

**Kol Echad:
A Guide for Jewish Institutions Interested
in Becoming More Inclusive of LGBTQ
Families**

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Kol Echad: Improving Our Welcome of LGBTQ Familiesⁱ

What is Kol Echad?

This handbook is meant to serve as a resource for Jewish institutions that are interested in becoming more welcoming and inclusive of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer Jews and their families. The guide provides a variety of ideas and strategies that can be implemented to make institutions more LGBTQ-friendly, as well as ideas of how to engage Jewish communities in the process of inclusion. While the guide can be read as one coherent document, individual sections can also be used as resources for specific topic areas or as tools for specific professionals within an institution. In addition to the suggestions included here, the guide also provides references to other resources that could benefit a community engaging in a process of becoming more welcoming.

Why is a guide like this important?

LGBTQ Jews Are Everywhere: Whether or not they self-identify or speak out on these issues, LGBTQ people and their allies are in every community. Even if a congregation has no self-identified LGBTQ members, engagement in such a process is still important, as the historic and ongoing exclusion that many LGBTQ people have experienced in mainstream Jewish settings can often lead them not to disclose their identities.ⁱⁱ Additionally, if there are no LGBTQ people, whether out or not, in a congregation, this does not mean that LGBTQ people are not interested in finding Jewish communities where they feel at home; it likely means that the congregation has more work to do to be truly welcoming of LGBTQ members.ⁱⁱⁱ It is incumbent upon all communities to reflect on their current practices and policies around inclusion so that no Jewish individual or family feels unwelcome in a Jewish institution because of their identity.

Inclusivity Benefits All Children: All children have the right to feel safe and secure in our community. They deserve the chance to see their own lives reflected in the learning they engage in, the people they come in contact with and the structures that surround them.^{iv} This can only happen when our communities fully value and include all families, including ones with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender parents. In addition, while experiences of exclusion and discrimination are particularly hard on those at whom they are directed, homophobia and transphobia^v hurt all children. When children receive the explicit or implicit message that certain behaviors and identities are less valued than others, this limits their social and intellectual development as well as their personal expression and creativity. Finally, gender or sexuality-based name calling and bullying not only affect those whom they are directed at. They also have negative implications for the perpetrators and bystanders of the act as well.^{vi}

Discrimination Still Exists: While virulent homophobia is less common in the American Jewish community than it once was, discrimination based on gender and sexual identity is still prevalent in Jewish communities. The *Kulanu* Resource Guide, published by the Union for Reform Judaism, suggests that despite the many policy decisions and programs initiated by several of the movements over the past couple decades, many LGBT people still notice a difference between the movements' policies and everyday actions related to inclusion. Support for same-sex ceremonies is still lagging in many

congregations and many LGBTQ rabbis find themselves coming up against a glass ceiling professionally.^{vii} In addition, LGBTQ membership at mainstream synagogues rarely is above a token amount, which likely indicates some barriers either to membership or public disclosure of one's identity. One lesbian Jew quoted in *Kulanu* said, "If I have a choice between a congregation that will go out into the world with me (i.e. a LGBT synagogue) and one in which I'll spend a lot of time needing to work on changes right there, I choose the former."^{viii} We must work as a community to make all congregations ones that will "go out into the world with" their LGBTQ members and ones where they do not feel as though they must engage in extensive work just to make a comfortable place for themselves in the community.

It's The Right Thing to Do, But It's Not Easy: Many congregations, clergy and staff support the idea of inclusion and would like to see their organizations be more inclusive. In fact, in the 2009 Welcoming Synagogue's project, "73% of rabbis [reported that] their congregations do a good or excellent job welcoming gays and lesbians but only 31% of Conservative rabbis, and 49% of Reform rabbis, said their congregations are actively welcoming of gay and lesbian Jews to a great extent."^{ix} While the desire to be more inclusive is there, figuring out how to engage in such a process, especially with the many competing priorities that face a community, can be difficult. This guide will provide the tools and resources necessary to make such an undertaking less daunting. As one of the contributors to *Kulanu* suggested, "the proportion of GLBT members at 'pluralistic' congregations will remain below the proportion of GLBT Jews in any given area until groups of congregants become proactive in their own communities to educate themselves about GLBT culture, figure out what they can genuinely offer to prospective GLBT members, and maintain open and ongoing dialogues with each other and their GLBT members about feelings, perceptions, and needs."^x

Our community is already welcoming of all people, why do we need to be explicit about our inclusion of LGBTQ individuals and families?

Congregations that already have a spirit of welcoming and inclusivity have already made one important step towards the goal of full inclusivity of LGBTQ Jews. However, the history of negative messages from religious institutions about sexual and gender identity has created an expectation among many LGBTQ individuals of faith that they are not welcome in religious institutions.^{xi} The discrimination that LGBTQ people have faced may cause them to assume by default that they are not welcome unless this welcome is made explicit. By publicly declaring this specific type of inclusivity, congregations identify their communities as safe spaces and this can also serve as a form of outreach to potential LGBTQ members. This type of public visibility also positions communities to be able to take an ethical stand on justice issues related to LGBTQ people.^{xii}

Important Terminology Related to Sexual and Gender Identity

As with any cultural group, LGBTQ communities have a variety of terms that are used within the community that may not be as well known to individuals outside of the community. One aspect of a community becoming inclusive is members taking the time to learn this language, so that they can use it appropriately and comfortably with LGBTQ members. This section will provide some information about some of the most commonly used terms. The definitions that follow are excerpted, with some alterations, from the Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide [more substantial additions appear in brackets].

Gay:

1. One who has significant sexual or romantic attractions primarily to members of the same gender or sex.
2. Often used as a synonym for gay male.
3. A sometimes out of date umbrella term for LGBTQ. Lesbians, Bisexuals, [Queer and Transgender individuals] often do not feel included by this term.

Lesbian:

A girl/woman who has exclusive sexual and romantic attractions to other women.

Bisexual:

One who has significant sexual or romantic attractions to members of both the genders and/or sexes. [This term assumes that there are only two genders/sexes, which some LGBTQ individuals and allies disagree with].

Transgender:

A person whose gender identity does not match their born biological sex. Transgender is often used as an umbrella term. Transgender people may or may not choose to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically. When referring to transgender people, it is appropriate to use the pronoun they have designated for themselves. [These pronouns may include he, she, they, ze, etc.]

Queer:

Historically a negative term used against people perceived to be LGBTQ, “queer” has more recently been reclaimed by some people as a positive term describing all those who do not conform to rigid notions of gender and sexuality. Queer is often used in a political context and in academic settings to challenge traditional ideas about identity (e.g. “queer theory”). [Queer is also often used as an umbrella term similar to LGBTQ].

Homophobia:

1. A fear of (and/or hate expressed towards) sexual attraction to the same gender or sex.
2. A fear of (and/or hate expressed towards) LGBTQ people.

Coming Out:

To be “in the closet” means to hide one’s identity. To “come out” is to publicly declare one’s identity, sometimes to one person in conversation, sometimes to a group or in a public setting. Many LGBTQ people are “out” in some situations and “closeted” in others. Coming out is a life-long process—in each new situation a person must decide whether or not to come out. [Some LGBTQ people choose to come out simply by *being* out, without making formal declarations.]

Intersex:

One whose external genitalia at birth do not match the scientific standards for male or female, or one whose sex glands or sexual development do not totally match the sex assigned at birth. (Note: Many intersex infants are surgically “corrected” to conform to the sexual binary of “male” and “female.” However, the Intersex Movement seeks to halt pediatric surgeries and hormone treatments.) Hermaphrodite is an outdated and politically incorrect term for intersex.

Genderqueer:

A gender identity between or outside the binaries of masculine or feminine. May also refer to people who identify as both transgender AND queer, i.e. individuals who see gender identity and sexual orientation as overlapping and interconnected. Some genderqueer people use gender neutral pronouns. [This term is most often used by individuals of younger generations].

Transition:

The period of time in which a person begins to live in a gender role which is in accordance with their internal gender identity. Transition may include some or all of the following: changing one’s name and/or sex on legal documents, hormone therapy, and possibly some form of chest and/or genital alteration.

Questioning:

Refers to people who are actively aware of uncertainty as to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

What’s the Difference Between Gender Identity and Sexual Identity?

The definitions above relate to two different types of identities – gender identity and sexual identity. Gender identity “refers to the way a person acts, dresses, and identifies in terms of masculinity, femininity, or anything in between.”^{xiii} The terms above that refer to gender identity include transgender, intersex, genderqueer, and transition. Sexual orientation or identity “refers to a person’s sexual and romantic attractions to others. Attraction is complicated and diverse so folks in the LGBTQ community encompass many different permutations of sexual orientation.”^{xiv} The terms above that refer to sexual orientation and identity include gay, lesbian, bisexual, and homophobia. Several

of the terms above can encompass both sexual and gender identity and these include queer, coming out and questioning.

