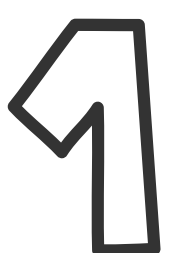


Keshet Disability Accommodation, Celebration, and Inclusion Project

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Overview:

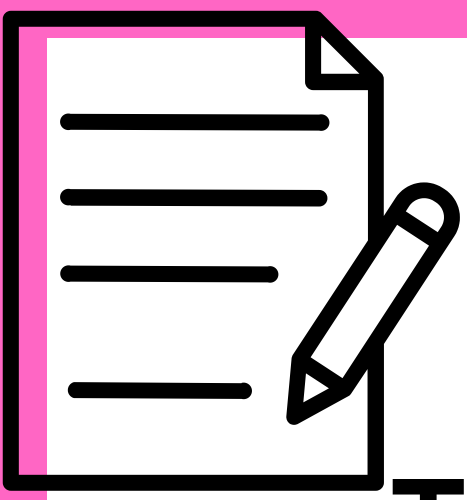
As a nonprofit organisation Keshet works to support, celebrate, and advocate for LGBTQ+ Jews and allies to create a world that all can live with justice, equality, and dignity. This project began with acknowledging the unique **intersectional** experiences of LGBTQ+ Jewish people across the globe.

Moreover, sources such as the Human Rights Campaign have acknowledged the unique experiences and identities that LGBTQ+ people hold. For instance, a 2020 HRC survey stated, “36% LGBTQ+ identifying individuals reported to have at least one **disability** compared to 24% of non-LGBTQ+ identifying adults.” The report also found that rates of disability were self-reported at a significantly higher rate in Transgender identifying people than cisgender identifying individuals (HRC, 2020). Therefore, disability **accommodation** and belonging is also key in LGBTQ+ inclusion.

“The Disability Affirmation, Celebration, and **Inclusion Project**” is a survey data collection project on the practice of Disability inclusion in Jewish spaces. This project strives to fulfill two main goals:

1. To highlight accommodation practices to celebrate ongoing efforts for inclusivity and diversity in Jewish life.
2. To spark conversation and assist in the creation of action goals for different Jewish congregations, community spaces, and organisations across the country.

This project is designed as a starting point to create welcoming and inclusive Jewish spaces and to be continued and implemented.



Notes:

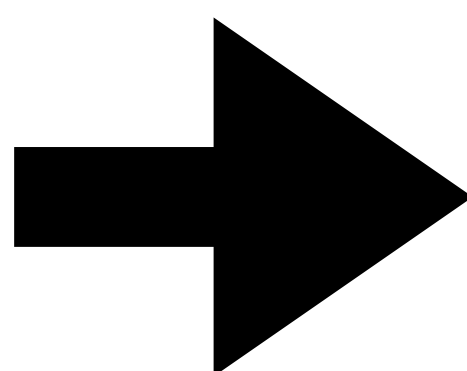
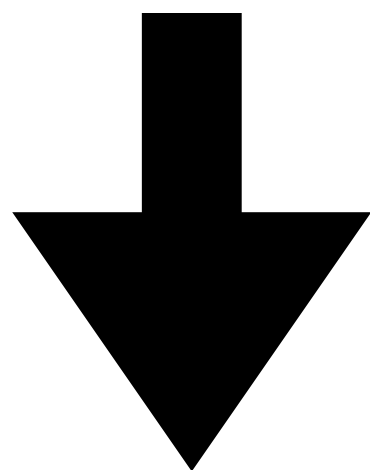
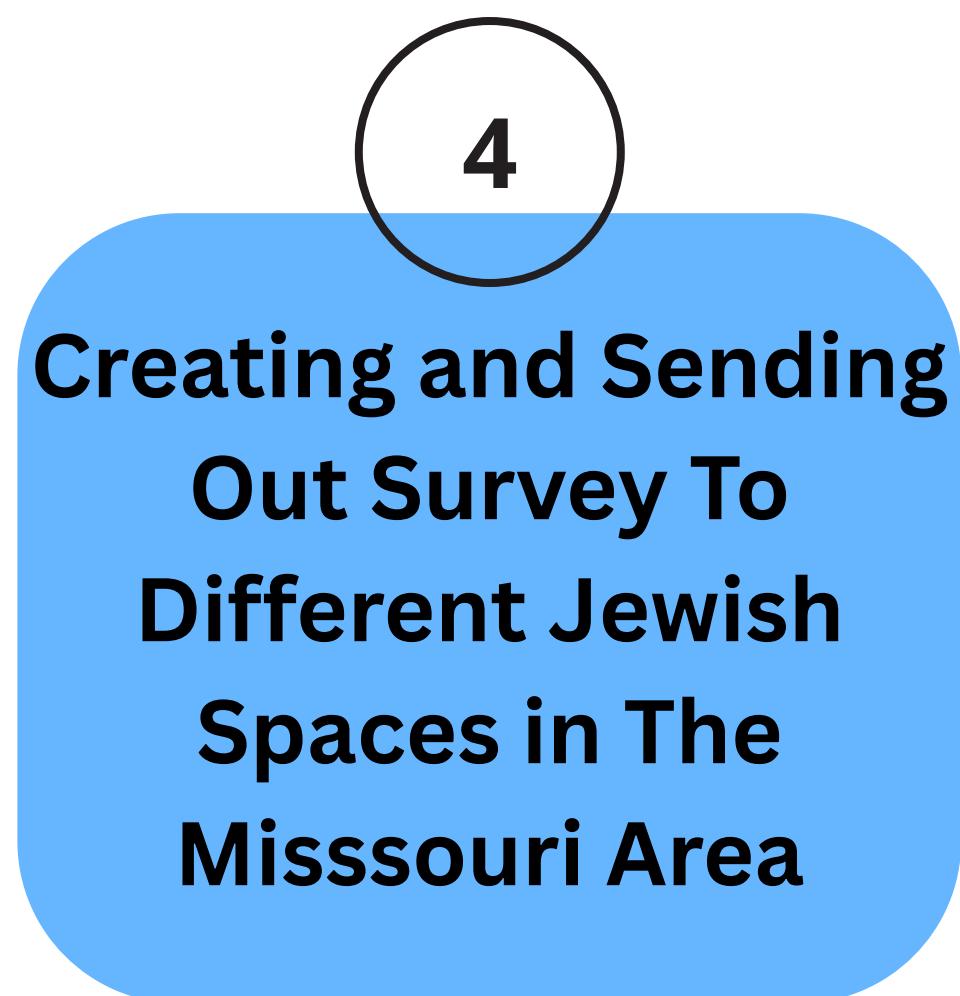
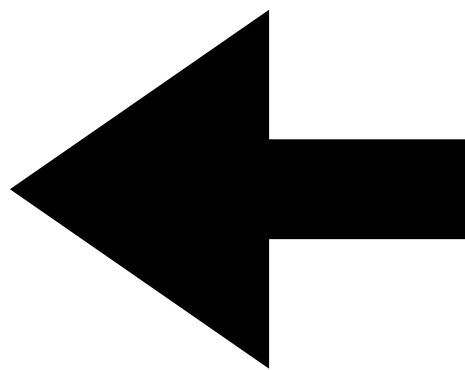
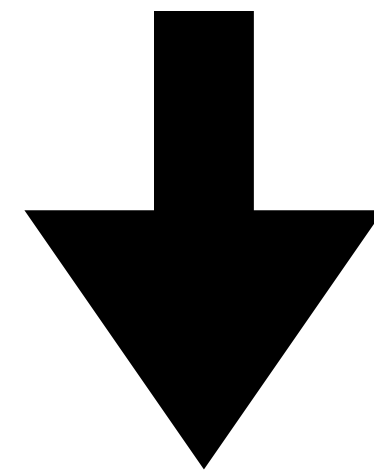
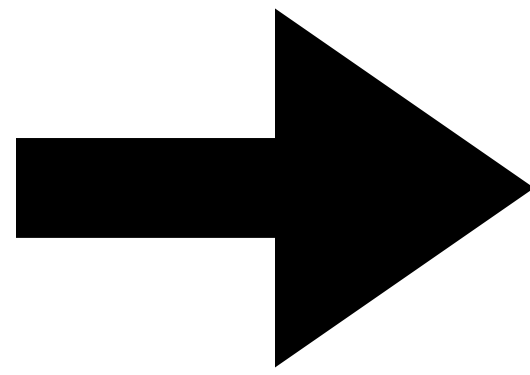
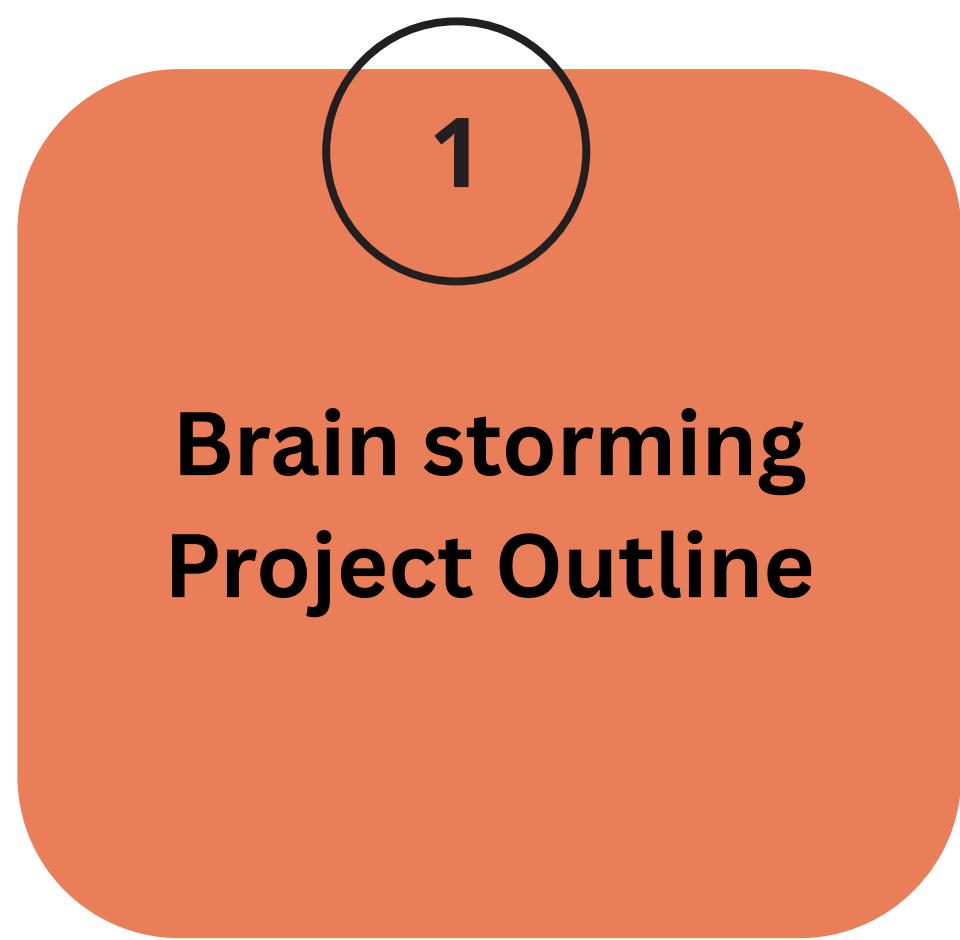
- The **definitions** stated on page 4 are specific to this project and its context. As a result, these definitions may not be significant or relevant in other contexts such as disability law, other advocacy work, academic/work accommodations etc.
- The **questions** also used for this project survey are simply a starting point and do not speak for every disability accommodation or belonging need.
- Finally this project doesn't include every congregation, community center, and jewish educational institution. This project uses a **specific sample** of jewish congregations who responded to the survey from the Missouri area.
- The survey was also conducted in an open-ended question format to gain more insight into the space's efforts for inclusion, motivations, and goals.



