Jewish Engagement from Birth: A Blueprint for Outreach to First-Time Parents

Mark I. Rosen, Ph.D.
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Executive Summary

Jewish Engagement from Birth: A Blueprint for Outreach to First-Time Parents

Full report may be downloaded at: www.cmjs.org/parents

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November 2006

This report describes the findings of a national study of outreach programs for Jewish and intermarried parents with young children.

This report describes the results of an in-depth study based on visits to ten Jewish communities around the country that have developed successful outreach programs for first-time parents and parents with young children. The report focuses on how these communities find parents who are not connected to the community, and describes the programs they offer to help these parents make connections. Over one hundred professionals in Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Denver, Milwaukee, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, St. Louis, and Washington, DC were interviewed to obtain detailed information about each community’s programs, the parents who participated, the program staff and volunteers, and the community infrastructure that supported these efforts. Focus groups were also conducted with parents and volunteers.

New parents are looking for support and connections; unengaged parents are receptive to overtures from the community.

Professionals felt strongly that the organized Jewish community needs to pay much greater attention to first-time parents and parents with young children. While youth programming has expanded considerably over the past decade, programming for the parents who raise these children and make their educational choices has received surprisingly little support.

When young adults give birth to their first baby or adopt, their lives change dramatically. There are profound shifts in the realms of personal identity, relationships, and work. Many of these parents have moved thousands of miles from where they were raised and are looking for support, guidance, information, and friends. This set of circumstances offers the Jewish community a unique
window of opportunity to engage these parents by offering targeted programming, while helping them to become better parents. Unengaged parents who would not otherwise attend programs with Jewish sponsorship are receptive to programs when these programs address their needs as parents.

Peer relationships have a strong influence on engagement

The site visits indicated that engagement with the organized Jewish community is strongly influenced by parents’ peer relationships. The main reason that parents attend programs is to meet other parents. Peers can influence Jewish choices by encouraging attendance at events with Jewish sponsorship, by serving as role models, and by recommending Jewish institutions. Peers can also influence choices that intermarried couples make regarding the religion in which their children will be raised. Jewish playgroups appear to be one of the best ways to foster peer relationships.

Programs are offered by many different agencies and organizations; efforts are uncoordinated both within and across communities

Programs for new parents are offered by a variety of agencies, organizations, and foundations. Federations, Jewish Community Centers, Jewish Family Services, synagogues and synagogue-based early childhood programs, central agencies for Jewish education, Chabad, local foundations, and individuals in private homes all offer or have developed programs. Programs are rarely coordinated among agencies within communities and there is little communication and sharing of information across communities.

In several communities, well-designed programs have been very successful at welcoming unengaged parents and helping them to make connections, but most such programs are underdeveloped

Communities reach out to first-time parents through welcome programs, commonly called Shalom Baby programs. These programs, which involve delivery of a gift basket to a family when they have had a baby or adopt, introduce parents to the community at a time when parents are very receptive to overtures. Several communities appear to be successful at finding unengaged parents, and when parents are contacted by program staff, more than 95 percent respond positively. In communities with especially well-developed gift basket programs, about 75 percent of the parents who receive baskets participate in a variety of follow-up programs.

Over 30 communities have implemented gift basket programs, but only a few have fully realized the potential of these programs to engage parents. Most
programs are run by part-time staff in federations who have many other responsibilities and do not have time to find the unengaged or follow up with parents who have received a basket.

Successful programs, mainly those sponsored by JCCs, have the following features: passionate staff with strong interpersonal skills; directors who devote a majority of their time to running the program; community leaders who support the program; an extensive network of Jewish professionals, parents, and medical professionals who help find first-time parents; committed peer volunteers who deliver the baskets and advise the program; strong follow-up programs, including Jewish playgroups for mothers; and a policy of no solicitations.

Communities offer a number of different programs that correspond to children’s stages of development and parents’ interests

Some communities offer programs for expectant parents that include material on childbirth and Jewish tradition. Many communities offer programs for parents with infants and toddlers that have a variety of titles and topics, although the quality of the individuals who teach these programs has more of an impact on enrollment than program content. Some JCCs and synagogues have parenting centers where parents can choose from among many different program options. Jewish Family Services offers programs in some communities to provide parents with support and guidance.

A number of family and adult education programs have been developed. National family education programs include Al Galgalim: Training Wheels, a family education program offered by Hadassah, and the PJ Library, developed by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, which sends Jewish books and CDs to children each month beginning at six months of age.

Adult education programs for parents with young children include Ikkarim, a joint collaboration of Combined Jewish Philanthropies and Hebrew College in Boston, and the Parent Education Program, developed by the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School with support from the AVI CHAI Foundation.

Programs specifically for intermarried parents with young children include The Mother’s Circle, developed by the Jewish Outreach Institute, which teaches non-Jewish mothers how to raise Jewish children, and Pebbles, a Reform Movement program in Denver, which encourages intermarried families to raise their children as Jews.

Organizations offering programs face a number of challenges

• Communities need to create an effective “infrastructure” for finding Jewish parents or programs do not reach the unengaged.
• While publicity through obstetricians and pediatricians is the best way to reach the unengaged, communities do not always approach physicians and physicians are not always willing to distribute publicity to patients.
• Some community professionals are uncooperative and do not provide the assistance that welcome programs need to find the unengaged.
• Parents who live in outlying suburbs with few Jewish institutions are reluctant to drive long distances, so programs must be brought to them.
• Since unengaged parents are sensitive to program venues, neutral venues such as JCCs tend to be preferred over synagogues.
• Professionals find it difficult to establish an appropriate level of Jewish content in programs. When programs have little Jewish content, they are indistinguishable from secular counterparts. When parents think there is too much Judaism, those who are not yet interested in learning about it are unlikely to show up. If Jewish content is taught at a level suitable for young children, parents do not receive exposure to Judaism’s richness.
• Professionals do not feel that separating intermarried parents from in-married parents is in the best interests of either the parents or the community.
• Parents prefer a single, trusted point of contact and do not want to be on multiple lists. Since parent lists are frequently owned by one organization, other organizations find it difficult to publicize their programs.
• Once unengaged parents have begun attending programs, it is necessary for community professionals to provide them with a considerable amount of personal attention to help them move along on their Jewish journey.
• Unengaged parents are less likely to choose Jewish preschools for their children, since their preschool choices are based primarily on quality, location, and hours rather than Jewish sponsorship. Involvement in Jewish programs prior to enrollment in preschool can enhance the importance of Jewish sponsorship, potentially leading to more Jewish preschool choices.

Professionals need to be carefully selected; volunteers are critical
Professionals who do outreach to parents need to have early childhood expertise and must be sensitive to the needs of parents. Programs are most successful when there is strong volunteer involvement.

Program developers need to ask the right questions
• Have program leaders been carefully selected based on their interpersonal skills and expertise?
• Has the program been designed so that it is accessible and appealing to unengaged parents?
• Is the program’s Jewish content appropriate for the audience?
• Is the program sufficiently informed by current knowledge on parenting and child development?
• Does the program strengthen bonds between parents and their children?
• Does the program offer opportunities for parents to form friendships with other Jewish parents?
• Does the program offer opportunities for parents to form relationships with Jewish professionals?
• Does the program inspire parents to learn more about Judaism, create a Jewish home, make Jewish educational choices, and become involved with Jewish institutions?

Jewish institutions that offer programs for parents with young children have both strengths and weaknesses; collaborations among agencies and organizations generate the best programs

• Jewish Community Centers offer many programs for parents, have early childhood expertise, and have facilities that lend themselves to these types of programs. They also engage in extensive marketing and draw parents that would probably not come to a program at a synagogue. However, Jewish content is sometimes lacking in JCC programs.
• Synagogues create community and offer rich Jewish learning opportunities, but programming for parents with young children is rarely a priority for rabbis or synagogue leadership.
• Professionals who teach in early childhood programs connect with parents every day, but since early childhood programs and professionals are oriented toward the needs of children rather than parents, parent education remains underdeveloped at most preschools.
• Jewish Family Services has considerable expertise in parenting and child development, but programs are usually secular.
• Federations can fund existing programs, initiate new programs, partner with community agencies, and bring professionals together from different agencies. When they are responsible for program delivery, however, the programs do not receive sufficient attention since staff members usually have many other responsibilities.
• Jewish chaplains have connections to hospitals where babies are born but are sometimes reluctant to promote specific programs.
• Central agencies for Jewish education can provide models of excellence, and have expertise in family education, but tend to be oriented toward programs within educational institutions rather than outside of them.
• Chabad has experience with outreach, many centers in outlying communities where young families live, and early childhood expertise. In addition, Chabad centers are run by couples with young children who relate well to parents. However, Chabad’s religious orientation does not have universal appeal.

Successful outreach to parents requires a coordinated effort by the entire community
Communities that are successful at engaging first-time parents have passionate champions who are a driving force; engage in extensive efforts to find parents; offer many opportunities for parents to get together; offer many different programming options to parents; offer Jewish programs based on best practices; have connections to secular parenting organizations; place an emphasis on relationship-building with parents; communicate regularly with parents via email, phone, and newsletters; draw upon the expertise of local early childhood professionals; cultivate volunteers and peer leaders; have strong JCCs that are centrally involved; have professionals who work together across agencies and organizations towards a community-wide vision; and have leaders who recognize the importance of reaching parents with young children.

Funding is needed to realize the potential of these programs
The next step is to identify a community for a pilot project that would involve developing a community-wide effort based on these success factors.
Funding needs include: the expansion of Shalom Baby programs and other successful programs for parents with young children; helping synagogues to become more parent-friendly; helping preschools to better serve the needs of parents; and the development of training programs to create peer leaders.
A national coordinating body is needed to disseminate best practices, assist communities in developing programs, support professionals, advocate, and seek funding. Additional research on these programs is also needed.

Well-designed and well-coordinated programming for parents with young children has the potential to change the Jewish future
The conclusion of this report is that an investment in programming for first-time parents has the potential to change the Jewish future by engaging many families who might otherwise be lost to the organized Jewish community.
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Mark I. Rosen  
Waltham, Massachusetts  
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Chapter 1:
Jewish Parents and the Jewish Future

Putting Parents on the Jewish Agenda

For more than a decade, the organized Jewish community has been deeply concerned about the future of Jewish life in America. In response, educational and cultural programs for young Jews have expanded significantly and funding has increased dramatically. National organizations that are dedicated to early childhood, day schools, and college students have either been created or have expanded. Israel experience programs have undergone what can only be described as spectacular growth. Jewish summer camps are now viewed as socializing environments and venues for informal Jewish education. Innovative new organizations and initiatives have been launched to reach and inspire post-college adults in their 20s and 30s who would otherwise be indifferent to traditional Judaism.

Numerous studies have been conducted to inform and guide these efforts. Commissions, conferences, seminars and retreats, attended by both Jewish professionals and academics, have been convened to analyze and address the Jewish future. Jewish leaders and scholars have debated solutions in the press. Philanthropists have fashioned bold new programs.

Yet almost all of this energy, brainpower and funding, however well-intentioned, has been directed toward the next generation rather than their parents. In light of the irreplaceable role that parents play in the lives of their children, this one-sided emphasis is both curious and puzzling.

Children, especially young children, emulate their parents. The role that parents play in the home cannot be duplicated by any outside Jewish institution, educator, or program. Parents have far more contact with their children than Jewish educators. If what is learned outside the home is not modeled and reinforced in the home, it is less likely to be sustained. Secular and cultural influences that erode Jewish identity can be counteracted in the home. Parents transmit Jewish identity. For better or worse, parents unquestionably are a major influence on children’s Jewish identities and the Jewish future.
There are only a few voices in the organized Jewish community that advocate loudly for greater attention to parents. There are only a few conferences on family education and Jewish parents, and these are sparsely attended relative to attendance at other educational conferences. Comparatively few studies or publications focus on Jewish parents.¹

Yet the role of parenting is hardly ignored outside the Jewish world, where one can find dozens of high-profile, well-funded national advocacy and educational organizations for parents.² A number of state governments have created agencies and resource centers to help parents. In academia, scholars around the world have generated an extensive body of research literature that has investigated the effects of parenting on the future lives of children.³ Virtually every major community in the country has a free newspaper for parents. Dozens of magazines and hundreds of websites exist to help parents with parenting. There are many commercial businesses that serve the needs of parents.

Why then has there been such a comparative lack of attention to parents and parenting in Jewish organizational life? Is it due to a failure of imagination? Is there an implicit assumption that children are the problem, not parents? Has the organized community simply given up on parents because so many are ill-prepared to pass on the tradition or uninterested in doing so? Is it because those parents who do want to pass on the tradition have, for the most part, delegated responsibility to professional educators and institutions? Is it because parents who choose not to affiliate are harder for the organized Jewish community to find and reach than their children? Is it because intermarriage makes it more complicated to educate and engage parents? Or, does the problem have its origins in gender politics? The leadership of the organized Jewish community is predominantly male, while those who are currently involved in developing programs for Jewish parents are largely female.

At present, answers to these questions are elusive, suggesting a need for further investigation.

This report, which is based on a systematic study of programs for Jewish parents with young children, suggests that the Jewish community needs to focus much more on engaging Jewish adults when they have a baby or adopt and first become parents. The intent is to enrich Jewish home life and strengthen the Jewish identity of children through a constellation of attractive programs, coordinated within each community. Based on the research findings described in the following chapters, this report concludes that early interventions at this stage
of the life cycle have the potential to engage many parents who would otherwise be indifferent to Jewish life, thereby increasing the number of children who are raised as Jews and who enroll in Jewish institutions.

When young adults give birth to their first baby or adopt, their lives are forever changed. The period beginning with the birth or adoption of a child through initial enrollment in an early childhood program is therefore an ideal time to engage in outreach to in-married and intermarried families. It is a window of opportunity for the organized Jewish community that only opens once.

There are several reasons why this is the case. Life changes dramatically when one becomes a parent for the first time. Daily routines are completely disrupted and new parents struggle to build a new sense of normalcy. These parents need guidance, are very receptive to new information, want connections with other parents, and ponder how they want to raise their new child. If Jewish tradition has not been a part of their lives, the quest for a new family routine makes these parents especially receptive to a value system that will enrich their new child’s life. With the right approaches, even if these parents have been previously uninterested in Judaism, they can be inspired to bring Jewish values into their home and to take steps toward giving their children a Jewish identity.

The key to Jewish involvement is to foster relationships with other Jewish parents and Jewish professionals. If new parents form friendships with other Jewish parents, and if they have positive encounters with representatives of the organized Jewish community, the findings of this study offer encouraging indications that many will enthusiastically want to maintain these connections. Once the richness of Jewish social life has been experienced, and once positive Jewish role models have been encountered, there is little inclination to revert to a life that is isolated from the Jewish community.

Many Jewish communities around the country have already recognized that first-time parents have unique needs and have developed local programming for them. Several of these communities have gone beyond basic programs and have made a considerable investment in developing sophisticated offerings for this population. These programs are highly successful, attended by large numbers of enthusiastic parents, some of whom rave about how they have acquired a renewed appreciation for being Jewish after having had no involvement since adolescence. These communities have discovered ways to find and connect with unengaged parents who would otherwise be uninterested in attending events with Jewish sponsorship.
With the right support, many other communities could generate comparable results. However, the professionals in the communities that have developed these successful programs do not belong to any organizations or networks where they can share their successes. They come from different agencies, organizations, and backgrounds. They tend not to coordinate their efforts with other professionals in their own community. There are no conferences for them to attend, no email networks for them to join, and no newsletters in which they can publish. Jewish organizations such as the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA), the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE), and the Jewish Community Center (JCC) Association at the national level, and central agencies for Jewish education at the local level do not begin to focus on children until they reach preschool age. Hence programs for expectant parents and parents with young children are, for all practical purposes, invisible outside of the communities where they are offered.

The consequence of this lack of coordination and coverage is that successful programs are rarely replicated elsewhere, and when they are, only the general concept is duplicated, rather than the nuances of detail that lead to successful implementation. Lessons learned are not documented for the benefit of other communities.

To illustrate this state of affairs using a medical analogy, it is as if a cure for a major disease had been developed in Atlanta, but physicians everywhere else were unaware it existed because the medical profession had no mechanism for documenting results and notifying others of their findings. On occasions when physicians in other communities did manage to learn about the existence of the cure, they attempted to invent their own version rather than learn from Atlanta’s experience.

In summary, programming for Jewish parents with young children is under the radar and underdeveloped. Best practices are not disseminated. The promising effects of these programs are not widely recognized or appreciated by Jewish leaders. Funding is minimal and highly inadequate.

A national initiative to cultivate and expand these programs has the potential to have a powerful impact on the Jewish future. Youth may be the focus of most current programming, but parents make the decisions about whether their children will be enrolled in youth programs. Early childhood programs, congregational schools, day schools, Jewish Community Centers, summer
camps, and synagogues would all benefit if there were an influx of new faces generated by community-wide efforts to build relationships with new parents.

Imagine a well-coordinated network of trained professionals dedicated to establishing warm, supportive connections with the parents of Jewish babies. Imagine exciting, creative, cutting-edge programs that help these parents make the difficult yet wonder-filled transition to parenthood within the context of Jewish tradition. Imagine children exposed to Jewish tradition from birth. Imagine parents who have a rich network of Jewish friends through these efforts and who are then inspired and encouraged to make Jewish educational choices for their children.

Community professionals bemoan the absence of young families in community institutions. It is the community’s responsibility to create new ways for these families to connect. It is not the responsibility of the families to attempt to connect through existing programs and institutions that don’t attract them or serve their needs.

It is axiomatic that Jewish life begins at birth, and that babies are the Jewish future. No less than a national effort for the parents who will raise these babies is warranted.

**Report Background and Research Design**

In the fall of 2003, philanthropist Michael Steinhardt spoke to the General Assembly in Jerusalem. Before representatives of the federation system, he proposed a new national program to be called Newborn Gift, which would involve a gift for all Jewish parents at the birth or adoption of a child. In describing his vision, he shared his hope for the program:

> The Newborn Gift becomes a very real symbol of our love for Clal Yisrael, our joy in being Jewish. Parents who might not have considered raising their child in a Jewish way may be catalyzed to explore their identity.⁵

To obtain help with the program’s design, the Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation contracted with the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University. The Cohen Center conducted focus groups across the country to assess parents’ potential reactions to the program, and it also
contacted Jewish professionals by telephone in nearly 60 communities to learn about existing programs. The findings were summarized in three reports.6

The focus groups revealed that most parents were receptive to efforts to reach them. Even though parents with young children tend to be unaffiliated, almost all of the parents who participated in the focus groups wanted their children to have a Jewish identity. However, most of them did not practice Judaism in their home and did not have sufficient knowledge to teach their children about the tradition. They expressed an interest in connecting to the community but had not found the right place. Synagogues, the traditional choice, were viewed by many as too expensive, and almost all of the parents who participated in the focus groups wanted their children to have a Jewish identity. However, most of them did not practice Judaism in their home and did not have sufficient knowledge to teach their children about the tradition. They expressed an interest in connecting to the community but had not found the right place. Synagogues, the traditional choice, were viewed by many as too expensive, and all of the parents felt uncomfortable bringing small children to traditional synagogue services.

When programs were tailored to their needs and childcare was provided, parents were found to be receptive to adult and family education programs. There was a strong interest in meeting other Jewish parents, and peers were found to have an especially strong influence on attendance at Jewish events and enrollment in Jewish institutions. Additionally, in a number of the communities, particularly those in the West and South, a large proportion of parents had relocated and were not living near where they had been raised. They expressed a desire for support from the organized Jewish community that traditionally would have been provided by grandparents and other family members.

The phone interviews with Jewish communal professionals indicated that almost all of the communities had some type of program to engage parents with young children. There were programs for expectant parents, new parents, and for parents with infants and toddlers. Programs were sponsored by different agencies and organizations, depending upon the particular community. Sponsoring organizations include Jewish Community Centers, federations, central agencies for Jewish education, Jewish Family and Children’s Services, Jewish early childhood programs, synagogues, and Chabad. Some programs were conducted by community members in their homes without any support from the community.

About one-fifth of the communities that were contacted had “exemplary” programming, characterized by a combination of program elements:

- the community expends considerable effort to find those who are expecting a child, have just given birth, or who have recently adopted
• the community offers a variety of programs targeted toward parents with very young children

• participation in these programs is substantial, parental involvement is sustained over time, and participants are enthusiastic

• emphasis is placed on the creation of social networks to help new parents form friendships with other Jewish parents

• program content is sophisticated, incorporating research findings on parenting and child development

• staff and volunteers are carefully selected, committed, and passionate

• community leaders provide strong support and funding

While the telephone interviews provided basic information about these programs, without actual site visits, it was not possible to acquire a detailed understanding of how these programs actually operate and the types of institutional mechanisms that lead to their creation.

The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation provided support so that the author of this report could visit a number of these communities. The Helen Bader Foundation subsequently provided matching funds. The purpose of the visits was to learn as much as possible about each community’s programs for parents with children from birth through three, the parents who participate, the program staff and volunteers, and the community infrastructure that supports these efforts. The following research questions were addressed:

• How do communities find parents, especially those who are unaffiliated?

• How effective are specific programs at connecting parents to the community?

• How do parents respond, and what do they find most attractive?

• How influential are the friendship networks that are created among Jewish parents who participate in these programs?
- How do these programs affect parents’ future educational choices, inclination to affiliate, and practice of Judaism?

- What community-specific factors foster or inhibit the success of these programs?

The communities visited and the rationale for choosing them is presented below.

**Austin, Texas**  The local *Training Wheels* program, a national family education program developed by Hadassah, is considered to be one of the strongest in the country. The Jewish Community Center also has a parenting center, unusual for a community with a relatively small Jewish population of approximately 15,000.

**Baltimore, Maryland**  Programs for expectant and new parents have been in existence for twenty years under the auspices of the Center for Jewish Education. The JCC in Owings Mills has a well-funded parenting center focusing on infants and toddlers that has been in existence for 17 years.

