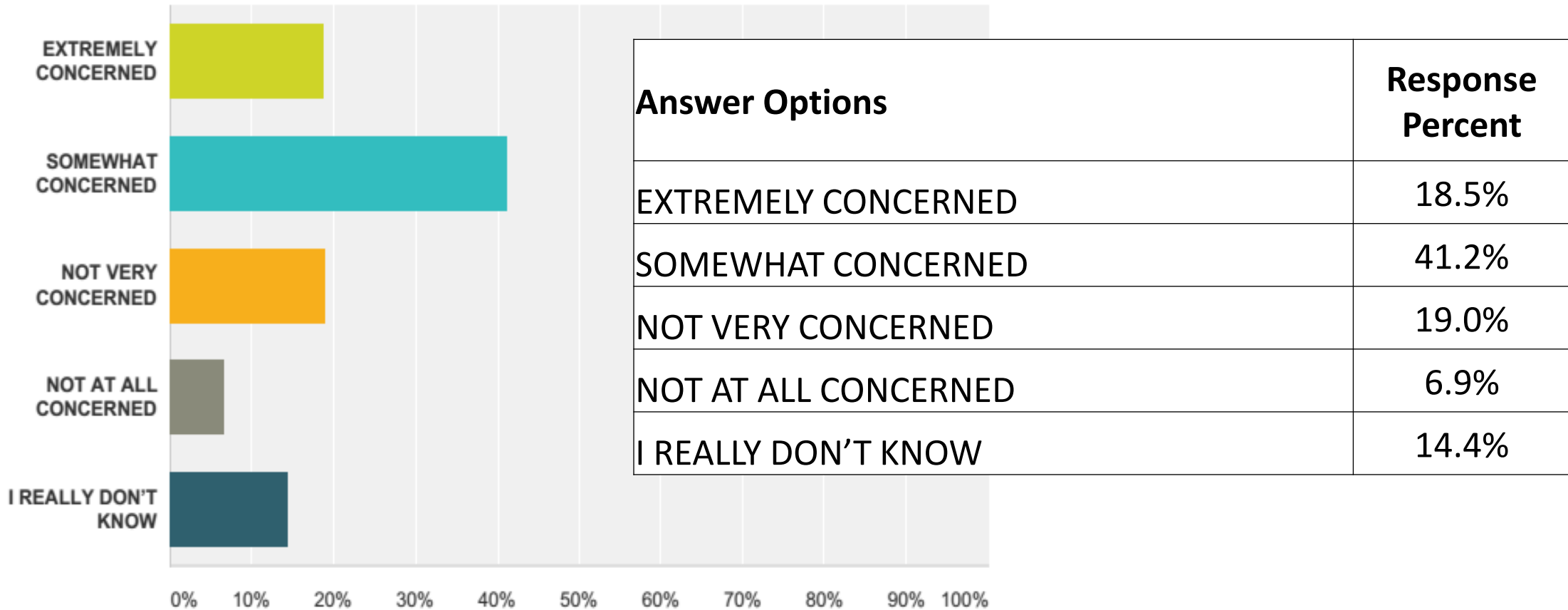
- ❖ Lack of Knowledge and Awareness: If people with disabilities aren't seen, it is because there either– isn't a need or the need is already taken care of.
- ❖ Religious messaging only works with religious audience and turns off others. Many Jews connect culturally, this is no exception.
- ❖ Limited knowledge revolves around individual programs and places.
- ❖ Frame to donors has traditionally been one of “need” and “help” not include and value.
- ❖ Scope of issue (at least 1 in 5) is not credible.