Key Terminology:

- **Accommodation:** Modifying an environment to provide equitable opportunity and accessibility. (ADA, 2020)
- **Disability:** A condition that differs from the societal norm (environmental, social) and can limit the persons ability to act within the norm (physically, cognitively, sensory etc.) (APA, 2022)
- **Inclusion:** The act of creating equal access and oppurtunities for folks who have been historically excluded. (CDC, 2024)
- **Intersectionality:** A term created by Dr. Kimberly Crenshaw describing unique political, social, and economic experiences of Black Women including both experiencing racism and sexism. Later this term was used by sociologists to describe the impact of intersecting identities on marginalised people (Learning For Justice, 2016)

Project Breakdown:





Methods:

- An overview of “The Disability Affirmation, Celebration, and Inclusion Project” was sent out via **email** to a **contact list** of different Jewish spaces within the Missouri Area, 20+ Jewish spaces (congregations, educational centers, organisations)
- “The Disability Affirmation, Celebration, and Inclusion Project-Survey” was sent out via **Google Form** and was completed by voluntary participants
- The Survey data was compiled into a google sheets format
- Other project information was exchanged via **email** and **Zoom**.



Email Draft:

Dear Jewish Congregational and Organizational Staff,

My name is Neon Liebson, and I use he/they pronouns. I am a transgender Jewish youth from Missouri, a member of Central Reform Congregation, who is currently a college student in St. Petersburg, Florida. I am writing to you as a youth advocacy intern for an organization named Keshet. I am conducting a data project on disability accommodations in Jewish community spaces. Keshet is a nonprofit organization that strives to support, celebrate, and advocate for the lives of LGBTQ+ Jews and allies. Keshet envisions a world where all LGBTQ+ Jewish individuals, families, and allies can live with equality, justice, and dignity.

Keshet is rooted in creating an inclusive Jewish community through the practice of our 7 core values. By working together we can strengthen Jewish communities and advocate for human rights nationwide.

To create this world it is essential to practice the values of affirmation and belonging, inclusion and accommodation so everyone may feel welcomed and safe. For this project, I am compiling data on the efforts of disability inclusion and accessibility in Jewish spaces. My intent is to use this information to create a data base where potential congregants can find a Jewish community that fits their accessibility needs.

I am starting with a brief survey list of starting questions on accessibility resources. This survey will be attached to the email.

[Disability Affirmation, Celebration, and Inclusion Project. \(Link To Survey\)](#)

This project is focused on achieving two main goals.

1. To highlight accommodation practices to celebrate ongoing efforts for inclusivity and diversity in Jewish life.
2. I hope to spark conversation and assist in the creation of action goals for different Jewish congregations, community spaces, and organisations across the country.

Every person who enters a Jewish place deserves to be treated with respect, compassion, and dignity.

Let me know if you would like to participate in this project by responding to the survey linked in this email. Additionally, please reach out over email to neliebson@eckerd.edu. if you have any questions, concerns, or feedback.

Sincerely,

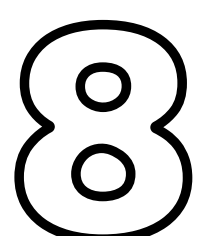
Neon Liebson (he/they)

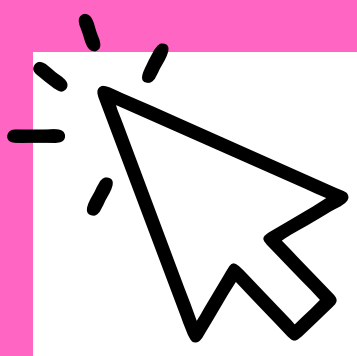
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Questions Asked

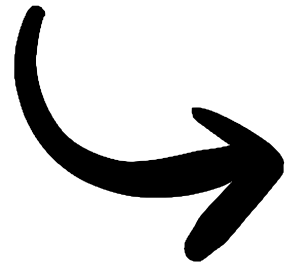
1. Does your community provide online accessibility for services, classes, or events (hybrid format, streaming services, zoom sessions etc.)?
2. Does your space include a quiet area for those with sensory sensitivities?
3. Does your space offer services such as CART (closed access real-time translation) ASL interpretation, and closed captioning for services, classes, and events?
4. Does your congregation and community space offer transportation accommodations such as accessible parking and carpooling services?
5. Is your community space easily and comfortably navigable for those with mobility difficulties and/or disabilities (elevators, accessibility ramp, all gender single stall restrooms, non slip and hazard free flooring)
6. Does your space offer visibility tools such as clear signage, preference seating, reduced glare, and larger text options in pamphlets, siddurs, and/or prayerbooks?
7. Does your space offer services for those hearing impaired such as availability to assistive learning devices, limited background noise, preference seating, microphone, and ASL services?
8. If food is offered, does the space provide clear labeling for potential allergies (nuts, fish dairy etc.) as well as dietary accommodations such as gluten free, dairy free, and vegan options?
9. Does your community provide comfortable space for service animals and mobility aids?