**Boston, Massachusetts**  Jewish Family and Children’s Service has created the Center for Early Relationship Support, which offers a sophisticated set of programs for mothers, fathers and infants, supported by an annual budget of $650,000. *Ikkarim*, developed by Combined Jewish Philanthropies and Hebrew College, is a 19 session adult education program specifically designed for parents with children ages 0-5. The Lappin Foundation in Boston’s north suburbs has a *Shalom Baby* gift basket program to welcome new parents, the only such program in the country supported and run by a private foundation.

**Denver, Colorado**  Denver has a highly successful JCC-based *Shalom Baby* program to welcome new parents that was started with a $500,000 grant from the local Rose Community Foundation. *Jewish Baby University*, a six-session program for expectant parents offered at Rose Community Hospital, has been in existence for ten years. *Pebbles* is a family education program for interfaith families with children four and under.

**Milwaukee, Wisconsin**  The Milwaukee JCC was the first in the country to establish a parenting center in 1986. The parenting center's 2002 publication, *Tastes of Jewish Tradition*, containing recipes, activities and stories for families, won several national awards. The Milwaukee federation offers a *Shalom Baby* program.
San Diego, California  The JCC-based Shalom Baby program, with support from the federation, reaches 300 new families a year, more than one-third of all Jewish babies born in the area. Seventy-five percent of mothers reached through the program subsequently join Shalom Baby playgroups with other new mothers that meet regularly, and families receive periodic emails from the federation describing a variety of targeted programs.

San Francisco, California  Jewish Family and Children’s Services runs Parents’ Place, a drop-in resource center that serves almost 30,000 parents annually. Chai Baby delivers gift baskets to new families. Several local educators specialize in mother/baby programs. Local Jewish Community Centers provide extensive infant/toddler programming. Congregation Beth Sholom is one of the few synagogues in the country that has a parenting center. Project Welcome offers Baby is a Blessing, a three-session program for expectant parents.

Seattle, Washington  The parenting center at the JCC has developed strong connections with national experts in child development and parenting at the University of Washington and elsewhere, and with local non-Jewish agencies. Attendance at some programs exceeds 300. An insert for new mothers written by the JCC was included with a local parenting paper.

St. Louis, Missouri  A network of over 100 mothers and Jewish professionals notify the Shalom Baby program at the JCC of new births to Jewish parents. Around 75 percent of parents who are contacted by the Shalom Baby program subsequently attend follow-up programs or join playgroups with other Jewish mothers that often are sustained for years.

Washington, DC  The JCC of Greater Washington has had a successful parenting center for 17 years. The District of Columbia JCC also has a parenting center. Northern Virginia has had a Shalom Baby program for 11 years and one for DC and Maryland was recently started.

Community visits took place between September 2005 and July 2006, generally lasting three days. Most visits involved approximately 10-15 one-hour interviews with Jewish professionals who were responsible for designing, conducting, sponsoring, supporting, or funding local programs. Professionals were identified through the phone interviews conducted previously, programs listed on agency websites, recommendations from community leaders, and suggestions from the project consultant. In total, over 100 professionals were interviewed.
When feasible, professionals were asked to help organize focus groups with local parents and/or volunteers participating in these programs. To make it attractive for parents and volunteers to attend, refreshments and child care were provided, and participants received incentives for their participation. Focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Quotations in this report that are placed within text boxes are taken from these focus groups.

In addition to Jewish community professionals and parents in the visited communities, three other categories of individuals were interviewed:

- Directors of every Shalom Baby gift basket program in the country.
- Jewish professionals connected with national programs that target parents with young children.
- Experts in parenting and child development not connected with the Jewish community. These included faculty and researchers in child development and parenting, directors of nonprofits with missions that focus on the parents with very young children, and business professionals who market to this group.

Outline of This Report

The material in this report is organized as follows:

Chapter 2, A Window of Opportunity, describes the rationale for outreach to new families. It discusses the transition from being a young adult without children to being a parent. Because becoming a parent is such a life-changing event, individuals who have previously had little interest in Judaism may, virtually overnight, become receptive to the right overtures from the organized Jewish community that address their new concerns and needs. Understanding these concerns and needs and current societal trends is an essential first step if the community seeks to engage them and maintain an ongoing relationship.

Chapter 3, Programs to Find and Engage Jewish Parents, describes programs to welcome new parents, programs for expectant parents, programs for parents with infants and toddlers, and family and adult education programs. It also discusses program challenges and roles, and presents criteria for evaluating programs.
Chapter 4, *A Community-Level Perspective*, discusses what communities need to consider when offering programs to parents. It discusses factors affecting programming, strengths and weaknesses of agencies and organizations offering programs, identifies key elements necessary for success, and describes the need for a community-wide pilot project.

Chapter 5, *A National Vision*, offers suggestions and recommendations for strengthening and expanding programs for new Jewish families, and calls for a new national initiative.

**Author’s Notes**

This section offers a few brief comments about the assumptions, philosophy, and choices underlying this study.

*Types of households included in the study’s purview*  The reader should assume that this report covers all types of households, not just traditional family structures consisting of a Jewish mother and a Jewish father. Parents who adopt, intermarried families, gay/lesbian families, inter-racial parents, and single parents who choose to give birth without a partner are also included.

Because it is cumbersome to repeat this list each time parents are referenced, and because births into families with a mother and father represent the situation in the vast majority of households, the language used in this report refers to couples who have a baby. Where appropriate, distinctions are made for intermarried families.

*Firstborn orientation of the report*  Although the title of this report refers specifically to first-time parents, all of the material discussed in this report is equally applicable to the birth or adoption of additional children. The report emphasizes outreach to first-time parents because the dramatic nature of the transition from young adulthood to parenthood makes this group especially receptive to overtures.

*Programs included and excluded*  As mentioned earlier in this chapter, programs for parents with young children can be found in virtually all Jewish communities. Time and resource limitations meant many communities and many programs could not be visited or investigated. The programs mentioned in this
report represent only some of the excellent programs offered across the country. Exclusion of any program does not imply that it is of a lesser caliber or less effective.

Criteria for program success Since this study is qualitative rather than quantitative, it was not possible to establish numerical benchmarks for program success. The terms “success” and “successful” as used in this report are thus inherently subjective and comparative in nature.

Tensions between the religious and the secular In a modern society, there are always tensions between the religious and the secular, the parochial and the universal. These tensions are reflected in this study. This study advocates for early intervention, but focuses on the parochial cause of improving the Jewish future rather than the universal cause of infant mental health, the traditional aim of early intervention.

This choice by no means implies that the former is more important than the latter. Jewish children, like any children, need optimal social and emotional development during their early years. To be a good Jew, one first needs to be a healthy individual. The reason this report has chosen to focus on the Jewish future is that there are already many excellent organizations, books, and websites devoted to early childhood. Jewish parents, who tend to be highly educated, will inevitably encounter these resources whether or not they choose to become involved with the organized Jewish community.

However, individuals and families must make a conscious choice to be Jewish, and increasingly, more and more Jews are choosing not to become involved with Jewish life or raise Jewish children. Jewish leaders who care deeply about the Jewish people and who want to ensure a strong Jewish future devote their energies and resources to counteract these trends. This report has been written specifically with these leaders in mind to offer a new way to think about the problem.

Happily, when parents who have not previously been involved with the organized Jewish community make Jewish choices, the effects are not just religious and cultural in nature. While parents who participate in programs sponsored by Jewish institutions receive exposure to a time-honored tradition that has a profound system of values to help them raise their children, they are also exposed to the many current theories and practices on parenting and child development that these programs offer.
Chapter 2:  
A Window of Opportunity

The central premise of this report is that if first-time parents can be encouraged to attend specially-designed programs offered by the Jewish community, they will be more likely to create a Jewish home and raise their children with a Jewish identity. This chapter explains why the transition to parenthood is such an opportune time to offer these programs.

If the organized Jewish community wants to reach Jewish parents, it is important to recognize that when these individuals have their first baby, they are just like any other new parents. Their central concern is their new baby, not their religion. Thus the initial step for designing any outreach efforts must first be to understand the mindset, needs, and concerns of these individuals in their new role as parents.

Becoming a Parent

Anyone who has become a parent for the first time will readily agree that no event is simultaneously as joyful and as stressful. Aside from the immediate practical tasks of changing diapers, getting up in the middle of the night for feedings, and becoming an instant expert on baby gear, there are a number of other profound changes that occur in the realms of personal identity, relationships, and work. These changes are especially pronounced for mothers, who, despite shifts in societal norms over the past decades, remain the primary caregivers for children.

Changes in Identity  Social scientists consistently find that American Jews exceed other ethnic/racial and religious groups in socioeconomic status, education, occupational prestige, and household income. More than any other ethnic group in America, Jews are more likely to be members of the middle or upper class who hold professional, high-paying positions.
Jews also tend to marry later than other Americans and consequently have children later. More than half of Jewish women age 34 and under have not yet given birth to a child.

Consequently, a sizable percentage of first-time Jewish mothers are in their 30s and have been in the labor force for 10-15 years. When they have their first baby and either take a leave of absence or stop working altogether, there is often an identity crisis. In the words of one Jewish community professional who works with new mothers:

> Prior to becoming a mother, they defined themselves by their career, or even as a wife; motherhood has been unlike anything they either expected or experienced.

New mothers, who have been accustomed to daily social interactions in the workplace, suddenly find themselves isolated at home. These feelings are further accentuated if fathers are working long hours, if the parents have not yet made local friendships, or if they are not living near the baby’s grandparents.

Mothers also find their workplace experiences and skills are just not applicable when it comes to caring for a newborn. Prior feelings of competence and mastery are replaced by feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. Mothers have ongoing questions about their new baby’s eating habits, sleeping patterns, and bodily functions. Plus, they are overtired and stressed. It is not an exaggeration to say that some are desperate for guidance. As one professional summarized the situation:

> Today’s parents are frantic and very overwhelmed.

In response to their new status, mothers actively seek out parenting information, other mothers, and professional organizations for practical and emotional support. Often they join local playgroups or attend classes offered by secular organizations.

**Changes in Relationships** Having a baby causes dramatic changes in every major family and social relationship. Changes take place in relationships with spouses, parents, in-laws, and friends.

Perhaps the most dramatic changes take place within the marriage. Researchers have found that on average, there is a six-fold increase in the number of household tasks that need to be performed once a couple has a baby.
who have been accustomed to spending leisure time together find they spend much less time with each other. Conflicts may arise over responsibilities for household tasks, with each parent holding different expectations about the other's contribution. If the parents are a dual-career couple, there is even less time available for household tasks. As a result, somewhere between 40 and 70 percent of couples experience an increase in marital conflict and a decrease in marital satisfaction.

Relationships with parents and in-laws change as well. It is a natural instinct for new parents to turn to their parents and their spouse’s parents for support and guidance when babies are born. From the perspective of new grandparents, nothing brings joy like a first grandchild. Yet these relationships are significantly affected by the fact that sizable percentages of new parents have relocated, often for professional reasons, and are living a considerable distance from where they were born and raised. According to the 2000-01 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), more than a third of Jews born in the Northeast, and half of Jews born in the Midwest, have relocated to the West and South. When many Jewish parents have their first baby, family members may live thousands of miles away.

Friendships also change. Childless couples who have formed friendships around common interests find they suddenly have less in common with their friends once they have had a baby. New parents have little leisure time and instead of going to movies, cultural events, or restaurants with friends, are occupied by the needs of their new baby.

Finally, an entirely new relationship comes into existence when a baby is born. Young adults who have been preoccupied with their own professional, material, and recreational concerns shift their focus to their new child and their child’s future. The new baby is unquestionably the new focal point of their lives. Priorities shift radically.

Changes in Work and Finances According to the latest available figures, in the United States three out of every four white women (75 percent) between the childbearing ages of 25 and 54, and 57 percent of all women with children 3 and under, are in the labor force. The decision to return to work either part-time or full-time after becoming a mother is influenced by several economic factors, including the local cost-of-living, the husband’s income, and the degree to which the mother’s income prior to having a baby contributes to overall household expenses. In many households, especially those located in communities with a high cost of living and those in which the mother is a highly-paid professional, it
is simply not feasible for the household to function on one income. With the additional expenses resulting from having a baby, and the cost of childcare, the inevitable result is that new parents experience financial pressures.

*Opportunities for the Organized Jewish Community*  These life changes suggest the following when designing programs for this population:

- **Most parents are too busy to form their own support groups**  Parents welcome initiatives from the Jewish community because they are too preoccupied with their new babies to organize anything for themselves.

- **By meeting the needs of new parents, the Jewish community creates a positive impression and generates goodwill**  New parents have many needs not necessarily linked to being Jewish that the Jewish community can address. If the community provides support and assistance to new parents, they will view the community as a valuable resource and may become receptive later on to other Jewish programs.

- **Programs that address Jewish parents’ immediate concerns about becoming parents are more likely to be a draw, at least initially, than programs that are explicitly Jewish in content**  At the beginning stages of parenthood, parents are looking for information on how to be better parents and how to care for their baby. Religious issues and concerns are not foremost in their minds during the baby’s early months.

- **The Jewish community should view itself as an alternative extended family**  With so many new parents living far from extended family, Jewish professionals can serve as an alternative extended family.

- **There are many secular options that compete for new parents’ attention; to attract Jewish parents, programs with Jewish sponsorship need to be run professionally and conducted in high quality facilities**  New parents have many secular choices. In addition, affluent parents are used to spending time in nicely appointed offices and health clubs. Jewish programs need to be competitive with secular counterparts with respect to content, delivery, and facilities.

- **The Jewish community needs to be sensitive to different types of families and different types of Jews**  There are a number of alternatives to the traditional Jewish family consisting of a Jewish mother and a Jewish
father. Intermarriage is now commonplace. There are parents who adopt, single parents, gay/lesbian parents, and interracial parents. There are also different types of Jews that relate to programs in different ways and have different needs and preferences.

- **Fees for membership in Jewish institutions need to parallel parents’ financial circumstances**: Because parents experience financial pressures when they have a baby, they are less inclined to join synagogues or JCCs, even though they would benefit from membership. For those who are in need, fees need to match circumstances.

- **To attract parents, Jewish organizations need to offer child care and schedule events when parents can come**: If Jewish institutions want to attract Jewish parents to events, they need to offer child care. In addition, with so many parents in the labor force, it no longer makes sense to schedule events for parents exclusively on weekdays.

- **Programs always need to incorporate time for socializing**: It is critical to build in time for social relationships for a number of reasons: because parents feel isolated; because new parents are seeking friendships with other couples who have recently had children; because parents are stressed and seek emotional and practical support; because parents are looking for information from others about a variety of new concerns; and because the baby’s grandparents are likely to live in another state.

**The Importance of Peers**

As described in the preceding section, new parents go through many changes in a very short period of time. Because of these changes, new parents are especially eager to seek out relationships with other parents who are at the same stage of life and who are experiencing the same transitions. This is particularly true for mothers:

> Support is likely to be especially important to women at this time, given that they are the ones experiencing firsthand the physical and emotional changes of pregnancy, and generally the ones taking primary responsibility for the infant’s daily care.29
Peers provide practical and emotional support as well as the information needed to help new parents navigate through unfamiliar territory. Peers can also influence the choices these new parents make when decisions need to be made about childcare providers, classes, early childhood programs, or community resources.

Word of mouth among new parents about these community options is frequently the main information that parents rely upon. Word gets around fast, and if there is something negative it would spin so quickly that we would all hear.

**Playgroups** Perhaps the most popular way that parents connect with peers is through playgroups. The following description covers the different ways that parents, primarily mothers, participate in playgroups:

*A play group…can be shaped to fit parents’ needs and children’s interests. Play groups can meet in homes or community centers, be sponsored by religious, civic, or social organizations, or parents themselves. The activities can involve free play or structured projects. Generally the groups meet regularly and have a core membership.*

Although playgroups first came into existence in the 1940s with an emphasis on children, in recent years they have increasingly become opportunities for mothers to develop and maintain social networks. Currently, playgroups are ubiquitous and opportunities to join are actively sought out by new parents. Joining a playgroup is considered the thing to do when one has a baby. Some playgroups continue to meet for years and there are indications that they can be the source of some mothers’ most satisfying relationships. They are especially helpful to mothers who feel isolated.

**Intermarried Parents and Peers** The nature of peer relationships differs between in-married and intermarried couples. According to NJPS 2000-01, intermarried couples are much less likely to have Jewish friends. NJPS 2000-01 found that among intermarried couples, only 24 percent reported that half or more of their friends were Jewish. Among in-married couples, the corresponding figure was 76 percent.

Both before and after having children, many intermarried couples avoid discussions about the religion their children will be raised in, since these discussions can lead to controversy and disagreement. If the Jewish spouse is indifferent, does not press the issue, or is unable to convince the non-Jewish
spouse to agree to give the child a Jewish upbringing, the child will not be raised as a Jew. Not surprisingly, then, NJPS 2000-01 found that only 33 percent of children in households with a non-Jewish spouse are being raised as Jews, in contrast with 96 percent in households with two Jewish spouses.39

Even when intermarried parents do agree to raise their children as Jews, often as a condition of being married by a rabbi, there is no real way to ensure that the commitment is kept.40 In situations where the Jewish spouse has little Jewish background and the non-Jewish spouse has none, chances are slim that their children will have Jewish identities. A further complicating factor is that intermarried individuals who lack Jewish knowledge, both Jews and non-Jews, are often self-conscious and tend to avoid asking authority figures for information or advice. Jewish peers are a more accessible and less threatening source of information.41 This, of course, assumes that intermarried couples have Jewish friends they can ask.

There is clear evidence that Jewish peers influence Jewish choices. For example, a recent re-analysis of NJPS 2000-01 data found that the strongest predictor of intermarriage was the extent of Jewish friendships in high school. Jews who had fewer Jewish friends in high school were more likely to intermarry.42 Another study found that involvement in informal Jewish networks was related to involvement in other aspects of Jewish life.43 A strong case can be made that intermarried parents with Jewish friends will be more likely to raise their children as Jews and make Jewish choices for them.

Opportunities for the Organized Jewish Community  From a Jewish perspective, the fact that social relationships with peers are so important to new parents places these relationships in a pivotal role with respect to Jewish engagement.44

Jewish peers and Jewish playgroups can serve as a mediating structure between unengaged parents and community institutions. Parents who have not been connected to the community may not be interested in connecting to community institutions, but they are interested in connecting to other parents. Jewish peers
can serve as a link to the larger community. It appears to be the case that Jews, even those who are otherwise uninvolved with the organized community, enjoy being with other Jews.\textsuperscript{45} When given the choice between participating in a Jewish group or a secular group, Jewish parents prefer being in a Jewish group.

The preceding points about the importance of peers raise several practical possibilities for influencing new parents’ engagement:

- **One way to “market” programs sponsored by the Jewish community is to make sure that parents know they will have opportunities to meet other parents** Since parents want to meet other parents and Jews want to meet other Jews, the community can attract more Jewish families to events if it creates opportunities for parents to socialize.

- **Playgroups organized and facilitated by the Jewish community are an especially effective way to create strong, lasting connections with other Jews** Since most new parents are looking for social relationships and want to join playgroups, Jewish playgroups facilitated by Jewish community professionals have the greatest potential to forge long-lasting connections between Jewish parents.

- **Parents who would not be inclined to attend events sponsored by Jewish organizations might be more likely to go if encouraged by Jewish friends** Parents who have not been involved with the organized Jewish community might be more willing to attend events if peers invite and accompany them.\textsuperscript{46}

- **Parents are more likely to make Jewish educational choices if they have Jewish friends making these choices** Parents rely on peer recommendations for a variety of decisions regarding their children. If parents have Jewish friends and these friends recommend Jewish educational institutions, parents will be more inclined to enroll their children in these institutions.
Children’s Development and Parents’ Interests

Babies are the focal point of new parents’ lives. The types of programs that tend to interest parents are linked to their child’s stage of development. For example, pregnant parents are interested in childbirth classes, parents of newborns want to learn about such topics as lactation and diaper rash, and parents of toddlers want to help with the development of their child’s motor skills.

The novelty of parenthood creates a fresh learning dynamic. Parents become very receptive to new ideas during their child’s first two years. During this time, they are “moldable,” highly inquisitive, and constantly seeking information.

During the baby’s first three months, parents are focused almost exclusively on strategies to get through the day. They are preoccupied with diapering, dressing, eating, and sleeping. From three to six months, parents begin to think about their own lives again. Mothers begin to think about going back to work and struggle to integrate their old and new identities. Their focus shifts towards learning more about how to help their new baby develop. Beginning at about six months, parents become much more interested in outside programs and are looking for ways to get out of the house. This period of interest and exploration continues until around the time when children turn two, when in the words of one professional, the “door shuts.” Thus, the optimal window for reaching parents appears to be from the time babies are three months old until they reach the age of two. This “sensitive period” seems to be the best time for learning.

Parents read extensively beginning the first moment they become pregnant, consulting books and the Internet for information about parenting and child development. By the time parents show up in a class, they already know a great deal and are coming as much for social reasons as for information.

*Opportunities for the Organized Jewish Community*  
The close links between children’s developmental stages and parents’ interests suggests the following ways the community can connect with new parents:

- **Parents are likely to be more receptive to learning about Jewish values during their baby’s first few years than when their children are older.**  
  Because parents are already open to new ideas and are in a learning phase, they are also potentially more willing to learn about Judaism. Also, just as first-time parents lack confidence in their ability to parent, they also
lack confidence in their ability to pass along Jewish tradition, and are looking for values with which to raise their children. They don’t want to repeat the inadequacies of their own childhoods.\(^{49}\)

- **Programs for Jewish parents need to be different for children of different ages**  
  Parents with infants are at a very different stage than parents with toddlers; programs need to target very specific age ranges. It isn’t effective to mix parents with children of diverse ages.

- **Mothers, especially those who choose not to return to the labor force, are receptive to volunteer opportunities**  
  Once babies are six months or older, mothers are more willing to get involved in outside activities and are open to volunteer opportunities. Jewish programs targeted for mothers with very young children can readily draw on this pool of potential volunteers.