# Key Findings

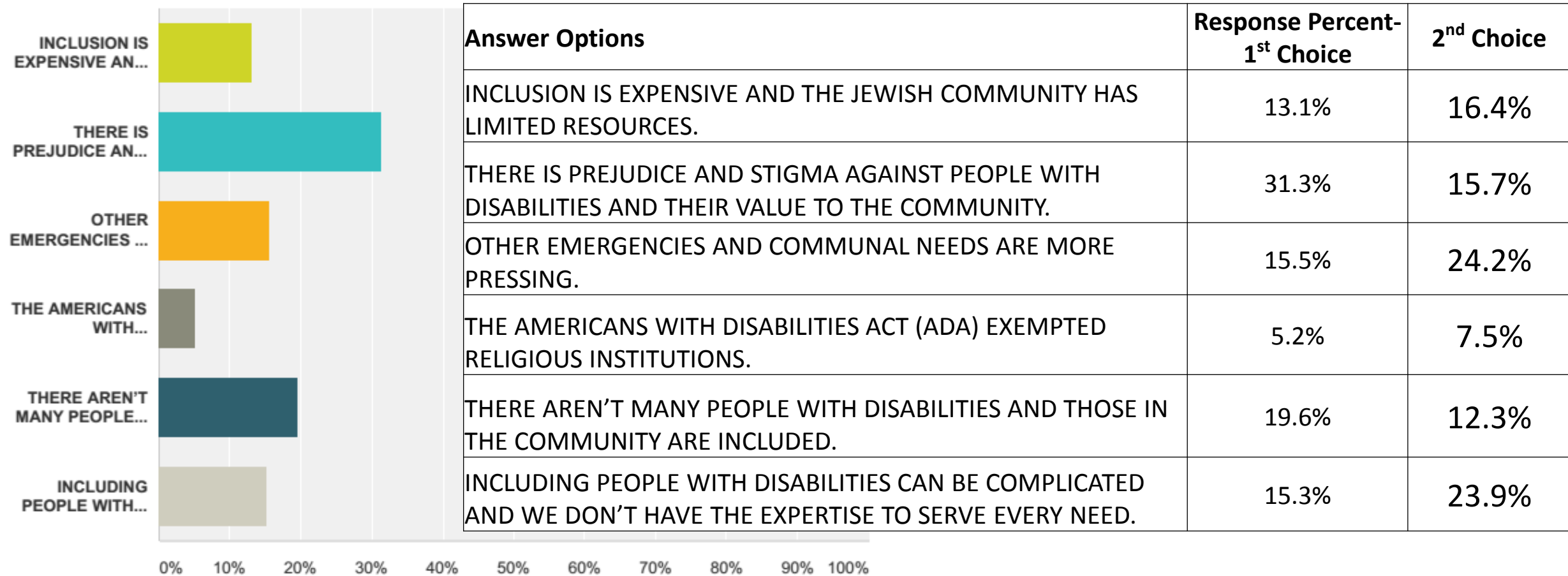
- ❖ Tendency to want to “fix the problem” in limited targeted ways rather than real open inclusion, i.e. establish a school, host a fundraiser.
- ❖ Checkbook Judaism.
- ❖ No real discussion of “abilities” of PwDs.
- ❖ Concern over cost
- ❖ Concern about inability to serve everyone.
- ❖ General rejection/defensive that the community is at fault for lack of inclusion.
- ❖ Best messages are uplifting, inspirational, and value based.

# Polling Results

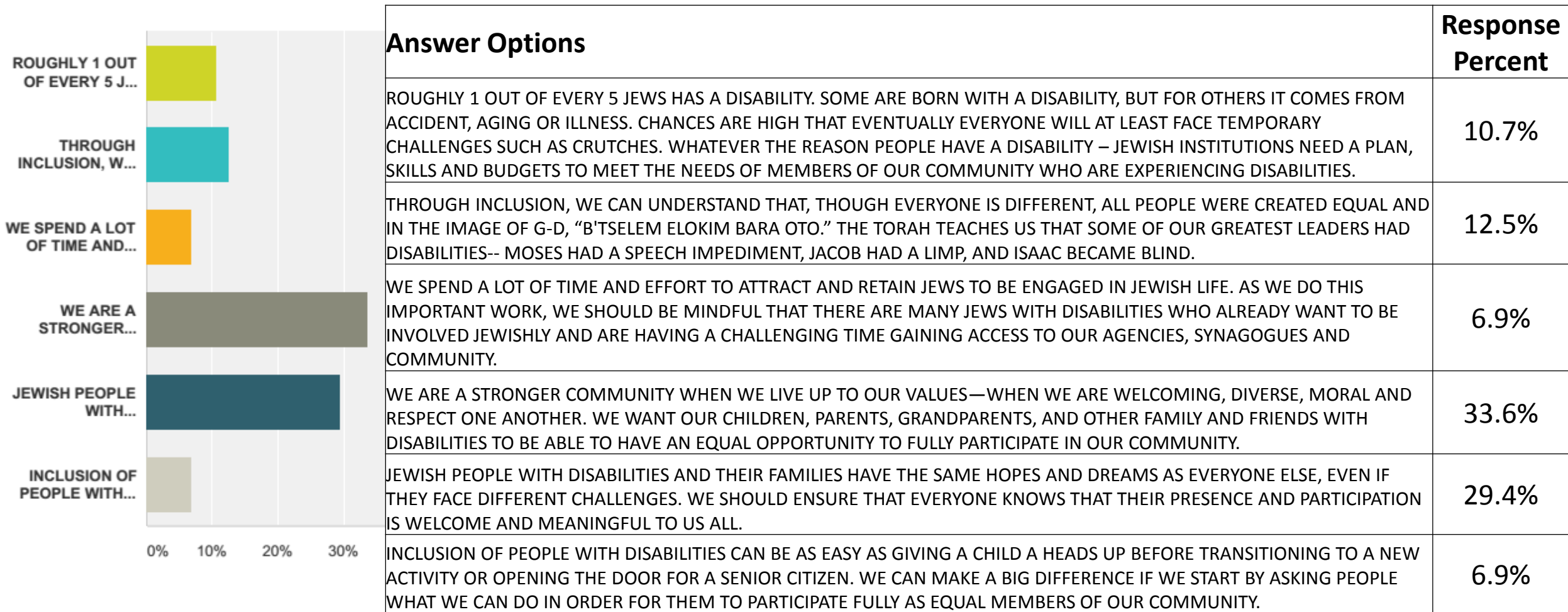
# Overall, how concerned are you about increasing inclusion of Jews with disabilities in the Jewish community?