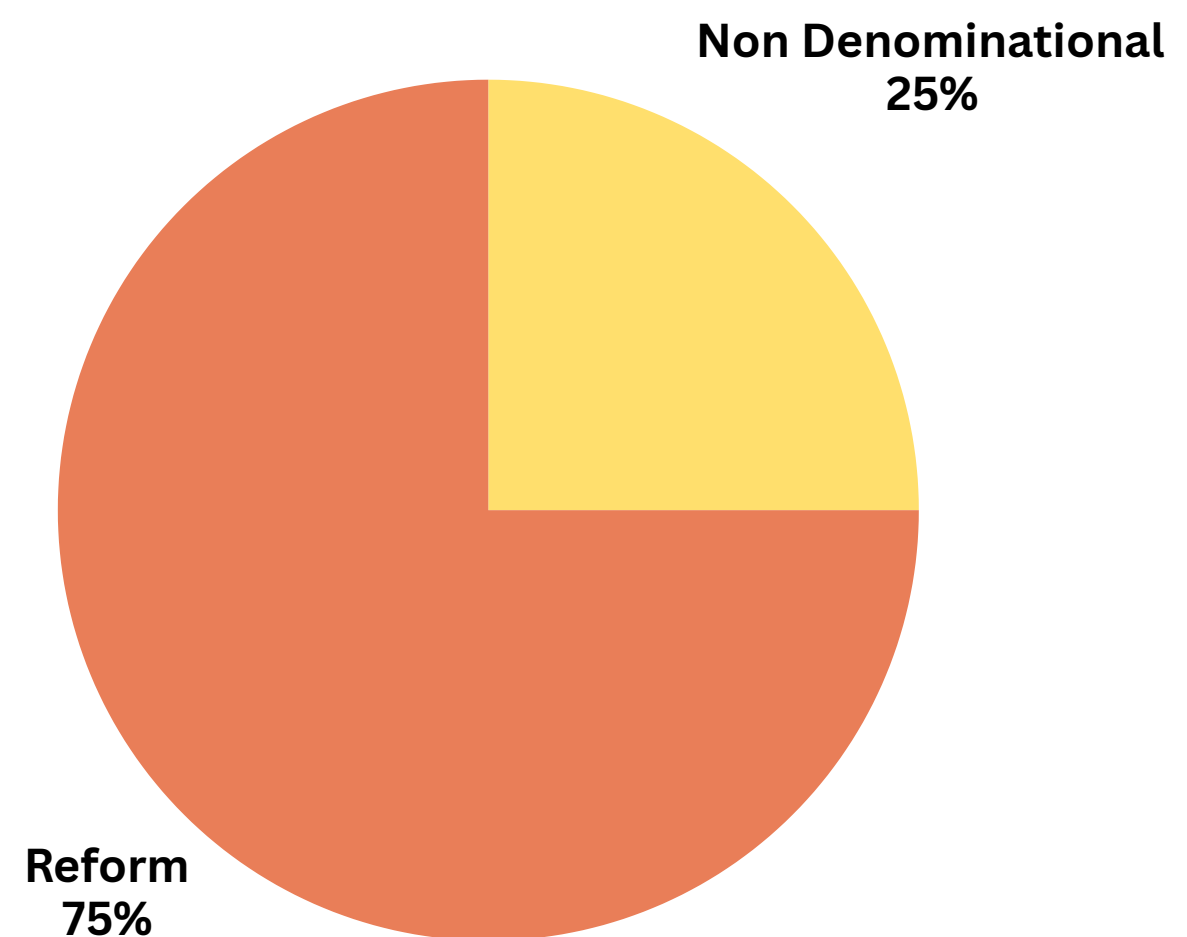
Demographics of Respondents

- Out of the 20+ jewish community contacts, 4 contacts participated in the “The Disability Affirmation, Celebration, and Inclusion Project- Survey”

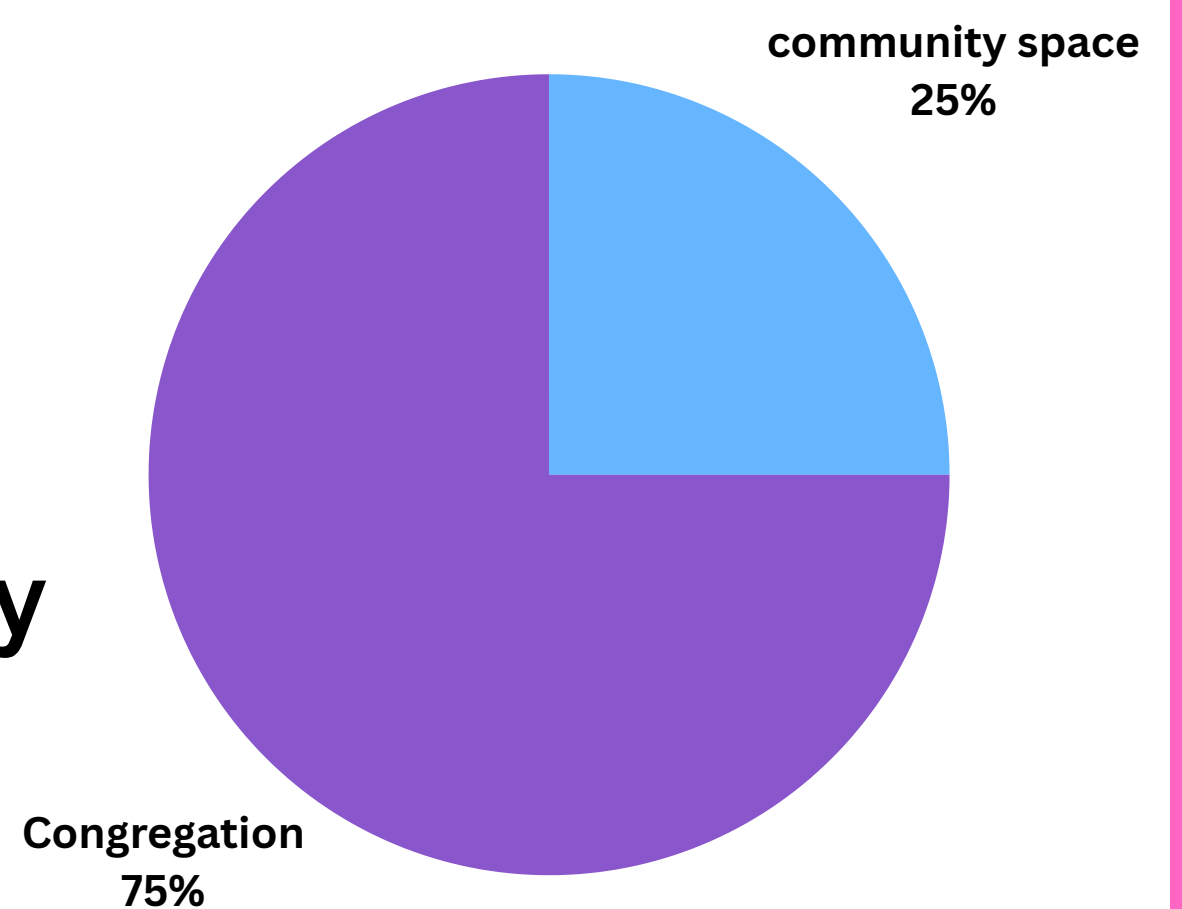


Ma Tovu, Central Reform Congregation,
Shaare Emeth, Temple Emanuel

- 75% of the Jewish spaces surveyed identify as reform while 25% identified with no specific denomination.

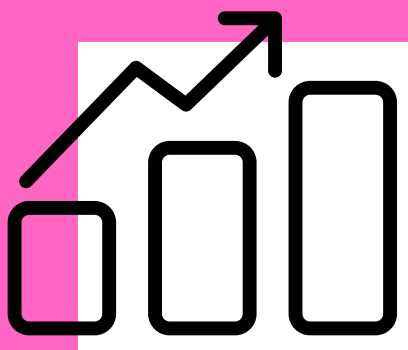


- 75% of the Jewish spaces surveyed identify as a congregation while 25% identified as a community space.



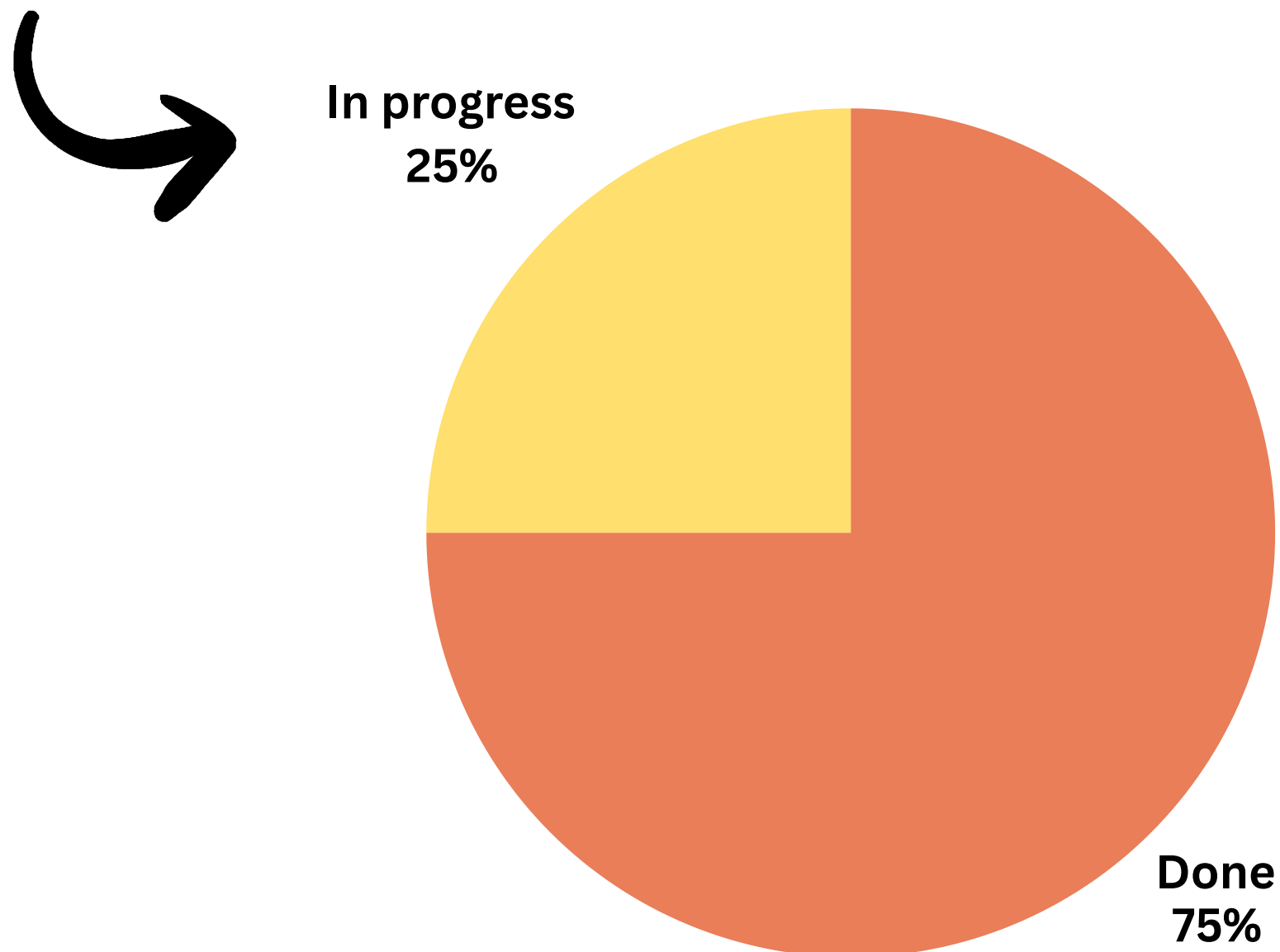
- 50% of the Jewish Spaces surveyed were located in the St.Louis City area while 50% were located in Creve Coeur





