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Mikvah Programming and Individual Consulting

OU Women's Initiative

The OU Women's Initiative mikvah programming is rooted in supporting mikvah directors and attendants as they create environments that are welcoming, thoughtful, and grounded in each mikvah's policies and rabbinic guidance. Every woman arrives at the mikvah with her own story, often unseen and unspoken, and her experience is shaped as much by clarity, consistency, and human interaction as by the physical space itself. Thoughtful training and guidance help ensure that these moments are met with care, discretion, and professionalism.

Over the past decade, as mikvah usage has increased across North America alongside new construction and renovations, the need has grown for training and support that integrates emotional awareness, appropriate language, and operational consistency, all firmly rooted in local halachic process.

Individual Mikvah Consulting

To meet these needs, the OU Women's Initiative developed an individual mikvah consulting program to support mikvaos in strengthening operations, clarifying roles, training staff, and navigating sensitive situations with confidence and care.

A foundational principle of this work is that **each mikvah operates according to its own policies and rabbinic psak**. Our consultants do not impose external standards. Instead, we work closely with mikvah leadership to understand their existing framework, including

communal norms, operational guidelines, and halachic processes, and then train staff to operate within that framework with consistency, sensitivity, and clarity.

Individual mikvah consulting includes direct training for attendants, integrating the Sense and Sensitivity framework as part of the consulting process. This ensures that policies, language, and practical guidance are translated into day-to-day practice, equipping attendants to respond thoughtfully and consistently to the range of situations that arise at the mikvah.

Consulting typically includes:

- Reviewing and clarifying mikvah policies and operational guidelines
- Distinguishing between what is clearly permissible, what is clearly a shailah, and how to navigate situations that fall in between
- Establishing clear and respectful processes for asking halachic questions
- Developing consistent language so staff know not only what to say, but how to say it
- Discussing policy options when questions arise through staff experience or client interactions

When staff understand the policy, the halachic process, and the appropriate language, they are better equipped to handle sensitive situations calmly and supportively, reducing stress for both attendants and the women they serve.

Sense and Sensitivity Training

The **Sense and Sensitivity** professional development training equips mikvah directors and attendants to respond thoughtfully to the wide range of emotional, physical, and situational challenges women may bring to the mikvah, often without disclosure.

Training emphasizes:

- Creating a supportive environment
- Recognizing when something may be amiss, even if it is not articulated
- Staying within role boundaries while responding with care
- Using consistent language aligned with mikvah policy

Topics addressed include:

- Infertility treatments, pregnancy loss, arriving late, or needing extended time
- Mental health and physical challenges such as anxiety, water phobia, eating disorders, disabilities, and potential abuse
- Navigating these situations with empathy, discretion, and clarity

Through scenarios, discussion, and troubleshooting, attendants build the skills to respond appropriately even when they do not know the full story, while maintaining the structure and kedusha of the mikvah experience.

Halachic Process and Organizational Clarity

Effective mikvah operation depends on both sensitivity and structure. Many operational decisions and elements of a mikvah carry halachic implications, making it essential that each mikvah has:

- An identified community posek
- Clear guidelines for when and how to ask shailos
- Defined roles among staff, directors, and lay leadership

The OU Women's Initiative supports this work through a comprehensive resource booklet and ongoing consulting. These resources help mikvaos think through the behind-the-scenes operations of a well-functioning mikvah and establish systems that allow staff to act with clarity and confidence.

Impact and Ongoing Support

Through individual consulting, professional development, and ongoing support, the OU Women's Initiative has worked with and supported close to 100 mikvaos across North America through direct consulting, in-person trainings, and national seminars. This work is guided by **two expert mikvah consultants** with extensive experience supporting both long-standing and newly established mikvaos. **Both consultants work with the guidance and endorsement of recognized poskim in the communities they serve.**

We regularly work with women from diverse communal, cultural, and religious backgrounds, and tailor our guidance to reflect the specific needs, sensitivities, and minhagim of each community when that element is required.

In addition to direct consulting and training, the OU Women's Initiative convenes and moderates international WhatsApp communities that provide ongoing support and real-

time guidance. The Mikvah Directors and Presidents group includes close to 100 administrators worldwide, and the Mikvah Attendants group includes over 300 attendants across the globe. These forums allow women to ask questions, share experiences, and seek guidance around policy, resources, operations, and sensitive situations as they arise.

Together, this work strengthens not only systems and staff, but the kedushah of the mikvah itself. By supporting those entrusted with this avodas hakodesh, we help ensure that the mitzvah of taharas hamishpachah is upheld with clarity, care, and consistency, strengthening the foundation of the Jewish family and, through it, the continuity of Am Yisrael.