What's the Challenge with Definitions and Labels?

The challenge with labels is that it's easy to forget about diversity in groups that identify themselves by shared labels or identities. Jews who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, genderqueer and more come from a variety of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and religious backgrounds. Though they may choose to identify with the same label, there is still immense diversity in the way that they understand and live out those identities. In addition, it's also important to note that even within LGBTQ communities there is disagreement on the meaning and application of some of these terms. For example, some people strongly prefer to identify as queer rather than lesbian, gay or bisexual, while others find the term queer to be offensive and would never want to self-identify in that way.

Making Institutional Change Possible

Once an individual or small group within a Jewish institution decides that they would like to increase the ways in which their community is welcoming to and inclusive of Jews who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or queer, the next step is to figure how best to approach this goal.

Planning for Change:

Jumping straight in to demand change in an institution without strategically considering the situation first is often ineffective. To create an effective plan to increase inclusion in an institution, a few steps are recommended:

- ***Assess the level of support for such an initiative with various stakeholders^{xv}***
If issues of sexual and gender diversity have not come up previously in your institution or have not been dealt with in a public manner, it may be hard to tell who would be in favor of becoming a more welcoming institution. Having conversations with key stakeholders including clergy, educators, lay leaders and active congregants can provide insight into the existing level of support for inclusiveness. Given the role that clergy, especially rabbis, play as opinion leaders within Jewish communities, an inclusion process will be helped immensely if any rabbis associated with the institution are willing to be public proponents of the issue.
- ***Understand the positions of the institution and movement (if applicable) relative to issues of sexual and gender diversity^{xvi}***
Many Jewish institutions already have some kind of policies related to sexual and gender diversity, at the very least in the form of a non-discrimination policy. In addition, each of the Jewish movements has made policy decisions around issues related to sexual and gender identity, which affect the positions of local institutions. Before engaging in a process to increase inclusion, it's important to understand the institution's current public position on the issue and how that is impacted by the position of any movement the institution is affiliated with.
- ***Identify ways that becoming a more inclusive institution could be connected with the institution's core values, mission statement and/or policies and help others understand these connections^{xvii}***
Part of engaging in an effective inclusion process is framing the process in the existing language and symbolism of the institution. Does the institution have a core value around diversity or embracing difference? Does the mission statement include language about creating a welcoming institution? Once you've identified these connections, think about how you can most compellingly share them with others.
- ***Identify key challenges currently being faced by the institution and ways that becoming more inclusive might address these^{xviii}***

Every institution has a variety of challenges it is facing at any given moment. Some of those demands might actually be addressed or alleviated by engaging in a process of becoming more welcoming to people of a variety of sexual and gender identities. For example, if an institution is struggling with dwindling membership, creating a more inclusive community might bring an influx of new LGBTQ members to help increase membership.

- ***Consider the pace of the process***

An important final consideration is the pace of the process. An inclusion process needs to move quickly enough so that those in the congregation who identify as LGBTQ or as allies feel that progress is being made. However, the process must move slowly enough that those individuals in the institution who might not initially identify with the issue have time to adjust to the changes gradually.

Creating an Inclusion Committee:

Once you have done the background research described above, the next step is to create an Inclusion Committee to initiate the process and support its progress. The committee should be composed of individuals in the congregation for whom the issue of LGBTQ inclusivity is an important value. This is likely to include LGBTQ members of the institution and individuals who have LGBTQ family or friends. Once such a group has been formed, it should engage in the following activities:

- ***Assess the climate of the institution around inclusivity***

One of the first steps that an inclusion committee should engage in is an assessment of the current state of inclusion in the institution. This assessment should evaluate where the institution is already succeeding at inclusion and where there are areas for growth. To make this exercise as effective and comprehensive as possible, it is important to make sure that a variety of stakeholders participate including clergy, staff, lay leaders, individuals of a variety of ages, and people who identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, etc.^{xix} See the Appendix for sample questions to include in such an assessment.

- ***Raise visibility within the institution around the issue of inclusion^{xx}***

Part of the task of an inclusion committee is to bring the issue of LGBTQ inclusion into focus for the institutional community. Many members of the community may not consider the importance of inclusion unless it is highlighted for them, but once it is they may support it.

- ***Initiate educational events within the community^{xxi}***

One important way to raise visibility and move a community in the direction of inclusion is to facilitate a variety of educational events related to sexual and gender diversity. These events should be designed so that they are appropriate for the particular community and meet community members where they are.^{xxii} See the next section on “Educating the Community” for specific ideas.

- ***Reach out to other institutional committees to investigate the possibility of collaboration***

There are a variety of ways for an inclusion committee to partner with other synagogue committees to get their message out. Educational events can be cosponsored with Brotherhoods or Sisterhoods. Community service or political

action events focused on LGBTQ issues or rights can be cosponsored with Social Action Committees.^{xxiii}

- ***Engage clergy and staff in the process***^{xxiv}
Clergy and staff are among the most important allies to an inclusion process. Due to the power that they hold both politically and in terms of public opinion, one of the key goals of any inclusion committee must be to form alliances with institutional staff and compel them to be active supporters, or even drivers, of the inclusion process. In some institutions clergy and staff may already be on board with the issue. In these cases, identifying the ways that their time and energy can best be used is crucial.
- ***Advocate for the issue***
This may include promoting the issue as a relevant and urgent one to congregants, staff, clergy, board, and various committees. There are many ways in both individual interactions and more formal situations that one can emphasize the importance of inclusion as a priority.

Educating the Community

As mentioned in the previous section, an important element of any inclusion process is to educate the community around issues related to sexual and gender diversity. Educational events can serve to provide individuals in the community with information that they had not previously had access to and to challenge assumptions they may have about people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or queer. In addition, if these events include opportunities for LGBTQ individuals to share their stories, this can help to humanize an issue which can be exclusively theoretical or political to some individuals.

There are a variety of types of education events that an Inclusion Committee might consider hosting, catering to various audiences. Some particularly effective ones include:

- For adults:
 - A showing of the Human Rights Campaign’s movie “For the Bible Tells Me So” and facilitated discussion afterwards utilizing the accompanying study guide.
 - Facilitation of the Human Rights Campaign’s “Gender Identity and Our Faith Communities” study series.
 - Screenings of the movies “Hineini” or “Keep Not Silent” or “Trembling Before G-d,” followed by discussion using the accompanying discussion guides or other discussion questions.
 - Facilitation of the educational session “Know the Heart of the Stranger: A Curriculum on Combatting Assumptions and Stereotypes” by Rabbi Geoffrey Mitelman and Joel L. Kushner, Psy. D.
See Resources section at the end of the guide for more information on each of these sets of materials.
 - An open forum for community members to ask questions that they have but have been afraid to ask for fear of being offensive.
 - A panel with LGBTQ community members where they can share how their sexual and/or gender identities impact their personal and religious lives, as well as their life within that particular community.^{xxv}
 - One-on-one or small group meetings or discussions to share experiences related to sexual and gender identity and discuss the inclusion process.

- For parents:
 - An educational forum on the effects of hurtful teasing and name-calling, especially related to gender and sexual identity, which provides specific skills to help parents intervene.^{xxvi}
 - A workshop on how parents can most effectively use the many teachable moments that arise around sexual and gender diversity with their children.^{xxvii}
 - Host “Answering Your Children’s Tough Questions: An Evening Workshop” created by the Welcoming Schools program, which provides parents with a chance to practice answering some of the difficult questions that arise when

discussing sexual and gender identity with children. See Resources section for more information.

- For families:
 - Screening of the movie “That’s a Family,” which explores the diversity of American families. Include a facilitated discussion afterwards that allows participants to reflect on similarities and differences between the families in the film and their own. See Resources section for more information.

How Staff Can Foster an Inclusive Community

Another important step towards becoming an inclusive community is to make specific changes within an institution that either proactively include the needs and interests of LGBTQ individuals or that address current barriers to their inclusion. Clergy, administrators and religious educators all have the ability to foster an inclusive community by making intentional choices within their areas of responsibility.

Clergy and Ritual Committees

Rabbis, cantors and ritual committees can address issues of inclusivity in their approaches to worship, sermons, ritual facilitation and pastoral care. These steps should be considered, regardless of whether there are any current members of the community who openly identify as LGBTQ or not.

