

Engaging Grandparents: Next Steps

Step One

Stop – Before you plan that next program

- Eager to start a new program? Don't assume that you have all the information you need to creatively and successfully engage and support grandparents and their families. Take time to deepen your and your community's understanding of the complex challenges and dynamics of Jewish grandparenting today.
- One size-fits-all? Grandparents and their families come in all shapes and sizes; married, single parent, divorced (sometimes in more than one generation), widowed, multi-faith, multi-cultural, LGBTQ. The National Study has identified five groups or segments of grandparents that represent different attitudes about Judaism and relationships between grandparents, parents, and grandchildren. The study results affirm that communities and organizations should not assume a uniform approach to engaging grandparents and their families. Rarely will one program or experience meet the needs or concerns of today's Jewish grandparents. Finally, consider the unique qualities, resources, and opportunities in your organization and community.
- Think about engaging current or recently retired professionals who are grandparents to benefit from their unique talents and perspective as you explore the potential of this new field.

Step Two

Look – At grandparent roles and how you truly see grandparents

(choose the relevant options)

- **Grandparent support of family involvement in Jewish life:**
 - How many grandparents are driving carpool for early childhood, day and religious schools and/or for JCC and other regularly scheduled Jewish activities?
 - How many grandparents are bringing children to tot Shabbat, rooting at soccer games, helping out in the classroom?
 - How many grandparents pay the student tuitions or family membership fees at your institutions?
 - How many grandparents attend programs at your organizations in lieu of or in addition to parents?
- **Grandparent support and advancement of organizations and the Jewish community:**
 - How many grandparents are major benefactors of your institutions?
 - Play active governance roles?
 - Constitute an important part of your membership?
 - Are around the table as grandparents when problems and opportunities are identified, and new approaches are explored?
- **Your organization's or community's marketing and imaging:**
 - Are there images of grandparents interacting with their grandchildren?
 - Are these images active and joyful; do they represent an age range of grandparents and the diversity of your grandparent community and their families?
 - Are you telling their stories from your grandparents' perspectives? Their children's, their grandchildren's?



Step Three

Listen – To what grandparents have to say

Focus groups and one-on-one conversations are wonderful ways to hear directly from grandparents and their family members and to show grandparents that they matter for their own sake and for their families.

- Consider design thinking and other customer-centric approaches to ensure that grandparents and their family members' voices are heard.
- Grandparents, like any other group, will be invested in what they help to create. Additionally, grandparents come to the table with valuable resources: wide-ranging life experience, passion for their role as grandparents, and potentially time and money.

Strategies to Bring Grandparents Together

- Acknowledge and thank the grandparents in your community when and where you can.
- Find Grandparents:
 - Approach them at events or in hallways when they are with grandchildren and find a time to talk. Be creative in thinking of ways to collect contact data.
 - For synagogues, for instance, review the past decade of birth announcements congratulating grandparents or have a knowledgeable volunteer review the roster.
 - Set up welcome coffees for grandparents at carpool drop-offs or pickups.
 - Use networks of relationships to widen circles. Grandparents know one another because they have often been living in the community for some time. Newcomers will be grateful for the outreach.
 - Collect addresses, contact info, and create a database that also includes interests and skills.
- Invite boomers – based on their roles as grandparents - to communal events within your organization.
- Keep in mind that boomer grandparents expect excellence in their experiences. If they do not find it, they have the resources and freedom to seek it elsewhere.
- If you meet at a Jewish communal organizational venue (JCC, Federation, Jewish Family Service, etc.):
 - Joyful and Faithful Grandparents are likely to be more heavily represented. Consider strategies to identify them through the data you already have. They are more likely to be currently involved in organized Jewish life. Chances are, you have not thought about them as grandparents. Recruit these grandparents one on one; have coffee, meet for lunch.
 - Other groups are there too. Especially Wistful Grandparents. Use the relationships of the grandparents you know to find the ones you don't.
 - Secular Grandparents are likely to be involved in non-Jewish communal organizations such as museums, the performing arts, alumni associations. Explore networking opportunities outside of a Jewish framework. Some of the most talented and wealthy Jewish grandparents may be entirely outside the orbit of Jewish communal life. The most vital grandparent groups will have a diverse mix.
- If you meet outside of a Jewish communal organization—in a home or neutral, well-recognized community location:
 - Start recruitment by thinking about diversity.
 - One-on-one invitations through social and business networks are the most effective.
 - Consider the LGBTQ, Russian, Interfaith and Adoptive communities.
 - Consider non-profit Jewish and non-Jewish boards in your community.
 - Include working and retired professionals and small business owners. 2/3's of Jewish grandparents are retired.
 - Think about ways for parents to recruit their parents.
 - The outcome is not programs; it is connecting grandparents to one another and showing that they matter to you.
- Use the data from the National Study and other resources from the Jewish Grandparents Network to help guide initial thinking and conversations about engagement opportunities.

Contact the Jewish Grandparents Network for:

- In-depth presentations to organizational leaders, key stakeholders, and community members.
- Support to assess existing programs and services for grandparents in your community or organization.
- Help to create a plan for your community or organization.
- Grandparent pilot/prototype initiatives around the country.
- Assistance with understanding and applying the data from the National Study of Jewish grandparents.
- Insights from the experiences and initiatives in different communities and organizations.
- Guidance and suggestions for additional resources on grandparenting.

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