



הדרכה למדריכים
A Handbook for the Synagogue Youth Advisor/Youth Director

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Chapter II: The Role of the Advisor

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613 Mitzvah Corps application, Heschel Honor Society application, Hechalutzim application, list of free publicity materials all available on the USY website

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Chapter II: The Role of the Advisor

Why do we do what we do?

What is a synagogue Youth Advisor, what does an advisor do?

- Each synagogue has a different job description for youth advisors. Please check with your synagogue for a detailed “job description.”
- It is assumed that most synagogues hire youth advisors to run the synagogue youth group. This person may also be operating another programming area in the synagogue or may be a parent volunteer.
- This includes planning and implementing programming, publicity, record keeping, working with parents, leadership training, creating a youth community and working with a youth commission and clergy.
- The advisor must relate to youth, be an overall role model and understand the basics of experiential, informal Jewish education.

Who is a youth advisor?

Throughout your year, you will find yourself wearing many different hats:

- | | |
|---|--|
|  councilor and confidant |  friend |
|  story teller |  parent |
|  party/event planner |  disciplinarian |
|  negotiator |  “clown” or entertainer |
|  budget manager |  Judaic advisor |
|  discount shopper |  service leader |
|  social worker |  problem solver/conflict manager |
|  educator |  peace keeper |
|  calendar manager |  marketing and recruitment expert |

Dugma:

Above all hats you end up wearing, your overall role as an advisor is being a *dugma* or role model to Jewish youth. What does it mean to be a *dugma*?

Think back to those people in your life who you would consider a role model.

My role model was someone named: _____

He/she inspired me by saying things like _____

He/she inspired me by doing things like _____

I'll never forget how this person used to _____

He/she inspired me to _____

A *dugma*:

- Is responsible- plans, organizes, delegates, is punctual, accountable and follows through
- Shares his/her knowledge and passion for Jewish life and *mitzvot*
- Is Jewishly knowledgeable and tries to learn what he/she does not know
- Enjoys working with young people and relates well to them
- Empowers and motivates young people to get involved
- Behaves respectfully in public (including online behavior and profiles)
- Promotes values of friendship, teamwork, respect for others, empathy, inclusion

- and caring
- Is committed to Conservative Judaism and practice
- Offers guidance and support as a caring and committed adult who teens can trust
- Listens, learns, guides and teaches
- Is adaptable, flexible and practices empathy and patience
- Add your own: _____



Ten Ways to be a dugma

1. Make sure you *respond* and not *react* to a situation. If it helps to count to ten or write down what you would like to say before speaking to an angry parent or irresponsible teen, please do that.
2. Keep smiling, even when everything seems to be going wrong.
3. Learn names and details about the individuals in your group- knowing each person goes a long way
4. Be demonstratively and actively Jewish. Show your youth how Judaism can be cool and fun
5. Tell stories they can relate to, give advice they can use
6. Notice behavior changes and offer support or help
7. Ask questions, listen and then talk; it shows you care about their development
8. Help youth figure out their talents and skills and how they can use them in the chapter. On the other hand, help them figure out how to overcome their challenges
9. Get to know parents and others who are active in the synagogue so responsible youth presence is known.

Use humor and friendly rapport with *every* individual (and not just the outgoing teens with leadership potential). Everybody counts, especially the shyer, more introverted types who could truly benefit from the youth group community.

The advisor role and responsibilities can often be time consuming, exhausting and frustrating. Where do we find our motivation?

Why we do what we do: A story (adapted from the Talmud, Taanit 23a)

— Honi and the Carob Tree

Told by Peninnah Schram

Honi the Wise One was also known as Honi the Circle Maker. By drawing a circle and stepping inside of it, he would recite special prayers for rain, sometimes even argue with God during a drought, and the rains would come. He was, indeed, a miracle maker. As wise as he was, Honi sometimes saw something that puzzled him. Then he would ask questions so he could unravel the mystery.

One day, Honi the Circle Maker was walking on the road and saw a man planting a carob tree. Honi asked the man, "How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?" The man replied, "Seventy years." Honi then asked the man, "And do you think you will live another seventy years and eat the fruit of this tree?"