- **Some mothers can be cultivated as peer leaders**  
  Mothers in their 30s with 10-15 years of experience in the corporate world are eager to integrate their professional skills with their new interest in motherhood. Mothers with natural leadership ability can be identified and trained to serve as leaders in specific neighborhoods, encouraging and inspiring Jewish choices among their peers.

**The Science of Early Childhood Development**

Over the past decade, there has been a great deal of interest in the neurophysiology of infant development among scientists, educators, service providers, policy makers, and parents.\(^{50}\) A landmark study entitled *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development* provided a sweeping review of the literature, identifying several core themes.\(^{51}\)

- All children are born wired for feelings and ready to learn
- Early environments matter and nurturing relationships are essential
- Society is changing and the needs of young children are not being addressed
• Interactions among early childhood science, policy, and practice are problematic and demand dramatic rethinking.

Babies begin life with a complete set of neurons in their brains. Each interaction with the environment stimulates the brain to form synapses between brain cells. Positive interactions with the environment release chemicals in infants’ brains that promote healthy development and help in the development of brain architecture. Thus, each experience creates an actual brain structure for subsequent experience. The timing of these experiences is critical since certain structures stop developing at certain ages. Thus what takes place during a child’s early months and years sets the stage for what the child’s future will be like.

Learning begins much earlier in life than was previously suspected. For example, research indicates that babies at the age of three months can already distinguish among several hundred spoken sounds. Research also indicates that babies cannot learn these sounds from electronic devices, only interpersonally from parents and caregivers, underscoring the all-important nature of the quality of early relationships.52

Given the vital importance of early learning experiences, an international movement has developed to prepare children properly for entry into school. The phrase “Ready to Learn” has become a widely used mantra for this movement.

Because early experiences are so formative, and because early interventions are so effective, early childhood professionals pay considerable attention to “at-risk” and special needs children. These efforts exist in both the nonprofit and government sectors, and at the local, state, national, and international levels.

Opportunities for the Organized Jewish Community  Brain research and “ready to learn” are popular topics among parents, and parents are very interested in incorporating this information into their interactions with their children. These trends have implications for Jewish organizations who want to serve this population.

• Non-Jewish program content needs to be sophisticated  Parents read extensively and already have sophisticated knowledge from books and the Internet about child development and parenting. Programs that do not take this into account will be viewed by parents as unsophisticated. Professionals who offer programs either need early childhood expertise or
training so that they are not perceived by parents as lacking basic knowledge.

- **Programs with non-Jewish content can be big draws** Events featuring prominent authors and subject-matter experts can draw hundreds of unengaged parents to events at Jewish institutions, providing an opportunity to publicize other Jewish programs at the institution.

- **Jewish organizations need to develop relationships with secular organizations** Jewish organizations have much to learn from organizations with expertise in parenting and child development. In addition, these organizations are often willing to partner with Jewish programs and publicize their activities.

- **Jewish outreach agendas also have implications for infant mental health** Programs designed to attract unengaged families also have the potential to help parents raise healthier children and identify children who are at-risk or who have special needs.

**Transmitting Jewish Identity**

*There can be no doubt that the attitudes of parents are among the most important factors in the formation of religious attitudes.*

If the hope of the Jewish community is for new parents to instill a Jewish identity in their children, it is important to first understand how identity is transmitted.

Research to date on families from a variety of religious backgrounds suggests that parents are indeed the most important factor in the transmission of identity, having an even stronger effect than religious schools. Mothers appear to be more significant than fathers in transmitting identity, in part because they spend more time with children.

Yet agreement between parents is also important, since differences between parents creates an atmosphere in which children learn there are multiple options and consequently grow up feeling that religion is a matter of choice. A further complicating factor resulting from intermarriage is the burden that it places on children. When children who grow up in intermarried families are not given a religious identity by their parents, they find themselves in the uncomfortable
position of choosing later in life, where the choice is not between one set of religious beliefs and another, but between mom’s religion and dad’s religion. To avoid this situation, children of intermarriage sometimes make the choice not to choose at all.

Religious identity is transmitted by involving children in religion at home, by taking children to religious services, and by talking about religion. Stories are especially important in the transmission of religion since they play a role in children’s cognitive, emotional, and social development. Unlike older children and teenagers, young children unquestionably accept the religious teachings of their parents. The quality of parenting itself is also a factor in subsequent religious expression. Healthy parenting appears to foster healthy religious attitudes.

Is it possible to instill Jewish identity in very young children? There is some evidence that cognitive development does not constrain religious development. Insights regarding the age at which religious identity begins can tentatively be extrapolated from the recent research on infants’ brains described in the previous section. Babies learn by watching. Observational learning is one of the primary ways that identity is formed. Thus, since babies demonstrate learning as early as three months of age, it is conceivable that Jewish identity can also be acquired at a very early age.

While still speculative, it may turn out to be the case that children can acquire a Jewish identity in the crib through explicitly Jewish interactions with parents and caregivers.

Opportunities for the Organized Jewish Community The preceding discussion has important implications:

- **Working Jewish mothers need Jewish infant care for their children**
  Early in this chapter it was pointed out that more than half of women with children 3 and under are working. This means that many Jewish babies are being cared for by individuals other than their mothers. In all likelihood, the caregivers are not Jewish. Judaism cannot be transmitted effectively if there is no Jewish relational environment during a child’s critical early years. At the present time, there are only a few infant care programs with Jewish sponsorship. If there were more Jewish infant care, more babies and parents would be influenced in a Jewish direction.
• Parents are the most important Jewish educators; they should understand, and the Jewish community must recognize, that parents need to be the primary transmitters of Jewish identity. Jewish educators and institutions are vital for ensuring a strong Jewish future but they are not a substitute for the even more significant role that parents play in creating a Jewish identity. Young children emulate their parents. If parents are indifferent to Judaism, young children will not take it seriously, even when they receive the best Jewish education from the best Jewish educators.

Summary

Carefully-designed programs for new parents are a promising and logical investment for creating Jewish identity among the next generation. If parents become engaged with Judaism when they first have children, they are likely to stay engaged. Children will be much more likely to grow up with a Jewish identity if their parents have a Jewish home, talk about Judaism, and bring their children to synagogue. First-time parents are especially receptive and open to learning. Young children are highly impressionable and learning begins in the crib.
Chapter 3:
Programs to Find and Engage Jewish Parents

Overview

Even though programs for Jewish parents with young children have been offered for more than twenty years, few Jewish leaders appear to recognize their value, judging from the lack of support they receive. The prevailing assumption seems to be that new parents aren’t very interested in Jewish life and are hard to find.

The research described in this chapter, based on visits to communities with well-developed programming, indicates that parents actually can be reached and, when the right types of programs are offered, are very interested in getting involved with the organized Jewish community.

Virtually all communities offer some type of program. However, only a few communities have developed sophisticated programs on a community-wide scale. This chapter describes what these communities offer and identifies best practices.

Who Offers Programs? Programs for new parents are offered by a variety of agencies, organizations, and foundations. At the local level, federations, Jewish Community Centers, Jewish Family and Children’s Services, synagogue-based early childhood programs, central agencies for Jewish education, Chabad, Jewish colleges, local foundations, and individuals in private homes all offer or have developed programs.

At the national level, synagogue movement regional offices, Hadassah, the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School, the Jewish Outreach Institute, and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation have each developed national initiatives.

Types of Programs There are four basic categories of programs, corresponding to children’s stages of development:

- Prenatal education programs for parents who are expecting
- Gift basket (Shalom Baby) programs to welcome parents who have just had a baby
• Infant/toddler programs, including Shabbat and Jewish holiday programs, both within and outside of formally established parenting centers

• Family or adult education programs for parents with young children

Motivations for Offering Programs Programs for new parents are developed with varying motivations and aims. While those who conceive of and propose these programs may do so out of a simple desire to help new parents, ultimately, community leaders do not provide funding and support unless certain outcomes are expected. The following list describes various reasons that new parent programs are offered:

• Fundraising Welcome programs for parents are often created by federations with the primary goal of adding names to federation lists for future solicitations.

• Marketing Jewish organizations offer programs in part to encourage parents to either become members or enroll in their early childhood programs.

• Outreach Reaching out to unengaged Jews is a frequent aim of new parent programs.

• Revenue Many programs generate revenue for the sponsoring organization. Individual educators also offer programs either in conjunction with a Jewish organization or independently as a way to supplement their income.

• Mission-driven Some organizations, such as Jewish Family Services or central agencies for Jewish education, offer programs because they are a logical expression of the organization’s mission.

Program Content Programs vary not only in their motivations, but also in their content. Most programs involving very young children are attended by a parent or caregiver together with a child, although some programs are for parents only. Different programs incorporate different combinations of the following content formats:
• **Information about parenting and child development**  Some programs are purely secular, offering practical information to help parents make the transition to parenthood and bond with their children. Others combine parenting information with some Jewish content.

• **Developmentally-appropriate children’s activities**  Sometimes the primary orientation of a program is for children rather than parents, and age-appropriate activities are offered.

• **Social time**  Almost all programs provide time so that parents can socialize.

• **Jewish learning**  Central agencies of Jewish education, rabbis, Jewish educators, Jewish Community Centers, and synagogues offer programs primarily designed to give parents a stronger background in Jewish tradition.

• **Clinical/peer support**  Some new parents have personal difficulties such as post-partum depression or marital conflict. Others are overwhelmed by the responsibilities of new parenthood. Jewish Family Services sometimes offers support by trained professionals or peers for either individuals or groups.

**Gift Basket/Welcome Programs**

Programs for first-time parents won’t be offered and cannot succeed unless parents come. How do communities find parents who have recently had a baby? The most common way is to establish a gift basket/welcome program, commonly called a Shalom Baby program. These programs provide an opportunity to introduce parents to the community in a positive light at a time when parents are very receptive to overtures. They strengthen the Jewish identities of parents who are already engaged and foster engagement among those who are not.

*It all started with that first Shalom Baby visit… and then it snowballed and it’s really great.*

*Origins and Scope*  Gift basket programs for new parents are by no means a Jewish innovation and have been utilized extensively in the general community. The first modern gift basket program in a Jewish community, entitled *Welcome to*
Our World, was started over 20 years ago in Baltimore by the Associated, the local federation. The current ubiquitous program name Shalom Baby was coined in 1992 by the JCC and federation in St. Louis, which expanded on the original Baltimore concept by using peer volunteers to deliver the baskets to the new parents’ homes.64 A year later, based on feedback from these initial home visits, mothers were invited to join specially-created playgroups after they received a gift basket. Shalom Baby is now used as an umbrella term for a variety of new parent programs in addition to gift basket programs.65

Tables A1 and A2 in the Appendix provide information about current gift basket programs in the United States.66 At the present time, 30 appear to be active; information was obtained from 25 of them for this study.

Four of the ten largest Jewish communities in the United States, Chicago, Washington, DC, Detroit, and South Palm Beach County, Florida, have gift basket programs. New York and Los Angeles, the two largest communities, together representing somewhere between a quarter and a third of all Jewish births, do not have gift basket programs. Programs are also found in relatively small communities like Albuquerque, Charlotte, Peoria, and Gainesville.

In some communities, such as Dallas, Houston, Philadelphia, Rochester, and Southern New Jersey, programs were started but were later discontinued. Reasons include inadequate funding, insufficient staff and volunteers, and cancellation by community leadership. Seattle also discontinued their program but has recently restarted it.

Twenty programs are sponsored by federations and 6 are sponsored by JCCs. The remaining four are sponsored respectively by Jewish Family and Children’s Services, a Board of Jewish Education, a Jewish nonprofit, and a private foundation.

For the most part, program directors/coordinators have multiple responsibilities and only devote a fraction of their time to these programs. In 16 of the 25 communities from which data were obtained, program coordinators devoted 25 percent or less of their time to the program, all in federation-sponsored programs. Denver and San Diego, both communities with JCC-sponsored programs, are the only ones with full-time Shalom Baby directors.
Program budgets (excluding staff salary) vary widely. For example, although St. Louis and Denver have similar Jewish populations, the budget in St. Louis is only $2,000, while Denver’s budget is $90,000.

Several programs are highly successful at recruiting volunteers. St. Louis has 70, and San Francisco has 55. Programs vary widely in the extent to which they search for new parents and the extent to which they offer follow-up programs after the initial gift basket.

In order to compare programs’ success at welcoming new parents, a very rough estimate of the percentage of new parents welcomed was calculated (see the Appendix for an explanation of how the figure was determined). Charlotte, a relatively small Jewish community of 8,600, appears to be the most successful at finding and welcoming new Jewish parents, reaching approximately 70 percent.67 Among somewhat larger communities, two in California, San Diego and San Jose, were the most successful, reaching about 40 percent of new parents. Fifteen of the 23 communities from which data were available appear to have reached less than twenty percent of new families, which means that more than four out of every five Jewish parents in these communities did not receive any welcome from the community when they had a baby.

Finding the Parents  The primary reason for creating a gift basket program is simultaneously the primary challenge facing communities that offer them – finding Jewish parents who are having a baby or adopting. Names can be obtained from members of the community (community referrals) or from the expectant parents themselves (self-referrals).

Community referrals come from other parents, from reading synagogue newsletters and Jewish newspapers, and from Jewish professionals such as mohels, hospital chaplains, rabbis, social workers, early childhood professionals, and day school leaders. Realtors may also provide information about new families who move to the community. Publicizing the program to these professionals and getting them to participate is vital since they can serve as its eyes and ears.

Self-referrals come about through word of mouth, from advertisements in Jewish newspapers and local parenting magazines, or from brochures distributed to Jewish establishments, offices of obstetricians and pediatricians, and maternity stores. Privately owned maternity stores are usually more cooperative than
chains. Brochures usually have tear-off cards, a phone number, or directions to a website explaining how to receive a basket.

Most gift-basket programs make only minimal efforts to seek out new parents, waiting for phone calls from what is likely to be a not very extensive community referral network. Programs that do engage in extra efforts tend to find many more parents. Whether or not efforts are made depends on the inclinations of the program coordinator, the amount of staff time devoted to the program, the availability of volunteers, and the receptivity of community professionals. Among successful programs, ongoing efforts to publicize the program generate word of mouth that creates a very positive community-wide awareness among both Jewish professionals and parents.

Jewish professionals are much less likely to know about pregnancies among those who are not connected to the community. To reach those who are not connected, a volunteer network of parents is vital. The ideal volunteer is someone who has a strong Jewish identity and many contacts in the secular world. These parents will have acquaintances through work, school, social networks, playgroups, parenting classes, professional organizations, and health clubs, and can tell their Jewish acquaintances about the program.

Successful program coordinators report that referrals from volunteer networks and self-referrals through brochures in physician’s offices are the two most effective ways to reach Jews who are not connected to the community.

Initial Contact  Initial contacts with parents are carefully orchestrated in well-developed programs. When a new name is obtained, the expectant or new parents receive a phone call from a member of the program staff. For community referrals, the staff member begins by mentioning the person who provided the referral, since some parents start out being suspicious of the phone call under the assumption it is some sort of commercial marketing effort. Suspicious feelings, if present, usually subside quickly. Less than five percent of parents find the contact to be unwelcome. Occasionally, parents are not reached or calls are not returned. One type of referral that seems to be problematic is when grandparents provide the

[The program director] cares about this program. This is an extension of something that she really believes in and it is important and she is passionate about it, and so are the volunteers. And I think she and the people who are working together help support that in each other and encourage that, and I think it is one of the reasons it is successful.
program with a name of a son or daughter who is not interested in the Jewish community and resents the grandparent’s interference.

The staff member then introduces the program, obtains the baby’s due date, and sends out some sort of introductory information, which might include a letter or a birthing card. A second call is placed after the due date to wish the family a mazal tov and make sure that the birth went smoothly. The name is then turned over to a volunteer who contacts the family to set up a time to deliver the gift basket.

When volunteers in well-developed programs deliver the baskets, they describe the contents and complete a questionnaire which is subsequently entered into a database. Most programs have training sessions for volunteers that cover such topics as the contents of the gift basket, how to conduct the visit, the questionnaire, and potential next steps for parents. Volunteers are provided with checklists to make sure all critical points are covered. Many programs do not deliver the baskets in person, sending them via mail or leaving them at the door.

Parents repeatedly indicated in focus groups that one of the most attractive and compelling features of the program was the friendliness and personal warmth expressed by program coordinators and volunteers who called and visited their homes. Whether parents choose to engage with the community or remain unengaged seemed to be affected much more by these personal contacts than by the gift basket itself.

Contents of the Gift Baskets
Shalom Baby programs pay a great deal of attention to the contents and appearance of the gift baskets. In many cases, there is more attention paid to the basket than to any other aspect of the program. Baskets range from simple containers with a few items to elaborate arrangements created by professional designers that have contents worth close to $100. Often, items are donated. Baskets generally contain Judaica, baby items, information about Jewish and general resources in the community, books, music, coupons, and information about Judaism. Several programs have created customized resource guides containing comprehensive information about the community. Some programs charge a fee to include promotional materials from local preschools or day schools. Programs generally have policies about what can and cannot be
included in a basket. The Appendix presents a list of the contents of the Baltimore basket as an example of what one community offers.

Parents report that while they are initially very impressed with the more lavish baskets, it would seem that for many the impressions the baskets make aren’t enduring. New parents receive many gifts when they have a baby and also receive a gift basket from the hospital. What is likely to happen is that some of the contents of the Shalom Baby basket end up in a closet with all the other unused gifts.

Timing is also a consideration with respect to basket contents. For example, baskets may include flyers about local Jewish preschools, but parents generally don’t begin to think about preschool until children reach 18 months.\(^6\) Getting materials into parents’ hands at the right time through proper follow-up is likely to have a much more significant impact than providing too much information at a time when parents are already overwhelmed by their new baby.

*Playgroups and Follow-Up*  As the discussion in Chapter 2 pointed out, peer relationships are critical for getting new parents engaged with the community. Parents who have not been engaged with the community previously won’t necessarily start coming to programs just because they receive a gift basket, but might come if they are invited by a volunteer or someone they know. Yet surprisingly, relatively few Shalom Baby programs offer a strong follow-up program to help parents connect with community professionals and other parents after the initial basket is delivered.

After gift baskets are delivered, well-developed programs have a variety of follow-up programs to give new parents an opportunity to meet each other. These range from one-time programs offered on an infrequent basis to weekly playgroups. While the latter is the most likely to creating lasting connections to the community, only a few Shalom Baby programs help mothers to join Jewish playgroups.\(^6\) Jewish playgroups sometimes are created separately from gift basket programs, although it is more difficult to make them work since a recruiting list of potential members is not readily available.

In the secular world, new mothers frequently join playgroups with other new mothers from a variety of backgrounds who have given birth around the same time. In Seattle, for example, most new mothers join “PEPS” groups, an acronym for the Program for Early Parent Support.\(^7\) In St. Louis, Washington, DC, San Diego, and elsewhere, playgroup membership is “engineered” by Shalom Baby
programs so that members are Jewish or have Jewish spouses or partners. In both San Diego and St. Louis, about 75 percent of mothers who receive baskets join playgroups. The following discussion describes the process of creating playgroups in St. Louis.²¹

When volunteers arrive to deliver the gift basket, one of the items on the questionnaire that parents complete asks if new mothers would be interested in joining a playgroup with other new mothers.

What follows is a careful matching process, assigning mothers to groups on a number of criteria: when their baby was born, where they live, whether or not they are first-time mothers, whether they are working mothers or stay-at-home mothers, their age, and the days/times they are available.

A JCC staff person contacts the mother by phone before the first meeting is scheduled to explain how the groups work, address any concerns, and emphasize that the groups are run by the mothers themselves – the staff person’s role is simply to coordinate. Once enough mothers in the neighborhood are ready, the first playgroup meeting is scheduled at one of the mother’s homes.

Mothers, who have just entered an entirely new phase in their lives, are nervous and excited about the first meeting, called Nosh & Play. The staff person begins by asking the mothers to introduce themselves and their babies. Subsequent topics of discussion include expectations, hosting, scheduling, snacks, and sick baby policies. The staff person also provides the new members with a menu of options describing where they might meet and what they might do.

The staff person observes the first group to identify a contact person who is outgoing, friendly, and appears to have organizational skills. This person will be the link between the staff person and the group and has responsibility for scheduling the group meetings and alerting the staff person about issues that arise. JCC staff and contacts generally speak every month or two to discuss how the group is going and address any issues that might emerge with respect to new mothers who want to join or mothers who want to leave.

The San Diego Shalom Baby program, rather than selecting coordinators, asks mothers to volunteer to be the group “captain” during the first meeting. It
appears that the choice of a captain/coordinator, more than any other consideration, determines the longevity of a particular group.

Email is critical for scheduling meetings and keeping mothers in touch. Mothers meet in a variety of settings – homes, parks, playgrounds, zoos, local bookstores, and the JCC. Mothers tend to rely heavily on each other for information and support. They celebrate holidays together and teach each other about various aspects of Judaism. Many experience Shabbat for the first time in these groups.

In both St. Louis and San Diego, there are groups that stay together for years, continuing to meet regularly. Both communities find that groups enroll their children en masse in Jewish preschools so they can continue to be together. Warm, lasting friendships are created.

Other follow-up programs are described later in this chapter.

*Evaluating Gift Basket Programs*  Professionals who coordinate gift basket programs consistently describe how previously unengaged parents become involved with the Jewish community through these programs, and parents who participate in focus groups describe their experiences very positively.

However, professionals cannot be entirely objective since they have a vested interest in these programs, and anecdotal reports from parents do not provide systematic information, since responses are not random and comments are not anonymous. The highly positive comments voiced by participants are encouraging, but the effects of the programs need to be studied in a more systematic fashion.

None of the gift basket programs has been objectively evaluated by an outside organization. The San Diego program conducted its own internal study via the Internet, and received responses from 273 parents, more than a third of those who have participated in the program. The study found that 83 percent of respondents felt that they had been introduced to community resources, 63 percent felt more connected to the Jewish community, and 38 percent had become more involved. More than three-fourths (77 percent) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the program, and only 12 percent were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Most of the dissatisfied responses came from working mothers, who felt that the program did not accommodate their schedules.
One of the main effects of the program appears to be in influencing preschool choice and synagogue affiliation, as 79 percent of respondents indicated that they were either enrolled or planning to enroll in a Jewish preschool and 78 percent had either joined or were planning to join a synagogue.