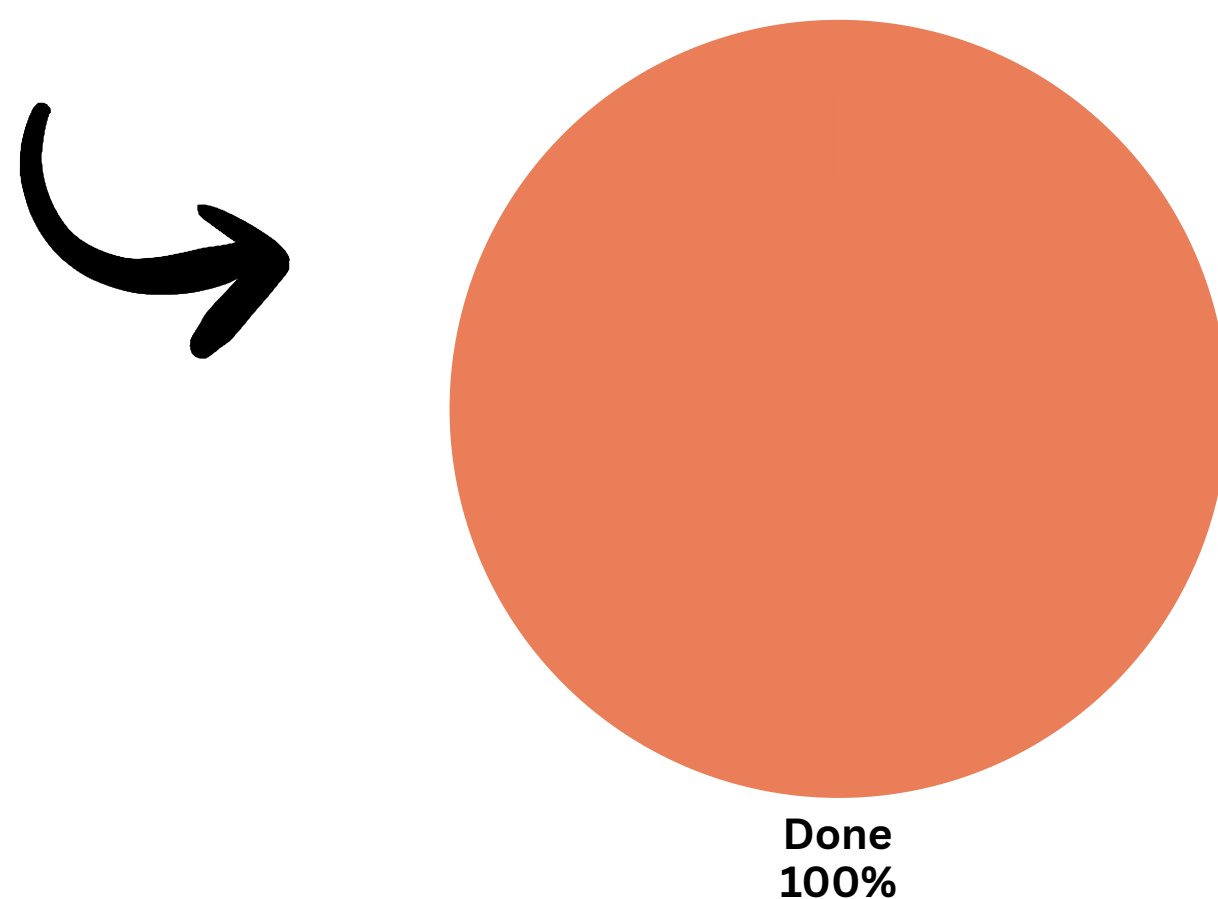
Findings :

- Does your community provide online accessibility for services, classes, or events (hybrid format, streaming services, zoom sessions etc.)?

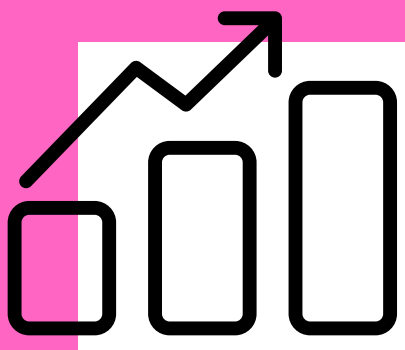


Notes: 3 out of 4 spaces stated they provide a variety of program and services options including Hybrid, In-Person, Virtual, and streamed options.

- Does your space include a quiet area for those with sensory sensitivities?

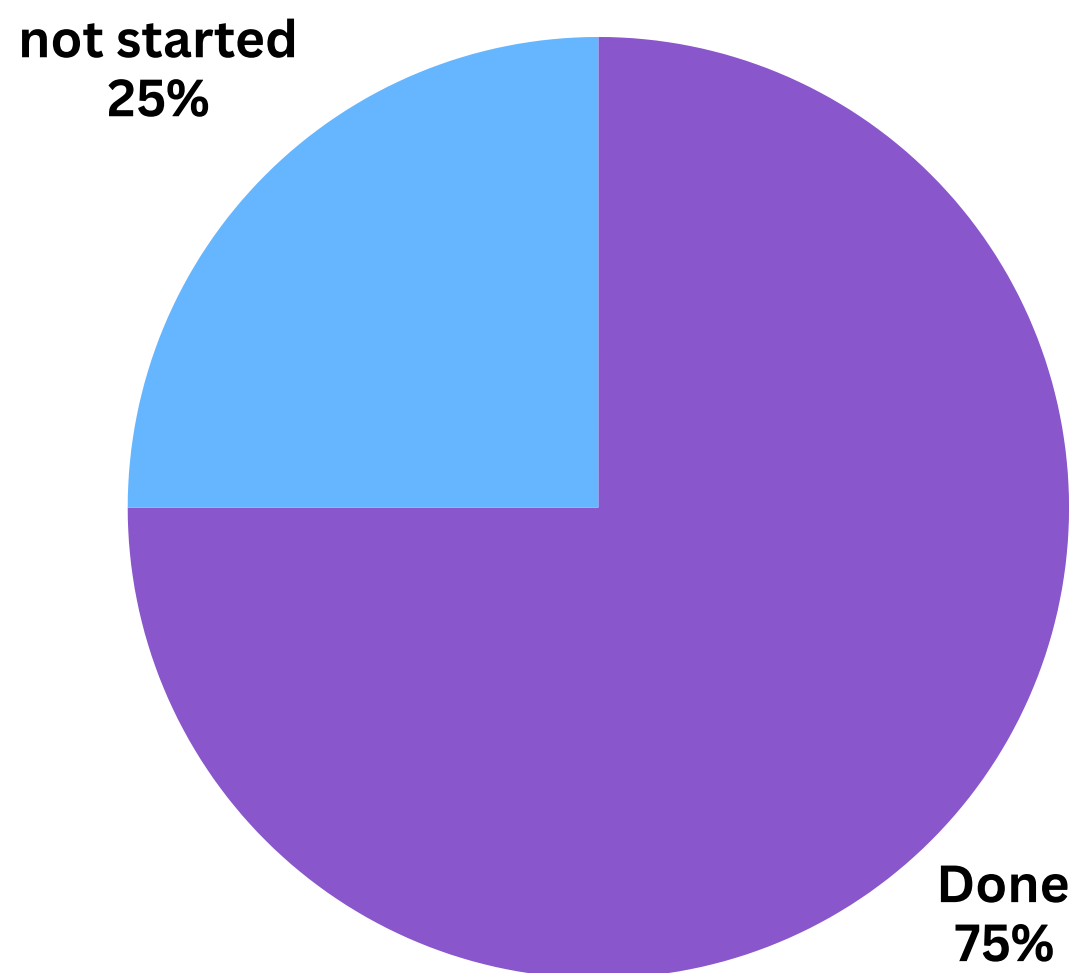
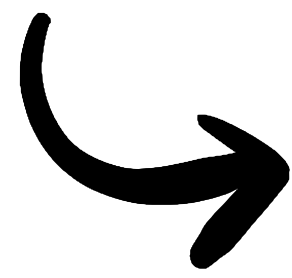