# Which of the following do you think is the biggest barrier to fully including more Jews with disabilities in the community?

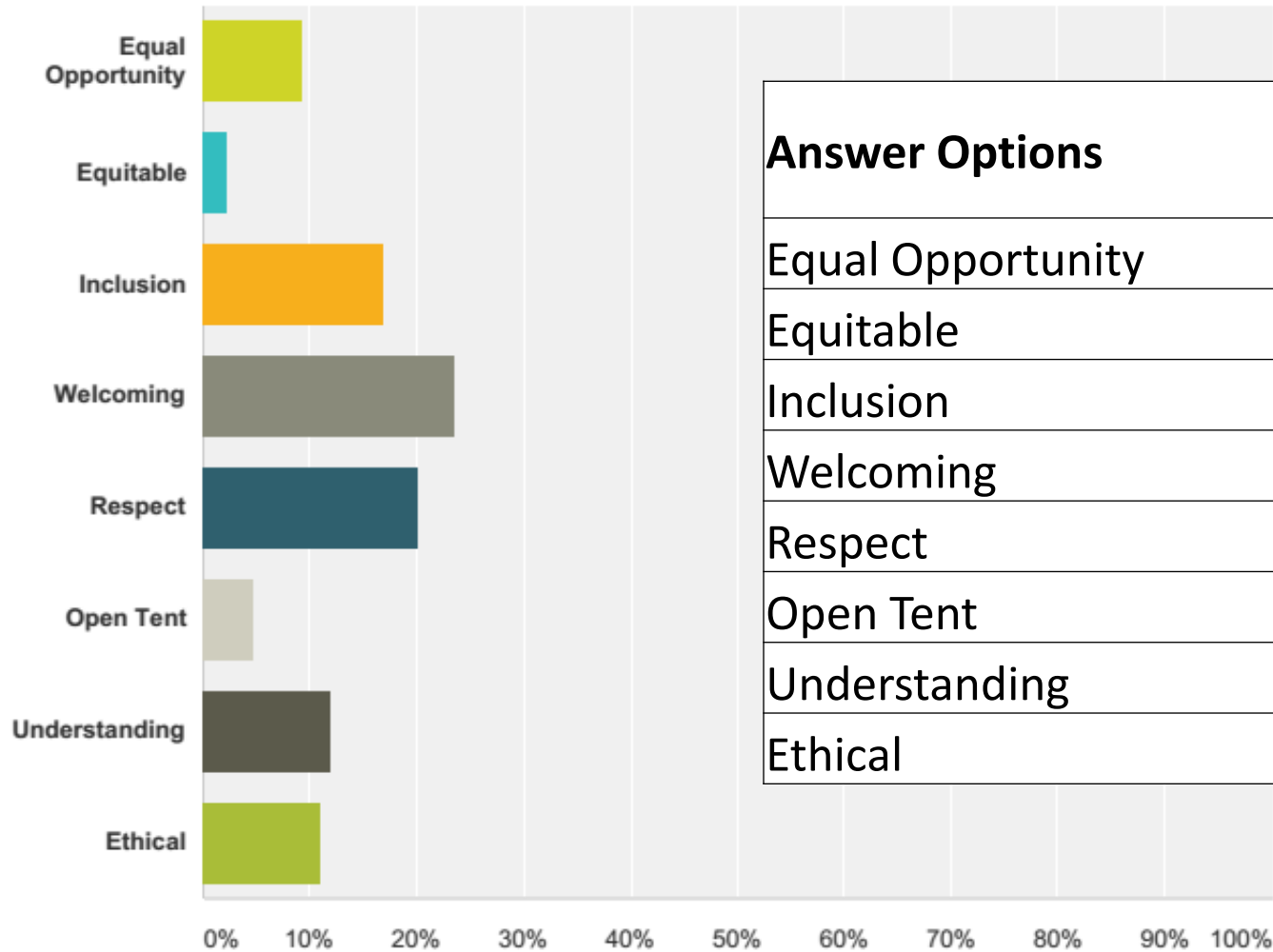


# Which of the following is the most convincing statement on why inclusion of Jews with disabilities should be a more important priority for the Jewish community?



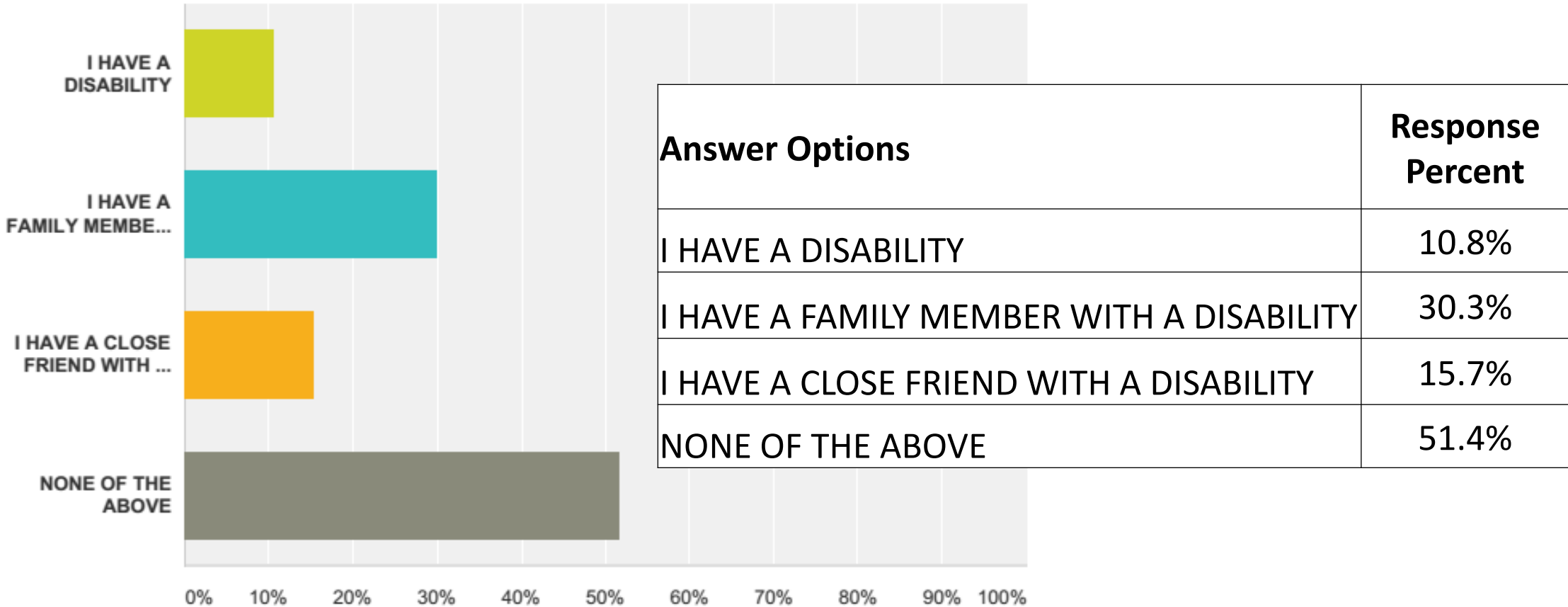


# Which of the following words makes you feel most positive about including more Jews with disabilities in our community?



Answer Options	Response Percent
Equal Opportunity	9.6%
Equitable	2.3%
Inclusion	16.7%
Welcoming	23.5%
Respect	20.0%
Open Tent	4.7%
Understanding	12.1%
Ethical	11.1%

Do you have a family member, close friend, or yourself have a disability? Please check all that apply.