The man answered, "Perhaps not. However, when I was born into this world, I found many carob trees planted by my father and grandfather. Just as they planted trees for me, I am planting trees for my children and grandchildren so they will be able to eat the fruit of

these trees."

You were inspired somewhere along the way in your Jewish journey. Now is your time to inspire others!

Think for a moment. Why did you commit to this position in the first place (try writing it down if that helps!)?

- Is it because *you* had a positive USY/Kadima youth group experience?
- Is it because your child is a USYer and you want to help connect him/her to synagogue life and other Jewish youth?
- Is it because you want to inspire Jewish living in Jewish youth?
- Is it because you are committed to Conservative Judaism and see youth as an integral part of the movement?
- Is it because you want to make a difference in the life of a young person?
- It is to motivate yourself to stay Jewishly involved?

Why would someone commit to the sometimes thankless job of synagogue youth advisor?

When you commit to being a synagogue youth advisor, you are committing to creating positive Jewish experiences for Conservative Jewish youth and for being an overall *dugma* or role model. You aim to inspire youth along their Jewish journey through threefold experiences of: *Keshet*, *chavayah* and *kehillah*

קשר/Keshet- you want to make a *connection* with the youth so they see you as Jewish *dugma*. You want them to make a connection with each other as "members of the tribe." You want them to connect with Jewish history, practice, mitzvot, culture, people and of course, synagogue and ritual.

חוויה/Chavayah- you want them to *experience* Judaism, Jewish peoplehood and create positive and lasting Jewish memories through active programming. The experiences they have in youth group will inspire them to live full and rich Jewish lives after they leave the youth group setting. The experiential nature of youth group leaves the most lasting impression

קהילה/Kehillah- you want them to feel that they are part of a *chevre*, a community of others just like them. You want them to feel comfortable as members of a movement, of a Conservative synagogue community, of a youth community and of a Jewish community.

Standards for the Youth Advisor

Abridged from the original document

- Serve as a *dugma* as he/she directly influences the daily lives of the youth
- Brings to life Jewish values of *Torah*, *Avodah* (prayer) and *G'milut Chassadim* (acts of kindness).
- Upholds the ideals of the Conservative Movement
- Confronts social issues with which teens deal from the Jewish perspective
- Go beyond program planner to confidant and friend

As role models, it is expected that the advisor:

- Be born of a Jewish mother or converted according to Jewish Law
- If single, date only Jews
- If married, be married to a Jew

Guidelines adopted by National Youth Commission for the Youth Advisor:

I. Jewish Observance

- Observe the laws of Kashrut
 - a) at all youth group functions
 - b) if not possible to keep Kosher at home, home should be “off limits” to the youth
- Observe Shabbat and Jewish holidays
- *Observe Shabbat at all youth functions
- Be a positive role model in area of Tefillah. He/she should regularly attend services and be able to explain the importance of Jewish prayer.
- Demonstrate *mitzvot* through personal practice and teaching (e.g. G'milut Chassadim, Lashon Hara, V'ahavta L'reyecha, etc.).

II. Education

- Advisors should have a basic understanding of Jewish Law, holidays, ritual, history and liturgy
- Advisor should be able to creatively transmit his/her knowledge to youth
- It is recommended that the advisor take advantage of any opportunity to visit or study in Israel

III. Professional Skills

- Past experience within the Conservative Movement, youth group and informal education/experiences
- Relate to both youth and adults and professionals in the congregation
- Have experience in working with adolescents
- Appropriate personal, organizational and administrative skills
- Become a member of JYDA* (Jewish Youth Directors Association) and be involved in their programs for professional growth

**JYDA aims to professionalize the work of the Jewish youth worker through professional enrichment and development and through setting professional standards for Jewish youth workers. JYDA hosts a 3 day professional development training seminar each year, usually in January and co hosts a number of conferences throughout the year for advisors and youth directors. JYDA provides a forum for youth workers to get together, share ideas, express challenges, work toward solutions and identify with each other as coworkers and team mates.*

- Be able to work with lay committees
- Be familiar with basic teen related social concerns and where to turn in the community for help in dealing with these serious issues

IV. Personality

- Mature
- Friendly and outgoing
- Sense of responsibility and accountability
- Sincere, passionate, committed
- Can relate well to youth