

Yachad Advisor Guide

What is Yachad?

Yachad helps Jewish individuals with intellectual, developmental, and learning disabilities develop a sense of belonging in the community. We believe that every Jew deserves the same opportunities to have a place in our community. This belief comes from the Torah, which states - *Ve'ahavta Le'rayacha Kamocha*- You shall love your fellow as yourself. We believe that the 3 elements that are critical to participating in the community and thus developing a sense of belonging are: Education; Employment; Relationships.

CORE VALUES

Passionate- We thrive on serving our community with dedication, consistency and prioritizing their needs first.

Growth Focused- We continually grow, embracing challenges to achieve excellent results and maximizing each person's potential.

Fun- We bring positivity, approachability, and joy into everything we do.

What is a Yachad Advisor?

Yachad Advisors are part of a passionate community creating inclusive, supportive spaces for individuals with disabilities to engage in the Jewish community—whether through Shabbatonim, weeknight events, or unforgettable summer programs. To foster belonging, advisors are paired with a Yachad member with the goal of forming friendships while carrying out responsibilities for the member's social, emotional, and physical well-being, and engaging in programming in the Jewish community.

What is the Goal of a Shabbaton?

The goal of a Yachad Shabbaton is to create an inclusive, joyful Shabbat experience for our members—filled with meaningful programming, friendships, and fun. Shabbatons also educate and inspire our peers and host communities by showcasing inclusion in action. It's a chance for members to enjoy a weekend away, build connections, and for advisors to grow, give back, and feel enriched by the experience.

What Does Inclusion Mean?

Inclusion is “the action or state of including or being included within a group or structure.” At Yachad, inclusion means that individuals with disabilities are fully welcomed, valued, and engaged in all aspects of Jewish life—side by side with their peers. Whether it's a

Shabbaton, weekly program, or summer camp, Yachad creates spaces where everyone participates together—davening, learning, laughing, and growing. Inclusion isn't a separate activity—it's the heart of everything we do.

Who is There to Support me?

All Yachad events have head staff there to support you including coordinators and program directors.

- **Coordinators** lead programming and activities on the Shabbaton and are there to assist you in your role in any way.
- A **Program Director** and/or an **Asst. Program Directors** are on every Shabbaton.

In addition, there is a Yachad authorized **medical professional**; please identify who this person is at the start of Shabbos.

Yachad Policies

The following are important policies to be aware of when participating at a Yachad event:

- There is a zero-tolerance policy for gambling, drugs, vaping, alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana usage at any point over the course of the program.
- No touching between genders. Yachad staff may not have extended physical contact with any participant (i.e.- sitting on laps, holding hands, tickling, etc.), except to protect or safeguard someone in immediate physical danger
- Staff members are also expected to follow *shomer negiah* between staff (no touching between genders)
- Everyone is expected to follow the schedule to the best of their ability and contribute meaningfully to the program.
- Yachad Staff may not be alone 1:1 with a Yachad participant in a non-public space or a room with a closed or locked door. Yachad Staff and any participants should always interact in a manner where they are both observable and interruptible.
- Yachad Staff are not permitted to share beds with participants under any circumstance.
- Yachad's Program Directors (head staff) have a "heter" and directive from our Posek to carry their phones on Shabbos. Please call them in the event of an emergency.

DRESS CODE

The following is a dress code guideline for advisors:

- Males and females should have their shoulders covered.
- No cap sleeves
- Skirt/dress length of at least touching one's knee
- On shabbatons, shabbat attire should be worn, which includes a collared shirt and pants for males and a skirt or dress for females.

Yachad is a department of the Orthodox Union and follows the strict adherence of Orthodox halacha. Our programs are run in a shomer Torah and Mitzvot fashion and under guidance of our posek, Rav Shay Schachter.

Shabbos with Yachad

Pre-Shabbos Phone Call

Before Shabbos, typically on the Thursday night prior to the Shabbaton, a Yachad staff member ('coordinator') will call you and explain much of what you need to know about the Shabbaton and the member you will be spending Shabbos with.

Meet the Yachad member you will spend Shabbos with

Upon arrival at a Shabbaton, each advisor will be paired up with a Yachad participant. A coordinator will help with this introduction.

Work to build a relationship with your Yachad participant. Ask them to tell you about themselves. Try asking open ended questions if you feel that is within their reach to answer. You'll be pleasantly surprised about what may interest them and how much you'll enjoy conversing with your new friends.

Don't hesitate to ask participants about their medication or their other personal needs. It's their life and they can probably explain it to you better than anyone else!

The Info-Sheets

You will be given the Yachad participants info-sheet to help better understand them and your specific responsibilities toward them.

These papers are confidential!

Please return them to a Yachad staff member after the Shabbaton!

- Any medication a participant takes and when it needs to be taken is included here.
- You will see comments and advice on how to best engage with the participant based on Yachad's knowledge of them and advice from previous Advisor experiences.
- The info-sheet will help you understand the type of attention you need to give them. It may explain that the participant is more/less independent and how much support or lack thereof they need.
- Typical behavioral issues which may arise on Shabbos will be explained here, as well as how to handle them.

The coordinators are your friends!

If you have any questions or concerns about your Shabbos experience, personally or for your members, speak to a coordinator! Coordinators are there to answer whatever questions you may have about your member and to assist you in any way possible.

Responsibilities of an Advisor

At All Times: Ensure the health and safety of our participants.

- Ensure the participant you are spending Shabbos with is receiving the appropriate care under the direction of the Yachad authorized professional medical personnel.
- Stay with participants. You don't always need to be 'on top of them', but you must know where they are and stay nearby so you can always reach one another.
- You are expected to be a role model to both Yachad participants and community members.
 - You should model appropriate behavior to the Yachad participants: from you, they will understand what behavior is expected of them.

- o You are showing community members how to interact with Yachad through your own interactions. Others are looking to follow your lead - lead appropriately.

During Programs:

- You should participate in Shabbaton programming; join in the games, *ruach*, and davening.
- Encourage participants to participate, get yourself and those around you excited!
- If you have an idea let the coordinators know so they can incorporate it into programming.

At a Host's Home - To the host and their home:

- Facilitate the relationship between the host and the Yachad participant. Make introductions and ensure appropriate interactions at the start of the Shabbaton - this may be the hosts only meaningful interaction with a Yachad member, so make sure it is a positive one!
- Please thank them for hosting!
 - o You will be given a host gift and an envelope containing information about Yachad. If the host has questions you can't answer, please direct them to the envelope where this information can be found or show them to a Yachad staff member on Shabbos.
- Double check you have everything with you before you leave after Shabbos.

At a Host's Home - To the host and their home:

- Show your participant around the house; make sure they know where the bathroom is and where you both will be sleeping.
- It is not the host's responsibility to spend time with a participant while you nap or relax.

In Shul: It is your responsibility to be with your participant during shul.

- Ensure appropriate behavior in shul. We do not want our program to disturb davening. This is a very important part of making sure the community has a positive experience with our participants.

- Be mindful of your participant during davening. Do they need help davening or following along? Do they need a short break? If davening is not something your member is able to do, support your member by conveying to them an understanding of davening and our relationship with Hashem.