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JEWISH  
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WESTCHESTER WOMEN'S IMPACT PHILANTHROPY GROUP  
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Camping Movement

# INCLUSION TRAINING GUIDE FOR JEWISH SUMMER CAMPS

# CHAPTER 1: INCLUSIVE CAMPING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

## Research on Serving Children with Disabilities at Jewish Overnight Camps

As the only agency dedicated to working with all nonprofit Jewish camps, regardless of denomination or affiliation, FJC has become the leading force for growth and expansion of Jewish camps' programs and services. We understand modalities, methodologies, and the support camps need to implement change, in Jewish/Israel educational experiences, leadership development, marketing and recruitment, and more. We are keenly aware that Jewish children with disabilities have been underserved by the field of Jewish camp. It is our hope that, after 15 years as a research- and data-driven agency with a reputation for delivering programs of excellence that elevate the Jewish camp experience, FJC's standing will enable us to successfully broaden access to Jewish summer experiences for all Jewish children.

FJC believes that inclusivity is as important to typically developing children and the camp community at large as it is to children with disabilities. A fully internalized Jewish identity should certainly include a mandate to help others overcome challenges. These summer communities must be accessible to all Jewish children; they must also be infused with an ethos built around including all individuals, regardless of their needs. Moreover, sharing the camp experience with children with disabilities helps typically developing youth gain a greater appreciation of, and learn from, the strengths and abilities of their peers who face challenges.

As a first step towards initiating field-wide changes in this arena, FJC engaged in a research project mapping current, potential, and desired services available to children with emotional, intellectual and physical disabilities at nonprofit Jewish overnight camps across North America. Laszlo Strategies delivered the results of the research (conducted in early 2013), the first of its kind in the Jewish community. The survey garnered results from 423 camp staff members (from 124 camps), 262 parents, and 141 campers.

This study indicates that the majority of those involved in Jewish camps care about this issue and agree that every Jewish child, regardless of a disability or need, should be able to attend a Jewish camp. Most respondents note a preference for an inclusion model. The survey shows that the field of Jewish camp is serving no more than 2,340 to 2,590 children with disabilities, out of 75,000 total campers. While this number is more than originally estimated, it is far less than ideal. The biggest barrier to camps offering or expanding programs for special populations is not the camps' physical attributes, but rather is a dearth of relevant training and knowledge, followed by insufficient funding to adequately educate their personnel.

Armed with the findings of the survey and our understanding of what Jewish camps currently are and are not offering in the arena of disabilities programs, and encouraged by conversations with leaders in the field of Jewish camp, parents, and potential funders, FJC is now working to address the needs of children with disabilities whose right it is to have access to and benefit from immersive summers at Jewish camp. By employing a diverse set of approaches to expand camp accessibility, we are confident that we can increase access to Jewish camp so that children with wide-ranging differences can experience the best of what camp offers: joyous Judaism, new friendships, developmental growth, and fun.

For more about the 2013 Inclusion Study, click below:

Key Findings:

<http://www.jewishcamp.org/sites/default/files/u4/Key%20Findings%20-%20Jewish%20Camp%20Survey%20on%20Disabilities.pdf>

Full Results:

<http://www.jewishcamp.org/sites/default/files/u4/Jewish%20Camp%20for%20Children%20with%20Disabilities%20and%20Special%20Needs%20-%20Full%20Survey%20Findings.pdf>

## History of Tikvah Programs in the Ramah Camping Movement

In the late 1960s, two Long Island, NY public school special education teachers had an idea: offer children with disabilities the opportunity to participate in a Jewish overnight summer camp experience. After all, Jewish camping had positively impacted so many typically developing Jewish campers. As you might imagine, Jewish camps did not respond in the most supportive way. The law did not even require school districts to provide children with disabilities with a free public education until PL 94-142 was passed in 1975. Nearly every Jewish summer camp expressed hesitation. They worried about “normal” campers leaving the camps, they worried about the level of Hebrew going down as the camp catered to these campers, and of course, they worried about the extreme costs associated with such a program. And what about liability? What if the campers ran away, became violent, required extensive medical care, etcetera? Just as in the midrash wherein no nation of the world wanted the gift of the Torah, so too no Jewish camp or camping movement wanted to take on a program for campers with disabilities.

Then along came Danny Adelman (z”l), director of Camp Ramah in Glen Spey, NY, to change the course of history for people with disabilities in the Jewish camping world. Adelman questioned why Ramah or any other Jewish camp exists if not to promulgate the value of being inclusive of as many Jewish campers as possible. Thus, Ramah’s Tikvah Program was launched with pride in 1970. It soon moved to Camp Ramah in New England located in Palmer, MA. The Tikvah Program now thrives at most Ramah overnight camps, positively influencing thousands of campers, staff members, and Israeli *mishlachot* members (emissaries).

Having a Tikvah Program at Camp Ramah now feels as natural as having Shabbat, swimming, or campfires. Yet, it hasn’t always been easy. In the early years of Tikvah in New England, medical personnel were nervous, if not reluctant, to care for these campers, and Israeli *mishlachot* members, particularly in the post-Six Day War period, were very uncomfortable having “these campers” around. After all, they had barely seen “such people” moving freely out and about, interacting with the community. When Rabbi Mitch Cohen, the current director of the National Ramah Commission, served as the director of Camp Ramah in Canada, he and the board of directors decided to start a Tikvah program there. Again, there was resistance and many asked, “what are you doing to our camp?!” Within days, however, the positive impact of Tikvah on the rest of the camp was felt and, as Rabbi Cohen proudly reports, people in the camp community began treating *all* members of the community, regardless of their abilities, more sensitively. When Rabbi Cohen travels to the various Ramah camps each summer, people frequently ask him why two of the Ramah camps don’t have Tikvah programs. These people had either worked at a Ramah camp with a Tikvah program or they had friends who described the program and its impact on the camp community. These people feel a lost opportunity in the absence of Tikvah in their camp: a Ramah camp without Tikvah is missing something very important.