# Pictures that Work



# What Doesn't Work



It isn't just about a beautiful and happy person. Elements that make images less effective are:

- ❖ Staged
- ❖ Religious Observance
- ❖ PwDs Alone Isn't Inclusion

# Winning Messages

- ❖ WE ARE A STRONGER COMMUNITY WHEN WE LIVE UP TO OUR VALUES—WHEN WE ARE WELCOMING, DIVERSE, MORAL AND RESPECT ONE ANOTHER. WE WANT OUR CHILDREN, PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, AND OTHER FAMILY AND FRIENDS WITH DISABILITIES TO BE ABLE TO HAVE AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN OUR COMMUNITY.
- ❖ JEWISH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES HAVE THE SAME HOPES AND DREAMS AS EVERYONE ELSE, EVEN IF THEY FACE DIFFERENT CHALLENGES. WE SHOULD ENSURE THAT EVERYONE KNOWS THAT THEIR PRESENCE AND PARTICIPATION IS WELCOME AND MEANINGFUL TO US ALL.



# Download PDF-- [Click Here](#)

## Jewish Inclusion: Building a Welcoming Community for All



**ADA 25**  
AMERICANS WITH  
DISABILITIES ACT  
1990-2015

## Building a Welcoming, Respectful and Diverse Community for All

**W**e are a stronger Jewish community when we live up to our values—when we are welcoming, diverse, moral, and respect one another. The 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act is a timely reminder that Jews with disabilities and their families have the same hopes and dreams as everyone else, even if they face different challenges. Together we can build a more inclusive community where our children, parents, grandparents, and other family and friends with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in our community.

According to the U.S. Census, 18.6% of Americans (almost 1 in 5) have a disability. However, because Jews carry genetic risks and frequently have children later in life than any other demographic group in America, the percentage of Jews with disabilities is likely higher than the national average.

Today, smart and dedicated leaders are spending considerable time and resources to find the best ways to encourage unaffiliated Jews to become more connected to our community. Equally important is the need to welcome and serve Jews with disabilities and their families who are already eager to participate in Jewish life. By ensuring that those who want to participate are welcomed, respected and valued, we can be a stronger and better community.



Photo Credit: Yeshiva Torah, National Jewish Council for Disabilities at Ten  
Yeshiva Museum (www.ten.org)



Photo Credit: Jack Hartman

**We are a stronger  
Jewish community  
when we live up to  
our values—when  
we are welcoming,  
diverse, moral,  
and respect one  
another.**

RespectAbility wishes to thank the following major supporters:

Anonymous, Aaron & Lucie Goldstein Family Foundation, Andrew and Shana Lippin, Charles and Esther Lee Kreselberg Charitable Foundation, Cheri Fox, Combined Jewish Philanthropies, Dana Weinberg, Hedy Charitable Gift Fund, Gary and Esther Pollack, J.E. & J.B. Butler Foundation, Jonathan Fisher, Jewish Community Fund, Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, Jewish Community Foundation of Southern Arizona, Jewish Community Foundation of MidWest NJ, Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, Jewish Federation of Memphis, Joan and Stuart Alexander, Joanne Harsh, John and Patricia Lurie, Joseph and Phyllis Koff, Linda Rieger, Linda Marsh, Lisa E. Wolfson, Louis and Robin Zelig, Margo Sam Glattman, Monte and Roberto Gelberman, Michael and Linda Fagan, Mirachi Family Charitable Trust, Nancy Grossman-Stern, Nancy Lurie, Robert Scott Hovav, Robinson Family Foundation, Schwartz Family Foundation, Shelley Richman-Laban and Russ Laban, Silver Family Foundation, Stanley Lutz, Steven Sim and Hedy Lurie, The Julia and Dorothy Lippin Foundation, The Levitt Foundation, EEA Federation of NY, Yehuda Silver, Yoram and Reita Schifman



Photo Credit: Mazon's Adaha Inclusion Mitzvah Program for Children and Youth with Disabilities