It is clear that additional research on these programs is needed to determine their effects.

**Key Elements for Successful Gift Basket Programs** Data from the interviews and focus groups suggest the following to maximize program success:

- The purpose of the program is to establish and build connections with new parents. Presenting parents with a gift basket is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Without follow-up, the program is at best a nice gesture, but will have little or no effect on future engagement.

- Community leaders need to be educated about the program’s considerable potential to engage new parents if properly designed. They also need to understand that this potential can only be realized if sufficient staff time is funded to do all the work involved in finding the parents, delivering the baskets, coordinating the volunteers, and engaging in follow-up. Directing a gift basket program should not be just another staff responsibility among many. It should be its own job, ideally full-time.

- Gift basket program directors should be carefully selected. Selection criteria should include organizational skills, having a passion for working with first-time parents, experience as a parent, and warm, caring interpersonal skills.

- Extensive efforts should be made to find the parents by cultivating relationships with physicians and creating referral networks of Jewish professionals and parents.

- Baskets should be delivered in person by trained peer volunteers.

- Volunteers should collect information from parents during the visit and enter it into a database afterward.

- Committed volunteers should become co-owners of the program.
• All interactions with parents should convey a feeling of warmth and caring.

• Playgroups should be organized for new mothers. Playgroup coordinators should stay in regular contact with the groups.

• Program directors should engage in continuous follow-up with a variety of targeted programs, phone calls, and regular emails. Parents should receive information from a single, trusted source.

• Gift basket program lists should belong to and benefit the entire community, not just the sponsoring organization. It may not be practical or advisable to make lists of new parents available to anyone who wants them, but parents should be informed about all relevant programs in the community, not just those offered by the sponsoring organization.

• Because one of the most important goals of the program is to engage parents who have been previously unengaged with the community, the focus should always be on giving to parents, not receiving from them. Parents should not be solicited by the local federation for a minimum of at least two years after receiving a basket, and then only after having attended a specified number of events. Requests for specific donations to the Shalom Baby program prior to this time are, however, reasonable.

Programs for Expectant Parents

If properly designed gift basket programs are an effective way to reach the unengaged after they have had a baby, wouldn’t it also be effective to reach parents who are expecting? And wouldn’t it benefit parents to learn about Jewish traditions concerning pregnancy and birth? This is the logic of programming for expectant parents.
Programs for expectant parents have been in existence for at least 20 years. The program with the greatest longevity is Lamazal Tov in Baltimore, which was started in the 1980s based on a course that was being taught in Los Angeles.

A number of programs for expectant parents now exist around the country, sponsored by synagogues, regional Movement offices, central agencies for Jewish education, and individual mothers. Some primarily have Jewish content while others are a combination of Jewish content and childbirth information. Contact information for this representative list can be found in Table A5 in the Appendix.

- **Jewish Baby University**, which has been taught in Denver for the past 10 years, is currently being taught at Rose Community Hospital and is co-sponsored by the local JCC, which oversees registration. The program consists of six sessions for parents in the third trimester of pregnancy and is co-taught by a rabbi who is the hospital chaplain and a childbirth educator. There is an equal emphasis on Jewish teachings and childbirth issues. A course with the same name and similar content is also taught in the Phoenix area at various synagogues.

- **Lamazal Tov** is a name used by programs in a number of communities, although they have only the name in common and are otherwise unrelated. The Baltimore program, offered by the Center for Jewish Education, is similar in format to Jewish Baby University, alternating childbirth information with Jewish content (see the Appendix for a detailed description of the curriculum).

- **Making Mishpocha**, a five-session course offered in Washington, DC, is co-taught at a Conservative synagogue by a rabbi and a social worker from the Jewish Social Service Agency. The content is exclusively Jewish, with no information on childbirth. There is some emphasis on the transition from being a couple to being a family. The course is not open to intermarried couples and has received some criticism for this policy.

- **Baby is a Blessing** is a three-session course offered by Project Welcome, an outreach program in San Francisco. The curriculum was developed by the Reform Movement and a similar program is offered at Reform synagogues around the country.73

- **Belly Shmooze** was developed by an expectant mother in Boston who wanted to meet other Jewish expectant mothers and decided to start her
own program. Without any support from the organized Jewish community, using synagogue and havurah email listservs for publicity, she ran a successful five-session program with speakers from the community.

From the perspective of finding the unengaged, there are several limitations to these types of programs. Expectant parents are harder to find than new parents, since having a baby is a more public event than expecting one. Program coordinators find expectant parents through emails, advertisements, word of mouth, synagogues, federations, and publicity at offices of obstetricians.

A more significant reason why these programs have limited enrollment is that expectant parents have not yet entered into the intense responsibilities of new parenthood. There may be physical discomfort and anticipation during pregnancy, but the new reality has not yet happened. Expectant parents are not yet desperate and they do not yet feel a sense of urgency to get help.

For these reasons, programs for expectant parents usually attract those who are already connected to the Jewish community, rather than the unengaged. The exception is in communities where these programs have been in place for a number of years and there is very positive word of mouth.

For those who do participate, professionals report that strong bonds are created among parents that last for years.

**Infant/Toddler Programs and Parenting Centers**

Programs for expectant parents and gift basket programs may reach parents for a brief period of time, but unless programs are also available for parents with children at the infant/toddler stage, they will not stay involved with the community. Most infant/toddler programs are offered by Jewish Community Centers, although more and more programs are being offered by synagogues and synagogue-based early childhood programs.

Programs are attended by both parents (or caretakers) and babies. While in some communities parents have the opportunity to begin attending infant/toddler programs as early as three weeks after a baby is born, once babies have reached the age of about six months, parents begin to relax and become much more interested in attending outside programs.74
Most infant/toddler programs do not have Jewish content. The idea is to focus on parenting issues and the baby rather than Judaism. However, program sponsorship is Jewish and there are many opportunities for parents to meet other Jewish parents. Programs are often very similar to those offered in the general community – the similarities are deliberate so that the sponsoring organization attracts parents who would otherwise go to the competition. Programs that do have Jewish content are often based on Jewish holidays or Shabbat observance. Chabad is one organization that offers Mommy and Me programs with Jewish content at hundreds of locations.

Parents come to these programs to get out of the house, have fun, meet other Jewish parents, and learn something useful. Programs are light and have cute titles. The Appendix presents a list of program titles from various programs around the country. Music and swimming classes at JCCs seem to be especially popular. Depending upon the range of offerings, parents can potentially go to a different program every day. For this reason, program providers try to offer many different options.

Professionals indicate that program content is less important than program staff. A popular program leader will draw parents regardless of the topic. Certain leaders have a following among parents, and synagogues and JCCs actually compete for their services. It is considered a coup when a popular leader switches to another institution.

There are certain programs that will always draw parents when offered by the right staff person. For example, mothers always want “time off” so programs try to offer these opportunities regularly, scheduling programs like “Mom’s Night Out” once a month. At the same time, program leaders need to continually come up with new ideas for programs. Parents are trendy and are always looking for something new. It’s not always easy to generate new ideas since children between the ages of 6 and 18 months can’t do very much yet, and parents are past the point at which they feel the need to discuss the trials and tribulations of new parenthood.

One of the most popular Jewish programs is a Tot Shabbat service, found in JCCs, synagogues, and synagogue-based early childhood programs.
Classes tend to bond quickly and parents tend to move in packs, signing up together for programs. Predictable attendance helps to build a sense of community among parents.

Professionals indicate that programs with explicit Jewish content are “scary” to some parents who have not been engaged with the community, so some professionals are reluctant to offer programs with too much Jewish content.

**Parenting Centers** The first Jewish parenting center started at the Milwaukee JCC in the mid 1980s. Parenting centers offer a variety infant/toddler programs and courses for parents in one place. There are about 25 JCC-based parenting centers in the country (see Table A3 in the Appendix for a listing), and another 15 or so can be found in synagogues (Table A4 in the Appendix).

Where parenting centers exist, they are a strong draw. Several, including those in Milwaukee and suburban Washington, DC and Baltimore have been in existence for more than 15 years.

One of the most successful parenting centers in the country is in Seattle, where parents can join support groups, choose from among a number of programs, attend a *Tot Shabbat* service, or participate in an annual baby fair. In addition, while their children are in childcare, parents can attend talks by scientists, physicians, authors, and experts in parenting and child development.75

Successful parenting centers model many of their programs on those in the general community. Parenting centers like the ones in Seattle and Milwaukee are the best programs of their kind in the general community and draw all types of parents, not just Jewish parents.

Some parenting centers have a drop-in facility where parents can just show up during designated hours, creating a regular sense of community. JCC-based parenting centers usually offer membership for a fee that is much less than a JCC membership, with the hope that parents might later choose to join the JCC.

As is the case with infant/toddler programs, some parenting centers have strong Jewish content and some do not. Even in the absence of Jewish content, the Jewish setting promotes Jewish conversations. One parenting center in a JCC has
a policy of always including Jewish content, but limiting it to no more than 5 minutes.

**Clinical and Peer Support Programs**

Over the past decade, in the general community, there has been a great deal of interest in early interventions and home visits to mothers because the first few years are so critical for a child’s development. The Jewish community is considerably behind in instituting these programs, perhaps because of a mistaken assumption that Jewish parents and children don’t need them. There are, however, several cutting-edge programs of this type either sponsored or co-sponsored by Jewish Family and Children’s Services that serve Jewish parents, often attracting parents who would not otherwise come to an event with Jewish sponsorship. Contact information for each of the programs described below is provided in Table A5 in the Appendix.

*Parents Place*  
Parents Place, which is a part of Jewish Family and Children’s Services in San Francisco, began in 1975 with a mother/infant support group and grew from there. The intent was to create a whole family resource center model that would help parents develop the strengths they need to raise a healthy child. The program now has a budget of $6 million, facilities at four sites, and serves the needs of almost 30,000 Bay Area parents a year. Its offerings go far beyond the parenting center model discussed in the previous section.

Most programs involve a fee for parents. Programs include between 40 and 60 different classes and workshops, a resource library, a drop-in play center, and a childcare bulletin board. Some classes are taught in workplaces to accommodate working mothers. Parents Place also provides assessment and counseling services, mental health consultations, and assistance with adoption. Programs serve parents with children of all ages, both for everyday issues and serious problems. Programs are highly responsive to parents’ interests, needs, and wishes.

The programs are advertised as non-sectarian and are open to all parents. About a third of those who attend are Jewish, and many are intermarried. Parents Place sees itself as turning Jewish values into action, but does not offer programs with Jewish content. Their underlying philosophy is based on the premise that to raise healthy Jewish children, parents first need to raise healthy children. When they have tried to offer Jewish programs, the programs were not successful, and now
leave this type of programming to JCCs and synagogues. Nevertheless, because Parents Place has such a favorable reputation in the Bay Area and because it is sponsored by a Jewish agency, it engenders Jewish pride in parents who use its services.

*The Center for Early Relationship Support* While Parents Place encompasses the full range of childhood from birth through adolescence, the Center for Early Relationship Support (CERS), which is part of Jewish Family and Children’s Service in Boston and has a budget of $650,000, focuses exclusively on the needs of families in the first year of a child’s life. The mission of CERS is to decrease the isolation of new mothers, increase parents’ confidence in their ability to parent, and help parents and infants bond in a healthy way. Center staff include social workers, psychologists, parent educators, lactation consultants and nurses.

CERS offers a variety of services and programs, many of which are free for parents. *Visiting Moms*, with 80 volunteers serving 130 mothers, provides home visits by trained volunteers to new mothers. CERS offers a variety of support groups for new mothers, mothers with twins or triplets, new fathers, gay/lesbian parents, parents of premature infants, mothers experiencing post-partum depression, and couples who have experienced pregnancy loss. There are also consultants to help with infant feeding and sleeping, and parent consultations for a variety of concerns. The Infant-Parent Training Institute at CERS offers a two-year research-based training program in infant mental health to community professionals. *Nurturing Rooms* brings mothers and infants together with senior citizens who are residents of an assisted living facility.

Like Parents Place, CERS serves the entire community, not just the Jewish community. Slightly over a third of the mothers served by programs are Jewish, while over 90 percent of volunteers are Jewish. CERS has strong support from Combined Jewish Philanthropies (the Boston federation) and Jewish donors. None of the programming has Jewish content.

*Mom2Mom* *Mom2Mom* is a mentoring program for mothers that was developed jointly by the JCC and Jewish Family Service in Seattle for the critical months after a baby is born. Focus groups with mothers had indicated that they needed more support than was available.

Unlike Parents Place and CERS, Judaism is prominent in the program. The program, with an annual budget of approximately $10,000, matches mothers with trained peer volunteers known as “mentor moms” who “offer a supportive
and warm presence, share information about mother-child bonding and infant development, and help new moms connect to resources in both the Jewish and general community.81

Mentor moms must be mothers themselves. They are carefully selected and undergo 8 hours of training from community professionals who are experts in infant mental health and family support. They meet with mothers in the program approximately 4-6 times over a three-month period, although this period often lasts longer. Mentor moms themselves meet monthly with the program coordinator from Jewish Family Services to share their experiences and obtain additional training.

Mentor moms and mothers participating in the program are matched by the program coordinator. Very few of the mothers who choose to enroll in the program have connections to the Jewish community. While most of the mothers who participate are Jewish, non-Jewish mothers who are interested are not excluded, even if they do not have a Jewish spouse. Mothers learn about the program through word of mouth, from the secular media, and from the JCC, synagogues, or Jewish Family Services. Many of the mothers are concerned that there is a stigma attached to their participation and are concerned about privacy. The program is careful to preserve their anonymity.

The goals are to reduce isolation, increase connections to the Jewish community, provide support, and provide information about community resources. Evaluations indicate that these goals are met and that mothers who participate are very satisfied with the program.

The program coordinator is critical to the success of the program. The coordinator recruits mothers, hires the mentor moms, organizes the training sessions, matches mentor moms with interested mothers, meets with mentor moms monthly, interviews mothers at the program’s end, and continually monitors the program to make adjustments and refinements.

**Family and Adult Educational Programs**

There are a number of family and adult education programs offered to parents, some of which are national in scope. Contact information for each of the following programs is provided in Table A5 in the Appendix.
Family Education Programs  Two national family education programs for parents with young children are offered at multiple sites:

Al Galgalim: Training Wheels is a nine-session family education program sponsored by Hadassah for families with children ages 2-5, with material centered on Jewish holidays and Shabbat. The program has been in existence for over 15 years and there are approximately 50 registered groups around the country led by trained facilitators. Both parents and grandparents can participate, and are asked to join Hadassah if they enroll in the program.

Sessions take place in homes or synagogues. A typical one-and-a-half to two-hour session begins with an arts and crafts project connected with the session’s holiday theme. This is followed by singing, practice of rituals, and snack time. After snack time, the adults meet for about 20 minutes to discuss the theme of the session. The session concludes with a Hebrew language exercise and handouts for parents/grandparents to take home.

Parents bond in the program and continue getting together after the program has ended. Facilitators report that intermarried couples are comfortable with the program because the Jewish content is very basic. The curriculum developers come from a Reform orientation, and facilitators report that there has been some discomfort with the curriculum among participants who are more observant.

The success of the program at enrolling parents is largely dependent upon the energy and enthusiasm of the facilitator. Depending on the community and its particular Hadassah chapter, groups are either integrated with other community institutions or operate in relative isolation.

The PJ Library, offered by The Harold Grinspoon Foundation, was launched at the end of 2005 and is expanding rapidly. The program sends free children’s books or CDs to families beginning when children are six months of age through age five. The program was inspired by a program called The Imagination Library developed by the country singer Dolly Parton and her Dollywood Foundation, which has given away over 3 million books since it was launched 10 years ago.

Books and CDs are selected by a team of Jewish educators, incorporating themes of Jewish holidays, folktales, and family life. The cost of the program is $60 per year, which is underwritten by donors in participating communities. The program is free to families for the first year and $18 per year thereafter. The
Harold Grinspoon Foundation covers all overhead and administrative costs, and coordinates monthly distribution.

The program provides parents with guides to help them use the books and CDs, and parents receive a book on Jewish parenting, *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee*, the first month. Efforts are underway to develop community programs led by Jewish educators that bring parents together.

In less than a year, the program has secured funding from 18 communities, and 30 other communities are currently considering the program. In September 2007, the program expects to be sending 4,000 books a month.

The program is too new to have been evaluated, but anecdotal feedback from parents thus far is highly positive.

*Adult Education Programs*  Two national Jewish adult education programs for parents with young children have been created in the past few years, primarily for those who already have some connection to the community. Although professionals report that most first-time parents are either not interested in adult education or don’t have time for it, when parents do enroll in these programs, professionals find that intense personal bonds are created and participants experience rich Jewish learning that creates a strong desire for more.

*Ikkarim*, which in Hebrew means roots or principles, is a text-based adult learning program for parents of children birth through five taught at Boston synagogues. It was developed jointly by Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP is the federation in Boston) and Hebrew College as an alternative to *Meah*, a successful CJP adult learning program, which was not drawing younger families. While it is currently being taught only in Boston, several other communities are currently planning to start the program.

From its inception, the program was designed to be highly convenient for parents with young children. Parents have a choice of attending the 19 ninety-minute sessions either in the morning while children are in an early childhood program, or in the evening. Materials are free, childcare is free, and tuition is subsidized by a local philanthropist. Program staff indicated that the free childcare was crucial – parents cannot be concerned about their children while they’re in class.
The underlying orientation of the program is that parents, many of whom are highly educated professionals, want something sophisticated, not something cute. There are currently 400 graduates of the program. Most participants learn about the program through their child’s synagogue-based early childhood program, although some parents who are not involved with these programs enroll as well. Participants include both affiliated and unaffiliated parents.

The program has an extensive teacher’s guide and trains teachers before the program begins. Teachers are carefully selected based on their experience teaching text-based material, their ability to relate to parents with young children, and their skill at facilitating discussion in a non-judgmental fashion. The latter is especially important, since the sessions can sometimes become very personal. Jewish participants can bring “negative baggage” about Judaism into classes and issues arise around family history. Non-Jews, in contrast, tend to find the classes engaging and rich. There is always the awareness on the part of the teachers that Judaism is a choice, and that the program needs to help parents justify making that choice.

Parents usually enroll wanting practical advice about parenting, but that is not the purpose of the program. The program has a number of goals: to inspire Jewish choices, to engage parents in serious text learning, to create a community of learners, and to discuss and direct strategies for parenting that reflect Jewish values. The philosophy of the program with respect to parenting techniques is that in the absence of a sound value-based foundation, such techniques are ephemeral. Nevertheless, to address parents’ wishes, sometimes a Jewish social worker teaches parenting workshops, although this option is not specifically part of Ikkarim.

The curriculum, which is based on parents’ desire to have values that guide their parenting, addresses four core “domains”: interpersonal ethics, personal meaning, Jewish spirituality, and Jewish identity. The knowledge participants acquire empowers them to take their Jewish identity and the future identity of their children into their own hands.

Community organizing was vital for the program’s growth. The program was not an easy sell to synagogues when it was first announced. With only one exception, all of the synagogues it was initially offered was turned down. However, after the pilot program at the one cooperating synagogue received very positive publicity in the local Jewish press, other rabbis began to ask for it to be taught in their synagogue. This marketing “savvy” helped the program to
grow quickly. The success of the pilot program created an impression among parents that *Ikkarim* was the hottest program around, and parents want to be on the cutting edge.

The program was a significant boost to synagogues, inspiring current members and bringing in new members who were excited about Jewish learning. Many classes requested that their rabbi continue the program for a second year, even though no formal second-year curriculum existed.

*The Parent Education Program* was developed by the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School with the support of the AVI CHAI Foundation. In contrast with *Ikkarim*, which created an entirely new curriculum for parents, the PEP is an adaptation of the existing Melton core curriculum, which involves two years of study and a total of 60 sessions. The program’s initial inspiration was to introduce a “Jewish spark” at a time when Jewish parents were making educational decisions. The program was marketed to parents of preschool children in the hope that it might influence them to choose a day school education for their children.

The program is currently being offered in 18 communities. The PEP looks for appropriate partners in communities, which might be the central agency for Jewish education, the federation, the JCC, or a local college. The AVI CHAI Foundation subsidizes the first two cohorts that enroll in the program and communities are expected to generate funding to sustain the program while keeping it affordable for parents.

Like *Ikkarim*, PEP staff found that making the program as accessible as possible helps with enrollment. Parents are busy and are not inclined to enroll in adult education programs. Experience has shown that scheduling classes during the day and offering childcare make it easier for parents to attend.

It is also important to have active cooperation from parents who have children in early childhood programs and institutional leaders to promote the program, since parents enroll almost exclusively through recommendations from others, not through traditional recruitment techniques. As one example, a rabbi in Detroit who decided the program was important recruited 50 people from her synagogue.

One criterion for teacher selection is the capacity to serve as a Jewish role model to parents. Teachers have regular discussions with each other about how to make the curriculum relevant to the lives of parents. There is a real effort to connect the
material to what parents face each day. Parents are looking for hands-on practical information, but that’s not the orientation of the program – it focuses on the “whys” rather than the “hows.” To address parents’ desires, teachers provide parents with resources and hold three havurah-type sessions that are more practical.

PEP reports that participants are “very enthusiastic” and there appears to be more behavior change with this group than with traditional Melton students.87

**Educational Programs for Intermarried Parents** While a number of programs for the intermarried exist, very few focus on parenting issues for parents with young children. This section describes two such programs, one an adult education program and the other a family education program.

The **Mother’s Circle**, developed by the Jewish Outreach Institute (JOI) and funded by the Marcus Foundation, was piloted in Atlanta over a three-year period and is now offered in ten communities nationally.88 It has three components, all of which are free to participants. The main component is an 8-9 month adult education course with meetings twice a month for non-Jewish mothers who are raising Jewish children. About 12 to 15 mothers enroll in any given course. Additional components include a national listserv and various one-time events. The program is not focused on encouraging non-Jewish mothers to convert but rather respects their choice to retain their own religious identity.