- **Worship:** The language of worship can serve to welcome all involved into the spiritual community or to alienate some while including others. Clergy and ritual committees should look at the language they use during services. Some questions to consider include:
 - When God is mentioned what gender is used? Is there a way to refer to God and human beings that is non-gendered?
 - When families or romantic relationships are addressed in the language of the service, is this done in a way that acknowledges the diverse forms that these structures can take?
 - Are assumptions made in the language of the service that all of those who are listening are straight or that all in attendance identify as either male or female? How can language be changed to address this?
 - Are there prayers that acknowledge the specific experience of LGBTQ people during the service? Is there a way to include them?
 - Are there ways that a Shabbat service or other holiday service could be used to educate the community about LGBTQ issues and inclusion?
 - Are there ways to acknowledge various events in LGBTQ history throughout the Jewish year (for example, acknowledging gay and lesbian victims of the Holocaust at a Yom Hashoah memorial service)?^{xxviii}
 - Are there guidelines that should be shared with others who are involved in leading services to encourage them to use language that is inclusive? If not, could guidelines be created?^{xxix}
 - Will a *gabbai* treat the *aliyah* of someone who is called to the Torah and provides a Hebrew name with two mothers or fathers in the same way that they would any other?^{xxx}
 - Are there ways that traditionally observant members of the community might react negatively to a transgender or genderqueer member who wants to participate in a service? Are there ways that clergy can serve as advocates and mediators in this type of situation?^{xxxi}

- Can particular passages of the Torah (such as the laws against certain kinds of sex between men) be read in a way that notes their challenge to modern communities (e.g., by reading them in an undertone)?^{xxxii}
- Do you have copies of individual prayers or full *siddurim* (such as [Siddur Sha'ar Zahav](#)) available that speak directly to LGBTQ congregants?
- **Sermons:** Sermons and divrei torah are regular forums for clergy to share their thoughts with a community and can serve as an opportunity both to influence public opinion on inclusion and to model the use of inclusive language. Some ways to do this include:
 - Consider the language and examples used in sermons to make sure that they are inclusive of people who might identify as LGBTQ. For example, rather than referring to “all men and women” in a sermon, referring to “all of humanity” or “all people.”^{xxxiii}
 - Regularly model the correct and respectful use the words gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and/or queer.
 - When speaking about issues of diversity or human rights, include LGBTQ issues and individuals.^{xxxiv}
 - If social justice issues related to LGBTQ individuals arise in the local or national community, speak out on these issues and advocate for other members of the congregation to take action.^{xxxv}
 - Consider developing a theological statement of welcome and inclusion for LGBTQ persons and share that with the community.^{xxxvi}
 - Explicitly address the two Torah portions that legislate against certain kinds of sex between men.^{xxxvii}
 - If issues of intolerance arise in the spiritual community itself, clergy should be willing to speak out publicly against the victimization and serve as a moral compass for the congregation. Clergy may need to reach out for support in identifying the most effective ways to do this.

- **Rituals:** Clergy assist and support members of communities to engage in a variety of rituals throughout their lifecycles. LGBTQ members sometimes have unique needs around these rituals. Some issues to consider include:
 - Does the institution allow for LGBTQ members to use the main worship space and services of clergy for lifecycle events such as marriages and baby-namings? Why or why not?
 - Would LGBTQ members be comfortable being open about their identity in the planning process for a ritual and in front of the community? Are there ways that their comfort could be increased?
 - For sensitive events related to the body, such as *mikvah* and illness-related rituals, are clergy prepared to be sensitive to the needs of transgender individuals? How can their needs and experiences be elicited in order to make these situations as comfortable as possible for them?^{xxxviii}

- **Pastoral Care:** Beyond worship, sermons and rituals, clergy provide immense amounts of support to community members through pastoral care. These one-on-one interactions also provide opportunities for clergy to practice inclusion. Some ways to do this include:
 - Be explicit about the availability of clergy to support families and parents who are struggling with the sexual or gender identity of their child.
 - Maintain a list of organizations to which you can refer congregants who are struggling with issues related to their own sexual and gender identity or that of their family members.^{xxxix}
 - Educate yourself on issues related to coming out and transitioning so that you can serve as a resource to community members who might be going through these processes. Be especially cognizant of issues that might be particularly important in the Jewish community around these issues, including fears about continuity, inability to have children, etc.^{xl} See the following section on Individuals Questioning Their Sexuality for details.
 - Educate yourself around issues related to spirituality for transgender Jews and ways that you might support community members grappling with these questions. Some of these issues include fears about exclusion from future ritual participation and whether God will disapprove of them because of their gender identity.^{xli}

Administrators

Institutional administrators often have the ability to set both the tone and the policies for an institution. Administrators can work towards a more inclusive environment by setting an inclusive tone, reflecting these values in institutional publications, thorough professional development for staff, in the institution's physical environment, through organizational policies and by conducting a needs assessment.

- **Setting the Tone:** Administrators can provide a model of respectful leadership which allows all members of the institution to feel included and valued.^{xlii} Administrators can also establish an organizational culture where clergy and educators feel “safe when they use inclusive materials or respond to teachable moments.”^{xliii} Finally, administrators can assume the presence of LGBTQ individuals and families in the institution and act on that assumption, even if none are explicitly known, which will lead to a greater sense of inclusion.^{xliv}
- **Internal Publications:** Administrators can review all publications distributed by the institution (including handbooks, directories, and newsletters) to make sure that they use language that is inclusive of LGBTQ individuals and families.^{xlv} If a transgender individual or same-sex couple has requested to be listed in a certain way in publications, this request should be honored.^{xlvi} Administrators may also want to consider whether it makes sense to include explicit language in the institution's mission statement about inclusivity with respect to LGBTQ members. Finally, the institution's newsletter can include a column on gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender issues as a regular part of the publication.^{xlvii}
- **External Publications:** In addition to internal publications, LGBTQ members should be able to see themselves and their families in the materials that are used to advertise the institution. Administrators may also want to consider including a welcoming statement for LGBTQ individuals and families in these advertising materials.^{xlviii}
- **Forms:** Administrators can design forms so that they are inclusive of partners of the same-sex as well as transgender individuals. For membership categories, “committed relationship” can be offered in addition to “single” and “married.”^{xlix} On forms related to children, “parent” or “guardian” can be used instead of “mother” and “father.” When requesting an individual's gender on a form, the request can include “male,” “female” and “other: _____” or it can simply read “gender: _____.”^l
- **Professional Development:** While some staff may theoretically want to create a more inclusive environment, this endeavor will be most successful when they are given specific tools to do this and a chance to practice. Administrators can provide staff with trainings about how to deal with discrimination and bullying related to sexual and gender identity. Trainings can also be provided around answering questions that members may ask about LGBTQ issues and members who identify as such. Staff should also have a chance to discuss what language is most inclusive when discussing members who identify as LGBTQ. These trainings should be available to all staff including clergy, educators, support staff, administrative staff and maintenance staff, as all of these individuals are likely to

- interact with LGBTQ members or issues at some point.^{li} Administrators may also want to consider consulting with nearby institutions to see what trainings they may be interested in offering and whether there are ways to collaborate.^{liii}
- **Physical Environment:** There are many ways that an institution’s inclusivity can be demonstrated in the physical environment. Pamphlets and posters with LGBTQ-related themes can be displayed around the building, including the Human Rights Campaign’s “Living Openly in Your Place of Worship.” Notices about local LGBTQ events can be posted on bulletin boards. Staff who feel comfortable can be encouraged to display a “Safe Zone” sticker on their office door which alerts members that they are someone who is open to discussing issues related to gender and sexual identity. See the Resources section for more details. Finally, LGBTQ groups outside of the institution can be invited to rent or use institutional space for their meetings and events.^{liiii}
 - **Policies:** Administrators can ensure that the institution has non-discrimination policies that cover all aspects of institutional life including membership and hiring practices.^{liv} Administrators can also work with other staff, especially those working with children, to create policies on how the institution will respond to harassment related to gender or sexual identity. These policies should include both strategies for preventing harassment and clear disciplinary protocol for when it does happen.^{lv}
 - **Needs Assessment:** Once an institution does have some LGBTQ members, administrators may want to consider conducting a needs assessment with these members. As Lisa Mottet and Justin Tanis point out in their inclusion guide, “Far too often, we waste precious money and resources on programs based on what we think that people will need or want rather than taking the time to find out what the genuine needs are. Conducting a community needs assessment can be a valuable investment to ensure that you are planning the right type of events and services.”^{lvi}

Religious Educators

Religious Educators can create safe and inclusive classroom environments for all children, including those who may identify as LGBTQ, may be questioning their sexual or gender identity or who are the children of parents who identify as LGBTQ. Educators can do this through setting the tone in the classroom, in the ways they deal with gender and through the ways they approach specific curricular topics.