- 1. Communicate that all people are of equal value and are to be respected and openly welcomed.** Rabbis, CEOs of Jewish organizations, lay leaders, philanthropists and the Jewish media all set the vision, mission and tone of our community. Leadership must be intentional, not accidental. Inclusion of all must be embedded in policies, budget, staffing and practice.
- 2. Work with people with disabilities, not for them.** People with disabilities want a seat at the table and to be involved in decision-making. If there are no people with disabilities participating in your decision-making process, invite them in. Value their experiences and opinions. Even people who are unable to speak have opinions that must be shared and heard. Remember the mantra "Nothing about us without us." And keep in mind that people with disabilities don't want to be objects of pity — they want to contribute to making this world a better place, just like anyone else.
- 3. Take the time to learn "people-first language,"** which respects human beings and their strengths, rather than defining them by their disabilities. An example of people-first language is referring to a child with Down syndrome by his or her name, not "the kid with Down syndrome." Or, worse yet, the "Down-syndrome kid." A person who uses a wheelchair is a person first. Their wheelchair is a tool of liberation, and he or she is not "wheelchair-bound." People-first language puts the focus back on people by speaking of "people with disabilities", not the "handicapped" or "the disabled." It costs nothing to use different language, and it goes a long way to making people feel respected and valued.
- 4. Ensure all program registration and sign-up forms include questions about accommodations people may need to fully participate.** Not all programs can meet every need, but often all we need to do is ask. Starting such conversations lets people know you care about including them. When participants indicate they need an accommodation (i.e. sign language, more time to transition from one activity to another, extra tutoring, etc.) their forms must go to the inclusion director/coordinator so he or she can ensure that particular needs can be met. If you have a question about what a person with a disability needs in order to participate in a program, the solution is easy: ask them!
- 5. Trust is vital — and must be established even before meeting face to face with a person with a disability.** How can you do this? Go beyond encouraging people to share their needs on registration forms. When people share their needs, respect their privacy by treating it just as you would healthcare information. Also, those working with children with disabilities will find that parents can be your best assets: they are already experts in meeting their children's needs and can help you serve them successfully.
- 6. Spread the word in your marketing and social media that all people, with and without disabilities, are welcomed and appreciated.** Showcase photos of people with disabilities enjoying your programs next to their "typically developing" peers. This sends a message that all are welcomed and valued. Websites, Facebook, Twitter and Jewish media can be important tools for sharing your values and what you offer. Post your diversity policy on your website and ensure it states that you are open to all, regardless of ability. Work to make your website easy to navigate and accessible to people who are blind and deaf. Post all of your videos on YouTube, which helps people who are hearing-impaired by creating free captions.

- 7. Inclusion is a lot less expensive than most people think, but it still takes the right team and training to do it effectively.** All camps, schools, JCCs and synagogues should have trained staff or provide effective training for existing staff in order to achieve success. Also critical is making changes to buildings so they accommodate those with disabilities. Professional training sessions and materials are vital to prepare staff and community for successful inclusion, and much of it is available online and for free.
- 8. Provide an inclusion director/coordinator to ensure your organization is ready to meet the needs of community members with disabilities.** This does not need to be expensive. Trained professionals can be hired as part-time employees, and many people are willing to work as volunteers. Numerous special educators, therapists and social workers working in public schools or other institutions may be available to work, consult or volunteer part-time.
- 9. Make a commitment to enable Jews with and without disabilities to develop peer relationships, build social skills and respect and accept each other.** In many Jewish institutions, one-on-one counselors and educators who provide support to children with more involved disabilities may mistakenly think their job is to be a child's best friend. It's not. Their role should be to "aid and fake" so that children with disabilities can make friends

with their "typically developing peers," and children without disabilities can enjoy diverse friendships as well. Moreover, it's not a staff member's or counselor's job to fix every problem or constantly hover over participants. Instead, they should help children or adults with disabilities discover solutions on their own. At times a teacher or counselor will need to assist people with disabilities, either physically or in a conversation to meet their needs. But once the immediate need is met, it is important that people are given the space to be as independent as possible.

- 10. Put diverse and qualified people with and without disabilities on your staff, board and committees.** Jewish communal agencies should reflect



Adapted, permission was requested from the Americans with Disabilities Act as we need to talk and build on our work.

the people they serve. This includes being role models for involving qualified people with disabilities. In addition to developing programs with people with disabilities, they should also employ them and make use of their great talents. Congregations can encourage their members to offer internships to young Jews with disabilities or serve as "job coaches" to help Jewish teens with disabilities get on track to a life of independence and success.

We all have hopes, dreams, and a desire to make the world a better place. By being intentional about opening our doors to all Jews no matter their differences, everyone benefits. Each person with a disability, just like those without disabilities, has strengths, purpose, equal value and a place in the Jewish community.