Notes: All spaces surveyed stated they provide quiet areas including meditation/mindfulness centers and sensory spaces



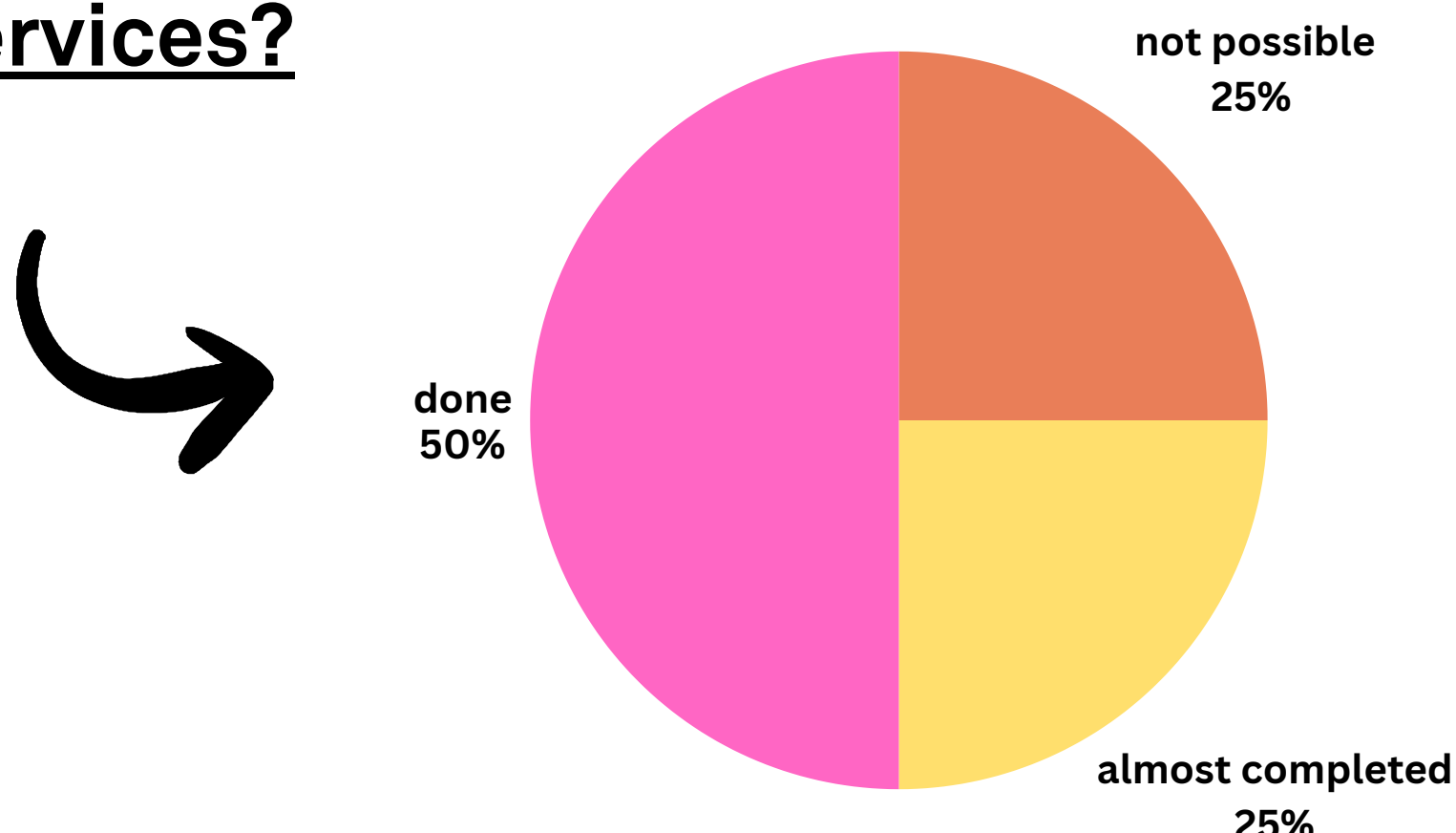
Findings :

- Does your space offer services such as CART (closed access real-time translation) ASL interpretation, and closed captioning for services, classes, and events?

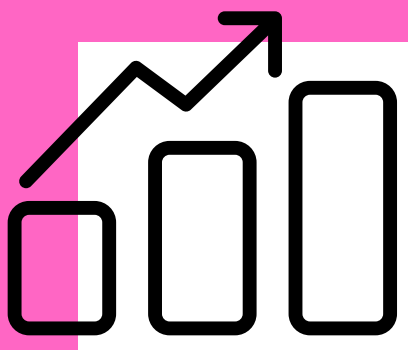


Notes: 3 out of 4 spaces stated they provide ASL interpretation at least for large events such as the High Holidays and that they work to provide closed captioning for services and events

- Does your congregation and community space offer transportation accommodations such as accessible parking and carpooling services?

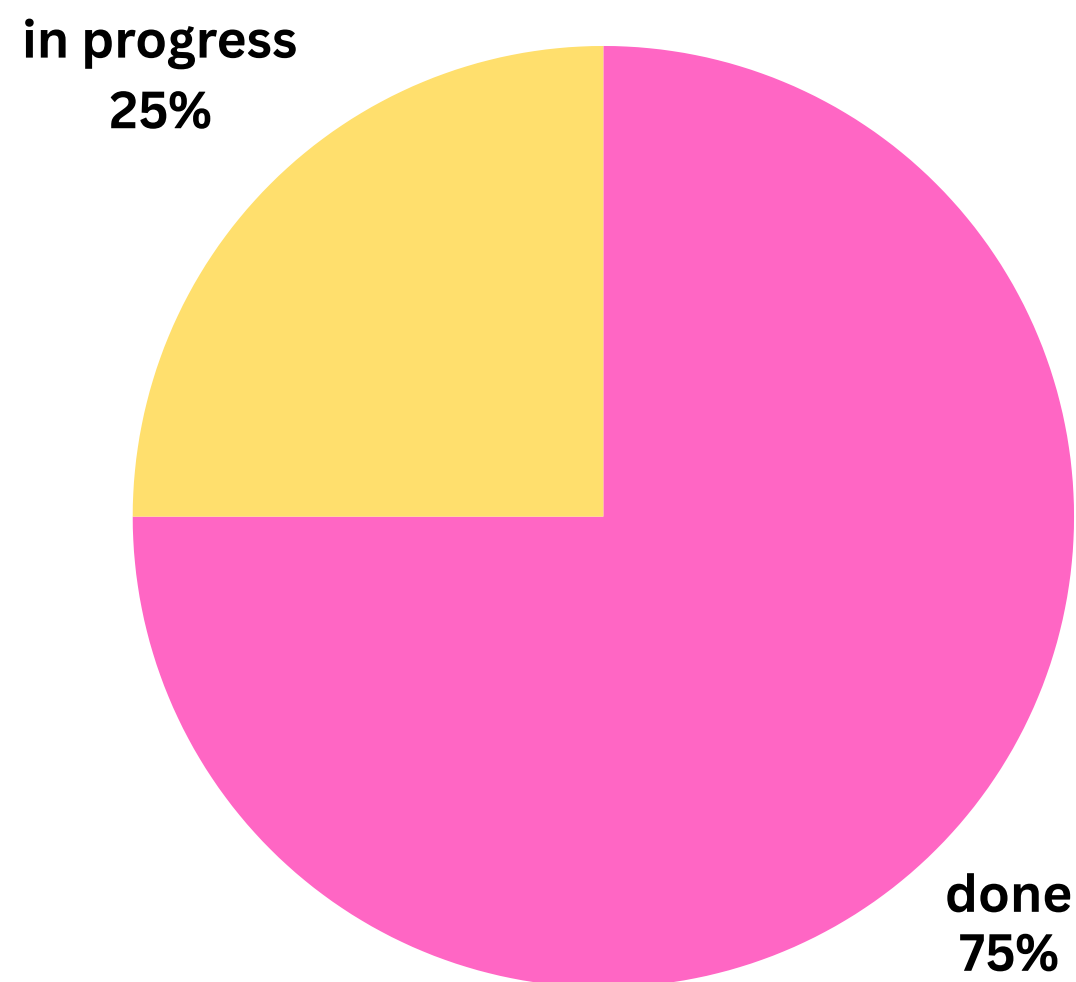
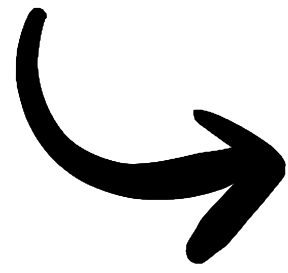