- **Setting the Tone:** One of the first things an educator can do to create an inclusive learning environment is to have students create a list of group rules or norms that include treating and talking to one another with respect. Educators can then use any instances where these norms are broken as a teachable moment for students about the importance of respect for others. It can be useful for educators to prepare themselves for these types of moments by considering how they might respond to various questions that students might ask about gender and sexual diversity or derogatory comments they might make. Educators can also focus time within the curriculum on developing interpersonal skills such as conflict resolution, listening skills and respecting differences, all of which will empower students to deal respectfully with those who are different than them.^{lvii}
- **Dealing with Gender:** Numerous messages are conveyed to children and young adults every day about gender in educational settings. It's important to think about what these messages are and how they are affecting young people. Some questions that are suggested in the *Kulanu* and *Welcoming Schools* guides are:
 - What do the words and images you use – in books, posters, music – teach about how different genders are “supposed to be”?
 - How are children taught about Jewish ways of respecting and welcoming many different kinds of human beings? Could transgender people be included?
 - What gender messages or stereotypes are conveyed by the stories, books and games used in the classroom?
 - Are there ways to convey messages that expand rather than limit children's thinking and understandings about gender?
 - What kind of role models are provided for children of each gender? Are they presented with a wide range of models of who they could become? Is this range limited in any way by their gender?
 - Do you make assumptions about “appropriate” behavior for boys and girls? Is this communicated to the children? How might this affect them?
 - Do young people have a chance to consider the messages they receive about male and female identity? Do they have a chance to critique these messages?
 - How often are the phrases “boys don't...” or “girls don't” used in the classroom? Are there ways to change these statements to “all children do...” instead?
 - When organizing children into groups, how often are these groups determined by gender? Are there other ways to identify groups, such as birthday or first letter of last name?

- **Specific Curricular Topics:** There are curricular topics that are likely to come up in the course of an educational cycle that require specific consideration.
 - **Holidays:** For example, religious school classes often celebrate Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. Educators should consider that not all children in their classroom may have a mother or a father. Instead, these holidays can be used as an opportunity to discuss honoring and appreciating your elders or they can also be used as an opportunity to discuss all adults who raise children and all kinds of families.^{lviii} Another holiday that is often discussed in religious schools is Yom Hashoah or Holocaust Remembrance Day. This observance is a great time to integrate some LGBTQ Jewish history into the curriculum by discussing the victims of the Holocaust who identified as gay or lesbian.^{lix}
 - **Sexual and Gender Identity in Jewish Texts:** A variety of Jewish texts that may be addressed in a religious school setting can be used as a chance to discuss issues of sexual and gender identity. When the creation story is discussed, make sure to include both versions of the story and explore the differing messages conveyed about gender by both. When discussing the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, educators can share both the traditional interpretations of the text as well as alternative re-readings. When discussing the stories of David and Jonathan or Ruth and Naomi, educators can discuss the love shared by these two sets of characters.^{lx}

Creating an Inclusive Environment for Specific Sub-Groups of the LGBTQ Community

While many of the suggestions listed in the previous section can help in creating a community that is welcoming of LGBTQ members generally, there are some specific sub-groups of this community for whom additional steps can be taken to further improve inclusion.

Transgender Members:

In the Welcoming Synagogues Project (a 2009 study of synagogues nationally which looked at inclusion of LGBT members), 36% of rabbis reported feeling that “they know very little about transgender persons and issues.”^{lxii} This lack of awareness around transgender issues both on the part of synagogue staff and laity, suggests that it’s especially important for Jewish institutions to be intentional about making changes to be more inclusive of transgender members. This inclusion can be accomplished through increased sensitivity, changes to physical space and active attempts by staff and members to act as allies.

- **Sensitivity:** The most important part of sensitivity when dealing with gender identity is language.
 - **Pronouns:** In classes or group discussion settings, it’s helpful to begin an event with a chance for individuals to share their names and anything relevant to the group about their identities, including what pronoun they prefer to be referred to by. If this is not possible, it’s important not to assume anyone’s gender. If someone’s gender is not clear, you can ask them “What is the respectful gender pronoun that you’d prefer I used for you?” Once you know a person’s preferred pronoun, it’s respectful to use that pronoun whether that person is present or not. Changing the pronouns that we use for others is difficult and you are bound to make mistakes from time to time. If you do, just correct yourself or accept correction and continue.^{lxiii}
 - **Questions:** Another place where sensitivity is required is around the questions you ask a transgender person. Open-ended questions permit a transgender person to set the ground rules for discussion (“Would you like to tell me about yourself?” or “What are your interests?”) Many times non-transgender people ask many questions of transgender individuals out of curiosity. However, this sort of attention can often make a transgender person feel uncomfortable or as though they are being singled out. Avoid asking about an individual’s medical history. Whether or not someone has had surgery or is taking hormones in order to transition is information that is personal. In addition, questions about someone’s life before they transitioned can often bring up complicated feelings for a transgender person. Allow a transgender person to bring this topic up if they are

comfortable with doing so, rather than asking about it. Finally, any questions that undercut someone's gender identity such as, "Are you really a man, you look so much like a woman?" or "Why would you choose to be a man, you made such a good woman?" are never appropriate.^{lxiii}

- **Public Language:** It's also important that the public language used in Jewish institutions be inclusive. When speaking in services or making an announcement in the newsletter, rather than using "men and women" you can use "people of all genders." When referring to generally to parents you can use "parents" or "parents and guardians" rather than "mothers and fathers."
- **Physical Space:** Issues related to gender identity and physical space come up most often in relation to bathrooms and to housing for off-site events.
 - **Bathrooms:** Many non-transgender individuals still are not comfortable with transgender people, and bathrooms are often a place where this discomfort is most visible. There are several steps that institutions can take regarding bathrooms to make them safe spaces for transgender members. At the most basic level, an institution can clearly communicate a policy to staff and members that individuals are free to use whatever bathroom they feel most comfortable using. In addition, if a building has any single stall bathrooms, these can be marked simply as "Restrooms" rather than being given a specific gender. If such bathrooms exist in addition to multiple-stall bathrooms, clear signage near the multiple-stall bathrooms should indicate where private bathrooms are located.^{lxiv} Finally, these steps should be followed both for permanent buildings and also for any temporary buildings that are being used for events, such as retreats.^{lxv} See the Resources section for more information around bathroom access.
 - **Housing:** Many Jewish institutions host events such as trips or retreats that include overnight stays at an off-site location. The default way that institutions often deal with transgender members is by assigning them a single in these situations. Rather than making this assumption, institutions can ask the transgender person whether they would prefer to have a single or whether there is someone else who will be attending with whom they would feel comfortable sharing a room. Alternatively, on registration materials for such an event in the housing section there can be an option where participants can check a box if they are comfortable sharing a room with a person of any gender.^{lxvi}
- **Being an Ally:** Institutions can also increase their inclusivity of transgender people by encouraging staff and members to act as allies. Allies take it upon themselves to educate themselves about issues related to gender identity. They proactively support transgender individuals in their chosen gender identity by using the correct pronoun and showing interest in transgender people as individuals. Finally, allies politely correct the pronoun and language use of other individuals in the community when they make mistakes or use offensive language.^{lxvii}

Bisexual Members

Bisexual individuals are often the most invisible members of the LGBTQ community because it is easy for others to assume that they are either gay/lesbian or straight, depending on who they may currently be in a relationship with or romantically interested in. Some ways that institutions can be inclusive of bisexual members are:

- Educating the community around issues related to bisexuality in addition to those related to gay, lesbian and transgender individuals.
- Encouraging staff and members not to assume that because an individual is in a relationship with someone of the same sex that they are gay/lesbian or if they are in a relationship with someone of a different sex that they are straight.^{lxviii}
- Advocating for staff to intervene when they hear derogatory comments or terms being used towards bisexuality, including words like referring to it as a “phase” or referring to a bisexual person as a “fence-sitter” or “switch-hitter.”^{lxix}

Children of LGBTQ Parents

The children of LGBTQ parents also have some specific needs that should be taken into consideration by Jewish institutions. Most of these issues are ones that are most likely to be dealt with by clergy or religious educators, though they may come up in other circumstances.

- **Asking About Families:** When asking about families, staff can ask about a child’s parents rather than their mom and dad, not assuming that they have one of each. In addition, if a child does reveal that they have same-gendered parents, staff can refrain from delving into the details of the child’s birth and background, unless the child raises the topic.^{lxx}
- **Coming Out:** Children of LGBTQ parents must constantly decide how open they are going to be with other children and adults about their family. Staff can assist these children by supporting them in whatever decisions they make about disclosure and providing a safe space for them to talk about these issues.^{lxxi}

Individuals Questioning Their Sexual or Gender Identity

The process of questioning one’s sexual or gender identity and possibly coming out is a challenging one for many individuals. Often times the support and guidance of a trusted advisor can be incredibly valuable to individuals at this stage. In order for institutions to be most supportive of individuals going through this period, it’s important to understand some basic information about the coming out process.

One of the most widely accepted models for the steps of the coming out process was developed by Vivienne Cass, though no one model will accurately depict each individual’s unique process. [Cass’ model](#) suggests that the process includes six stages: identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride and identity synthesis. During each of these steps there are specific issues the

person is grappling with and unique needs they may have, as well as specific ways that those around them can support them.^{lxxii} The most important ways to show support during any stage of the process are to normalize the person's experience, be accepting of any feelings they may be having and to serve as a sounding board when needed.^{lxxiii} Coming out within the Jewish community brings an added set of challenges, some of which are similar to other identity groups but some of which are different. Many Jews have internalized a sense of homophobia or transphobia based on what they have learned about the Torah's perspective on the subject or through strong Jewish cultural norms such as a "fear of extinction as a result of not reproducing, entrenched gender role expectations, and the importance of family as a primary social unit."^{lxxiv} It's important to take into consideration these cultural factors when supporting someone who is questioning their sexuality, while also being open to the possibility that other cultural identities, such as racial or ethnic ones, may impact someone's experience of the process.^{lxxv}

See the Resources section for more information on resources to support those who are coming out.