For more information and resources, visit:  
[respectabilityusa.com/resources/jewish-inclusion](http://respectabilityusa.com/resources/jewish-inclusion)

**RESPECTABILITY** [www.RespectAbilityUSA.org](http://www.RespectAbilityUSA.org)

- [www.facebook.com/RespectAbility4All](https://www.facebook.com/RespectAbility4All)
- [www.facebook.com/RespectAbilityUSA](https://www.facebook.com/RespectAbilityUSA)
- [www.youtube.com/channel/UC6KXaw\\_8WjKXZU-B4K3w/feed](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6KXaw_8WjKXZU-B4K3w/feed)

# Join Us

[www.facebook.com/respectability4All](https://www.facebook.com/respectability4All)

Twitter- @jewishinclusion

[www.respectabilityusa.org](http://www.respectabilityusa.org)



# Appendix A- Houston Worksheets

## **Barriers**

Below is a list of reasons that for why inclusion may not currently be a top priority for the Jewish community. Please read it and pick the top 2 barriers to more wide-spread inclusion, mark them down and then we will discuss them together.

*The number written right before the statement indicates how many people chose it as one of the two most convincing.*

\_\_2\_\_ Inclusion is expensive and the Jewish community has limited resources.

\_\_6\_\_ There is prejudice and stigma against people with disabilities and their value to the community.

\_\_4\_\_ Other emergencies and communal needs are more pressing.

\_\_3\_\_ The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) exempted religious institutions.

\_\_3\_\_ There aren't many people with disabilities and those in the community are included.

\_\_0\_\_ Including people with disabilities can be a liability to individuals and organizations.

\_\_4\_\_ Including people with disabilities can be complicated and we don't have the expertise to serve every need.

Which of the following words do you think best describes the positive reasons and attributes of inclusion of PwDs in the Jewish community? Please choose your top 5 choices.

*In black, number of people who chose that word as a top choice.*

__3__ Moral Obligation	__1__ Benefit to All
__4__ Ethical	__2__ Open Tent
__1__ Justice	__2__ Human Rights
__4__ Equality	__6__ Understanding
__7__ Equal Opportunity	__0__ Big Tent
__4__ Respect	__1__ Fairness
__5__ Welcoming	__4__ Diversity (2 people)
__6__ Inclusion	__1__ Dignity
__3__ Equal Participation	__2__ Mitzvah
	__1__ "Hesed"

# Appendix B- DC Worksheets

## Worksheet #1

Below is a list of statements on why inclusion of Jews with disabilities should NOT be a top priority for the community. Which two statements are most convincing to you personally?

*The number written right before the statement indicates how many people chose it as one of the two most convincing.*

\_\_1\_\_ **Education and employment today is incredibly competitive, and Jewish students without disabilities** can't be slowed down by children with disabilities. We can't serve children who may cause a class to teach down to accommodate different learning styles and needs. Teens without disabilities are also very stigma conscious and they don't want to hang out with kids with disabilities. We don't want to do things that will make it harder for us to recruit the most kids and those with the biggest potential.

\_\_8\_\_ **With the limited resources in our community, inclusion is a lofty and moral goal but it can also be very expensive.** Upgrading buildings to add ramps, elevators and be physically accessible comes at a cost and providing individual aides and accommodations aren't free. Most of our institutions are struggling to fundraise and this just isn't where we get the biggest bang for our buck.

\_\_1\_\_ **We have to deal first with emergencies like anti-Semitism in France, Israel and the real needs of poor aging Holocaust survivors who live here in our community.** If you divert attention towards inclusion that means there will be less time and resources for the "un-special needs of the community.

\_\_2\_\_ **When the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed, it exempted religious institutions for a number of reasons.** We aren't legally required to modify buildings and accommodate curriculum, so we should leave these to others who are better equipped. Every child deserves an education, but not every Jewish institution can serve every child's needs. Public schools by law must serve kids with disabilities and thus they are better equipped to provide for children with special needs.

\_\_0\_\_ **There isn't a significant need for additional work because we see so few people with disabilities at synagogue and Jewish organizations and those that are there seem fine and don't ask for anything special.** If we don't know that someone has a disability, how can we accommodate them? Why should we prepare for the hypothetical by putting in ramps and changing everything around?

\_\_8\_\_ **Each person is different, each need is different-- which makes inclusion complicated and difficult to achieve.** We have to serve a community, which sometimes means that not everyone can participate. Synagogues shouldn't be expected to hire a sign language interpreter for only one person. It's not possible for example to deal with every challenging behavior in a quiet synagogue or install an elevator in an old building.