Notes: Some spaces stated they work to provide carpool spaces whether formally or informally. One space stated they had issues with accessible parking due to not having a designated parking lot and residing in a residential neighborhood



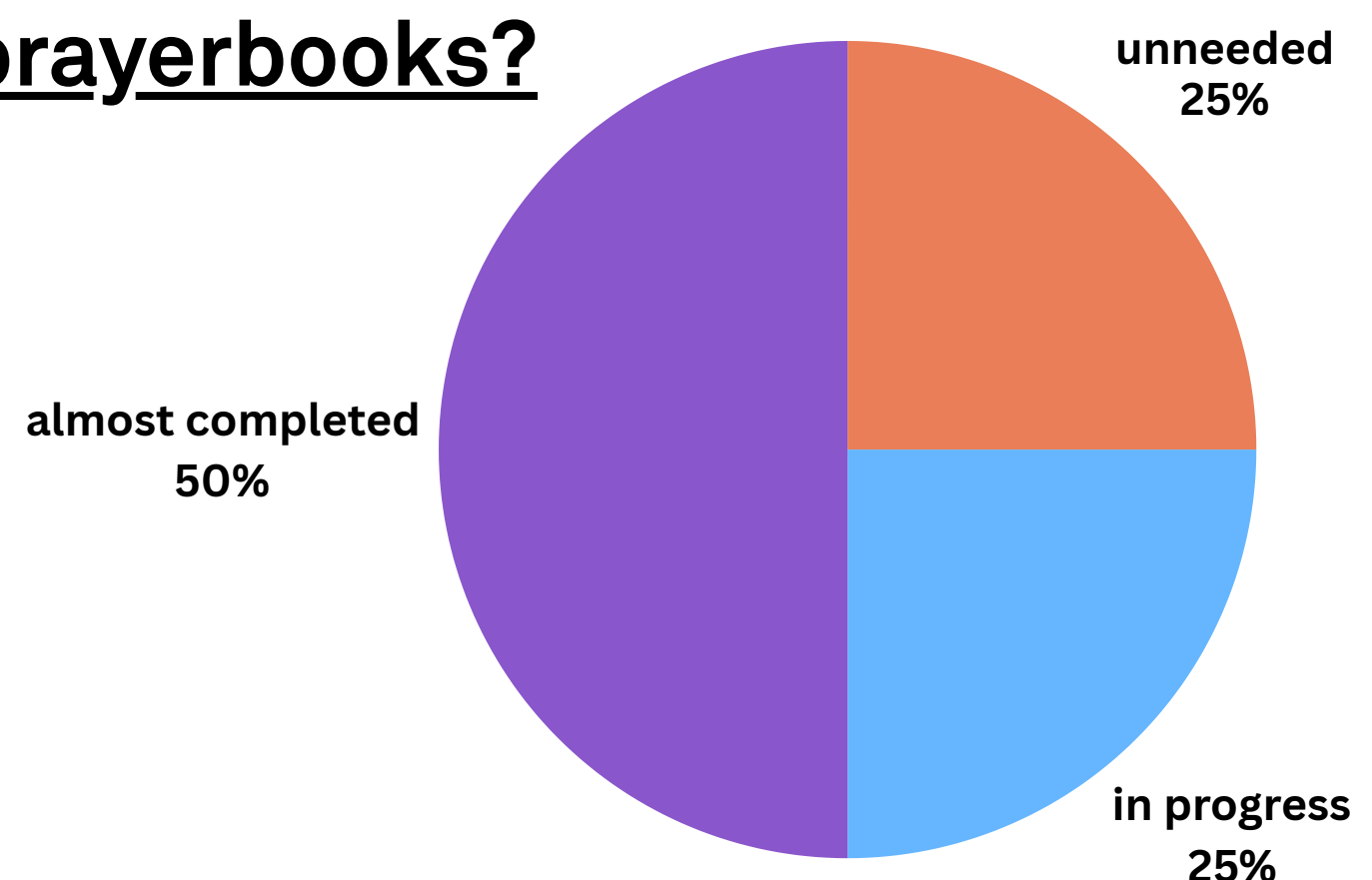
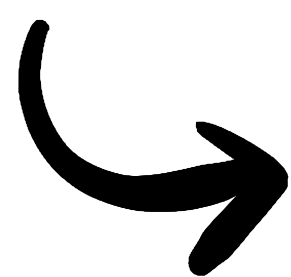
Findings :

- Is your community space easily and comfortably navigable for those with mobility difficulties and/or disabilities (elevators, accessibility ramp, all gender single stall restrooms, non slip and hazard free flooring).

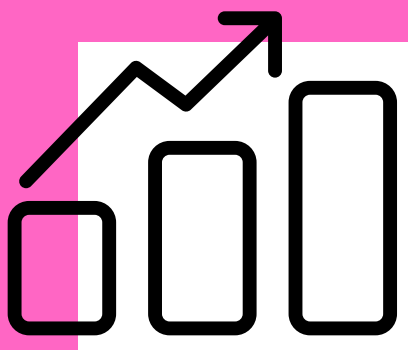


Notes: All spaces surveyed stated they are making advancements in providing ramps around the buildings and some working to add gender inclusive restrooms.

- Does your space offer visibility tools such as clear signage, preference seating, reduced glare, and larger text options in pamphlets, siddurs, and/or prayerbooks?

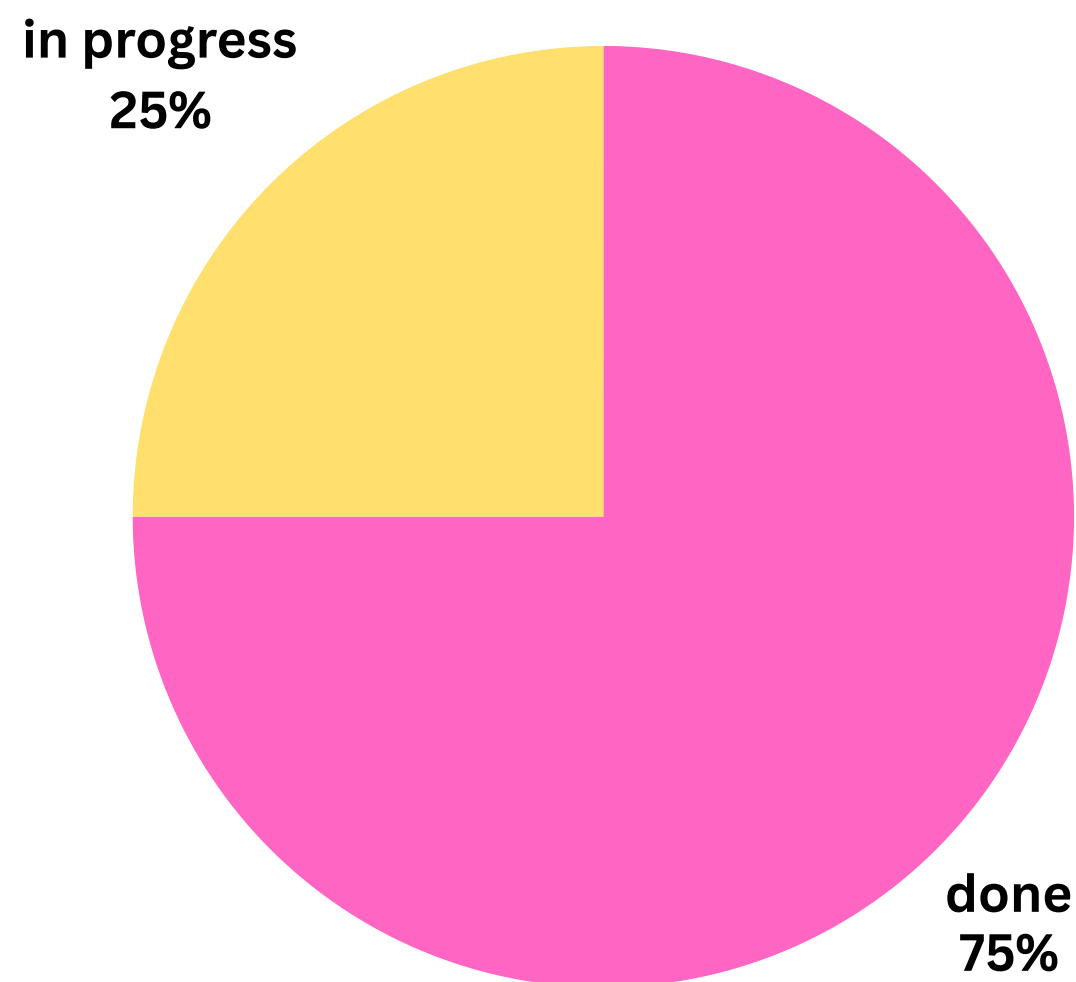
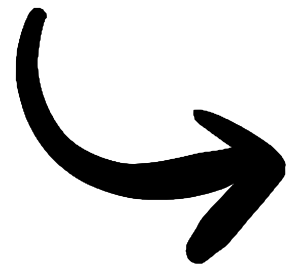


Notes: 3 out of the 4 spaces surveyed stated they are working to improve or check up on visibility tools including adding more clear signage and adding more large text options to prayerbooks and reading material.