Since the 1970 opening of the first Tikvah Program at Camp Ramah in Glen Spey, NY (which moved to Palmer, MA and became Camp Ramah in New England), every residential and day camp in the Ramah network has launched a Tikvah program, including Ramah’s newest overnight camp, Ramah Outdoor Adventure in the Colorado Rockies, and two new programs which will proudly start at Camp Ramah in the Poconos and Camp Ramah Darom, in Georgia, over the coming months. In 2016, all eleven of the Ramah camps will have Tikvah programs open to hundreds of campers with disabilities, spanning and serving Jewish families across the entire North American continent. The inclusivity programs feature a wide array of camping opportunities, including targeted programs for specific populations, family camps for children with autism, and a growing initiative in vocational education, in which Tikvah alumni come back to camp as young adults to learn job skills and work in neighboring communities while enjoying the socialization and Jewish experiences of camp life. Some 250 campers with disabilities participate in Ramah programs each summer, and those programs are staffed by 240 young adults. Interest in starting or bolstering inclusive camp programs for people with disabilities continues to grow throughout the Jewish camp world.

## History of Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) Programs for Campers with Disabilities

In 2011, an especially shy and socially anxious young girl named Ali arrived at URJ Camp Harlam in Kunkletown, PA, fearful of the summer ahead. With high anxiety and a diagnosis of ADHD and autism, Ali and her parents wondered if she could successfully navigate the incredibly social environment of camp. With assistance from Camp Harlam’s Camper Care staff, a team of nurturing individuals responsible for the

happiness of all campers, Camp Harlam's staff watched Ali evolve over four years, growing from an insecure camper into a confident and happy one with an arsenal of tools for building successful friendships.

After much correspondence with Ali's family in the months prior to camp each year, and a great deal of staff training, the staff was able to support Ali as she transformed herself from an struggling camper to a repeatedly excelling one. In November 2014, she became a Bat Mitzvah, and her parents graciously referred to the Camper Care team as the "fairy godmothers" who changed Ali's life, helping their daughter mature from "a seed into a flower." Her *d'var torah* spoke to what Camp Harlam had done for her: how she would not have been the same person, or have had eight of her Camp Harlam friends at her Bat Mitzvah, without the devoted team of professionals at Camp Harlam. With support from the FJC Ruderman Inclusion Initiative Grant in 2015, Camp Harlam will expand their Camper Care team by adding an Inclusion Coordinator, who will spend even more time making sure campers with disabilities are prepared for and experience a fruitful summer.

"We want to set our campers up for a successful camp experience. Much of that success depends on creating an open and safe camp community. Our campers and staff benefit from a more diverse group of peers, where each person feels responsible for creating an inclusive and welcoming environment." –Lisa David, Associate Director of Camp Harlam

Starting in 2004, every URJ Camp hired an Inclusion Coordinator or Camper Care staff member(s) in order to meet the needs of campers with disabilities. URJ has seen these staffing changes create great success for children whose needs run the gamut of social and emotional issues to physical disabilities. Molly, a ten-year-old camper at URJ Greene Family Camp (GFC) in Bruceville, TX, was born with Cerebral Palsy, which mainly affects her balance. To set Molly up for success, GFC provided her with a one-on-one shadow (supportive adult), whose sole responsibility was to help Molly accomplish all of her goals and get her involved with activities. Molly was so pleased with her success at GFC that she wrote a blog post [1] chronicling moments of adversity that evolved into her proudest feats. Molly reflected, "I think that it is okay to be different in camp. We all have different things we need, and that does not make us any weaker than anyone else. I am having a blast at camp and think other people should try it out."

In the early 1990s, URJ Kutz Camp, in Warwick, NY, the URJ's camp for young Jewish leaders in NFTY (the Reform Jewish Youth Movement), started the Kutz Mitzvah Corps Program, an inclusive camp experience for Jewish teens with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Teens with autism are fully integrated into the Kutz summer programming. A particular highlight of this program is that NFTY leaders from across North America apply to become mentors to Mitzvah Corps campers. The peer-to-peer experience that occurs between Mitzvah Corps campers (*Tzofim*), and Kutz participants (*Chaverim*) in the Mitzvah Corps peer engagement major makes this program extraordinarily meaningful. These groups of teens set the stage for all campers to feel a sense of belonging in the Kutz community; teens in the peer engagement major (*Chaverim*) come to feel a particular sense of connection with *Tzofim* while building a *kehila kedosha* (holy community) in which each member is fully honored.

URJ Camp Coleman in Cleveland, GA, launched the inaugural year of Chadash in 2014. Chadash is a vocational program for high school graduates with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. The three-and-a-half week program offers participants with disabilities the chance to participate in the joy of an inclusive URJ camp community. Chadash provides vocational training in a supervised setting, along with the opportunity for participants to join in a wide range of recreational, social, and educational aspects of camp life.

It's not only at camp that the URJ is building awareness of inclusion. NFTY, the Reform Jewish Youth Movement, places inclusion at the forefront of everything they do. At the 2015 NFTY Convention, one of the ways NFTY celebrated inclusion was by inviting URJ Eisner Camp alumnus, Matan Koch, to address a sea of over 1,000 teens and 200 youth professionals. Koch, a Jewish lawyer with disabilities, told teens that it's not only the kids with disabilities that are benefiting from inclusive camping experiences, but even more so, typically developing teens.