JOI estimates that as many as 200,000 non-Jewish women with Jewish partners are raising their children as Jews. The Mother’s Circle was created because they face unique issues and challenges, and need a “safe space” to communicate. For this reason, the course is not open to Jewish mothers, Jews by choice, and men. While mothers with children of all ages are welcome in the course, many have young children three and under.

The facilitator-led course provides practical, “hands on” information about Jewish rituals, practices, and ethics while emphasizing parenting issues. The course meets in a secular venue – Jewish institutions are considered a “last resort” to be chosen if nothing suitable can be found. Childcare is provided without cost to mothers.

The facilitator for the course not only teaches the material and leads the discussion but is also responsible for introducing participants to the community, arranging family-friendly events, and making referrals to various Jewish
organizations. Additionally the facilitator recruits mothers for the program, beginning three to four months before the start of the course. Facilitators receive extensive support and training from JOI.

To involve the whole family, at least four family events are held during the course. These may include Shabbat or Havdalah dinners, family outings, a Sunday bagel brunch, a sukkah dinner, or a field trip to a Jewish destination. Upon completion of the course, mothers frequently choose to continue meeting in “alumni” groups.

There is a national listserv for mothers who have not yet taken the course, are enrolled in the course, or are alumni to share their experiences and offer suggestions and solutions to each other. A rabbi is available on the listserv to answer questions about Jewish tradition.

Pebbles is a family education program currently being offered in Denver that was started with grants from the Jewish Outreach Institute, Rose Youth Foundation, and Lynda Goldstein Foundation. The name is derived from a successful program for school-aged children of intermarried families called Stepping Stones that has been offered by the Reform Movement for the past 20 years.

The genesis of the program came from the observation that many intermarried parents do not make a choice about their child’s religion until several years after their child is born. A thoughtfully-designed educational program might be able to influence that choice.

Participants are intermarried couples and their children ages 4 and under. The program, which meets in the homes of the participants, consists of five family sessions and a series of parents’ discussion groups. The program is very hands-on and is based on educational theories that emphasize the importance of sensory learning for children at this stage of development.

The Jewish content is very basic, designed to provide information to both the non-Jewish parent and the Jewish parent. The assumption is made that Jewish parents are not much more knowledgeable than their spouses. Facilitators bring in social workers to discuss issues around religion and moral development.

Traditional marketing for the program does not seem to be particularly effective. Ads don’t attract participants. The most successful recruiting strategies are to have information tables at local baby fairs and other community events and for
members of the community to serve as recruiters and extend personal invitations.

Families are not ready to join the larger community when they first enroll, but do want to connect with other families. They need a safe place to ask questions and not be judged. The goal of the program is to help them develop more comfort with Judaism and Jewish institutions and eventually affiliate with a synagogue. *Stepping Stones* has an affiliation rate of 70 percent but experience has shown that it can take several years after the program has ended to see these results. The hope is that *Pebbles* will have similar outcomes.

Program leaders report that a real sense of community develops among participants and that large numbers turn out for holiday-themed events. A number of families have begun to practice Jewish rituals in their homes. About 5-10 percent of the non-Jewish spouses have converted.

**Programming Challenges**

Both focus groups with parents and interviews with professionals raised various programming challenges across all of the different types of programs:

*Reaching the Unengaged*  In the movie classic *Casablanca*, Captain Louis Renault (played by the actor Claude Rains) gives the order to “round up the usual suspects.” This is what usually happens when professionals introduce a new program for parents in the absence of a community-wide system for finding them. Without an “infrastructure” for finding parents, attendees end up being “the usual suspects,” those who are already Jewishly engaged and whose names already appear on synagogue, federation, or JCC lists.

Unless a community has a strong gift basket program or other means of finding parents, investments in programming may strengthen those who are already engaged but will be unlikely to bring in many new faces. Before communities invest in programming, they must first invest in staff time devoted to finding and welcoming first-time parents.

*Enlisting the Medical Community*  All pregnant mothers visit obstetricians’ offices, and most physicians make routine inquiries of their patients’ religion to determine if there is a risk of genetic diseases. So if more physicians were willing to talk about *Shalom Baby* programs, more Jewish and intermarried mothers
would learn about these programs. Enlisting the medical community to find parents is the most promising way to reach everyone who has a baby. However, relatively few Shalom Baby programs have invested time in cultivating relationships with the medical community. Those that have done so sometimes find that physicians are unreceptive.

One possible way to “sell” physicians on mentioning Shalom Baby programs to their patients and having Shalom Baby brochures in their reception room is to enlist the help of their Jewish medical colleagues. Federations sometimes have professional groups consisting of individuals in the healthcare field, and these individuals could be approached to use their contacts. In Baltimore, the Shalom Baby coordinator actually visits a local hospital periodically and speaks to obstetricians at Grand Rounds.

Another way to approach physicians is to negotiate a quid pro quo arrangement promising referrals to cooperating physicians.

**Enlisting the Cooperation of Community Professionals** Welcome programs are only as effective as their referral networks, so it is important to enlist the cooperation of community professionals. Yet some communities find that certain community professionals, especially preschool directors, are not interested in participating. Overcoming this mindset and getting these professionals to recognize the benefits to their own institutions and the importance of serving the greater community is an ongoing challenge.

**The Schlep Limit** Parents in different communities seem to have differing sensibilities about how far they are willing to drive for a program. For example, focus groups with parents in San Diego and Atlanta indicated that they don’t mind driving long distances, while parents in Seattle and Chicago seem to have much less tolerance for lengthy drives. One recent study in Boston found that driving time to a JCC was the strongest predictor of membership in the JCC.\(^90\)

Given that housing costs in certain communities force some parents to live in distant suburbs, agencies and organizations that offer programs for parents need to take driving time into account in their program planning. One solution professionals described is to offer programs at parents’ homes and other venues in areas where there are no established Jewish institutions. This has two benefits – it brings programs closer to parents, and it offers them in a comfortable setting.

Orthodox outreach groups such as Aish HaTorah and Chabad appear to be far ahead of the rest of the Jewish community in establishing centers in these areas.
In Denver, for example, a number of rabbis affiliated with these groups have moved to outlying suburbs to serve the needs of young Jewish families.

Choice of a Venue Will unengaged parents attend an event in a Jewish setting? The issue of what venue to use came up a number of times during interviews with professionals. The Jewish Outreach Institute maintains that Jewish settings are barrier to attendance for some people and that events need to be held in neutral places that are comfortable and familiar. Some professionals felt that JOI’s requirement was a barrier for them. From their perspective, what mattered more was whether they felt comfortable in the venue as the program leader. According to these professionals, the main hurdle for participants is whether to enroll in a program, not where it is held. Once the decision to enroll is made, the setting doesn’t seem to matter.

It would seem to be the case that both arguments have merit. For a one-time event, it may well be the case that the venue is a consideration for a potential participant. But for programs with multiple sessions that involve a greater commitment, once the commitment is made, the setting is much less of a consideration for the participant.

Calibrating Jewish Content A consistent challenge that arose during all of the site visits involved determining the appropriate role of Jewish content in programs for parents. Some programs had no Jewish content whatsoever, while others had “pediatric” content that was appropriate for very young children but too simplistic for adults. When programs were offered with explicit Jewish content, professionals indicated that parents often didn’t show up.

If there is too little Judaism, programs are indistinguishable from secular counterparts. If there is “too much” Judaism from the parents’ standpoint, those who are not yet interested in learning about Judaism won’t come. If Jewish content is too simple, parents are not exposed to Judaism’s richness. Finding the appropriate level of Jewish content is an ongoing challenge.

Separating Intermarried Parents Interviews with professionals across the country were consistent in mentioning the inadvisability of separating intermarried parents from in-married parents. Whether a couple is intermarried or not does not necessarily dictate what they are interested in, and some intermarried couples don’t want to be identified as intermarried. Separating intermarried parents into distinct groups does not foster Jewish friendships that can take parents to the next level; it merely fosters friendships with other intermarried
couples who have a similar type of marriage and a similar understanding of Judaism. And often, there are no differences with respect to Jewish knowledge between Jewish and non-Jewish parents; each is equally in need of knowledge about Judaism.\textsuperscript{92}

\textit{Ownership of Parent Lists} Gift basket programs create lists of parents that are useful to a number of different local institutions. Yet parents do not want to be deluged by contacts from different organizations, preferring to receive information from a single, trusted source. So for all practical purposes, whoever has ownership of the list has sole access to parents.

Lists are usually owned by the organization that sponsors the local gift basket program, either a JCC or a federation. In some communities, the list is used to publicize all community programs, while in others, the list is used only to publicize programs offered by the organization that owns it. The latter situation makes it hard for other organizations to publicize their programs and creates resentment.

\textit{The Ethics of “Marketing” to the Unengaged} If, through a community referral, a gift basket program receives the name of someone who is not involved with the community, what is the proper ethical procedure for the initial contact? The operating policy seems to be to mention at the very start of the call where the referral came from, and to respect the parents’ wishes if they do not want a basket or do not wish to be contacted again by the community.

Having a passion for parents is an important qualification for being a \textit{Shalom Baby} coordinator, but there is a fine line between being passionate and being pushy. At all stages, it is necessary to respect parents’ wishes. The community does not benefit if it is insensitive to parents’ wishes. That is why peer relationships are so important – peers can sometimes overcome parents’ initial resistance.

\textit{Encouraging Jewish Journeys} At the present time, programs for parents accomplish two aims with respect to those who are unengaged. They foster friendships with Jewish peers, and they encourage parents to attend programs that have Jewish sponsorship but limited Jewish content. This is an encouraging start but it is only the first step. How can parents be encouraged to continue on their Jewish journeys, acquire more Jewish learning, and join synagogues?
Professionals across the country were consistent and emphatic in stating that building personal relationships with parents was the only real way to accomplish this. Professionals find that they are most effective in reaching parents when they address issues that are of concern to them, and parents feel there is something to gain from the relationship. These professionals spend many hours of their time meeting with parents, learning about their lives, and teaching them about Judaism, both in intimate classes and one-on-one. The relationship draws them in, and Jewish learning from someone they like and respect keeps them involved.

This approach is by no means novel – it is the basis of much of the work that Hillel and Chabad do. In both cases, there is an emphasis on personal attention and on relationship building.

Taking a relationship-based approach to outreach is a distinct contrast to the gift-based approach of most Shalom Baby programs. Just as gifts to children are not a substitute for parental love and attention, gifts to Jewish parents should not be a substitute for caring attention from community professionals.

Adult education is another way to deepen engagement. Both Ikkarim and the Parent Education Program, described earlier in this chapter, are designed to provide parents with rich Jewish learning, and both programs have been highly successful wherever they are offered. The challenge is to get parents to enroll and make the time commitment that such programs require, which involves attendance at 19 sessions and 60 sessions respectively. Parents are busy. In the absence of any data comparing parents’ perceptions of the two programs, the former commitment would seem to be less formidable to parents who are not accustomed to Jewish adult education.

One rabbi, based in a JCC, observed that it takes time to move people Jewishly, especially if they have had negative experiences with Jewish education as children. New parents are simultaneously committed to not inflicting the same boring experience they had on their own children while avoiding Jewish learning for themselves as adults. The biggest challenge is to find the “ouch point” for each parent and not go beyond that point.

Encouraging Preschool Enrollment Getting parents to enroll their children in Jewish early childhood programs should be a major goal of programs for parents with young children, since there is ample evidence that having children in one of these programs does promote changes in Jewish practice at home. One of the benefits of Jewish playgroups reported by professionals is that the playgroups
choose Jewish preschools together for their children so that the groups can stay together.

Enrollment in a Jewish early childhood program represents the first major Jewish educational choice that parents can potentially make. There is evidence that parents choose early childhood programs for their children based primarily on quality, location and hours; Jewish sponsorship is either a secondary consideration or is not a consideration at all. Participation in a Jewish playgroup may shift parents’ orientation regarding Jewish sponsorship from secondary to primary.

Programming Roles

Successful programs involve partnerships between professional staff, volunteers and parents. Grandparents also play a role, but one that is not so clearly defined. This section discusses these roles in greater depth.

Professional Staff Across all of the community visits, certain staff members exhibited a commitment and passion for new parents. For others, outreach to parents was just another responsibility of their job description. Programs are far more successful when professionals who do outreach to parents see their job as a mission and a calling.

The challenge for the community is finding these individuals, since instilling passion in someone who doesn’t have it is unlikely to happen. Yet finding people who have it is also a challenge. One JCC professional, who is very selective in hiring for the parenting center she directs, described looking for program leaders who “have it in their heart and soul.”

Professionals also need to be role models who inspire parents to learn more about Judaism and become more involved in Jewish life. They need to live a Jewish life, not just talk about it, and they need to be willing to spend time with parents after hours, getting to know them and their concerns.

Still another requirement for being an outreach professional is to be a servant of the Jewish community. Some professionals have a primary allegiance to the agency they work for, but this loyalty creates barriers to cooperation with other agencies that have the same mission to parents.
Volunteers  The site visits revealed that volunteers played an important role in all of the communities with successful programs. The job of outreach is too big for any professional staff person; the best professionals know how to recruit and inspire volunteers.

Volunteers are in the best position to find Jewish parents and develop relationships with them because of their connections outside of the Jewish community. For this reason, the most effective volunteers are other parents with young children.

Volunteers are often highly competent professionals who bring considerable expertise to the programs they help. In Denver, for example, the Shalom Baby program empowered volunteers to become co-owners of the program. The result was a fundraiser organized by volunteers that raised over $100,000.

The availability of volunteers is linked to the cost of living in a community. The Shalom Baby program in St. Louis, a community with a relatively low cost of living, has a network of 70 volunteers. In contrast, the Shalom Baby program in Washington, DC has had some difficulties recruiting volunteers, since many mothers in the community need to return to work.

The potential of volunteers has not been realized in most communities. Having trained volunteers situated in each neighborhood where Jewish parents live would help strengthen connections to first-time parents and provide them with a nearby Jewish resource person.

Parents  Traditional Jewish education assumes the role of the program leader is to do something to parents. As discussed in Chapter 2, Jewish parents today are highly educated and highly competent, even though they may lack Jewish learning. A more contemporary educational model that takes these competencies and learning opportunities into account would suggest that program leaders need to co-create with parents.

This requires that program leaders learn new skills so they can work with parents in a new way. Program leaders need to find out what parents want and create it together with them. This model has several advantages – it makes the material more relevant to parents, enables parents to learn along with their children, and creates a sense of ownership.
Grandparents  Grandparents have a limited role in outreach. They are not the same age cohort as first-time parents so they aren’t always the best choice as volunteers. In addition, Shalom Baby professionals report that community referrals from grandparents are sometimes problematic. If parents aren’t interested in getting involved with the community, grandparents will be seen as meddling in their children’s lives when they contact Jewish professionals on behalf of their children.

At the same time, grandparents can make Jewish engagement affordable. Parents who balk at the cost of Jewish early childhood education, day schools, synagogue membership, JCC membership, or summer camp will sometimes choose these for their children if grandparents pay for them.

Many grandparents have grandchildren who are a product of intermarriage and are not being raised as Jews. The argument has been made that these grandparents can still have an effect on the Jewish identity of their grandchildren by inviting them for Shabbat and holiday meals and reading Jewish stories.99

Criteria for Developing Programs

Table 3-1 on the next page presents a series of questions that should be asked whenever a program for Jewish parents with young children is being considered. Criteria are categorized into five areas: marketing, staff, Jewish content, secular content, and relationship building.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Key Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>• Has the program been designed so that it is accessible and appealing to unengaged parents?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>• Have program leaders been carefully selected based on their interpersonal skills and expertise?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jewish Content</td>
<td>• Is the program’s Jewish content appropriate for the audience?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Does the program inspire parents to learn more about Judaism, create a Jewish home, make Jewish educational choices, or become more involved with Jewish institutions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secular Content</td>
<td>• Is the program sufficiently informed by current knowledge on parenting and child development?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship Building</td>
<td>• Does the program strengthen bonds between parents and their children?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Does the program offer opportunities for parents to form friendships with other Jewish parents?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Does the program offer opportunities for parents to form relationships with Jewish professionals?</td>
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Chapter 4:  
A Community-Level Perspective

Chapter 3 described various programs offered to new parents. This chapter takes a community-level perspective and discusses some of the ways that communities can coordinate and strengthen their efforts towards first-time parents.

The fundamental challenge each community faces is to create a parent-friendly infrastructure that reaches a majority of new parents and offers them high-quality programming. At the same time, the various organizations and agencies that offer these programs need to be knit together.

Even in the handful of communities that have thriving programs, only a fraction of Jewish parents are being reached. In the rest of the country, where programming is not as strong, hardly any first-time parents are being reached. Resources are badly needed to improve these efforts.

Within communities, there is very little communication concerning these programs. Few agencies work together or cooperate. Programs exist because individual agencies and organizations see an opportunity benefiting their own stakeholders and pursue it.

Community Dynamics Affecting Programs

Why do some communities have strong programming while others do not? There are a number of dynamics, both secular and Jewish, that affect the quality and extent of Jewish programming for new parents in a given community. Secular dynamics include:

- **The local economy and the region of the country**  Communities that are thriving economically attract young professionals. In addition, the U.S. population, as well as the Jewish population, is migrating to the West and Southwest. Both of these factors bring more Jews in their childbearing years into these communities, creating a need for programs.

- **Government programs for new parents**  A number of state governments have allocated funding and created programs to support parents and their
children from birth through age three. For example, Colorado has a program called Bright Beginnings, and Washington State has the Foundation for Early Learning. These programs generate a statewide awareness of the importance of children’s earliest years and offer information and resources to assist parents. It is no coincidence that two of the strongest Jewish programs in the country for parents of young children, the Shalom Baby program at the Denver JCC and the Jewish Parenting Center at the Seattle JCC, are in states that have these programs. These programs affect local Jewish programming in several ways:

- Shalom Baby gift basket programs sometimes partner with these programs and include their literature in gift baskets.

- Jewish professionals often have connections to these programs and apply what they learn from them to their own programs, incorporating state-of-the-art knowledge on parenting and child development.

- To compete, Jewish programs must go beyond what these programs offer or parents with little connection to Judaism will see no reason to come to a program with Jewish sponsorship. Thus, the existence of government programs serves as an impetus to design cutting-edge Jewish programming in order to serve a population that is already well-educated about parenting and child development.

- **Private-sector businesses that cater to new parents** While government programs simultaneously enhance Jewish programs and compete with them, private sector businesses that cater to parents are solely competitive. Unlike government programs, which target all parents, businesses are much more upscale, generating profit by catering to affluent professionals, the same demographic as most Jewish parents. Day One in San Francisco and Isis Maternity in Boston are two examples of such businesses. When these and other businesses are present in a community, Jewish programming needs to be upscale as well.

- **Cost of living** In some communities, like St. Louis, Jews are concentrated in certain areas. In others, like Denver, Jews are dispersed. This is often related to housing costs. Young parents in communities with expensive housing cannot afford to purchase homes near established
Jewish institutions and must live a considerable distance away, which makes it less likely that they will come to programs. In response, Jewish organizations end up developing satellite programs. In addition, high housing costs force mothers back to work, creating a need for infant care and programs that address dual-career couples.

Jewish dynamics include:

- **Size of the Jewish community** Programming exists in both large and small communities. However, programs are more infrequent in smaller communities since there aren’t as many Jewish babies. In addition, smaller communities face a number of challenges with respect to Jewish professionals. Smaller communities have fewer Jewish professionals, they are harder to recruit, and turnover tends to be higher. Smaller communities also have limited resources for programming. All of this creates instability in program offerings. On the positive side, smaller communities are often more tight-knit as Jews tend to bond together, making it easier to identify new Jewish parents.

- **The intermarriage rate** High rates of intermarriage in certain communities (e.g. Denver, San Francisco, Atlanta) create a greater impetus by Jewish leadership to “do something.” Programs for new parents are natural way to conduct outreach to intermarried couples.

- **The community’s history of inter-agency cooperation** In some communities, Jewish organizations and agencies have a history of working together and “turf wars” are relatively uncommon. In Baltimore, for example, the “Twelve Tribes Award,” is given annually to recognize outstanding collaborative efforts between two or more agencies. In other communities, there is little collaboration or cooperation. Programs for parents cannot succeed at a community-wide level if they are driven by a single agency or organization and others are excluded.

- **Involvement of local foundations and philanthropists** Several of the most successful programs for Jewish parents were created through generous grants from local foundations and philanthropists. The existence of even one supportive donor or foundation can make the difference between strong programming or none.
Strengths and Weaknesses of Sponsoring Organizations

Various organizations and agencies offer programs in a given community. Each has strengths and weaknesses:

*Jewish Community Centers* by far have the strongest programs and are the most effective delivery system. *Shalom Baby* programs to welcome new parents run by JCCs seem to be more successful than those in federations, and JCCs offer a wide-range of attractive infant/toddler programs that draw enthusiastic parents either as part of a parenting center or separately. JCCs have both early childhood expertise and facilities that lend themselves to these types of programs. They also engage in extensive marketing for their programs and publicize them widely. In addition, JCCs are “not too Jewish” and draw parents that would probably not come to a program at a synagogue. No other community program or agency offering programs for Jewish parents comes close to this model either in its breadth of offerings or in the numbers that attend.

Some community professionals outside of the JCC have not yet learned to see their local JCC as a valuable resource in the community, seeing them instead as competition. This perception is not entirely unwarranted, since lists of parents acquired through JCC gift basket programs aren’t always made available to others in the community who are interested in reaching these parents. As noted in an earlier chapter, JCCs have found that parents, especially those who have not been engaged with the community, don’t want to be overwhelmed by contacts from multiple organizations.

In the absence of a strong JCC, many more parents would remain uninvolved. JCCs are a valuable community resource, but they need to learn how to work more collaboratively with other community organizations and agencies, creating partnerships that are mutually beneficial, instead of generating negative perceptions.

A few JCCs get federation support for new parent programs, but most programs thrive or struggle depending upon who happens to be the executive director at a given JCC. When executive directors are supportive, programs thrive; when executive directors are not supportive, existing programs endure cuts in hours and budget, or programs don’t receive sufficient funding to get started.