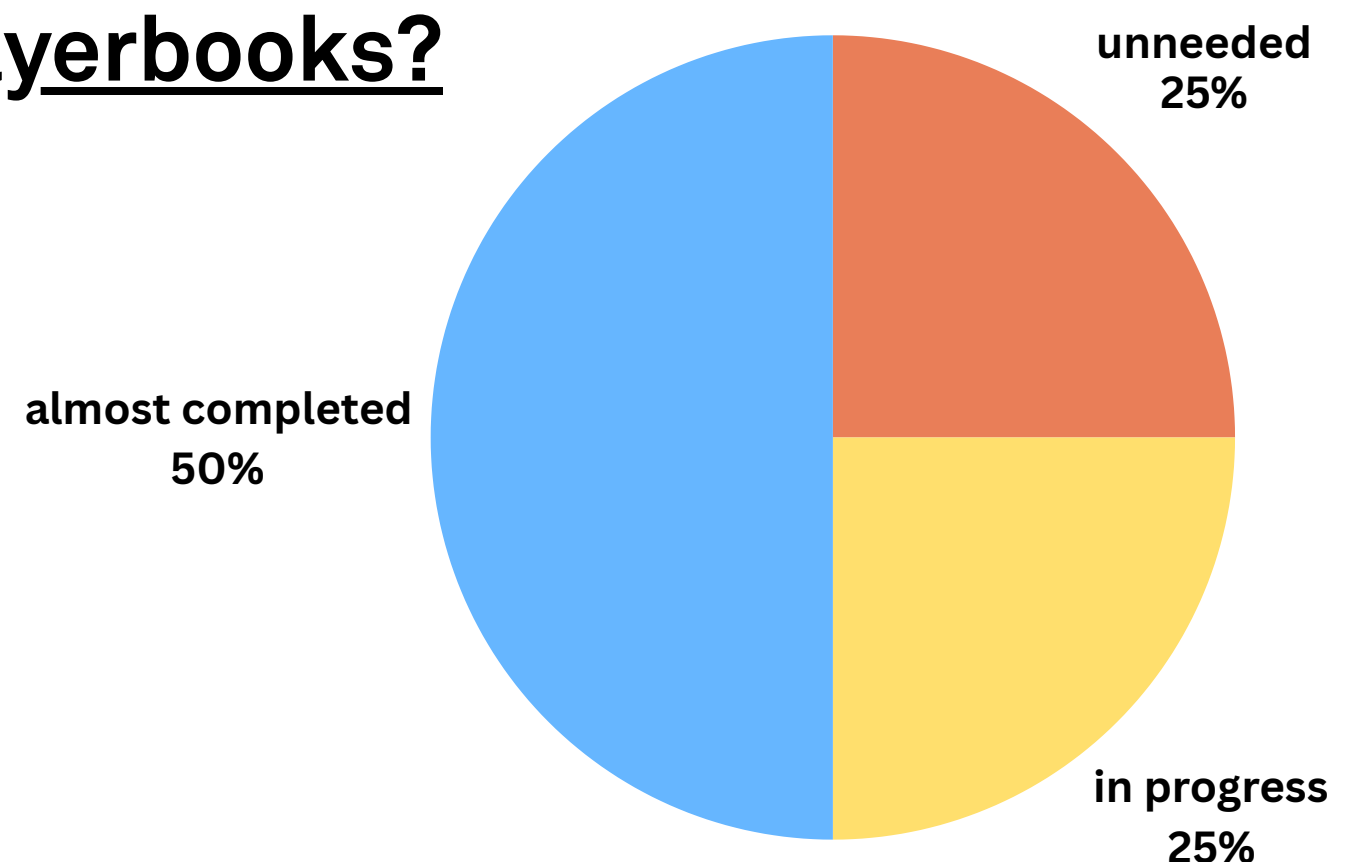
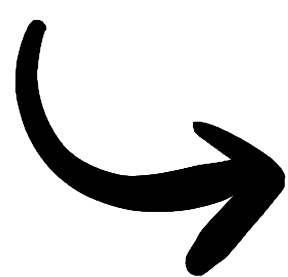
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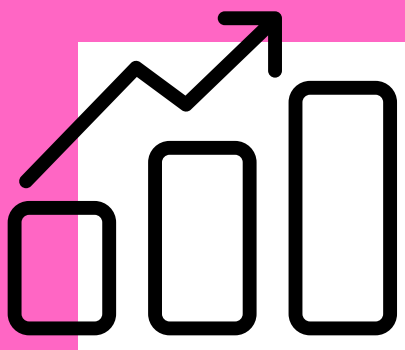


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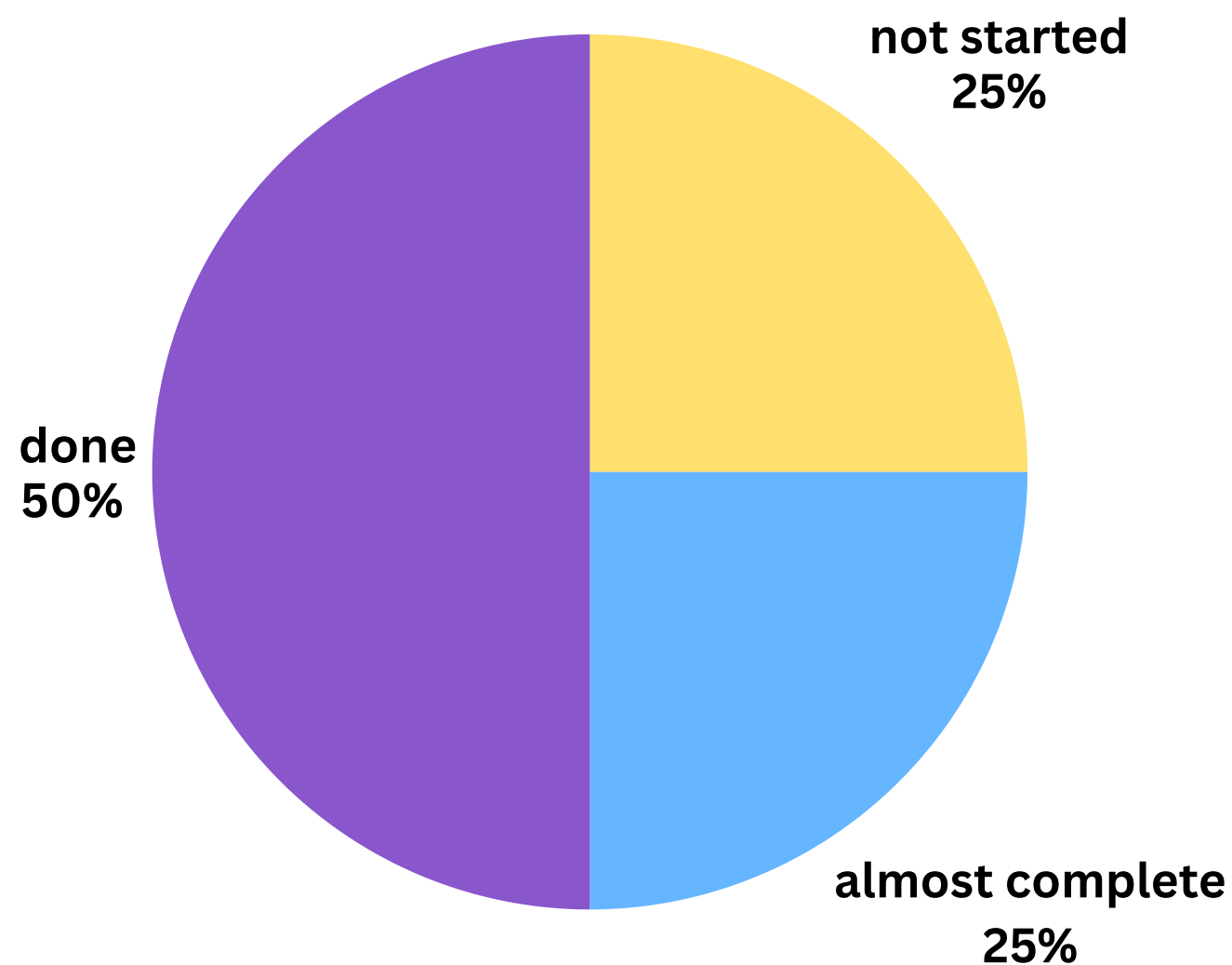
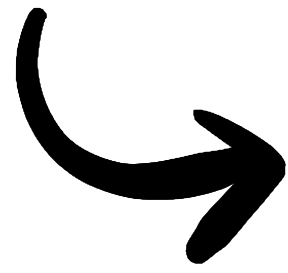