NFTY-Southern, the movement's youth region encompassing Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Florida, sponsors Camp Dream Street (in partnership with Mitzvah Corps, URJ Henry S. Jacobs Camp, and the Dream Street Foundation). Dream Street is a five-day camping program for children with

physical disabilities, led by NFTY-Southern teens. Inclusion is also on the radar of NFTY's Garden Region Empire (NFTY-GER), encompassing New York and New Jersey. Four years ago, NFTY-GER invited a social worker to analyze a regional event with an inclusion lens. GER's Regional Director of Youth Engagement Pamela Schuller implemented peer-to-peer inclusion training for her teens, which educates teens about how to help fellow teens who are struggling to find their place.

Schuller describes the results: "We have seen teens change immensely as our community has become more welcoming of teens of all abilities. We equip our teen leaders to model inclusive behavior through trainings and conversations. Our community continues to grow and build with every member and that's beneficial for everyone."

The URJ has seen immense growth and success with inclusion throughout the years. The URJ and its camping and educational initiatives remain committed to an inclusive Jewish experience for all its youth. It continually strives to break down remaining barriers for entry and to create a meaningful, fun summer for all campers, no matter their differences.

[1] [Embracing Challenges: When the Entire Camp is My "Challenge Course"](#)

## About Yachad

Yachad, the National Jewish Council for Disabilities, was founded in 1983 with a mission to include those with developmental disabilities in all aspects of the Jewish community. With a philosophy based around a model of inclusion, Yachad serves children and adults with a wide range of disabilities.

Up until 1995, Yachad offered a 4 week summer trip called Yachad Israel. Additional trips were added, such as an east coast bus trip, based on requests from Yachad members and their families. In 1995, Yachad's only non-inclusive program became an inclusive trip, taking mainstream high school students together with Yachad participants for the most unique Israel summer experience; thus Yad B'Yad was born with 16 high school students and 13 Yachad members. Since then, Yad B'Yad has grown exponentially, serving as Yachad's premier program offering a complete inclusion summer experience. Now with two trips, over 100 high school students and 50 Yachad members, Yad B'Yad continues to model the power of inclusivity.

In 2000, Taglit Birthright Israel responded to Yachad and agreed that individuals with disabilities should have the same opportunity as other young adults to experience Israel for the first time. The first Yachad Birthright trip included participants with hearing impairments as well as those with developmental disabilities. To date (2015) Yachad provides the only Birthright trip for individuals with all types of disabilities. Yachad Birthright runs two trips a year, in June and December.

With the success of Yad B'Yad's inclusive model, Yachad opened its first sleepaway camp program in Camp Morasha (Lakewood, PA) in 1999. This program began with nine campers, providing them with an exciting inclusive summer camp experience for a two week period. The following summer, Yachad ran a full summer session program at Camp Morasha and opened one in Camp Mesorah (Guilford, NY) the next year. The program at Camp Neshet (Lakewood, PA) followed in 2002. In 2015, there are close to 30 Yachad summer programs.

Yachad's first shadow program opened at Moshava IO in 2006. Shadow camper programs provide campers with moderate disabilities the opportunity for full inclusion, albeit with the needed support to be successful. Since then, Yachad shadow and camper programs have been opened at Camp Shoshanim, Moshava Ba'lr Toronto (Day Camp), Camp Chaverim, Camp Keshet, Camp Keshet (Day Camp), Moshava Malibu, and Camp Yavneh.

Yachad's vocational training programs were also launched in the early 2000s. With the help of supportive job coaches, Yachad members are able to participate as staff members in camp. Jobs taken on by vocational members include, but are not limited to, working in the office, health center, canteen, kitchen, sports program and day camp. Yachad has vocational programs in: Camp Morasha, Camp Mesorah, Moshava IO, Camp Lavi,

Moshava Ba'lr New Jersey (Day Camp), Moshava Ba'lr Toronto, Camp Amichai in Israel, Camp Shoshanim, and Moshava Ennismore.

Yachad's mission includes working tirelessly with host camps to provide the most inclusive experience for our campers and the most meaningful understanding of individuals with special needs by the mainstream campers. In 2014, Yachad program participants totaled 642. Yachad campers have very much become a part of the larger camp community at each of our host sites. They are welcomed with open arms each summer and have become equal members of their camp communities.

Three new programs are scheduled to open this summer (2015): Camp Yavneh Shadow Program, Camp Ennismore Vocational Program and Camp Shoshanim Vocational Program.

## History of Keshet and its Work in the Area of Jewish Camp

### BACKGROUND AND MISSION

Keshet: A Rainbow of Hope for Individuals with Disabilities is a community-based organization committed to overcoming barriers to inclusion and facilitating community participation for individuals with cognitive, intellectual, and physical disabilities. Working in partnerships with Jewish schools, camps, and businesses, Keshet provides integrated educational, recreational, and vocational programs for individuals with a wide range of disabilities, helping them reach their full potential and lead dignified and productive lives.

The idea behind Keshet (Hebrew for Rainbow) was to create a place where children with disabilities could gain equal access to the resources and education available to their typically developing peers. Since then, the organization brought the "abilities" of those with disabilities to the forefront of community life.

In developing its inclusion model, several core beliefs have guided Keshet's mission and vision since its inception:

- Individuals with disabilities do best in the embrace of the community, alongside their typically developing peers.
- The organization can expertly serve individuals with a wide range of complicated needs, so no rigid admission criteria is set.
- The success of Keshet is rooted in its mutually beneficial relationships with each of its partners.