There is considerable variability in Jewish program content among JCCs. At one end of the spectrum, Seattle, which has one of the best parenting centers in the
country, has no rabbi or Jewish educator on staff; as a result, many of its programs lack Jewish content. In contrast, the Owings Mills JCC in suburban Baltimore has two rabbis on staff and pays considerable attention to the Jewish content of its programming.

**Synagogues and Synagogue-Based Early Childhood Programs** In the abstract, synagogues are perhaps the best place to offer programs for parents since they provide rich Jewish learning and create a strong sense of community. Overall, however, the current reality is that synagogue programming for parents is weak. There are only a handful of synagogues around the country with well-developed programs.

Many families with young children feel marginalized in synagogues and can’t afford to join. At synagogues that have preschools, professionals report that most rabbis are not engaged with these programs or with families who have young children. Synagogue-based preschools are often relatively independent of the synagogues in which they are located.

While many synagogues offer Tot Shabbat programs to attract parents with young children who would not otherwise attend traditional services, and a handful have parenting centers, relatively few synagogues offer anything substantial. When programs for parents do exist, they are invariably in synagogues with preschools. Even then, preschools and preschool staff are primarily child-focused rather than parent-focused, since their primary mission is to educate children. On occasions when preschools do offer Jewish learning for parents, professionals report that attendance is sparse.104

The situation is largely a matter of scale; synagogues need to have fairly large memberships to justify efforts for parents with young children. In addition, rabbis and boards need to be interested and supportive for anything meaningful to happen. Invariably, there are other priorities.

Synagogue dues are a barrier for many families with young children. While some synagogues offer either free membership or reduced membership fees the first year, this may not be sufficient to encourage them to join.
Still, despite these obstacles, when synagogues do focus on families with young children, results can be spectacular. In San Diego, Congregation Beth Israel, a large Reform synagogue, regularly draws 350 people to their monthly *Tot Shabbat* service and dinner on Friday night and offers a considerable array of well-attended programs for parents. The success of these programs is attributable to the presence of a talented early childhood educator who has a strong interest in parents. As a result of her efforts, rabbis and synagogue staff are very involved in these programs. Their involvement is essential to success since they can help foster the kinds of relationships that lead to membership and long-term affiliation.

*Jewish Family Services* offers highly sophisticated programming that draws upon findings from parenting and child development research. In some communities, this information is integrated with Jewish teachings. In others, however, program offerings are no different than those offered in secular settings and do not specifically target Jewish families. Neither Parents Place in San Francisco nor the Center for Early Relationship in Boston, which were discussed in Chapter 3, offer programs with Jewish content. Directors of these programs saw their mission as helping parents, regardless of their backgrounds. Indirectly, this is seen as having an effect on Jewish identity among those who are Jewish and creates goodwill in the larger non-Jewish community.

Aside from a lack of attention to Jewish content, another shortcoming of JFS is that it is a service provider, not a membership organization. Thus, unless parents connect with other Jewish organizations like a JCC or a synagogue, there is little opportunity for parents to learn more about Judaism, connect with other parents, or educate their children Jewishly.

Partnerships between JFS and other Jewish organizations therefore have considerable potential to overcome these shortcomings, building upon the strengths of each type of organization. JFS brings considerable expertise in parenting and child development, and synagogues and JCCs can foster social connections and provide programming with Jewish content. In Seattle, *Mom2Mom*, discussed in Chapter 3, resulted from a partnership between the local JCC and JFS. In Washington, DC, JFS works closely with local synagogues and rabbis around family issues, including parents with very young children. In Baltimore, JFS is one partner in a program called *Parenting U* that is co-sponsored with a number of agencies.
Federations  The majority of Shalom Baby gift basket programs in the country are run by federations. Some of these programs, such as those in San Jose, Charlotte, and Cincinnati appear to be successful, while others reach only a small percentage of new parents (see Table A1 in the Appendix). There are several factors that contribute to whether federation-run programs are successful:

- **Staff background** – Shalom Baby programs succeed if they are staffed by the right person, regardless of sponsorship. However, at federations, unlike JCCs where Shalom Baby directors usually have backgrounds in early childhood, the responsibility may fall upon a federation staff person who has not worked professionally with parents before and is not fully in tune with their needs and mindset.

- **Volunteers** – Federations usually have a ready supply of volunteers. At some federations, volunteers in Shalom Baby programs are parents’ contemporaries, while at others they are older. For establishing connections with parents of young children, volunteers are most effective when they are peers. If there is a 30 year age difference between the parents being visited and the volunteers, parents don’t feel that the local federation is an organization that can effectively relate to their current challenges as new parents.

- **Staff time** – For Shalom Baby programs to be successful, time needs to be invested. Federation-based Shalom Baby directors frequently have many other responsibilities and can only devote a small amount of their time to these programs (see Table A1 in the Appendix for staff time devoted to Shalom Baby programs). As a consequence, programs do not have the resources to find new parents unless there is considerable volunteer involvement.

- **Follow-up** – Federations are administrative entities and programming is not their strength. When they own Shalom Baby programs, follow-up can be inadequate or non-existent, and without follow-up, the momentum of the initial contact is lost. Federations need to partner with synagogues, early childhood programs, or Jewish Community Centers to create strong follow-up programs.

- **Coordination with other organizations in the community** – Many different individuals, organizations, and agencies are interested in reaching Jewish parents with young children. However, in some
communities, federations operate independently and do not coordinate their efforts with these other Jewish organizations. One federation started a gift basket program without consulting any of the local early childhood professionals in the area who work daily with parents of young children. These professionals first learned about the program when they received a mailing after it had been started. Another federation-based Shalom Baby program was located one building away from a JCC that has a thriving parenting center. At the time of the site visit for this research project, the Shalom Baby coordinator and the parenting center director had never met, even though the parenting center’s programs were the perfect follow-up to receiving a gift basket.

- Policies on solicitations – The primary purpose of a Shalom Baby program is to find new parents and attract them to the organized Jewish community. However, some federations see Shalom Baby programs as a way to add new names to lists for solicitation. They can be too aggressive in soliciting new parents or solicit too soon after sending them a gift basket. Some parents, especially those who have not been involved with Jewish life as adults or do not have the resources to contribute, are understandably turned off by this introduction to the Jewish community. Some federation gift basket programs have failed primarily because solicitations killed the program.

- Donors – Federations usually depend upon support from donors to fund programs. While some donors defer to federation expertise and do not get involved with program specifics, others donate conditionally. Their stipulations can run counter to best practices and may weaken program effectiveness.

With the possible exception of small communities, federations are not likely to be the best program providers. However, forward-thinking federations are in the best position to mobilize local resources. The ideal scenario would be for a local federation to develop a comprehensive strategy to engage parents with young children that involves all relevant agencies and organizations, bringing everyone to the table.106

In the absence of a community-wide agenda, federations can still support existing programs, generate resources to create new ones, partner with other agencies and institutions, and foster connections among community
professionals who are working independently but have a common goal of reaching parents.

The best model observed during the site visits was in San Diego, where the federation provided financial support for a JCC-based Shalom Baby program. This took place largely because of a sympathetic federation planning director who had once been a synagogue educator and had a strong feel for the needs of new parents. While the JCC is responsible for finding and welcoming new parents, the federation has jurisdiction over follow-up and sends e-mails to parents publicizing parenting programs offered throughout San Diego by all agencies, not just the JCC.

*Jewish Chaplains* While Jewish chaplains represent a very small group in any given community, their potential impact is considerable since they are involved with hospitals where babies are born. The best example of how this potential can be realized can be found in Denver, where the chaplain at Rose Community Hospital, who is a rabbi, has been teaching Jewish Baby University to expectant parents for six years at the hospital, co-sponsored by the local JCC. His efforts have engaged hundreds of parents through his hospital connections, and these parents have continued to stay in touch with each other after their babies were born.

Some chaplains feel conflicted about being involved with outreach efforts, since their primary role is to work with those they serve, not to be an advocate for various programs. At a minimum, they should be closely involved with gift-basket programs in an advisory capacity.

*Central Agencies for Jewish Education* With the exception of Baltimore, central agencies do not appear to be involved with programs for new parents, since this type of education does not fall under their traditional areas of responsibility. Yet central agencies are in an advantageous position, since they can bring everyone together and to help them learn from models of excellence, especially when there is already a strong family education component in the agency’s mission.

In San Francisco, a parallel historical situation is instructive. The community had a number of programs for teens but no coordination or collaboration among the various program providers. The San Francisco Board of Jewish Education created a Teen Alliance to bring everyone together, resulting in a number of positive developments in teen programming. The same sort of “Zero to Three Alliance” needs to be created for all those in a community who are involved with this
population, and central agencies are in the best position to make this happen, since that is their natural role.

**Chabad** Chabad’s potential for outreach to first-time parents is considerable and remains largely unappreciated. Chabad has emissaries in many outlying and remote Jewish communities with young Jewish families where there are no synagogues or Jewish Community Centers. It has a network of close to 150 early childhood centers, and offers hundreds of *Mommy and Me* programs around the country. Chabad emissaries are often couples with young children who can easily relate to first-time parents. Chabad’s success is due largely to its emphasis on building personal relationships, and it regularly sparks Jewish awareness in individuals who were previously unengaged. For all these reasons, Chabad deserves to be taken seriously in any discussion of outreach to first-time parents.\(^\text{108}\)

Chabad’s main limitation is that its religious orientation does not have universal appeal.

**Summary** The strongest programs observed during the site visits involved collaborations among organizations that capitalize on their strengths. While some programs are quite sophisticated, they remain largely isolated within individual agencies, driven by the agency’s mission. Much more could be accomplished if there was greater collaboration within communities.

**Community Success Factors**

This section synthesizes the material in the preceding chapters to present a set of factors contributing to optimal community outreach. The more these factors are present, the more a community is likely to be successful at engaging first-time parents:

- **The community has passionate champions who are a driving force** In each of the communities visited, there were a handful of individuals with foresight and conviction who were committed to serving the needs of new parents. Several have been working with parents for decades, receiving little outside recognition or support. While these individuals are highly dedicated and have considerable expertise in child development, parenting, and Jewish education, they are not necessarily experienced at advocacy or fundraising. As lower-level professionals, they do not have
access to policy decisions or donors. Consequently, programming for first-time parents has not been a priority in any of the communities visited and has not come close to realizing its potential. Communities must have these passionate champions who see reaching parents as a mission and a calling.

- **The community’s leaders recognize the importance of reaching parents with young children**  Passionate champions cannot establish or grow unless community leaders support them. Community leaders need to be educated about the importance of reaching parents when they have their first child, and programs for families with young children need to be part of federations’ strategic planning process.

- **The community has donors and foundations that support programming and staff**  Programs for Jewish parents are inexpensive. They often draw on volunteer help and also generate revenue, which means that many parents can be reached for relatively little money. Staff time is the only major expense. Donors and foundations, like community leaders, need to be educated about the importance of reaching parents and need to provide much more support for these programs, recognizing that modest allocations have the potential to generate considerable effects.

- **The community engages in extensive efforts to find the parents**  Finding first-time parents is a prerequisite for the success of any program, local or national. Communities need to have an infrastructure in place that finds parents and invites them to participate in community offerings. This infrastructure needs to be a community resource, and should not be owned by any one agency, organization, or program. When Shalom Baby lists are owned by one agency or organization, the organization’s offerings might not be appealing to all parents, and these parents are not exposed to other programs or institutions that might attract them.

- **The community offers many opportunities for parents to get together**  The main reason parents attend programs is to meet other parents. Communities that want to be successful at engaging parents need to give them many opportunities to socialize.

- **The community offers many different programming options to parents**  Communities need to offer parents a variety of program options, since no single program will have universal appeal and parents are always looking
for something new. They need to offer programs with a range of Jewish content, since not all parents are looking for Jewish learning. And they need to offer programs at a variety of venues, since not all parents will be comfortable in traditionally Jewish settings. Multiple programs are mutually reinforcing.

• **The community offers Jewish programs based on best practices** Communities are prone to duplicating programs of other communities without sufficient attention to the nuances of implementation that engender success or failure. Communities need to identify and adopt best practices to maximize the potential for success.

• **Community professionals maintain ongoing relationships with professionals in secular parenting organizations** In each community, there are many secular nonprofit, for-profit, and government organizations that focus on parenting concerns for children from birth through three. Establishing relationships with these organizations is highly beneficial to the Jewish community. These organizations are often happy to publicize Jewish programs and partner with Jewish organizations. Contact with these organizations can help Jewish professionals to enhance their knowledge base.

• **The community places an emphasis on relationship-building** Communities with well-developed programs recognize that it is the caliber of program staff, rather than program content, that draws parents in and contributes to success. Communities need to recognize the primacy of building relationships with parents, and that parents want to create relationships with other parents. Programs cannot be successful long-term unless there is sufficient time allotted for program staff and Jewish professionals to cultivate warm, caring personal relationships with parents and for parents to cultivate relationships with each other. Gifts and programs without a personal touch, however well-funded, well-intentioned, and well-designed, are not a replacement for relationship-building.

• **The community communicates regularly with parents via email, newsletters, and phone calls** Communities need to have a mechanism for letting parents know about activities and programs that may be of interest to them. The Internet, email, newsletters, and phone calls can all
be utilized to provide information about programs, local resources, and Jewish tradition.

- **The community draws upon local early childhood expertise**
  Communities need to draw upon the expertise of professionals who teach in Jewish early childhood programs since they work with parents every day and are in touch with their needs and concerns.

- **The community cultivates volunteers and peer leaders**
  Communities with well-developed programming all make extensive use of peer volunteers who are excited and committed. Communities should identify, cultivate, and develop peer leaders in each neighborhood who can reach out to new parents.

- **The community has a strong JCC that is centrally involved**
  Jewish Community Centers play a central role in communities with well-developed programs for parents. As noted earlier in this chapter, JCCs have a strong programming, a suitable facility, early childhood expertise, extensive marketing, and are viewed as “neutral territory” by parents who might not otherwise come to an event with Jewish sponsorship. In addition, JCC parenting centers serve as a strong draw for parents in the community.

- **The community’s professionals work together across agencies and organizations towards a community-wide vision**
  In order for parent programs to succeed on a community-wide basis, community professionals must transcend their agency mentalities and focus on helping the Jewish people. At the present time, professionals pursue parents independently with little coordination or cooperation. Professionals serving parents with young children should meet regularly to share ideas, coordinate efforts, and learn from each other. Political and historical barriers to cooperation need to be overcome.

**The Need for a Community-Wide Pilot Project**

While the success factors listed above can be found in various communities, they are invariably driven by a particular agency or organization, usually a JCC. No community has planned a community-wide effort with input from all of the different organizations interested in parents with young children.
There is a pressing need for a community-wide pilot project that would involve all of these organizations – the federation, JCCs, day schools, synagogues, preschools, Jewish Family and Children’s Services, chaplains, the central agency for Jewish education, and Chabad. The focus would be on “linking the silos” so that all agencies and organizations work together to develop a community infrastructure to find parents. This would generate a database of parents that would not be owned by any one organization and would be a resource for the entire community.

Parents and professionals involved with these organizations would constitute a massive referral network, maximizing the community’s ability to find unengaged parents. Experience in several communities has shown that once these parents are located and contacted, more than 95 percent respond positively to the initial contact and as many as 75 percent attend follow-up programs.

Each organization and agency would be free to design and offer its own programs, taking into consideration their particular expertise and the geographic dispersion of the parent population. Parents would learn about all available programs through regular emails. This would create friendly competition among organizations for the same pool of parents, a model that if properly managed would lead to better and more varied programming since in order to attract parents organizations would need to improve their marketing efforts and offerings.

Which communities should be chosen for the pilot project? Criteria include:

- professional and lay leaders who share the vision of reaching first-time parents and donors who are willing to support the project
- a history of inter-agency cooperation and successful programming for parents with young children

To initiate a pilot project, it would be advisable to import consulting assistance to help community organizations work together in a new way and overcome historical patterns. A research component would be important to document the effects of the project. Criteria would need to be established to measure success.

If the pilot project were to prove successful, it would generate considerable national momentum for other communities to adopt the model.
Chapter 5: A National Vision

Chapter 1 of this report argued that the Jewish community needs to pay greater attention to the parents who will be raising the next generation of Jews, and Chapter 2 explained why programs for first-time parents are especially opportune. Chapter 3 described programs that are currently being offered for parents, and Chapter 4 described what communities can do to enhance efforts to reach them, calling for a community-wide pilot project. This chapter concludes with a national vision of what could be done if funding were available to expand programming and support communities.

Funding Needs

Federations, foundations, and private philanthropists interested in funding programs for first-time parents should consider the following needs:

- **Existing Shalom Baby gift basket programs need to be improved and new programs need to be initiated based on best practices**  For the most part, existing gift basket programs are understaffed, poorly funded, and not conducted based on best practices. Funding, which would be used primarily to either hire new staff or increase the hours of current staff, would help communities to find more first-time parents, strengthen volunteer involvement, and increase follow-up programming. New programs need to be developed in the communities that do not currently have them.

- **Preschools need to develop more programming for parents of preschoolers**  There is tremendous potential in Jewish preschools to reach parents with young children through parent networks, but for a variety of reasons these institutions don’t focus enough on parent education. Central agencies for Jewish education need to work more with preschools in this area. Funding for the early childhood departments at URJ, USCJ, the JCC Association, CAJE, and Chabad would help to develop programs so that preschools can serve the needs of parents as well as children.
Synagogues need to become more parent-friendly  Synagogues have perhaps the greatest potential to engage first-time parents over the long-term, but this population is rarely a priority for rabbis or synagogue leadership. There are several ways that synagogues could be supported. Synagogue movements could receive funding to help educate both the rabbinate and synagogue leadership about ways to make synagogues more family-friendly. A fund could be created to subsidize synagogue dues for families that can’t afford synagogue memberships. A study could be conducted of successful synagogue-based parenting centers to distill lessons that could be applied to other synagogues.

Promising programs for parents need support  Some of the programs discussed in Chapter 3, such as the PJ Library, Ikkarim, the Parent Education Program, or Pebbles deserve much wider exposure and additional funding so they can be expanded to other communities.

Peer leaders need to be identified and trained  For a number of years, the Wexner Foundation has been helping to develop future Jewish leaders. Their model should be applied to parents with young children who demonstrate the potential to serve as role models among their peers. “Wexner Moms and Dads” in communities would capitalize on a major determinant of engagement, peer relationships among parents.

The Need for National Coordination

Several communities have developed remarkably successful programs using home-grown talent. The rest of the country needs to learn from these communities. However, there is no easy way for communities wishing to implement these programs to learn from those who have done so successfully. None of the many local or national Jewish organizations to which professionals belong have departments that cover programs for parents with very young children. These organizations all begin with preschool-age children.

Thus there is no one to advocate for these programs at the national level. There are no organizations that help professionals who offer them learn from each other, provide consulting assistance for the development of new programs and improvement of existing programs, or generate funding.
Once a pilot project demonstrates the potential of these programs, a national coordinating body would be needed. Whether this body would be an entirely new organization or would be part of an existing organization would need to be determined. The ideal scenario would be for a coalition of philanthropists and foundations to create a new freestanding organization, in much the same way that the Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative (JECEI) and the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE) were created.

A freestanding organization focused entirely on zero to three without an agenda tied to a specific organization could draw upon the expertise of secular parenting organizations and serve the needs of all Jewish organizations, while focusing its efforts on what is best for parents, children, and the Jewish people. Such an organization would have the following responsibilities:

- **To maintain a national website**  Parents looking for information use the Internet extensively. Communities wishing to develop programs would need access to information about existing programs. A national coordinating body could have a presence on the Internet, could assist communities with their own websites, and could provide links to other parenting organization websites. It could also serve as a way to build community among parents and among professionals.

- **To create a national brand that is readily identifiable to parents and creates a sense of Jewish belonging**  Concepts such as the “Jewish people” and “Jewish identity” are abstractions that don’t have meaning to parents who have not been engaged with the community. However, these parents can and will connect with other Jewish parents. A national brand that this group can identify with, with its own logo and website, could create the beginnings of a sense of Jewish belonging.

- **To identify and disseminate best practices and develop resource materials**  Some programs for parents with young children are strong and successful, while others are underdeveloped. What are the best ways to find unengaged parents? What program practices contribute to success? How should programs be designed from the outset so that they serve parents’ needs and attract them? These questions cannot be adequately answered by individual communities and need a national perspective. Local professionals often do not have the time to document what they are doing. A national coordinating body could identify these practices, document them, and make them available nationally on the website.
• To monitor the field for continuous improvement and conduct research
   As new programs are developed and existing programs are modified, lessons learned need to be passed along to professionals in the field so that all benefit. Programs need to be evaluated so that resources are used in an optimal fashion, promising strategies are adopted, and ineffective strategies are discontinued.

• To provide consultants that can help communities work toward a common goal of engaging parents
   At the present time there is little coordination and cooperation within communities. Agencies and organizations that serve the same population are not in communication with each other and often compete for parents. Outside facilitators trained in organizational development and community organizing could help communities to overcome internal barriers to cooperation and work together to engage parents.

• To professionalize the field
   Professionals who work with parents are isolated and their contributions are largely unrecognized. A national coordinating body would professionalize the field, increasing pride and connections among professionals.

• To offer conferences for Jewish communal professionals who work with parents
   All Jewish organizations offer conferences for Jewish professionals, but there are no conferences for Jewish professionals who are working with parents who have young children. A national coordinating body would either create its own conferences or partner with organizations such as CAJE or the JCC Association.

• To educate and advocate among Jewish leaders
   Outreach to first-time parents is, at the present time, not viewed as an important pursuit and investment. The prevailing mindset is that parents are hard to find and are not interested in Jewish life. In actuality, parents can be found and are interested if the right programs are offered. Community leaders need to be educated and a national coordinating body could engage in advocacy. Programs cannot grow if they are not supported by leadership.

