

Temporary Interview Policy of the RA/USCJ Joint Placement Commission

November 2020

The Joint Placement Commission ("JPC"), made up of representatives of the Rabbinical Assembly ("RA"), The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism ("USCJ"), the Jewish Theological Seminary ("JTS") and the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies ("ZSRS"), is charged with developing procedures and policies governing rabbinic job search in congregations within the Conservative/Masorti movement. It is the duty of the JPC to establish policies and procedures that advance a fair, orderly and dignified career transition process for RA member rabbis in USCJ member congregations. All policies are created to support equity in the search process for every candidate across the entire membership of the RA.

The current Covid-19 pandemic now poses numerous challenges to our lives generally and to the rabbinic search process specifically. The JPC convened a meeting to discuss how best to ensure a fair, orderly, and dignified search process that ensures equity and fairness for congregations and for rabbis while also safeguarding the health and well-being of rabbis, their families and members of congregational communities.

After careful consideration and recognizing the highest values of equity and pikuah nefesh, saving lives, the JPC unanimously voted to institute a temporary policy requiring that all candidate interviews, including call-back interviews, be conducted via video-conferencing from now through at least April 1, 2021. That is, there is to be **no travel related to search processes and no in-person interviews until April 1, 2021**. The JPC understands that knowledge about this pandemic and information regarding safe practices change often, and therefore, the JPC will re-evaluate the policy in light of new information before this policy expires and determine whether to extend the time-frame or whether to permit travel and in-person interviews/visits after April 1, 2021.

In a time when the search process has to be done differently than one would hope or expect, it is easy to make rash judgements that would harm both candidates and congregations in the process. As a result, we are reminding you that the modern Conservative rabbinate comes from diverse backgrounds. Graduates of Conservative/Masorti seminaries are various ages, sexes, gender identities and expressions, and races. The JPC is committed to the needs of both rabbis and congregations and holds in the highest regard the sanctity of the relationship between a rabbi and the congregation they serve. In recent years, the JPC has enacted policies reflecting this diversity – creating a [new Diversity and Inclusive Hiring Statement](#), requiring search committees to participate in implicit bias training, and encouraging search committees to seek leadership irrespective of candidate demographics.

The JPC recognizes that this temporary policy is likely to be received with relief by some and disappointment by others. The JPC acknowledges that this temporary policy may pose added difficulties to an already challenging time. The professionals of the RA, USCJ, JTS and ZSRS are ready to offer support and guidance. There will be training sessions throughout November and December to prepare rabbis and congregations for an online interview experience. Staff representatives will also be available for private consultation. We will navigate this new terrain with compassion and fairness together as a Movement.

Failure to agree to this policy may result in suspension of a congregation's job listing or suspension of a rabbi's job search account. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact [Emily Hendel](#), Director of Career Services.