### KESHET INTEGRATED CAMP PROGRAM

Not every child with a disability has an opportunity to participate in recreational activities. For many, summer is not a time of freedom, sports, and fun, but of isolation and boredom. For individuals with disabilities, camp is not a luxury, but a necessity that provides a continuation of learning and socialization, helping to avoid the regression that often occurs over the summer. For someone with a disability, much, if not all, of the hard work and growth that takes place over a school year could be lost in an inactive summer.

As with many Keshet programs, the very first Keshet camp has evolved, out of necessity, to provide its participants with the same recreational opportunities available to their typically developing peers. If typical kids were off to an exciting, stimulating summer filled with exercises, outdoor activities, and team work, Keshet was committed to providing its campers with as many of the same experiences as possible. Keshet's first day camp program began in 1989, at Camp Apachi, with just five campers. In 1993, Keshet opened its first overnight camp program, at Camp Moshava in Wild Rose, WI, and has since expanded to multiple camps throughout the Midwest. This summer (2015), Keshet is consulting with three overnight camps across North America who plan to incorporate Keshet's model of inclusion. Now entering its 26<sup>th</sup> year of summer camp programming, Keshet serves over 150 campers annually while positively affecting the lives of thousands.

Keshet accepts participants regardless of the nature of their disabilities, accommodating a wide range of physical, verbal, social, and cognitive challenges, including pervasive developmental disorder, autism, intellectual impairment, Rett syndrome, Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, cerebral palsy, spina bifida,

various speech and language impairments, movement and behavior disorders, Sensory Processing Disorder, and learning delays or conditions that inhibit social interactions.

Keshet considers structured teaching—a university-developed, evidence-based service, training, and research program endorsed by the Illinois Department of Human Services—to be best practice for educating individuals with intellectual challenges. Keshet uses structured teaching, emphasizing social integration with typically developing peers. In order to ensure that each participant gets all needed supports, Keshet employs a highly trained, specialized, direct service staff including integration specialists, experienced teachers and paraprofessionals, and related services professionals.

For summer integrated programs or camps, it is essential to hire and train staff members who blend into ordinary camp life. While this can present a challenge, as the education and history of ordinary camp staff working with our campers is minimal, Keshet sees it as an opportunity to build capacity in the camps; they conduct extensive on-site trainings with Keshet and host site staff members. Additionally, they offer Disability Awareness education for typically developing campers. When inclusion is done correctly, it is beneficial for all members of a camp or program community.

As a side-effect that increases capacity in the field, exposure to Keshet trainings and programs has affected many people's career paths; the organization's own day school social worker, before experiencing a Keshet training, was studying to become a general education teacher.

## Ramah Tikvah Survey Results: The Positive Impact of Disabilities Programs on the Camp Community

The Tikvah Program's successes, and those of other early adopters in the Jewish disabilities inclusion field, provide strong anecdotal evidence of the positive impact of such programs for both campers with disabilities and for the entire camp community. At Ramah, all campers have experiences with Tikvah campers through buddy/peer mentoring programs, participation in joint prayer services, plays, camp-wide song and dance festivals, and informal interactions. Similarly, staff members throughout camp, from drama specialists to waterfront staff to ropes course instructors, have many ongoing opportunities to interact with members of the programs for campers with disabilities. The 50 members of the Ramah *mishlachat* (Israeli delegation of emissaries) also get to know the Tikvah campers through serving as teachers and peer mentors.

A recent study conducted by the National Ramah Commission measured the impact of Ramah's disabilities programs. Key findings are available at:

[http://www.campramah.org/pdf/handout\\_research\\_summary\\_web.pdf](http://www.campramah.org/pdf/handout_research_summary_web.pdf)

The study, entitled "The Impact of Ramah Programs for Children, Teens and Young Adults with Disabilities: A Survey of Special Needs Education Professionals, Ramah Special Needs Staff, Staff, Alumni, and Parents" analyzed the impact of Tikvah on staff and other campers. The results demonstrate that the impact of camp extends beyond the campers with disabilities to the disability program staff and to the typically developing campers who interact with campers with disabilities. Results indicate that the impact includes influence on many life choices:

- 55% – Philanthropy
- 53% – Volunteer work
- 41% – Professional work and career choice
- 32% – College or graduate school coursework

This includes a wide range of personal and professional benefits:

- 95% – gained awareness of issues having to do with inclusion of individuals with disabilities
- 87% – gained a sense of responsibility for others
- 84% – became more patient with others

One respondent wrote:

“Thanks to my experience working in a special needs program, my ability to recognize other people for their strengths, and not just for their weaknesses, is much more developed. When you’re working with a camper with special needs, not only does your patience have to increase, but your stress and intolerance for their supposed ‘weakness’ initially rise as well. However, as the summer goes on, you begin to realize that beyond the visible cues and often difficult moments in working with someone with special needs, there is a deep and elaborate human being with skills and desires far beyond what you expect.”

## Where to Begin? Developing a Successful Program Which Is Supportive of Campers with Disabilities and Seamlessly “Fits In” at Camp

The single most important step in creating a successful program to support campers with disabilities is to embrace the importance of and need for such inclusion, and to believe in the right of all Jewish families to have options for their children with disabilities within the Jewish camp world. A camp’s executive director and board of trustees must feel in their *kishkes* that offering a program for campers with disabilities is a priority. If so, the program will succeed. If a camp’s leadership is merely responding to pressure from parents or the field, then the resulting program will not succeed. FJC advises that camps wait to launch a program until they firmly take this step. There are many wonderful camp directors and boards of trustees who can serve as models for creating and running successful programs, ones in which the entire camp community benefits. They can demonstrate that while there are certainly investments to be made, the camp’s financial bottom line need not suffer.