• To establish relationships with national parenting organizations, academic institutions, subject-matter experts, and the medical community
   There are many national, state, and local organizations in
the nonprofit, for-profit, educational, and government sectors that address the needs of parents. There is also a great deal of research on parenting and child development. The Jewish community has much to learn from these organizations, especially since the needs of Jewish parents in their role as parents are not any different than the needs of other parents. A national coordinating body would establish and maintain relationships with various parenting organizations and provide a Jewish voice.

- **To serve as a resource to other Jewish organizations** The national coordinating body would serve as a central address for all issues that concern Jewish parents with young children, while maintaining close relationships with national and local Jewish organizations.

- **To coordinate and advise funders interested in funding programs, and to issue grants on behalf of funders** Communities need funding to develop and strengthen programs for parents. Where is funding most needed? What should the criteria be for funding a program? A national coordinating body could serve in several roles, advising funders regarding program criteria, recommending funding opportunities, and disbursing funds to programs that meet agreed-upon standards.

**National Jewish Organizations Interested in Parents with Young Children**

At the present time, several national Jewish organizations are interested in parents with young children:

- **CAJE**, the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education, which serves Jewish educators, has recently begun to address the needs of early childhood educators who work with very young children, and is advocating for Jewish infant care.

- The **JCC Association**, the umbrella organization for all Jewish Community Centers, will be focusing on zero to three at its upcoming conference for professionals in 2007 and is interested in enhancing JCC-based *Shalom Baby* programs and parenting centers.

- **PEJE**, the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education, “whose goal is to strengthen the Jewish day school movement by increasing enrollment in Jewish day schools,” feels strongly that Jewish institutions must work
together more effectively in the interests of parents and children and is advocating community-wide outreach efforts toward parents with young children.

- JOI, the Jewish Outreach Initiative, which conducts programs for those who are unengaged and/or intermarried, is responsible for The Mother’s Circle described in Chapter 3 and has considerable experience and expertise conducting outreach programs, some of which include parents with young children.

- JECEI, the Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative, explicitly incorporates zero to five into its mission. Its vision statement describes it as being involved in “the creation of vanguard [early childhood] centers using the best practices of early childhood, adult and family education, the most recent studies in brain development and social/emotional learning, and the accumulated lessons of organizational change efforts throughout the educational world.” JECEI recognizes the need to involve families in early childhood programs, has mobilized an impressive think tank of early childhood experts, and has emphasized the importance of involving synagogue leadership in early childhood programs. Their eventual aim is to attract the unengaged through excellence in early childhood education, but their current activities do not include programs outside of early childhood centers.

**The Need for More Research**

All of the information and recommendations in this report arose from a systematic investigation of existing programs. However, much more research needs to be done to further develop programs for parents. None of the programs discussed in this report have been properly evaluated and until they are, the potential of these programs will remain unrealized.

*Research Questions* At present, we only have strong anecdotal evidence that these programs attract parents who would otherwise remain uninvolved with the Jewish community. There is no empirical research and many questions remain unanswered. Studies need to be conducted to answer such questions as:

- How is religious identity transmitted from parent to child in Jewish families?
• What differences exist between mothers and fathers in identity transmission?

• Which programs for parents are most successful at engaging the unengaged?

• What is the relative impact of home visits to parents by volunteers and professionals versus attendance by parents at programs outside of the home?

• What are the dynamics of peer influence?

• How do playgroups operate and what is their impact on long-term engagement?

• How are children’s identities affected when parents participate in programs?

• How can outreach efforts influence the choices that intermarried parents make regarding the religion of their children?

• What differences exist in responses to programs between in-married and intermarried parents?

• To what extent do programs increase enrollment in Jewish early childhood programs, congregational schools, day schools, or Jewish summer camps?

• To what extent do parents involved with programs subsequently choose to become federation donors and synagogue members?

Community Planning Studies   Even before a community develops programs for parents, a planning study is advisable. What is the demographic profile of local households? How do parents perceive current programs? Are the community’s current offerings meeting their needs? What areas need programmatic development? What geographic areas are underserved?

Academic Centers   At the present time, there are no institutes or centers for the study of Jewish families within research universities.112 An Institute for the
Jewish Family located at a university with faculty in family studies, human development, and child development would create a valuable synergy. Such an institute could set a research agenda, create an interdisciplinary network among interested researchers, publish and disseminate findings to professionals, and sponsor conferences.

Conclusion

This report began by pointing out the considerable discrepancy between programming for Jewish youth and programming for Jewish parents. The community’s current emphasis on programs for Jewish youth is short-sighted if it is not also accompanied by concerted efforts to engage parents. Given current demographic trends, in the absence of any interventions for parents, the pool of youth available for youth programming is likely to dry up in a generation, lost to assimilation and intermarriage.

Timing is critical. The best time to engage parents is when they have their first child. An old way of living has come to an end and a new way of living has not yet been adopted. During the transitional months after having a baby, parents are looking for friends, for support, and for guidance in how they should raise their new child.

These parents are highly receptive to any program that might help their new child and to any information that might help them to be better parents. They may not be especially interested in Judaism, but they are very interested in their new child’s well-being, and they want to meet other Jewish parents. Rabbis, Jewish educators, Jewish social workers, and other Jewish communal professionals who express genuine interest in these parents, devote time to them, and offer the right programs can play a highly influential role in their lives.

Some Jewish organizations are already offering programs that show great promise. Yet these successes are, for all practical purposes, invisible to the larger Jewish community. The organized Jewish community does not need to develop any more new programs for parents. It needs to learn from and strengthen the existing programs that are successful, and then spread them to communities that do not yet have them.

At the present time, perhaps one out of every twenty babies in the United States receives a formal welcome from the organized Jewish community. Finding the
other 95 percent should be a high priority since *every* new baby is a precious member of the community. Parents should be warmly welcomed and embraced. Exciting programs should be in place to meet parents’ needs and connect them with each other.

It is important for communities to coordinate their efforts. A community network of programs accompanied by efforts to create strong Jewish social networks would create a synergy that would be far greater than the impact of any individual program.

The stakes are high. A nationally coordinated outreach effort, properly conceived, has the real potential to change the Jewish future.
Appendix

Counting the Babies

How many Jewish babies are born each year in the United States?

This question can only be answered with a great deal of imprecision, since the only potential source of information, the 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey, does not contain a great deal of information about parents with young children. NJPS 2000-01 estimated that there were approximately 245,000 Jewish children in the United States between the ages of 0 and 5. If this number is divided by 5, the resulting estimate is approximately 50,000 Jewish births annually. Very roughly, this number represents approximately one percent of the total Jewish population.

This figure, however, is not only questionable because of the limitations of NJPS 2000-01, it is just a starting point, because it is based on babies born to parents who are unambiguously Jewish. NJPS 2000-01 estimated the intermarried rate for Jews who have married since 1996 at 47 percent. So, using a broader definition of a Jewish baby, including not just babies who are unambiguously Jewish but babies born into households with one Jewish partner who potentially could be raised as Jews, then an estimate of annual births becomes even more speculative. It depends upon the extent to which intermarried families choose to raise their children as Jews, which in part, is determined by the success of the types of programs described in this report. In the end, this study cannot offer an estimate with any degree of confidence.

To estimate the number of births for a given community, the community’s demographics would need to be considered. For example, in communities with a large elderly population (e.g. West Palm Beach, Florida), one percent would probably over-estimate the number of births, while in rapidly growing communities with many young professionals (e.g. Austin, Texas), one percent would in all likelihood be too low. Similarly, communities with high rates of intermarriage will have more births of “potential” Jews, although current data from NJPS 2000-01 suggests that only about a third will be raised as Jews.

What is far more important than counting the number of Jewish babies born each year is determining how many each community is reaching. This is discussed in the next section.
Information About Gift Basket Programs

To determine the status of *Shalom Baby* gift basket programs in the United States, all programs of this type were sought out via the Internet. Each was contacted via email and phone to obtain additional information. Usable responses were received from all but 5 of the programs. Table A1 on the next page presents basic data about the programs, and Table A2 provides a directory. Table A3 provides an example of the contents of a gift basket. An explanation of the columns in Table A1 that require additional clarification follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Length of time program has been continuously active</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff time</td>
<td>Percentage of 40 hour week that coordinator devotes to program</td>
</tr>
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</table>
| Extent of search for new parents | Minimal – No additional effort to find parents
Moderate – Some additional efforts
Extensive – Extensive efforts to find parents |
| Extent of follow-up programs | Minimal – No programs after initial gift
Moderate – Some programming
Extensive – Many programming options
Planned – Still in planning stage |
<p>| Population of Jewish community | Population figure from National Jewish Year Book119 |
| Estimate of annual Jewish births | Annual Jewish births estimated at one percent of the Jewish population (see Counting the Babies in this Appendix) |
| Annual gift baskets delivered | Data provided by program coordinators |
| Estimated percentage of parents welcomed | Estimate of program success at making initial contact with new Jewish parents; based on the number of gift baskets delivered divided by annual Jewish births |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Type of Sponsoring Organization</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Staff Time</th>
<th>Budget Excluding Staff Salary</th>
<th>Number of Volunteers</th>
<th>Extent of Search For New Parents</th>
<th>Extent of Follow-Up Programs</th>
<th>Estimated Population of Jewish Community</th>
<th>Estimate of Annual Jewish Births</th>
<th>Annual Gift Baskets Delivered</th>
<th>Estimated Percentage of Parents Welcomed</th>
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### Table A2: National Directory of Shalom Baby Gift Basket Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Community Name</th>
<th>Program Coordinator</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Name of Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AZ</td>
<td>Tucson</td>
<td>Jennifer Fink</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jfink@jfsa.org">jfink@jfsa.org</a></td>
<td>520-577-9393</td>
<td>Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Silicon Valley</td>
<td>Arielle Hendel</td>
<td><a href="mailto:arielle@jewishsiliconvalley.org">arielle@jewishsiliconvalley.org</a></td>
<td>408-357-7501</td>
<td>Jewish Federation of Silicon Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>San Diego</td>
<td>Judy Nemzer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shalombaby@ljcc.com">shalombaby@ljcc.com</a></td>
<td>856-457-3030</td>
<td>Lawrence Family JCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>Gail Green</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gailg@sjcfl.org">gailg@sjcfl.org</a></td>
<td>415-512-6233</td>
<td>Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, and Sonoma Counties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Orange County</td>
<td>Amy Stoll, Kathleen Ron</td>
<td><a href="mailto:amystoll1@yahoo.com">amystoll1@yahoo.com</a>, <a href="mailto:kathleen@jfoc.org">kathleen@jfoc.org</a></td>
<td>714-755-5555</td>
<td>Jewish Federation of Orange County</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Boulder</td>
<td>Beth Litz</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bethlitz@yahoo.com">bethlitz@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td>720-364-1812</td>
<td>JCC Boulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>Caron Blanke</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cblanke@jccdenver.org">cblanke@jccdenver.org</a></td>
<td>303-316-6317</td>
<td>JCC Denver</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Hartford</td>
<td>Debbie Glassman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dglassman@jewishhartford.org">dglassman@jewishhartford.org</a></td>
<td>860-727-6125</td>
<td>Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford</td>
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<td>CT</td>
<td>Westport</td>
<td>Lois Baron, Lisa Tobin</td>
<td><a href="mailto:loisbaron@aol.com">loisbaron@aol.com</a>, <a href="mailto:lisatallia@optonline.net">lisatallia@optonline.net</a></td>
<td>203-226-8197</td>
<td>UJA Federation of Westport-Weston-Wilton-Norwalk</td>
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<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>Washington/MD/VA</td>
<td>Francie Kranzberg</td>
<td><a href="mailto:franciekranzberg@shalomdc.org">franciekranzberg@shalomdc.org</a></td>
<td>301-348-7313</td>
<td>The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington</td>
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<td>FL</td>
<td>Palm Beaches</td>
<td>Alicia Stillman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:alicias@iconline.com">alicias@iconline.com</a></td>
<td>561-712-5230</td>
<td>JCC of the Greater Palm Beaches</td>
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<td>FL</td>
<td>South Palm Beach</td>
<td>Anita Schwartz</td>
<td><a href="mailto:anitas@bocafed.org">anitas@bocafed.org</a></td>
<td>561-852-3129</td>
<td>Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County</td>
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<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>Pinellas County</td>
<td>Renee Silverman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:renesilverman@jewishpinellas.org">renesilverman@jewishpinellas.org</a></td>
<td>727-530-3223</td>
<td>Jewish Federation of Pinellas County</td>
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<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>Gainesville</td>
<td>Harriet Pawliget</td>
<td><a href="mailto:harrpaw@aol.com">harrpaw@aol.com</a></td>
<td>352-331-7648</td>
<td>The Maimonides Society of Gainesville</td>
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<tr>
<td>IL</td>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>Laura Smith</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lurasmith@ujf.org">lurasmith@ujf.org</a></td>
<td>312-357-4851</td>
<td>Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Peoria</td>
<td>Susan Katz</td>
<td><a href="mailto:fedeporia@fbgllobal.net">fedeporia@fbgllobal.net</a></td>
<td>309-689-0063</td>
<td>The Jewish Federation of Peoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>North Shore</td>
<td>Julie Newburg</td>
<td><a href="mailto:inewburg@rlcf.org">inewburg@rlcf.org</a></td>
<td>978-740-4410</td>
<td>Robert I. Lappin Charitable Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>Caron Blau Rothstein</td>
<td><a href="mailto:crothstein@cjebaltimore.org">crothstein@cjebaltimore.org</a></td>
<td>410-735-5013</td>
<td>Center for Jewish Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MI</td>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>Lisa Sobel Siegmann</td>
<td><a href="mailto:siegmann@ffmd.org">siegmann@ffmd.org</a></td>
<td>414-205-2534</td>
<td>Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit</td>
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<tr>
<td>MN</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>Barb Goldman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bgoldman@sabesinc.org">bgoldman@sabesinc.org</a></td>
<td>952-361-3414</td>
<td>The Minneapolis Jewish Federation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MO</td>
<td>St. Louis.</td>
<td>Sara Winkelman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:swinkelman@ccstl.org">swinkelman@ccstl.org</a></td>
<td>314-442-3268</td>
<td>St. Louis Jewish Community Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>Marnie Moskowitz</td>
<td><a href="mailto:marnie.moskowitz@jewishcharlotte.org">marnie.moskowitz@jewishcharlotte.org</a></td>
<td>704-944-6764</td>
<td>Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte</td>
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<td>NE</td>
<td>Omaha</td>
<td>Janie Murow</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jmurow@jewishomaha.org">jmurow@jewishomaha.org</a></td>
<td>402-334-6566</td>
<td>Jewish Federation of Omaha</td>
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<td>NJ</td>
<td>Bergen County</td>
<td>Nickie Falk</td>
<td><a href="mailto:nickief@ujannj.org">nickief@ujannj.org</a></td>
<td>201-488-6800 x254</td>
<td>UJA Federation of Northern New Jersey</td>
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<td>NM</td>
<td>Albuquerque</td>
<td>Sam Sokolove</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sam@jewishnewmexico.org">sam@jewishnewmexico.org</a></td>
<td>501-821-3214</td>
<td>Jewish Federation of Greater Albuquerque</td>
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<td>NY</td>
<td>Rockland County</td>
<td>Heather Lipsky</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hilipsky@jewishfamilyservice.net">hilipsky@jewishfamilyservice.net</a></td>
<td>845-354-2121</td>
<td>Jewish Family and Children’s Services of Rockland County</td>
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<tr>
<td>OH</td>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
<td>Lisa Hacker</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lisa@shalombabyinfo.org">lisa@shalombabyinfo.org</a></td>
<td>513-373-0300</td>
<td>Jewish Information Network (Jewish Federation of Cincinnati)</td>
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<td>PA</td>
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<td>Emily Farkas</td>
<td><a href="mailto:efarkas@ujfpittsburgh.org">efarkas@ujfpittsburgh.org</a></td>
<td>412-992-5217</td>
<td>United Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh</td>
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<td>RI</td>
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<td>Kerri Pariseault</td>
<td><a href="mailto:karrie@jafi.org">karrie@jafi.org</a></td>
<td>401-421-4111 x163</td>
<td>The Jewish Federation of Rhode Island</td>
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<td>WI</td>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>Michelle Gundrum</td>
<td><a href="mailto:michelleg@milwaukeejewish.org">michelleg@milwaukeejewish.org</a></td>
<td>414-390-5700</td>
<td>Milwaukee Jewish Federation</td>
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</table>
Example Of Shalom Baby Gift Basket Contents (Baltimore)120

Jewish Contents

Center for Jewish Education/Lamazal Tov: Cover letter, list of preschools, bibliography of books and websites, bib, magnetic memo board, Resource Center brochure, Jewish Learning Connection.org, bookmark

Baltimore Jewish Council: 5 year Jewish holiday calendar

The Associated: Synagogue list, calendar, Connections Program information, Impact (YAD) information

Jewish Family Services: Service guide, JIRS bookmark, Parent Resource Place calendar

Baltimore Jewish Times: Free subscription coupon, sourcebook

Jewish Community Centers of Baltimore: Program guide, discount coupons, baby classes flyer

Judy Caplan Ginsburgh “Good Day, Good Night,” Jewish music CD

“I Can Celebrate” children’s board book

Shabbat Blessings guide, Century Shabbat

Daytime and bedtime rituals, UAHC

Discount coupons for Judaica Place and Perns Hebrew Book and Gift Shop

General Contents

Parents Pages by Baltimore’s Child Magazine

Maryland Poison Center stickers

Postpartum depression information
Example of Lamazal Tov Curriculum (Baltimore)

Lamazal Tov Coordinator: Caron Blau Rothstein, MA, MSW
Childbirth Educators: Laure Gutman, RN & Ilana Hoenlein, RN

Every class will begin with a review and discussion from the previous session as well as breathing and relaxation techniques.

Session 1
Welcome and introductions; nutrition during pregnancy; changes during pregnancy
*Topic: From Partners to Parents*
Transition from couple to family; intimacy, marriage issues; Super Mom, Super Dad – myths, realities; Jewish Family Services as a resource
*Presenter: JFS Parent Resource Place Social Worker*

Session 2
Questions and answers; phases of labor; prenatal exercises
*Topic: It's a Boy!*
Bris; Pidyon Haben
*Presenter: Mohel*

Session 3
Questions and answers; transition and delivery; doula/role of birth coach
*Topic: It's a Girl! and General Welcoming Traditions*
Simchat HaBat; choosing a Jewish name
Presenter: Jewish clergy person from a Baltimore-area synagogue, typically a member of the Board of Rabbis

Session 4
Questions and answers; Caesarean delivery; pain relief options; postpartum
*Topic: Jewish Family Life*
Making a Jewish home; Jewish education for you and your family; Jewish communal resources
Presenter: CJE Family Educator

Session 5
*Topic: Infant First Aid*
Infant CPR and first aid; choking; injury prevention
Presenter: Chaya Lasson, RN

Session 6
Topic: Infant Care
Final questions and answers; breast and bottle-feeding; choosing a pediatrician; newborn care; finding good childcare
Presenter: Guest Pediatrician

Session 7
Topic: Child/Car Seat Safety
Actual car seat installation
Presenter: Debbie Baer, RN, Sinai Hospital
### Examples of Infant/Toddler Program Titles