\_\_1\_\_ **Inclusion efforts never seem to go far enough to please individuals with disabilities or their families.** We can't make everything accessible to everyone and we can't make kids who are different the same. It is enough for Jews with disabilities to do Jewish things with their families. We just don't have the capacity to change everything and families know what is best for their children. People with disabilities and their advocates are always talking about their needs and what they want from us but not about anything they offer us.

\_\_1\_\_ **Including people with disabilities can be dangerous and is a real liability to individuals and our organizations.** You can't know if someone will fall or get hurt or if a child will become uncontrollable and hit someone. We don't have a person on staff who is trained to support individuals with disabilities and it's just too big of a risk.

Below is a list of statements on why inclusion of Jews with disabilities SHOULD be a top priority for the community. Which two statements are most convincing to you personally?

*The number written right before the statement indicates how many people chose it as one of the two most convincing.*

1 **The Torah teaches us that Moses had a speech impediment, Jacob had a limp, and Isaac became blind.** Many leaders in the Torah had one form of disability or another. Some of the most successful Jews – including Itzak Perlman the violinist and Albert Einstein the scientist – had or have disabilities. When we exclude Jews with disabilities from our community we are also losing some of our greatest treasures.

1 **There is an equal spark of G-d in all of us and we must treat all people equitably.** Through inclusion, we can learn the true meaning of humanity and understand that, though everyone is different, all people were created in the image of G-d, “*b'tselem Elokim bara oto.*” The Jewish people are likened to one body. If someone is missing WE are incomplete. Every Jew is a gem and is valuable in G-d's eyes.

10 **Jewish people with disabilities and their families have the same dreams instead of goals? goals as everyone else, even if they face different challenges.** We all deserve the opportunity to be a full member of the Jewish community. While religious institutions are legally exempt, the same does not hold true for our moral or religious obligations. Jews with disabilities and their families want to be included, we should not turn them away. A Jewish community that lives according to Jewish values - justice and equality - is by definition an inclusive community. The challenge is not “why” but “how”.

4 **Polls paint a dismal picture of the Jewish communal future and when we cut out Jews with disabilities and their families we hurt ourselves.** Smart, dedicated leadership is spending a lot of time and treasure to find the best ways to connect with unaffiliated Jews while at the same time many passionate Jews with disabilities along with their families are being turned away. If one person in a family is excluded due to a disability, we often lose the entire family. Polls show that nearly 20% of Jews have a disability. Our Jewish community needs the support and inclusion of everyone who wishes to be included to allow us to thrive into the future.

5. 1 **We are hearing more and more about inclusion because our community is finding that a little effort goes a long way.** Most accommodations are easy and relatively inexpensive. Sometimes exclusion is done intentionally, but far more often it is done because we simply do not know how to truly serve all. Too often Jews with disabilities are segregated when we know separate is never equal.

*Continued on the next page...*

6. 2 **The exclusion of some takes away from the community's completeness or wholeness (and holiness).** Inclusion is not just for those who are being invited in; it is for those who are welcoming others. Studies show that kids without disabilities usually do better when they in groups where there are also children with disabilities. That is because teachers use differentiated learning (which also enables gifted students to move faster) and children learn to succeed with diversity and mutual respect.

7. 0 **People with disabilities have access and inclusion in church services and many Christian institutions just by going in the door.** If Christians, Catholics and Mormons can and do practice inclusion, we can and should as well. Inclusion of children and adults with disabilities is about making a decision to do it and getting the right training and tools to move ahead. Many of the best institutions in the world, including Harvard, MIT, Yale and others, accept and serve people with disabilities.

8. 3 **Anyone can experience disability at any point in their life.** Even if you don't currently have a disability or have a family member with a disability, chances are high that you eventually may- upwards of 25% of individuals will become disabled. It is important to make congregations and the Jewish community at large accessible for all people.

Which of the following words do you think best describes the positive reasons and attributes of inclusion of PwDs in the Jewish community? Please choose your top 5 choices.

*In parenthesis, the number of people who chose that word as a top choice.*

(9) Moral Obligation

(4) Ethical

(0) Justice

(3) Equality

(4) Equal Opportunity

(1) Honor

(6) Respect

(1) Fairness

(8) Welcoming

(2) Tikkun Olam

(3) Equal Participation

(0) Kovod

(0) Enable

(4) Benefit to All

(2) Empathy

(2) Understanding

mishpacha

Kindness

Torah based religious obligation

B'yachad

Enhancing

Diversity

Goodness

Caring

Supportive

Building community