At Ramah camps, the Tikvah Program is essentially “just another division” in camp. At each of the eight Ramah overnight camps, age groups (divisions or *edot*) are known by a Hebrew name, and campers within each *edah* travel together throughout the day. The main differences between the Tikvah Program and other *edot* are that Tikvah is a mixed age division (ages 13-18) and the Tikvah staff to camper ratio is higher than in other *edot* (approximately 2.5 to 1). There are several periods each day (including sports, and either swimming, arts and crafts, or pre-vocational training) which are intentionally planned to have Tikvah and other campers and participate together as buddies/peer mentors. At Ramah New England, Tikvah campers live in fully accessible bunks in Tikvah Village, situated right next to housing for the 13- and 14-year-old *edot*. Each of the four Tikvah bunks typically houses six to eight campers, two or three Tikvah counselors, and one or two members of the specialty staff (i.e. sports, dance, or arts) who live in the bunk and support Tikvah campers during daily transition times.

The Ramah New England Tikvah Village bunks were built 15 years ago. Designed with input of experienced Tikvah counselors, each has fluorescent lighting, two toilets and showers (one of each is universally accessible), porches for socializing, and window air conditioners, which help campers cool off and recharge during the daily rest period and at night.

Beginning around 2002, several Ramah New England Tikvah parents asked if the camp might consider offering a full inclusion program where campers with disabilities participate fully in the typical camper program. Parents pointed to increased inclusion in schools and recreational programs and encouraged camp leaders to move toward even greater inclusion in the overnight summer camp setting. The camp had been run a successful Tikvah Program for more than 30 years, and strove to respond regularly to new developments, innovations, and trends in the field. The camp director and the board expressed openness to the idea, and the staff set out to consult the literature on inclusive camping. They were disappointed not to find adequate literature or expertise on fully inclusive camping. They were fortunate, however, to connect with Professor Spencer Salend of the State University of New York at New Paltz, an expert on inclusive classrooms. Professor Salend worked with Ramah New England as a consultant on developing its inclusive camping initiative.

Ramah New England piloted their full inclusion program for 9-11-year-old campers with a range of disabilities and typically developing campers. They lived together in bunks and participated together in the daily camp program for that age group. The campers with disabilities were supported by an inclusion specialist and by an additional counselor in the bunk. They chose not to offer individual shadow counselors, and instead, assigned three counselors per bunk (rather than the customary two) who sufficiently supported each of the campers.

The entire division staff and all camp specialists were trained in ways to best support the campers with identified disabilities. Leadership determined that, as long as the pilot was successful, its participating campers with disabilities would continue into older divisions with his/her typically-abled peers.

Over the years, Ramah New England found that inclusion offers a different experience for each camper, bunk, division, and staff member. Campers with physical/mobility challenges, intellectual disabilities, autism, and language and processing difficulties have all been supported in the program, and camp leaders have remained flexible in thinking about and design of the ideal camper program. The parents whose children participated in the pilot and camp staff agreed not to let philosophy (i.e. a set notion of the ideal program) drive decisions about placement. Rather, honest conversations about each camper's experience would inform his or her inclusion plan. As a result, some campers have continued through the full inclusion program until "graduation" at age 16. Other campers have transitioned to the Tikvah camping program and/or to the vocational training program. The camp sometimes accepts older campers (up to ages 13 or 14) into the inclusion program, and has increasingly created opportunities for campers to split their time between Tikvah and typical divisions, based on individual needs.

An unanticipated benefit of the inclusion program is that counselors have been able to identify issues for and offer special support to campers considered typically developing. Each year, a few second or third year typical campers are observed to be struggling to succeed. In these cases, staff members speak with the parents about their children receiving support through the inclusion program, with little resistance and, largely, excellent results.

In the first year of the camp's inclusion program, the mother of a 9-year-old camper with Down Syndrome likened a child with disabilities to a dual citizen. "Our daughter, God willing, will always be part of the typical world—in our shul, our community, and more. And she will always be part of the disabilities world—she has Down syndrome! We should think of her as a dual citizen and have her split her time between two programs. It is like someone who moves to Israel from America—they will always be citizens of Israel AND the United States!" This way of thinking opened the camp leaders' thinking and facilitated creating an ideal program for this camper, who was able to fully participate in the typical camper program by day but required the level of support provided by the Tikvah Program and Tikvah counselors at meals and in the evenings.

Increasingly, the boundaries between programs at Ramah New England blurred—a camper can fully participate in a typical program or be a day camper in a typical program and sleep in a Tikvah bunk. Some members of the Tikvah camping program have the readiness and ability to participate in the vocational training program by day, without the independent living skills to live in the vocational training housing: they, too, would sleep in Tikvah Village at night.

## A Range of Inclusive Models to Consider for Supporting Campers with Disabilities

For camps considering starting a program for campers with a range of disabilities, it is important to know that there are several worthy models to consider. As one funder has pointed out to FJC staff over the years, the word inclusion has become ubiquitous and, quite frankly, can mean many different things. When it comes to creating a program for children with disabilities, there is no one-size-fits-all, universally accepted, model that works for everyone. Even parents of campers with disabilities do not all agree on which approach works. There are so many factors influencing the decision of which model to choose.

For camps and programs considering inclusion, we strongly recommend getting in touch with colleagues at camps and programs that have been running programs for children with disabilities; talk with the lay and professional leaders about the experience. This Guide helps you make those connections by including a [chart of camps](#) known by FJC to be running such programs.