Creating Inclusive Programming

Another important way that institutions can work towards becoming more inclusive of LGBTQ members is by hosting educational and social programming with LGBTQ-related themes. By including this type of programming in the calendar, an institution communicates its interest in addressing the interests of LGBTQ members while also providing educational opportunities for straight members. Some possible programs include:

- **LGBTQ Pride Month or National Coming Out Day Celebrations:** These celebrations could include a Shabbat service, social event, educational event around a LGBTQ-related current event or discussion group around different types of “coming out” (i.e. as LGBTQ, a Jew, etc.)
- **Transgender Day of Remembrance Commemoration:** This day serves to commemorate all of those individuals who have been killed because of hatred against transgender people. This commemoration could be marked by a memorial service, a Shabbat service with related readings or by partnering with a local transgender group to talk about current local issues facing this community.^{lxxvi}
- **“Queering Jewish Texts” Study Group:** There are many Jewish texts which can be read through a new lens to related them to queer issues. Some of these texts include the stories of David and Jonathan, Resh Lakish and R. Yochanan, Naomi and Ruth, and Isaac and Rebecca.^{lxxvii}
- **Arts and Culture Events:** There are a vast array of movies, books, theatre pieces and music performances with LGBTQ and Jewish themes which can be hosted by Jewish institutions.^{lxxviii} See the Resources section for more details.
- **Transgender Topics:** Due to the more recent arrival of transgender issues in the public eye, it’s important to also include events that specifically focus on these issues. Institutions can invite artists, authors or activists to speak about transgender issues from a Jewish perspective. See the Resources section for more details.
- **Discussion of Transgender Issues in Jewish Text:** In the past several years, scholarship around transgender issues in Jewish text has become more common and widely available. Sponsoring a text study around these issues can be a good way to bring together issues of transgender and Jewish identity. See the Resources section for more details.
- **LGBTQ Singles Events:** Many Jewish institutions sponsor events aimed at helping Jewish singles meet potential partners in a Jewish context. As hard as that process is for straight individuals, it can be even more challenging for LGBTQ Jewish singles. Sponsoring LGBTQ singles events for Jews would provide a valuable service to this community.

Supporting Inclusive Jewish Rituals

Institutions which include observance of Jewish rituals may also want to consider offering some rituals designed specifically for LGBTQ Jews or supporting these individuals in creating their own Jewish rituals for various events in their lives. These rituals may be private rituals that individuals are encouraged to perform on their own or ones that are open to the entire community.

As Rabbis Jason Klein and Mychal Copeland explain, “What makes queer Jewish ritual? Sometimes it is as simple as Jewish ritual performed by queer Jews or in queer communities, such as a Friday night service in an LBGT synagogue. Sometimes it is a reworking of a Jewish tradition to make it more accessible and meaningful to LBGT Jews, such as an addition of a reading about the Stonewall rebellions to a Passover Seder or the changing of ‘bridge and groom’ to ‘bride and bride’ at a lesbian wedding. Additionally, it might be a more thorough reconstruction of Jewish tradition altogether when the tradition seems particularly sexist, queer-unfriendly, or heterosexist to [the] contemporary eye.”^{lxxxix} However one defines it, providing and supporting rituals that affirm the lives of LGBTQ Jews is an important step towards inclusivity.

Some queer Jewish rituals that institutions might consider include:

- **Circumcision Ritual for the Male Child of Lesbian Parents:** Often times the ritual of circumcision and naming for a male child is seen as a tradition passed on from father to son. The story of Tziporah, Moses’ wife, who circumcises her son herself can provide a basis for creating a circumcision ritual for lesbian parents.^{lxxx}
- **Rituals and Blessings for Coming Out:** Over the past few decades a variety of rituals and blessings have been created to honor the process of coming out. The simplest of these is to say a *shechiyanu* blessing (the blessing said when doing something for the first time) after each experience of coming out to a new person.^{lxxxi} Rabbi Jason Klein has also adapted the *kiddush levanah* (blessing of the new moon) ritual to be used as a celebration of coming out.^{lxxxii} In addition, Rabbi Rebecca Alpert has written a new blessing in both Hebrew and English for coming out.^{lxxxiii} See the Resources section for more details on accessing these blessings and rituals.
- **Seders:** The Passover seder has a lot of potential for incorporation of LGBTQ themes and new rituals. Some communities sponsor explicitly Queer Seders, while others incorporate readings or rituals on these topics into other seders. See the Resources section for resources to use for incorporation of LGBTQ themes at seders.
- **Rituals and Blessings for Transitioning Genders:** A few Jewish scholars in recent years have begun to create rituals and blessings for individuals transitioning genders. Rabbi Elliot Rose Kukla has developed a set of blessings for transitioning.^{lxxxiv} Tova Rosen also recently translated a medieval Jewish poem about a man’s desire to become a woman which could be used as the basis for a ritual around transition.^{lxxxv} See the Resources section for more details on

accessing these blessings and readings. Additionally, transgender individuals may want to create a ritual using the *mikvah* to mark their transition. Finally, because of the connection that bar and bat mitzvah ceremonies have to become a Jewish woman or man, transgender individuals may want to study for and celebrate an adult bar or bat mitzvah after their transition.^{lxxxvi}

- **Taking the Gender Out of Ritual:** Some Jewish rituals, especially circumcisions, baby namings and bar/bat mitzvahs, have an intensive focus on the gender of the child celebrating that particular milestone. For children and youth who may either be intersex or already identify as transgender as a teen, this focus on gender can be alienating. Finding ways to celebrate the important parts of these life cycle events while allowing for fluidity around the idea of gender can make these events more inclusive of these young people and their families.^{lxxxvii}

Reaching Out to the LGBTQ Community

Once an institution has engaged in the various steps mentioned previously, the next step is to work on performing outreach to the LGBTQ Jewish community in the area and welcoming more LGBTQ members into the institution. As mentioned earlier, because of the discrimination and exclusion that many LGBTQ people have experienced, many assume that they are not welcome unless that welcome is made explicit. Outreach is one way to accomplish this.

When doing outreach, the framing is important. If LGBTQ people feel as though they are being encouraged to attend to address an institution's desire for diversity, rather than because the community is interested in what they as individuals can bring to and learn from the community, this can be a serious turnoff.

Some specific tips that Jewish institutions can follow for reaching out to the LGBTQ community include:

- If there are any LGBTQ members of the institution already, ask them about their experience and what drew them to the congregation. Ask if they might be willing to reach out to their social networks.^{lxxxviii}
- Contact LGBTQ groups in the area to ask for their input and for them to advertise the institution to their members. Consider co-sponsoring events with these groups.^{lxxxix}
- Consider hosting an LGBTQ specific outreach event. Some folks choose to avoid situations where they are likely to be the token LGBTQ person. Hosting an event where there will be many LGBTQ individuals can help to alleviate this concern.^{xc}
- Keep at it! Continuing to engage in outreach, even if it doesn't yield immediate results, is likely to produce results eventually.
- Don't be shy about sharing publicly any changes your congregation is making to be more inclusive. LGBTQ people will value the time and intention the community is devoting to the issue and be more likely to consider joining.^{xc}

Dealing with Challenges

While some Jewish communities may engage in a process of becoming more inclusive of LGBTQ people without any tension as a result, it is common that challenges will arise during the process. These challenges are likely to occur in two forms, either as challenges to the process itself or as incidents of homophobia or transphobia. This section includes strategies for dealing with both of these.

Challenges to the Process:

Challenges to the process of inclusion itself most commonly arise in the form of resistance based on discomfort and on concerns about negative impacts on children.

- ***Dealing with Discomfort:*** Often times discomfort arises as a result of ignorance. The more information and resources that members of the institution have about the process and issues of sexual and gender identity, the less likely they will be to feel uncomfortable with the process.^{xcii} In addition, clergy, administrators and educators can support the inclusion process by gently challenging the discomfort of members about the process and encouraging reflection on the root of those feelings.