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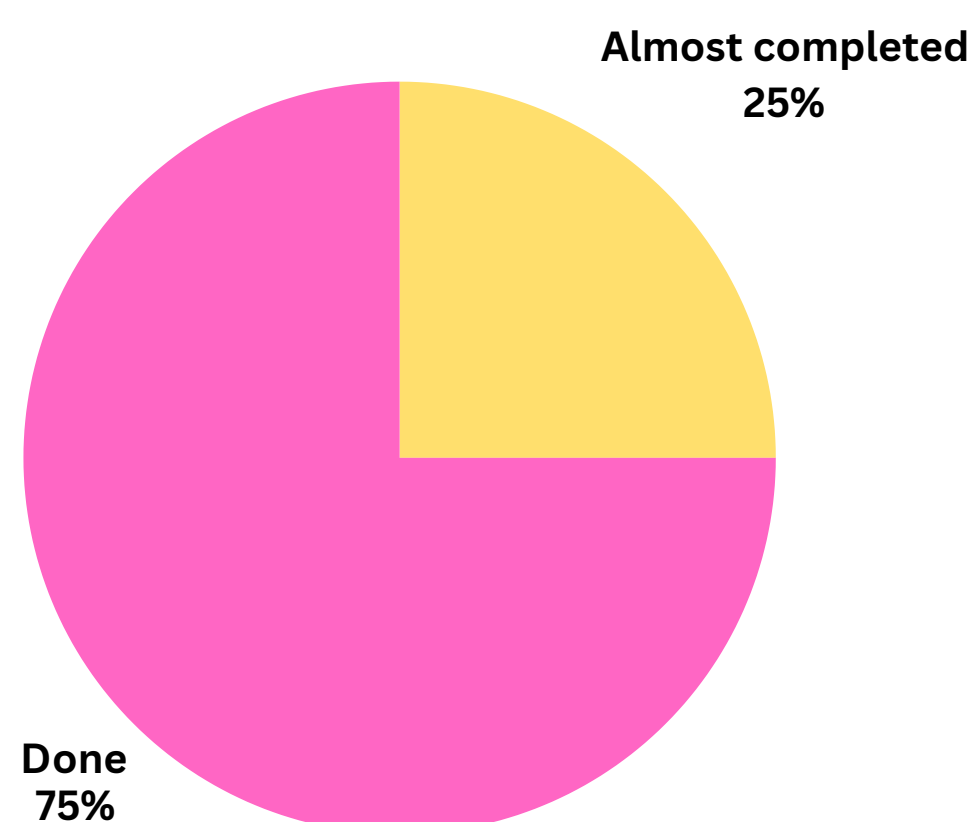
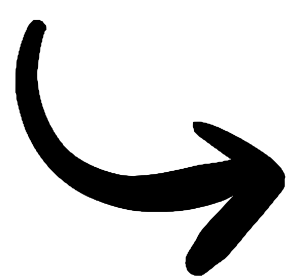
Findings :

- Does your space offer services for those hearing impaired such as availability to assistive learning devices, limited background noise, preference seating, microphone, and ASL services?

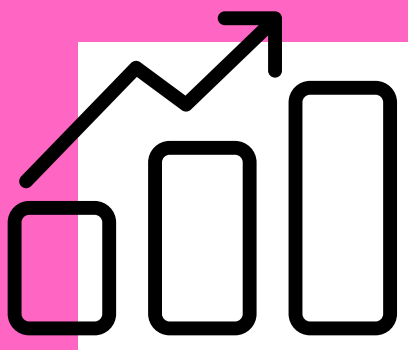


Notes: The majority of spaces stated they are working to provide ASL services and increase the volume of assistive learning devices.

- If food is offered, does the space provide clear labeling for potential allergies (nuts, fish dairy etc.) as well as dietary accommodations such as gluten free, dairy free, and vegan options?

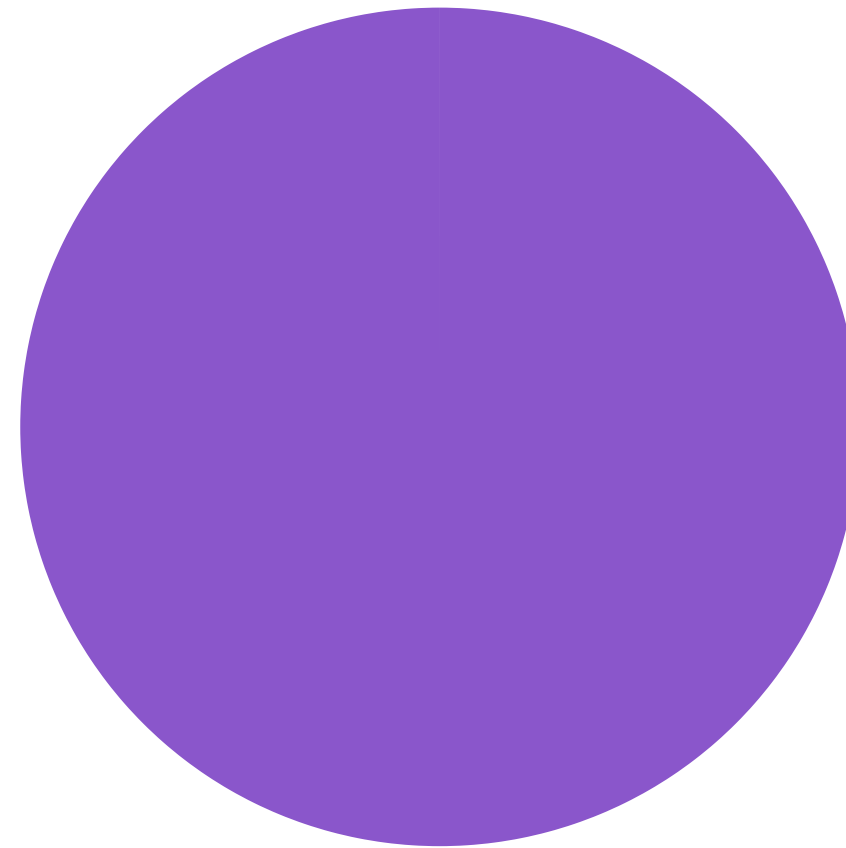
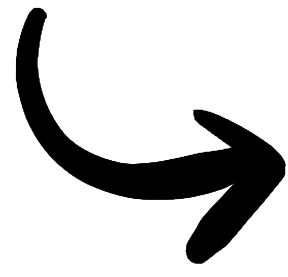


Notes: All spaces are working to improve labeling and expand dietary options to meet dietary needs.



Findings :

Does your community provide comfortable space for service animals and mobility aids?



done
100%

Notes: All 4 spaces stated they are provide comfortable seating options for those with mobility aids and service animals

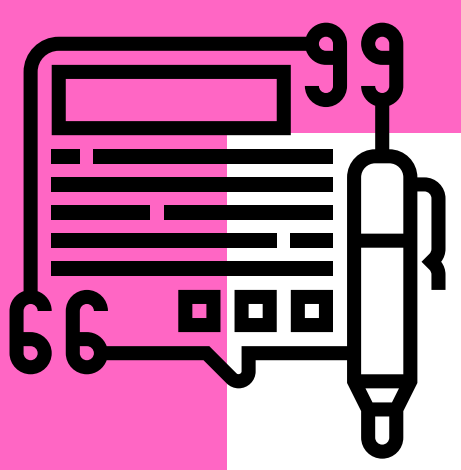


Final Thoughts:

In all this survey demonstrated that the Jewish Community is working to create more inclusive and welcoming spaces by implementing measures such as adding more mobility aid accessibility to buildings, expanding labeling & signage, and providing ASL and assistive resources. Depending on means and the type of space different accommodation resources were needed. For instance, a Jewish community center may require less large text options if they do not use a prayerbook as compared to a temple. Location also mattered in terms of ADA compliance and carpooling.

In all the “Disability Affirmation, Celebration, And Inclusion Project” is a starting point to conversation and action in disability rights. More research is definitely needed especially exploring different Jewish denominations, education institutions, and more rural areas.

I hope through reading this you feel inspired and motivated for change. Start thinking about your own space and ask questions such as do we have quiet spaces? Do we need to label food options better? Does our space need an all gender bathroom? Every small and big action matters whether it's starting a community carpool service or printing out a large text siddur. I hope you take action to bring upon changes in your own community.



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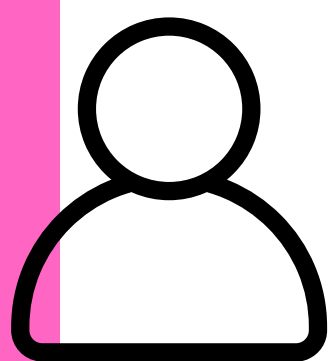
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Biography:

Neon Liebson (he/they) is a Transgender Queer Jewish College student in St. Petersburg, Florida a maritime Search and Rescue first Responder, a Training EMT, book enthusiast, and artist. Tey are studying Biomedical Anthropology Human Development, East Asian Studies, Aand Mandarin Chinese. He loves learning new languages and skills, embarking upon adventures, and volunteering in social advocacy, disaster relief, and public health. Beginning in Covid they have volunteered and worked in Keshet supporting the needs of LGBTQ+ Jewish community nationwide.