- Abrakadoodle Art Experience
- Baby and Me
- Baby Ballet
- Baby Book Club
- Baby Fun
- Baby Gym
- Baby Safe
- Baby Sign Language
- Baby Time
- Baby Yoga
- Baby’s Body and Brain
- Bagels and Blocks
- Boogie Babies Music Class
- Bounce Back with Baby
- Giggles, Wiggles and a Taste of Shabbat
- Hands On Holidays
- I Love Shabbat
- Imagination Station
- Infant Massage
- Itsy Bitsy Yoga
- Itty Bitty Ditty Doers
- Jammin’ Tots Music Class
- Just Me and My Dad
- Love and Logic
- Lunch Bunch
- Lunch Bunch Stay and Play
- Mazel Tots
- Messy Art
- Mini-Menschen
- Miracles and Mayhem
- Mom’s Night Out
- Mommy and Baby Playgroup
- Mommy and Me
- Mommy, Daddy and Me
- Mother-Baby Boogie
- Movin’ and Groovin’
- Music and Munchkins
- Music Makers
- Musical Beginnings
- Onezie Funzie
- Parent/Tot Swim
- Parents’ Day Out
- Pee Wee Pizza and Play
- Shake the Rattle & Roll
- Sing and Share
- Splash
- Stroller Baby Boot Camp
- Stroller Strides
- Temple Tots
- Terrific Twos
- Toddler Swing Time
- Toddler Transition Class
- Toddlin Tikes
- Together Time
- Tot & Company
- TOTalehs
- Two Plus One Means Fun
- Walkie Talkies
- Water Babies
- Water Tots
- WEE Play
- Wobblin’ Walkers
<table>
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<tr>
<th>State</th>
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<th>Name of JCC</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Irvine</td>
<td>Merage JCC of Orange County</td>
<td>Bev Menkin</td>
<td>949-435-3400 ext#299</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bevm@jccoc.org">bevm@jccoc.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Washington DC JCC</td>
<td>Madeline Lowitz</td>
<td>202-777-3278</td>
<td><a href="mailto:madeline@dcjcc.org">madeline@dcjcc.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>Greater Orlando</td>
<td>Jewish Community Center of Greater Orlando</td>
<td>Debbie House</td>
<td>407-645-0923 x275</td>
<td><a href="mailto:parentc@orlandojcc.org">parentc@orlandojcc.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>JCC of Greater Baltimore</td>
<td>Sharon Seigel</td>
<td>410-356-5200 x347</td>
<td><a href="mailto:parenting@jcc.org">parenting@jcc.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Rockville</td>
<td>JCC of Greater Washington</td>
<td>Robin Schneider</td>
<td>301-348-3837</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rschneider@jccgw.org">rschneider@jccgw.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>MN</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>Sabes JCC</td>
<td>Barb Goldman</td>
<td>952-381-3414</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bgoldman@sabesjcc.org">bgoldman@sabesjcc.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NJ</td>
<td>Tenafly</td>
<td>JCC on the Palisades</td>
<td>Lisa Sternbach</td>
<td>201-569-7900 x319</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lsternbach@jconthepalisades.org">lsternbach@jconthepalisades.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NJ</td>
<td>Cherry Hill</td>
<td>Betty and Milton Katz Jewish Community Center</td>
<td>Susie Shavelson</td>
<td>856-424-4444 x116</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sshavelson@jfedsnj.org">sshavelson@jfedsnj.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NJ</td>
<td>Wayne</td>
<td>YM-YWHA of North Jersey</td>
<td>Arlene Liebman</td>
<td>973-595-0100 x280</td>
<td><a href="mailto:liebmana@ymha-nj.org">liebmana@ymha-nj.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NJ</td>
<td>Bergen County</td>
<td>Bergen County YJCC</td>
<td>Susan Suzzan</td>
<td>201-666-6610 x327</td>
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<tr>
<td>NY</td>
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<td>JCC-Y of Rockland County</td>
<td>Cathie Izen</td>
<td>845-362-4400 x103</td>
<td><a href="mailto:liebman@ymha-nj.org">liebman@ymha-nj.org</a></td>
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<td>NY</td>
<td>Riverdale</td>
<td>Riverdale Y</td>
<td>Barbara Rosenfeld</td>
<td>718-548-8200 x221</td>
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<tr>
<td>NY</td>
<td>Oceanside</td>
<td>Barry and Florence Friedberg JCC: Long Beach</td>
<td>Roni Kleinman</td>
<td>516-431-2929</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rkleinman@jcca.org">rkleinman@jcca.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NY</td>
<td>Cedarhurst</td>
<td>Five Towns JCC</td>
<td>Melissa Wienerkur</td>
<td>516-239-1354</td>
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<td>NY</td>
<td>East Hills</td>
<td>Sid Jacobson JCC</td>
<td>Gale Kaplan</td>
<td>516-484-1545 x126</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gkaplan@jcca.org">gkaplan@jcca.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NY</td>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>14th Street Y</td>
<td>Jane Kornbluh</td>
<td>212-780-0800 x236</td>
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<td>NY</td>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>92nd St. Y</td>
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<td>212-415-5611</td>
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<td>NY</td>
<td>Pleasantville</td>
<td>Richard G. Rosenthalal JCC</td>
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<td>OH</td>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>Columbus JCC</td>
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<td>PA</td>
<td>Scranton</td>
<td>Scranton JCC</td>
<td>Rika Schaffer</td>
<td>570-346-6595 x114</td>
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<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>Austin</td>
<td>Jewish Community Association of Austin</td>
<td>Michele Chandler</td>
<td>512-250-1043</td>
<td><a href="mailto:michele.chandler@jcaaonline.org">michele.chandler@jcaaonline.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>The JCC of Houston</td>
<td>Eric Bishop</td>
<td>713-729-3200 x3246</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ebishop@jchouston.org">ebishop@jchouston.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>Virginia Beach</td>
<td>The Marilyn and Marvin Simon Family JCC</td>
<td>Beth Kinnear</td>
<td>757-321-2332</td>
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<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>Stroum JCC</td>
<td>Carla Hershman</td>
<td>206-232-711 x304</td>
<td><a href="mailto:carlah@sjcc.org">carlah@sjcc.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WI</td>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>Harry and Rose Samuelson JCC of Greater Milwaukee</td>
<td>Kelly Ramsak</td>
<td>414-967-8212</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kramsak@jccmilwaukee.org">kramsak@jccmilwaukee.org</a></td>
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### Table A4: National Directory of Synagogue-Based Parenting Centers

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<tr>
<th>State</th>
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<th>Name of Synagogue</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Tarzana</td>
<td>Temple Judea</td>
<td>Natalie Smolens</td>
<td>818-342-3840</td>
<td><a href="mailto:nsmolens@templejudea.com">nsmolens@templejudea.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Pacific Palisades</td>
<td>Kehillat Israel</td>
<td>Dana E. Entin</td>
<td>310-459-7539</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Encino</td>
<td>Valley Beth Shalom</td>
<td>Michele Warner</td>
<td>818-788-6000</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mwarner@vbs.org">mwarner@vbs.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>Wilshire Boulevard Temple</td>
<td>Carol Bovill</td>
<td>213-388-2401</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>Steven S. Wise Temple</td>
<td>Sheryl Cohen</td>
<td>310-889-2248</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ecc@sswt.org">ecc@sswt.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>San Diego</td>
<td>Congregation Beth Israel</td>
<td>Tammy Vener</td>
<td>858-535-1144 x3123</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tven@cbisd.org">tven@cbisd.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>Congregation Beth Shalom</td>
<td>Fern Eisenberg</td>
<td>415-221-8030</td>
<td><a href="mailto:earlychildhood@bethsholomsf.org">earlychildhood@bethsholomsf.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Potomac</td>
<td>B'nai Tzedek</td>
<td>Nancy Schmitz</td>
<td>301-299-1149 x325</td>
<td><a href="mailto:nschmitz@bnaitzedek.org">nschmitz@bnaitzedek.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>MI</td>
<td>Oak Park</td>
<td>Congregation Beth Shalom</td>
<td>Susan Gartenberg</td>
<td>248-547-7970 x234</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sgartenberg@congbethshalom.org">sgartenberg@congbethshalom.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NY</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Central Synagogue</td>
<td>Susan Alpert</td>
<td>212-838-5122 x233</td>
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<tr>
<td>NY</td>
<td>Harrison</td>
<td>Jewish Community Center of Harrison</td>
<td>Nancy Isaacs</td>
<td>914-835-2850</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jfcnsy@bestweb.net">jfcnsy@bestweb.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NY</td>
<td>Scarsdale</td>
<td>Westchester Reform Temple</td>
<td></td>
<td>914-723-5493</td>
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<tr>
<td>NY</td>
<td>South Salem</td>
<td>Jewish Family Congregation</td>
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<td>914-763-3028</td>
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<tr>
<td>NY</td>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>Brooklyn Heights Synagogue</td>
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<td>718-522-2070</td>
<td><a href="mailto:office@bhsbrooklyn.org">office@bhsbrooklyn.org</a></td>
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<td>PA</td>
<td>Wynnewood</td>
<td>Temple Beth Hillel-Beth El</td>
<td>Ina August</td>
<td>610-649-2277 x212</td>
<td><a href="mailto:magicmoments@tbhbe.org">magicmoments@tbhbe.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>Congregation Emanu El</td>
<td>Paula Katz</td>
<td>713-535-6400 x252</td>
<td><a href="mailto:becdir@emanuelhouston.org">becdir@emanuelhouston.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Program</td>
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<td><strong>Al Galgalim: Training Wheels</strong></td>
<td>Ehud Paz Hadassah New York, NY</td>
<td>800-391-3339 <a href="mailto:algalgalim@hadassah.org">algalgalim@hadassah.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Baby is a Blessing</strong></td>
<td>Karen Kushner Project Welcome San Francisco, CA</td>
<td>888-756-8242 <a href="mailto:projectwelcome@urj.org">projectwelcome@urj.org</a> <a href="http://www.projectwelcome.org">www.projectwelcome.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Belly Shmooze</strong></td>
<td>Karen Miller</td>
<td>617-566-3701 <a href="mailto:karen@bellyshmooze.org">karen@bellyshmooze.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Center for Early Relationship Support</strong></td>
<td>Peggy Kaufman Jewish Family &amp; Children's Service Waltham, MA</td>
<td>781-647-5327 <a href="mailto:pkaufman@jfcsboston.org">pkaufman@jfcsboston.org</a> <a href="http://www.jfcsboston.org/fcs/early_relationship.cfm">http://www.jfcsboston.org/fcs/early_relationship.cfm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ikkarim</strong></td>
<td>Deborah Kram Combined Jewish Philanthropies Boston, MA</td>
<td>617-457-8586 <a href="mailto:adultlearning@cjp.org">adultlearning@cjp.org</a> <a href="http://www.cjp.org/ikkarim">www.cjp.org/ikkarim</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jewish Baby University</strong></td>
<td>Rabbi Jeffrey Kaye Rose Medical Center Denver, CO</td>
<td>303-320-2159 <a href="mailto:jeffrey.kaye@healthonecares.com">jeffrey.kaye@healthonecares.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lamazal Tov</strong></td>
<td>Caron Blau Rothstein Center for Jewish Education Baltimore, MD</td>
<td>410-735-5013 <a href="mailto:crothstein@cjebaltimore.org">crothstein@cjebaltimore.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Making Mishpocha</strong></td>
<td>Rabbi Avis Miller Adas Israel Congregation Washington, DC</td>
<td>202-362-4433 <a href="mailto:rabbi.miller@adasisrael.org">rabbi.miller@adasisrael.org</a></td>
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<td><strong>Mom2Mom</strong></td>
<td>Marjorie Schnyder Jewish Family Service Seattle, WA</td>
<td>206-861-3146 <a href="mailto:mschnyder@jfcs.org">mschnyder@jfcs.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Mother's Circle</strong></td>
<td>Sonja Spear Jewish Outreach Institute New York, NY</td>
<td>888-205-7373 <a href="mailto:sonja@themotherscircle.org">sonja@themotherscircle.org</a> <a href="http://www.themotherscircle.org/">http://www.themotherscircle.org/</a></td>
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<td><strong>Parent Education Program</strong></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:mparkerm@fmams.org.il">mparkerm@fmams.org.il</a> <a href="http://www.fmams.org.il/pep/pep.html">http://www.fmams.org.il/pep/pep.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parents Place</strong></td>
<td>Kenny Altman Parents Place San Francisco, CA</td>
<td>415-359-2454 kennyafjcs.org <a href="http://www.jfcs.org/services/">http://www.jfcs.org/services/</a></td>
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<td><strong>Pebbles</strong></td>
<td>Phyllis Adler Stepping Stones Denver, CO</td>
<td>303-388-4013 x335 <a href="mailto:director@steppingstonesfamily.com">director@steppingstonesfamily.com</a> <a href="http://www.steppingstonesfamily.com">www.steppingstonesfamily.com</a></td>
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<td><strong>The PJ Library</strong></td>
<td>Gali Cooks The Harold Grinspoon Foundation West Springfield, MA</td>
<td>413-439-1943 <a href="mailto:gali@hgf.org">gali@hgf.org</a> <a href="http://www.pjlibrary.org">www.pjlibrary.org</a></td>
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About the Author

Mark I. Rosen has been a Senior Research Associate at the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies since 2000. He received his Ph.D. in organizational behavior from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Prior to joining the Cohen Center, he was a management professor at Bentley College and a consultant to businesses and nonprofits. His research activities on the Jewish community have explored such diverse topics as intermarriage, outreach, day schools, Birthright Israel, Jewish families with young children, Jewish life on college campuses, and Jewish summer camping. He recently completed a case study on Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life entitled *The Remaking of Hillel: A Case Study on Leadership and Organizational Transformation*, and is currently working on a case study about the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Rosen is also the author of *Thank You for Being Such a Pain* (NY: Three Rivers Press, 1999) a book of mussar teachings on interpersonal relationships.
About the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

The mission of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies is to conduct scholarly work that can enhance understanding of the Jewish community. The Center is a multi-disciplinary research institute and an integral part of Brandeis University's distinguished programs in Jewish studies and communal service. Research conducted at the Center focuses on studies of American Jewry and Jewish institutions and is widely disseminated.

The Center's faculty and student staff include psychologists, sociologists, and scholars trained in Jewish studies. They share a common interest in Jewish identity, culture, family life, religious expression and Israel-Diaspora relations. They are committed to academically rigorous research that contributes to a deeper understanding of modern Jewish life and the role of religion and ethnicity in modern society. "Leading edge" research done at the Center provides policy-makers and Jewish community leaders with timely analyses of current problems.

Recent studies conducted by the Center have been done in synagogues, schools, summer camps and Israel, and have dealt with a cross-section of American Jewry. A signature feature of the Cohen Center is its use of innovative research methods to answer complex questions. Research is designed and conducted by teams that combine a rich mix of skills, experience and perspectives. Findings are disseminated in academic journals, books, conferences, meetings of Jewish organizations and in the Jewish media.

The Cohen Center web site can be found at www.brandeis.edu/cmjs
References


Notes

1 Two exceptions are the William Petschek National Jewish Family Center at the American Jewish Committee and the Shirley and Arthur Whizin Institute for Jewish Family Life at the University of Judaism.
2 Two of the most prominent organizations of this type include Zero to Three (www.zerotothree.org) and Family Support America (www.familysupportamerica.org).
3 For a comprehensive review, see Barber (2000).
6 See Rosen (2004a); Rosen et al. (2004b); Rosen et al. (2004c). The latter two reports are available for download at www.cmjs.org.
7 Hirsh et al. (2002).
8 The consultant was Ilene Vogelstein from the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education.
9 According to the 2000-01 National Jewish Population Survey (Kotler-Berkowitz et al., 2003) about 5 percent of Jewish households have one or more adopted children.
10 The author wishes to Leonard Saxe of Brandeis University for pointing out the need to address these distinctions.
11 An excellent source of information about infant mental health is the organization Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families, in Washington, DC. Their website can be found at www.zerotothree.org.
12 Fishman (2000) makes the point that Jewish Americans mirror the larger culture. Hence it is entirely reasonable to make the case that Jewish parents are similar to other white, middle-class parents. Bubis (1994) made a similar point more than 10 years ago, and Greenberg (2006) makes the same point about Generation Y Jews in a recent study.
13 The following material draws primarily on secular research. Hyman (1986) noted 20 years ago that very little research had been conducted on the Jewish family. This state of affairs continues.
14 For various discussions regarding the transition to parenthood from the perspective of both mothers and fathers, see Barrett (1994); Feeney, et al. (2001); Huston and Holmes (2004); Walzer (1998); and Warner (2005). Research reviewed by Huston and Holmes (2004) indicates that the impact on fathers does not become pronounced until after about six months have passed.
15 See Smith (2005).
16 Smith (2005).
17 Kotler-Berkowitz et al. (2003).
18 Email communication from Caron Blanke, director of the Shalom Baby program in Denver, Colorado, May 30, 2006.
19 There are some new mothers who have never worked as a babysitter and have little experience caring for a baby.
20 Telephone interview with Natalie Merkur Rose of the Jewish Social Service Agency in Washington, DC, March 27, 2006.
22 Huston and Holmes (2004).
23 See Shapiro and Gottman (2005) for a comprehensive review of the literature on marital issues during the transition to parenthood. The authors have developed a workshop entitled Bringing Baby Home in Seattle specifically to address these issues.
24 Feeney et al. (2001).
Jewish migration patterns are described in Kotler-Berkowitz et al. (2003). Parents relocate where there are jobs, and job growth is greatest in the South and West. One data source that tracks employment trends found that the five cities with the largest job growth in 2006 were Houston, San Diego, Portland, Seattle, and Phoenix. Data retrieved October 9, 2006 from Monster Local Employment Index at http://www.monsterworldwide.com/Press_Room/MEI/Aug06/DMA/MonsterLEI_Overview_Aug06.pdf

U.S. Department of Labor (2005); percentage for women 25-54 found in Table 3 on page 10, figure for women with children 3 and under found in Table 7 on page 20. It is probable that the figures are lower for Jewish women, since Jews have higher education and income levels, which decreases the need for dual-income households.


Reisman (1994) uses the term “surrogate extended family.”

Feeney et al. (2001, p. 211).

For a review of the literature on social relationships and their effects on psychological and physical health, see Cohen et al. (2000).

See, for example, Cochran & Brassard (1979); Crittenden (1985); Jennings et al. (1991); Walker & Riley (2001).

The following discussion is based on Abutbul (2006). For a practical guide to playgroups, see Broad and Butterworth (1991).


Barrett (1994).

NJPS data from Kotler-Berkowitz et al. (2003).


A recent study found that in Boston, 60 percent of the children of intermarried parents were being raised as Jews. This higher figure appears to be related to the expenditures on outreach allocated by Combined Jewish Philanthropies, which are considerably higher than in other communities. See Saxe et al. (2006).

The author is grateful to Karen Kushner of Project Welcome in San Francisco for bringing this point to the author’s attention.

See Chertok et al. (2001).


See Kadushin and Kotler-Berkowitz (in press)

Linzner made essentially the same argument over twenty years ago. See Linzer (1984, p. 200).

This point came up repeatedly in focus groups conducted by the author.

The best Jewish parallel is birthright israel; virtually all of those who attend were influenced to register by friends. See Saxe et al. (2004).

The author is grateful to Nancy Held of Day One in San Francisco for providing much of the information presented in this section.

The author wishes to thank Donald Wertlieb of Tufts University for raising this point.

The author is grateful to Natalie Merkur Rose of the Jewish Social Service Agency in Washington, DC for raising these points.

See, for example, Gopnik et al. (1999); Hawley (2000); Friedman (2005).

Bullet points quoted from Shonkoff & Phillips (2000, p. 4).

Siegel & Hartzell (2003).
54 See Myers (1996); Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle (1997); Pearce & Axinn (1998); De Roos et. al. (2003).
57 Yust (2003).
61 Interview by the author with Professor Andrew Meltzoff, Co-Director, Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, February 6, 2006.
62 The author thanks Ruth Pinkenson Feldman of the Jewish Community Center Association for raising this point.
63 Rosen (2004a); Rosen et al. (2004b); Rosen et al. (2004c).
64 Credit for the name goes to Marci Mayer Eisen, Debbie Kaminer, Nikki Goldstein and Robin Fox in St. Louis.
65 The name Shalom Baby is now the legal property of the Denver JCC. Because of this, the program in San Francisco is called Chai Baby.
66 There is also a gift basket program in the former Soviet Union called Mazal Tov which was developed by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.
67 Peoria actually appears to be higher, but because there are so few births the figure is unreliable.
68 The exception is in communities where Jewish preschools have waitlists.
69 Baltimore started a playgroup program called Home Base but it was discontinued after the local federation cut funding because the program required too much staff time.
70 See http://www.pepsgroup.org/
71 The author thanks Sara Winkelman and Marci Diamond of the St. Louis JCC for providing much of the information in this section.
72 The evaluation was conducted by Dan Shapiro, director of marketing at the Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center in San Diego. The author is grateful to Judy Nemzer for providing this information. For an article in the local Jewish press about the program, see Reff (2006).
73 For the program curriculum, see Duwe & Greenwood (2002).
74 At the Owings Mills JCC Parenting Center in suburban Baltimore, parents can begin an infant massage class when their baby is three weeks old.
75 Disclosure: The author is a member of the Professional and Community Advisory Board for the Stroum JCC Parenting Center in Seattle. See Kannin (2005) and http://www.sjcc.org/children/parenting for additional information about the parenting center.
76 Atkins (1986); McCurdy (2001); Sweet & Appelbaum (2004).
77 The author wishes to thank Amy Rassen, the founding director of Parents Place, and Kenny Altman, the current director, for providing the information in this section.
78 The author wishes to thank Peggy Kaufman of the Center for Early Relationship Support for providing the information in this section.
80 The author wishes to thank Marjorie Schnyder of Jewish Family Service in Seattle for providing the information in this section.
81 Quotation from The Mom2Mom Project Fact Sheet available at http://www.jfsseattle.org/pdf/M2Mfactsheet.pdf#search=%22mom2mom%20seattle%22.
82 The author wishes to thank Ehud Paz of Hadassah and Beth Rogalski of Austin, Texas for providing the information in this section.
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The author wishes to thank Mitch Parker of the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School and Joel Einleger of the AVI CHAI Foundation for sharing information about the Parent Education Program. See also Parker (2006).


The author wishes to thank Paul Golin of the Jewish Outreach Institute for providing information about the program.

The author wishes to thank Phyllis Adler and Debbie Foster for providing information about the program.

Personal conversation with Ben Phillips at the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University.

Cohen & Kelman (2005) found that venue was important for attracting Jewish young adults.

For additional points about the inadvisability of separating the intermarried, see Miller (2005).

In the case of Hillel, with the growth of the JCSC Fellows program and the shift in leadership at campus Hillel foundations from rabbis to executive directors, students on campus have more contact with peers but less contact with Jewish educators. Some feel this development has not been good for Hillel or for students. See Rosen (2006).

The author wishes to thank Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin for providing this perspective.

See, for example, Pinkenson (1987); Beck (2002); Center for Policy Research (2006).


Levine (1985) made a similar point about professionals 20 years ago.

The author wishes to thank Lori Geismar-Ryan, a consultant to the Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative, for her assistance with this section.

Abramowitz (1997).

Information about Bright Beginnings in Colorado is available at http://www.brightbeginningsco.org; information about the Foundation for Early Learning in Washington State can be found at http://www.earlylearning.org.

For information about Day One, see http://www.dayonecenter.com/. For information about Isis Maternity, see http://www.isismaternity.com/.

For additional information about the effect of community size on Jewish professionals, see Kerner et al. (2005).


One study found more than half of the families in the San Francisco area with children in Jewish preschools either didn’t come to Jewish learning programs or didn’t know about them. See Rosenblatt (2006).


The author wishes to thank Eric Levine of UJC for offering this perspective.

The author is grateful to Bob Sherman of the San Francisco BJE for these insights.

See Fishkoff (2003) for a wide-ranging description of Chabad’s mission, philosophy, and programs.
The author thanks Josh Elkin of the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE) for helping shape this section.

Not all organizations offering programs for parents have agendas, but some do. Examples include federations that focus on parents primarily to add names to federation lists; preschools, day schools, and congregational schools that focus on parents to primarily to expand enrollment; JCCs and synagogues that focus on parents to primarily to increase membership.

See www.jcei.org for more information about JECEI.

Neither the Petschek Center at the American Jewish Committee nor the Whizin Institute at the University of Judaism is situated in a research university.


The author is grateful to Sergio DellaPergola of Hebrew University for his help with this calculation.

Kotler-Berkowitz et al. (2003).

Jews who are not intermarried marry each other while those who are intermarried marry non-Jews. Hence, there are twice as many intermarried households as there are households where both parents are Jewish. This, in combination with other statistical uncertainties resulting from the limitations of NJPS 2000-01, makes it impossible to generate any meaningful estimates of the number of babies born to intermarried households who might be raised as Jews.

For data on community differences, see Sheskin (2001).

Kotler-Berkowitz et al. (2003).


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