One place where discomfort is most likely to arise is around use of restrooms and transgender members. Feeling uncomfortable can sometimes lead non-transgender members to react in a strong or angry manner to a transgender person's use of a certain bathroom. It is important for an institution's staff to acknowledge that person's feelings while also asserting the transgender person's right to use whichever bathroom they feel is appropriate for them.^{xciii}

- ***Concerns about Children:*** Much of the resistance to communities becoming more inclusive of LGBTQ individuals centers around concerns for the welfare of the children in the community. People often mistakenly believe that in order to be inclusive around issues of sexuality when working with children, one must talk about sex. In fact, when talking about LGBTQ issues with children, you are "talking about families, name-calling, discrimination and current events," which most people would accept as appropriate topics of discussion.^{xciv} All children benefit from these types of conversations, which expand their world view and help them develop critical social skills.^{xcv} Working for inclusion also involves talking about respect and creating environments where all children feel valued and respected, regardless of their sexual or gender identity or that of their parents.

Incidents of Homophobia or Transphobia:

The other form in which resistance to a process of inclusion might arise is through overt homophobia or transphobia. It is important for institutions to have policies and procedures for dealing with such incidents. These steps should include actions by staff to support the person who was the target of the comment or action and help them process the experience. They should also incorporate procedures for addressing the perpetrator to

help them understand the impact of their actions, educate them about gender and sexuality-based discrimination and provide appropriate consequences if necessary.^{xcvi}

Taking the Next Step: Advocacy

Once an institution has taken steps to become more inclusive of LGBTQ people and has worked to bring more of those individuals into the community, engaging in advocacy on LGBTQ issues can be an important way of putting institutional values into action.

There are many ways that this kind of advocacy can occur in an institution, including:

- If the institution has a Social Action Committee or agenda, issues related to LGBTQ rights can be included, such as advocacy around marriage equality, non-discrimination laws and hate crime legislation.^{xcvii}
- The institution can sign on to pledges, letters and petitions calling for awareness of LGBTQ issues and advocating for specific rights.
- The institution can respond to instances of homophobia or transphobia in the broader community by having clergy or staff write opinion pieces to local or Jewish newspapers, by participating in rallies and by acting in solidarity with those targeted.

Conclusion

Hopefully this guide has provided a variety of strategies for increasing the level of inclusivity at your institution. The entire Jewish community will be strengthened when more of our institutions open their doors to LGBTQ Jews and fully integrate these individuals into our communities.

While this guide provides helpful resources for individuals and institutions who are interested in engaging in the process of becoming more inclusive, it does not provide an organizational structure for such a process. Other denominations have created structures, such as the [Methodists' Reconciling Ministries Network](#) and [Unitarian Universalists' Welcoming Congregation Program](#), to support congregations wishing to engage in this type of journey. The benefits of having such a structure include:

- Establishment of a specific set of expectations related to inclusion that congregations can work towards
- Ability to provide staff support to congregations undergoing the process
- A structure for congregations to share best practices
- A consistent label that congregations who have undergone the process can use to identify and publicize themselves

Jewish institutions, such as the various movements or Jewish LGBTQ organizations, may want to consider creating a similar structure for the Jewish community.

Resources

Educating the Community:

- The Human Rights Campaign’s “For the Bible Tells Me So” Documentary and Curriculum: <http://www.hrc.org/issues/10750.htm>
- The Human Rights Campaign’s “Gender Identity and Our Faith Communities” Curriculum: <http://www.hrc.org/issues/11618.htm>
- “Hineini” Movie and Discussion Guide: <http://www.hineinithefilm.org/>
- “Trembling Before G-d” Movie and Discussion Guide: <http://filmsthatchangetheworld.vswebdev.com/The-Films/Trembling-Before-G-d>
- “Keep Not Silent” Movie: http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/specialcollectionsandoffers/pdf/jewish_films07.pdf
- “Know the Heart of the Stranger: A Curriculum on Combating Assumptions and Stereotypes” in *Kulanu* (see Bibliography), pp. 93-109.
- “Answering Your Children’s Tough Questions: An Evening Workshop” from “The Welcoming Schools Guide”: http://www.hrc.org/documents/wschoools_Answering_Tough_Questions.pdf
- “That’s a Family” Movie and Discussion Guide: http://www.hrc.org/documents/wschoools_Thats_a_Family_Family_Forum.pdf

How Staff Can Foster an Inclusive Community:

Administrators:

- The Human Rights Campaign’s “Living Openly in Your Place of Worship” Brochure: http://www.hrc.org/about_us/7163.htm
- Other Distributors of Posters and Brochures:
 - <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/RG-posters.html>
 - http://syracuseculturalworkers.com/taxonomy/term/84/posters_unframed
- Safe Zone Posters and Kits:
 - http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/SafeZone_SafeSchoolsCoalition.pdf
 - <https://safespace.glsen.org/about.cfm>

Creating an Inclusive Environment for Specific Sub-Groups of the LGBTQ Community:

Transgender Members:

- **Other Resources about Bathroom Access:**
 - Transgender Law Center’s “Peeing in Peace”:
<http://www.transgenderlawcenter.org/publications.html#bathrooms>.
 - The Sylvia Rivera Law Project Film and Companion Resource, “Toilet Training”: <http://www.srlp.org/index.php?sec=05A&page=toilettraining>.

Individuals Questioning Their Sexual or Gender Identity:

- The Human Rights Campaign’s “Straight Guide to LGBT Americans”:
<http://www.hrc.org/documents/Straight-Guide-to-LGBT-Americans-September-2010.pdf>
- The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide:
http://www.hillel.org/NR/rdonlyres/D1FF7DE9-070C-4300-B33C-69B476BAF436/0/GLBTQ_Guide.pdf, pp. 43-9

Creating Inclusive Programming:

Arts and Culture Events and Transgender Topics:

- The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide:
http://www.hillel.org/NR/rdonlyres/D1FF7DE9-070C-4300-B33C-69B476BAF436/0/GLBTQ_Guide.pdf, pp. 113-40

Transgender Issues in Jewish Text:

- *Balancing on the Mehitzah* edited by Noach Dzmura (see Bibliography)
- TransTexts: Exploring Gender in Jewish Sacred Texts, sponsored by Jewish Mosaic: <http://www.jewishmosaic.org/verses/about>
- “Gender in Genesis” by Gwynn Kessler in Lillith Magazine :
<http://www.lilith.org/pdfs/Lilith%20Trans%20Sp02.pdf>
- “What the Talmud Says about Gender Ambiguity” by Alana Suskin in Lillith Magazine: <http://www.lilith.org/pdfs/Lilith%20Trans%20Sp02.pdf>

Queer Jewish Ritual:

Blessings for Coming Out:

- Rabbi Jason Klein's Kiddush Levanah: The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide: http://www.hillel.org/NR/rdonlyres/D1FF7DE9-070C-4300-B33C-69B476BAF436/0/GLBTQ_Guide.pdf, pp. 79-81
- Rabbi Rebecca Alpert's Blessing: The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide: http://www.hillel.org/NR/rdonlyres/D1FF7DE9-070C-4300-B33C-69B476BAF436/0/GLBTQ_Guide.pdf, p. 83
- Other Coming Out Ceremonies/Prayers: http://elearning.huc.edu/jhvrc/rea_che.php?subcategory=Coming+Out&category=Liturgym%2FRitual+Resources#Coming_Out

Passover Resources:

- Stonewall Seder Haggadah: <http://www.anotherqueerjubu.com/SederforSite.PDF>
- Orange on the Seder Plate Reading:
 - <http://elearning.huc.edu/jhvrc/upload/Why%20Is%20There%20an%20Orange%20on%20the%20Seder%20Plate%20by%20Lisa%20Edwards.pdf>
 - <http://haggadot.com/clips/susannah-heschel-explains-orange>
- Example of a GLBT Haggadah: <http://elearning.huc.edu/jhvrc/docs/JQ%20Haggadah%20Final%20no%20pics%204%209%2008.pdf>
- Description of an Alternative GLBT Seder Plate: <http://guydads.blogspot.com/2010/04/our-gay-passover-seder-plate-of.html>

Rituals and Blessings for Transitioning Genders:

- Rabbi Elliot Rose Kukla's Blessings: The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide: http://www.hillel.org/NR/rdonlyres/D1FF7DE9-070C-4300-B33C-69B476BAF436/0/GLBTQ_Guide.pdf, pp. 62-3
- Tova Rosen's Translation of Poem: The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide: http://www.hillel.org/NR/rdonlyres/D1FF7DE9-070C-4300-B33C-69B476BAF436/0/GLBTQ_Guide.pdf, pp. 63-4

Other Resources of Queer Jewish Ritual can be found at the Jeff Herman Virtual Resource Center sponsored by Hebrew Union College's Institute of Judaism and Sexual Orientation: http://elearning.huc.edu/jhvrc/rea_che.php

Other Relevant Resources:

From Welcoming Schools Guide:

- Workshop for Educators on “Practicing Responses to Questions about LGBT Topics”: <http://www.welcomingschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Welcoming-Schools-Connecting-Practicing-Responses-Extended.pdf>
- Handout on “What Do You Say to ‘That’s so gay!’”:
<http://www.welcomingschools.org/what-do-you-say-to-thats-so-gay/>

Books about Transgender Issues:

- Boylan, Jennifer F. *She’s Not There: a Life in Two Genders*. Random House, 2003.
- Brown, Mildred L., and Chloe Ann Rounsley. *True Selves: Understanding Transsexualism--for Families, Friends, Coworkers, and Helping Professionals*. Jossey-Bass, 2003.
- Conover, Pat. *Transgender Good News*. New Wineskins Press, 2002.
- Cromwell, Jason. *Transmen and FTMs: Identities, Bodies, Genders, and Sexualities*. University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Currah, Paisley, Richard M. Juang, and Shannon Price Minter, eds. *Transgender Rights*. University of Minnesota Press, 2006.
- Green, Jamison. *Becoming a Visible Man*. Vanderbilt University Press, 2004.
- Peters, Julie Anne. *Luna*. Little, Brown Young Readers, 2006.
- Rudacille, Deborah. *The Riddle of Gender: Science, Activism, and Transgender Rights*. Pantheon, 2005. Non-fiction
- Sycamore, Matt Bernstein. *Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender and Conformity*. Seal Press, 2006.
- Wittlinger, Ellen. *Parrotfish*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2007.