## A Definition of Inclusion at Camp

Inclusion of children with disabilities at camp is the participation of such campers to the greatest possible extent in the full experience of a regular camp setting alongside their peers. Campers with and without disabilities do all camp activities together, live together and eat together, with no separation. The inclusive

camp or program is structured to allow all campers to live and participate together while receiving appropriate supports and services based on their individual needs. Behavioral supports and accommodations are incorporated into daily living, often times under the guidance of an inclusion coordinator. The inclusion coordinator works closely with all staff to collectively provide and implement necessary accommodations and programmatic changes to achieve success for each camper.

Creating an inclusive environment requires a philosophical stance that all campers, regardless of abilities, will benefit from inclusion. A dedication to the broad training of all staff to understand and work together in support of this vision is necessary. Camp-wide assessment of goals, programs, and activities within the framework of the camp's overall mission must ensure that campers with varying abilities and needs will be able to fully participate in the life and culture of the camp.

The purpose of this Guide is to support you in crafting the program(s) for campers with disabilities that will work best within your camp: for some, that means a fully inclusive program; for others, the timing or circumstances may not yet be right to move into full inclusion. Facilitating full inclusion in your camp or summer program is a multifaceted project that goes far beyond building ramps and hiring extra staff members. Inclusion has to do with making friendships possible by allowing campers with disabilities to fully participate in all of the activities that take place. This includes camp plays and dance competitions, as well as all of the other exciting sports, recreation, outdoor education, cultural arts, and social activities that take place during the summer months. While you may understand or believe that an inclusive approach will ultimately impact your entire community in many positive ways, the entire camp community must be on board so that the transformation becomes a true camp-wide priority. To bring leadership, parents and campers around to this way of thinking, questions of purpose, value and values must be raised and discussed openly, so that concerns are aired and addressed openly. Questions worth raising may include: Is the camp play's goal to be the perfect theatre performance with only the most competent actors participating? Must a finished product in the art shop look a certain way? Does the blue team have to win every sports competition by involving only the most talented athletes? Or is the value of the camp community to recognize and promote positive attitude over pre-existing aptitude? Is it the goal that all campers, regardless of abilities, have many opportunities to grow, to define success individually, and to participate to the maximum extent.

## Other Approaches to Supporting Campers with Disabilities

Currently, many camps have developed models of partial inclusion, ranging from high degrees of integration to near complete segregation of the campers with disabilities. It is important to validate all historical attempts to serve and include campers with disabilities. For our purposes, it is useful to define them as follows:

**Partial inclusion** - A camper with disabilities participates in activities with typically abled peers for some percentage of the day, depending on their needs. The percentage of time spent in inclusion is based on the programming structure of the camp, its resources, and the disabilities of the campers. Campers may or may not be housed in separate cabins. An inclusion coordinator facilitates the process of inclusion and serves as a training and coaching leader and resource for the general staff.

**Camp within a camp** - A camper in this program lives on the same grounds as campers without a disability and uses the same activity spaces on a different schedule and is housed in separate bunks. While often opportunities are arranged at scheduled times for campers with and without disabilities to interact, in this model, the group of campers with disabilities essentially functions as a separate division of camp: camp within a camp.

## Other Program Approaches

**Vocational programs** - Older campers with disabilities work side by side with camp staff in all areas of camp: dining room, caring for younger campers, office, sports, etc. They receive job coaching as well as support and role modeling from coworkers within the larger camp setting.

A participant in the vocational training program at Camp Ramah in New England recently wrote,

“What I loved about Voc Ed was learning to be independent. I liked that I was treated as an adult more than a camper. For example, at Ramah I had a lot of choices for how to spend my time. I got to choose how to exercise and how to spend my free time. The advisors always helped me and pushed me to grow. This summer I learned to take better care of myself and make my bed. I also learned to be more social and I made a lot of new friends. I learned new Hebrew words that I never knew before. The skill I am most proud of learning at camp is advocating for myself. When something was bothering me, I learned how to deal with it and speak up instead of just getting frustrated. I am very proud that I learned to advocate at camp, and took this new skill home with me.”

**Family Camps** - For some younger children, the best introduction to the world of camping is through a three to five day family camping program. In such programs, campers with disabilities participate in age-appropriate recreational and religious programming. Some camps provide the children with a one-to-one shadow, while at other camps, each family camper is supported by all of the counselors supervising the whole group. Typically developing peers also participate in the social, educational, and group process activities while parents socialize with other parents and enjoy down time, knowing that their children are well cared for. This “taste of camp” can often serve as a first step in getting to know camping and ultimately attending a day or overnight camping program. In the summer of 2014, Camp JRF incorporated families of children who are Deaf into their family camp program. In a recent New Normal blog post in the New York Jewish Week, a parent wrote of her Tikvah Family Shabbaton experience:

“Before the Shabbaton, I’d never really visualized what it would be like if, instead of trying to mold our family to fit a mainstream environment, the environment was molded to us... For one weekend, my family learned what it felt like to be not merely accommodated, but truly accepted and nurtured by a community.”

## A Word about Day Camping

Perhaps the most inclusive of all Jewish camps to date are the day camps. Day camps offer a stimulating, structured, activity-filled day with a natural end point. Day camp is a bit like a play date; at the end of each day’s experience—good, bad or mediocre—it ends soon, all go home, and everything starts fresh tomorrow. In contrast, overnight camping is 24/7. Not exactly, since campers do sleep at night, but in overnight camping, campers spend the day together, share living quarters, wait in line for the shower, and navigate such potentially awkward situations as coming out of the shower and changing clothes in close proximity to others. (Campers with social skill deficits have even greater issues navigating such situations than do typically abled campers).

In day camps, children enjoy all the camping activities like swimming, singing and dancing, *ruach*, and they may even have bunks. Then, at day’s end, they return to their parents and to their own familiar bedrooms. They generally wake up each morning feeling rested, refreshed and ready to enjoy camp all over again. Many day camps offer supports for campers with disabilities and most report that nearly 10% of their campers have some type of identified disability or concern, including ADHD, social skill deficits, language processing issues, etc. Many day camps are formalizing inclusion training for their staff and support programs for children, so that all campers, regardless of abilities, have a successful summer.

A successful day camp summer is often a predictor of success in an overnight camp. Directors and intake staff of overnight camps are likely to ask about previous camp experience and may even contact day camps to find out how a particular camper fared. Day camp offers a taste of what overnight camp has to offer, and many day campers become overnight campers as they get older. Campers with disabilities may naturally progress, with their typically developing friends, to attending an overnight camp program.

JCC camps have been very successful in including campers with disabilities and other day camps, such as Moshava Ba’Ir, have also begun offering such programs. At these day camps, campers with disabilities are fully included with their peers and are supervised by inclusion specialists who provide extra support through counselor training, behavior management, visual schedules, encouraging cooperative learning, and working closely with camper families.

## A List of Inclusive Camps

It is a tremendous challenge for a camp to offer a brief, user-friendly description of the types of campers with disabilities they serve. This is due, in part, to the wide range of functioning within each disability type. For example, a camper with cerebral palsy may have clear language and require minimal assistance with leg braces, or he may use a wheelchair and communicate via an augmented communication device.

It is useful to have a general understanding of the types of campers typically well served, as well as the types of issues the camp is not able to accommodate (i.e. accessibility, medical issues such as insulin or feeding tubes). In general, camps are likely to assess rightness of fit based less on diagnoses or labels and more on each camper's demonstrated functioning in such areas as behavior regulation and self-care.

This chart of camps and the categories of disabilities they address can be a good starting point for parents of children with disabilities to explore potentially good fits between camps and their child(ren). It is also a great resource for camp leaders launching or expanding their programs for campers with disabilities to connect with experienced colleagues.

CAMP	SERVING	CONTACT
<b>Aryeh Adventures</b> (Teen Travel Program)	(Teen Program) Autism Spectrum Disorder, Intellectual Developmental Disabilities, Learning Disabilities, Tourettes Syndrome and Mental Health Issues	Contact: 718-790-0528
<b>B'nai B'rith Beber Camp</b> (Mukwomago, WI)	Blindness, Autism Spectrum Disorder, intellectual and developmental disorders	Winter contact: 847-677-7130 Summer contact: 262-363-6800
<b>B'nai Brith Camp</b> (Neotsu, Oregon)	Physical and intellectual disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder, developmental disabilities and some medical conditions	Winter contact: 503-452-3444 Summer contact: 541-994-2218
<b>Camp Akiba</b> (Culver City, CA)	Moderate-high functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders, ADHD, Pervasive Developmental Disorders and less severe physical challenges.	Winter contact: 310-398-5783 Summer contact: 424-202-1792
<b>Camp Barney Medintz</b> (Cleveland, GA)	Autism Spectrum Disorders	Winter contact: 770-396-3250 Summer contact: 706-865-2715
<b>Camp B'nai Brith of Montreal</b> (Lantier, QC)	Offers a fully inclusive program for children with disabilities	Winter contact: 514-735-3669 Summer contact: 819-326-4824
<b>Camp HASC (Hebrew Academy for Special Children)</b> (Parksville, NY)	Mentally and physically disabled children and adults	Winter contact: 718-686-5930 Summer contact: 845-292-6821
<b>Camp JCA Shalom</b> (Malibu, CA)	Intellectual, developmental, physical, neurological, behavioral disabilities, partially physically accessible	Contact: 818-889-5500
<b>Camp JRF</b> (South Sterling, PA)	Developmental disabilities such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, cognitive delays, developmental challenges, moderate speech and/or processing issues, and some forms of physical disabilities.	Winter contact: 215-576-0800 Summer contact: 570-676-9291
<b>Camp Judaea</b> (Hendersonville, NC)	Autism Spectrum Disorder, hearing impaired, developmental and intellectual disabilities, and communication disorders	Winter contact: 404-634-7883 Summer contact: 828-685-8841
<b>Camp Kaylie</b> (Wurtsboro, NY)	Developmental and Intellectual disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder and other	Winter contact: 718-686-3261 Summer contact: 845-888-5008