Movies about Transgender Issues:

- *Boys Don’t Cry*. Dir. Kimberly Peirce. Perf. Hilary Swank. DVD. 20th Century Fox, 1999.
- *Call Me Malcolm*. Dir. Joseph Parlagreco. DVD. United Church of Christ, and Filmworks, Inc., 2004.
- *Cruel and Unusual*. Dir. Janet Baus, Dan Hunt and Reid Williams. Outcast Films, 2006.
- *Ma Vie En Rose*. Dir. Alain Berliner. Perf. Michèle Laroque, and Jean-Philippe ÉCoffey. DVD. Sony Pictures, 1997.

- *The Brandon Teena Story*. Dir. Gréta Olafsdóttir. DVD. Docurama, 1998
- *Transamerica*. Dir. Duncan Tucker. Perf. Felicity Huffman, Danny Burstein, and Andrea James. DVD. Weinstein Company, 2005.
- *TransGeneration*. Dir. Jeremy Simmons. DVD. New Video Group, 2005.

Appendix: Sample Questions for Institutional Climate Assessment

Adapted from Welcoming Schools Guide^{xviii}:

- Does our congregation have core values or a mission statement that includes respect for diversity and multiculturalism?
- Does our congregation have a written policy protecting members from harassment, violence and discrimination with regard to real or perceived sexual or gender identity?
- Does our religious school have an anti-bullying policy that specifically identifies bias-based bullying?
- Do our forms that families fill out reflect the diversity [of our community], including households with parents of the same-gender?
- In the last three years, has our institution held trainings for staff on bullying and name-calling that address bias-based harassment, including harassment related to a person's real or perceived sexual or gender identity?
- In the last two weeks, have staff heard students use words related to any of the following as slurs:
 - o Gender (sissy, tomboy, "...like a girl")?
 - o Sexual orientation (fag, queer, "that's so gay")?
- In the last two weeks, has staff seen students physically harass other students while using slurs or put-downs related to the above?
 - o If yes, have they interrupted the behavior?
- Does our library [and/or classrooms] have books that show a diversity of families, including families with two moms or two dads?
- When doing a lesson plan to enhance understanding of different kinds of families, do educators include diverse families – including some with two moms and two dads?
- Do educators in our congregation feel comfortable defining the words "gay," "lesbian," "bisexual," or "transgender" to students?
- Which of the following present obstacles for our staff to addressing family diversity or intervening in anti-gay language used by students?
 - o Fear of parental dissatisfaction
 - o Students are too young
 - o Lack of time in curriculum
 - o Educators lack training
 - o Educators lack resources
 - o Religious objections
 - o Inappropriate to discuss outside home
 - o There are no obstacles
- Which of the following present obstacles for our staff to addressing gender roles and expression with students?
 - o Fear of parental dissatisfaction
 - o Students are too young
 - o Lack of time in curriculum

- Educators lack training
- Educators lack resources
- Religious objections
- Inappropriate to discuss outside home
- There are no obstacles

Adapted from Building an Inclusive Church's Congregational Assessment and Welcoming Process Outline:^{xcix}

- Does the congregation welcome/include a diverse population?
 - No, seeks a homogeneous environment
 - Yes, but only some types of diversity are accepted
 - Yes, and many types of diversity are accepted
 - Yes, and gay and lesbian folks are encouraged to attend
 - Yes, and LGBT people are encouraged to attend
- Are you aware of parents or family members of LGBT persons in the congregation?
 - No
 - Yes, but they do not accept their children
 - Yes, and they accept their kids, but are in the closet in the congregation
 - Yes, and they are out of the closet about their children
 - Yes, and they are visible advocates
- Has the congregation already done or participated in blessings of same-gender relationships?
 - No, never
 - No, but clergy participated in such a service at another synagogue
 - No, but two members did have a service which was private and not at the synagogue
 - Yes, but the service was private and at the synagogue. The congregation knew.
 - Yes and the congregation participated
- Does your rabbi use examples including people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in sermons?
 - No, never
 - Maybe once or twice but it caused a problem in the congregation
 - Yes, without comment from the congregation
 - Regularly, without comment from the congregation
 - Often, with positive comment from the congregation
- Does your congregation offer prayers that explicitly name LGBT persons and inclusion?
- Does your congregation offer religious rituals for its LGBT members around coming out, gender transitioning, and other life-cycle events?
- Does your congregation offer service trips for its youth group (and adults) that address specific LGBT issues?
- Does your congregation offer letter writing, legislative visits and other forms of public advocacy on behalf of LGBT persons and families?
- Does your congregation offer gender-neutral bathrooms?

- Does your congregation have a sign on its building that declares it inclusive?
- Does your congregation make its space available for use by LGBT groups?

Adapted from “Is Your T Written in Disappearing Ink?”:^c

- Do your programs, publications, or policies refer only to “sexual orientation” or do you also include “gender identity”?
- Do the in-person and printed materials that represent your programs include identifiably transgender persons?

Excerpted from “Welcoming GLBT Jews into Our Synagogues”:^{ci}

- Is the presence of GLBT people in our congregation/community/families ever evident in the word we hear from the pulpit?
- Do the rabbi’s sermons presume that all Jews have been, are, or want to be married or to bear children? Or, are words such as “committed relationship” and “raising children” used instead, as not all the same-gender couples can get married or bear children?
- Is the clergy comfortable incorporating and using new liturgy and rituals that address the life-cycle events of GLBT people? Do they know where to find such liturgy (e.g, union ceremonies, coming-out prayers, transitioning blessings, rituals of separation)?
- Do GLBT couples receive joint *aliyot* and anniversary blessings?
- May GLBT couples celebrate *kiddushin* (Jewish holy union) in our sanctuary? Will our rabbi or cantor officiate?
- May GLBT families name children (born by artificial insemination, surrogacy, or adopted) in our sanctuary?
- If contemporary poetry, readings, and musical compositions are ever included in our liturgy, are works by GLBT authors/composers included?
- Are GLBT Jews in visible positions of leadership in our congregation as trustees, committee chairs, lay service leaders (e.g., Torah readers, *shofar* blowers), teachers, youth advisors, administrative staff, clergy?
- Are GLBT couples able to feel comfortable to hold hands in our synagogue? Or, is it only okay if they come to services as long as they don’t touch each other?
- Are lesbian, bisexual or transgender women in our Sisterhood invisible? Do they feel welcome as they are, or do they feel that to be involved in the Sisterhood they must remain in the closet?
- Are gay, bisexual, or transgender men in our Brotherhood invisible? Do they feel welcome as they are, or do they feel that to be involved in the Brotherhood they must remain in the closet?
- Are letters sent home addressed to parents or to “moms”?
- Do our textbooks, teaching materials, community presentations, and hands-on projects render GLBT people invisible or betray a heterosexual bias?
- How would a child of gay co-parents, a child of a single lesbian mother, or a child with a transgender dad and a straight mother feel in our school?
- Are our youth group events safe and accessible for queer and questioning teenagers (e.g., dances, support groups)?

- Can GLBT people talk freely about their work/lives at the *Oneg Shabbat* or the Brotherhood breakfast?
- Does our congregation extend “spousal benefits” to the partners of our employees? Is the health insurance we provide for a GLBT person with a partner an individual or a family policy?
- Do our membership conditions/materials presume heterosexuality or discriminate against lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people and their families?
- If we have family memberships, do they apply to GLBT couples?
- Does our application say “member 1 and member 2” and then ask “relationship,” or does it say “husband and wife”?
- Have we joined the Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation or the World Congress of GLBT Jews – Keshet Ga’avah or other such Jewish GLBT organizations as a sign of our welcome? Is that membership noted in our materials and on our Web site?
- Do notices of events for “families” make it explicit that lesbians and gay men (as single parents or co-parents) are welcome with their children? (Or is the parent/toddler group called “Mommy, Daddy, and Me”?)