CAMP	SERVING	CONTACT
	disabilities	
<b>Camp L'man Achai</b> (Andes, NY)	Deaf and Autism Spectrum Disorder	Winter contact: 718-436-8255 Summer contact: 845-676-3996
<b>Camp Livingston</b> (Bennington, IN)	Inclusive of children with various emotional and developmental disabilities	Winter contact: 513-793-5554 Summer contact: 812-427-2202
<b>Camp Massad (Manitoba)</b> (Winnipeg Beach, MB)	Autism Spectrum Disorder, Developmental Disabilities, Deaf	Winter contact: 204-477-7487 Summer contact: 204- 389-5300
<b>Camp Moshava Enismore</b> (Ennismore, ON)	Developmental and Intellectual disabilities, hearing impaired and Aspergers	Winter contact: 416-630-7578 Summer contact: 705-292-8143
<b>Camp Ramah in California</b> (Ojai, CA)	Learning, emotional and developmental disabilities	Winter contact: 310-476-8571 Summer contact: 805-646-4301
<b>Camp Ramah in Canada</b> (Utterson, ON)	Developmental disabilities	Winter contact: 416 789-2193 Summer contact: 705-769-3601
<b>Camp Ramah Darom</b> (Clayton, GA)	Autism Spectrum Disorder	Winter contact: 404-531-0801 Summer contact: 706-782-9300
<b>Camp Ramah in New England</b> (Palmer, NY)	Mild to moderate intellectual and developmental disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder, neurological disabilities and physical disabilities	Winter contact: 781-702-5290 Summer contact: 413-283-9771
<b>Camp Ramah in the Berkshires</b> (Wingdale, NY)	Children with mild to moderate social and emotional disabilities	Winter contact: 201-871-7262 Summer contact: 845-832-6622
<b>Camp Ramah in Wisconsin</b> (Conover, WI)	Autism Spectrum Disorder	Winter contact: 312-606-9316 Summer contact: 715-479-4400
<b>Camp Simcha</b> (New York, NY)	Free camps open to children battling cancer, chronic hematological disorders, or other debilitating chronic conditions	Winter contact: 212-465-1300 Summer contact: 845- 856-1432
<b>Camp Yaldei</b> (Montreal, QC)	Developmental disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder, neurological disorders, and learning disabilities.	Winter contact: 514-279-3666 Summer contact: 450 -226-1129
<b>Camp Yavneh</b> (Northwood, NH)	Autism Spectrum Disorder, Intellectual Disabilities, ADHD, and other disabilities	Winter contact: 617-559-8860 Summer contact: 603-942-5593
<b>Camp Young Judeaea Sprout Lake</b> (Verbank, NY)	Campers are assessed on a case by case basis.	Winter contact: 917-595-1500 Summer contact: 845-677-3411
<b>Camp Young Judeaea Texas</b> (Wimberley, TX)	Autism Spectrum Disorder, Intellectual Disabilities, ADHD, and other disabilities, physically accessible	Winter contact: 713-723-8354 Summer contact: 512-847-9564
<b>Capital Camps</b> (Waynesboro, PA)	Physical, emotional, social and developmental disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder	Winter contact: 301-468-2267 Summer contact: 717-794-2177
<b>Eden Village Camp</b> (Putnam Valley, NY)	Camper must be fully independent. Campers are assessed on a case by case basis	Winter contact: 877-397-3336 Summer contact: 877-397-3336
<b>Herzl Camp</b> (Webster, WI)	Autism Spectrum Disorders, cognitive, some physical or emotional challenges	Winter contact: 952-927-4002 Summer contact: 715-866-8177
<b>JCC Camp Chi</b> (Wisconsin Dells, WI)	Autism Spectrum Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome, and Downs Syndrome	Winter contact: 847-763-3551 Summer contact: 608-253-1681
<b>JCC Camp Kingswood</b> (Bridgton, ME)	Autism Spectrum Disorder, Blindness, and any camper who has a sense of independence	Winter contact: 617-558-6531 Summer contact: 207-647-3969

CAMP	SERVING	CONTACT
<b>Ramah Outdoor Adventure</b> (Denver, CO)	Campers with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder	Winter contact: 303-261-8214 Summer contact: 303-261-8214
<b>Round Lake Camp (NJY Camps)</b> (Milford, PA)	Autism Spectrum Disorder, intellectual Disabilities, ADHD, and other disabilities	Winter contact: 973 575-3333 Summer contact: 570 798-2551
<b>URJ 6 Points Sports Academy</b> (Greensboro, NC)	Autism Spectrum Disorder	Winter contact: 561-208-1650 Summer contact: 561-208-1650
<b>URJ Camp Harlam</b> (Kunkletown, PA)	Acceptance of campers with disabilities is made on an individual basis in collaboration with families. We've successfully accommodated campers with learning disabilities, physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy (that don't require a wheelchair), campers on the Autism Spectrum, campers with ADHD and Oppositional Defiant Disorders, and other disabilities	Winter contact: 610-668-0423 Summer contact: 570-629-1390
<b>URJ Camp Coleman</b> (Cleveland, GA)	Young Adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities	Winter contact: 770-671-8971 Summer contact: 706-865-4111
<b>URJ Eisner Camp</b> (Great Barrington, MA)	Autism Spectrum Disorder and Mental health issues	Winter contact: 201-722-0400 Summer contact: 413-528-1652
<b>URJ Camp George</b> (Seguin, ON)	Acceptance of campers with disabilities is made based on the level of support required and ability for a camper to be successful in our integrated environment. Our intake process includes working with families, teachers, and other support staff. We accommodate campers with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, ASD, ADHD, ODD and other disabilities.	Winter contact: 416-638-2635 Summer contact: 705-732-6964
<b>URJ Goldman Union Camp Institute (GUCI)</b> (Zionsville, IN)	Autism Spectrum Disorder, Visual impairments, some physical disabilities	Winter contact: 317-873-3361 Summer contact: 317-873-3361
<b>URJ Henry S. Jacobs Camp</b> (Utica, MS)	Autism Spectrum Disorders	Winter contact: 601-885-6042 Summer contact: 601-885-6042
<b>URJ Kutz Camp</b> (Warwick, NY)	Autism Spectrum Disorders	Winter contact: 845-987-6300 Summer contact: 845-987-6300
<b>Yachad Camp Programs</b> (offers programs at the following camps: <b>Moshava IO, Moshava Malibu, Shoshanim, Neshet, Morasha</b> )	Many disabilities	Contact: 212-613-8229