Other:

- Does your congregation work with your denominational advocacy group on issues related to LGBT rights?

ⁱ In this guide, LGBTQ is used as an umbrella term to encompass individuals that identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer. See the section titled “What You Need to Know about L, G, B, T, Q and Some Other Letters” for more information on these terms.

ⁱⁱ D’ror Chankin-Gould, ed., “The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide,” Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, http://www.hillel.org/NR/rdonlyres/D1FF7DE9-070C-4300-B33C-69B476BAF436/0/GLBTO_Guide.pdf, 12.

ⁱⁱⁱ Lisa Mottet and Justin Tanis, “Opening the Door to the Inclusion of Transgender People: The Nine Keys to Making Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Organizations Fully Transgender-Inclusive,” National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute, http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/opening_the_door.pdf, 16.

^{iv} HRC Foundation Family Project, “An Introduction to Welcoming Schools,” Human Rights Campaign Foundation, http://www.hrc.org/documents/An_Introduction_to_Welcoming_Schools.pdf, 14.

^v Homophobia is a fear of (and/or hate expressed towards) LGBQ people. Transphobia is a fear of (and/or hate expressed towards) transgender people.

^{vi} HRC Foundation Family Project, “An Introduction to Welcoming Schools,” 10.

^{vii} Address et al, ed., *Kulanu*, 44 and 84.

^{viii} *Ibid*, 44.

^{ix} Drs. Caryn Aviv, Steven Cohen, and Judith Veinstein, “Welcoming Synagogues Project: Preliminary Results from the 2009 Synagogue Survey on Diversity and LGBT Inclusion,” http://www.jewishdatabank.org/Reports/SynagogueSurvey2009_DiversityAndLGBT.pdf, 13.

^x Address et al, ed., *Kulanu*, 44.

^{xi} Welcoming Congregation Program, *Becoming a Welcoming Congregation*, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, <http://www.uua.org/leaders/idbm/lgbt/welcomingcongregation/index.shtml>.

^{xii} *Ibid*.

^{xiii} Chankin-Gould, ed., “The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide,” 13.

^{xiv} *Ibid*.

^{xv} HRC Foundation Family Project, “An Introduction to Welcoming Schools,” 11.

^{xvi} *Ibid*, 12.

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- xvii Ibid, 13.
- xviii Ibid.
- xix Ibid, 25.
- xx Address et al, ed., *Kulanu*, 60.
- xxi Ibid.
- xxii Ibid, 61.
- xxiii Ibid.
- xxiv Ibid.
- xxv This kind of event should only be considered if LGBTQ individuals offer to participate and should be framed in a way that acknowledges the complexity of their identities and the fact that their sexual and/or gender identity is only part of who they are.
- xxvi HRC Foundation Family Project, “An Introduction to Welcoming Schools,” 12.
- xxvii Ibid.
- xxviii Congregational Consulting Group, “18 Ways to Make Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Members Feel Welcome in Your Congregation,” Union for Reform Judaism, http://urj.org/cong/membership/resources/?syspage=document&item_id=12098.
- xxix Welcoming Congregation Program, *Action Steps to Become a Welcoming Congregation*, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, <http://www.uua.org/leaders/idbm/lgbt/welcomingcongregation/23357.shtml>.
- xxx Chankin-Gould, ed., “The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide,” 68.
- xxxi Ibid, 60.
- xxxii Dr. Max Grossman, comments on document, April 22, 2011.
- xxxiii Welcoming Congregation Program, *Welcoming Congregation 101*, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, <http://www.uua.org/leaders/idbm/lgbt/welcomingcongregation/23348.shtml>.
- xxxiv Fr. Bob Kennedy and others, “What Every Parish Can Do as the Body of Christ,” Rochester Catholic Gay and Lesbian Family Ministry, 2007.
- xxxv Welcoming Congregation Program, *Becoming a Welcoming Congregation*.
- xxxvi Address et al, ed., *Kulanu*, 47.
- xxxvii Dr. Max Grossman, comments on document, April 22, 2011.
- xxxviii Ibid, 126.
- xxxix Kennedy and others, “What Every Parish Can Do as the Body of Christ.”
- xl Chankin-Gould, ed., “The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide,” 46-9.
- xli Ibid, 59.
- xlii HRC Foundation Family Project, “An Introduction to Welcoming Schools,” 31.
- xliiii Ibid.
- xliv Welcoming Congregation Program, *Becoming a Welcoming Congregation*.
- xlv HRC Foundation Family Project, “An Introduction to Welcoming Schools,” 31.
- xlvi Welcoming Congregation Program, *Action Steps to Become a Welcoming Congregation*.
- xlvii Address et al, ed., *Kulanu*, 127.
- xlviii Welcoming Congregation Program, *Action Steps to Become a Welcoming Congregation*.
- xlx Congregational Consulting Group, “18 Ways to Make Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Members Feel Welcome in Your Congregation.”
- ¹ Mottet and Tanis, “Opening the Door to the Inclusion of Transgender People,” 25.
- ⁱⁱ HRC Foundation Family Project, “An Introduction to Welcoming Schools,” 31.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Kennedy and others, “What Every Parish Can Do as the Body of Christ.”
- ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.
- ^{liv} Welcoming Congregation Program, *Welcoming Congregation 101*.
- ^{lv} HRC Foundation Family Project, “An Introduction to Welcoming Schools,” 31.
- ^{lvi} Mottet and Tanis, “Opening the Door to the Inclusion of Transgender People,” 42.
- ^{lvii} HRC Foundation Family Project, “An Introduction to Welcoming Schools,” 33-34.
- ^{lviii} Ibid, 58-9.
- ^{lix} Congregational Consulting Group, “18 Ways to Make Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Members Feel Welcome in Your Congregation.”
- ^{lx} Address et al, ed., *Kulanu*, 80.
- ^{lxi} Aviv et al, “Welcoming Synagogues Project,” 16.

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- lxii Mottet and Tanis, "Opening the Door to the Inclusion of Transgender People," 24.
- lxiii Address et al, ed., *Kulanu*, 124.
- lxiv Mottet and Tanis, "Opening the Door to the Inclusion of Transgender People," 22.
- lxv Address et al, ed., *Kulanu*, 126.
- lxvi Chankin-Gould, ed., "The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide," 58.
- lxvii Address et al, ed., *Kulanu*, 125.
- lxviii Ibid, 111.
- lxix Ibid.
- lxx Chankin-Gould, ed., "The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide," 67-8.
- lxxi Ibid.
- lxxii Joe Kort, "Cass Model of Gay and Lesbian Identity Formation," <http://joekort.com/PDF/cassmodelofidentityformation2.pdf>.
- lxxiii Chankin-Gould, ed., "The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide," 44.
- lxxiv Ibid, 45.
- lxxv Ibid.
- lxxvi Address et al, ed., *Kulanu*, 125.
- lxxvii Chankin-Gould, ed., "The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide," 110.
- lxxviii Ibid, 113-40.
- lxxix Ibid, 72.
- lxxx Ibid, 71.
- lxxxi Ibid, 75.
- lxxxii Ibid, 79-81.
- lxxxiii Ibid, 83.
- lxxxiv Ibid, 62-3.
- lxxxv Ibid, 63-4.
- lxxxvi Ibid, 81-2.
- lxxxvii Rachel Biale, "Beyond the Binary Bubble: Addressing Transgender Issues in the Jewish Community," in *Balancing on the Mechitza: Transgender in Jewish Community*, ed. Noach Dzmura. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2010), 214-16.
- lxxxviii Mottet and Tanis, "Opening the Door to the Inclusion of Transgender People," 17.
- lxxxix Ibid.
- xc Ibid, 19.
- xcI Address et al, ed., *Kulanu*, 127.
- xcii HRC Foundation Family Project, "An Introduction to Welcoming Schools," 19.
- xciii Mottet and Tanis, "Opening the Door to the Inclusion of Transgender People," 22.
- xciv HRC Foundation Family Project, "An Introduction to Welcoming Schools," 13.
- xcv Ibid, 18.
- xcvi Ken Rigby, "Addressing Bullying in Queensland Schools," Department of Education and Training of the Queensland Government, www.education.qld.gov.au/studentservices/protection/docs/sm-vodcast5.doc
- xcvii Chankin-Gould, ed., "The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide," 41.
- xcviii HRC Foundation Family Project, "An Introduction to Welcoming Schools," 25-30.
- xcix Welcoming Resources, "Building an Inclusive Church: A Welcoming Toolkit," National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, <http://www.welcomingresources.org/welcomingtoolkit.pdf>, 15-8.
- ^c Loree Cook-Daniels, "Is Your 'T' Written in Disappearing Ink?: A Checklist for Transgender Inclusion," FORGE and Transgender Aging Network, <http://www.forge-forward.org/handouts/InclusionChecklist.pdf>.
- ci Address et al, ed., *Kulanu*, 49-55.