

Interview Policy of the RA/USCJ Joint Placement Commission - November 2021

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Joint Placement Commission ("JPC")* has evaluated the changing safety landscape around candidate interviews and in-person interactions. Last year, we found that nearly all congregations were able to interview and hire new clergy while using solely virtual processes, although many communities felt there was a personal connection component lacking.

This year, as safety and health concerns continue to change, the JPC is recommending a hybrid approach. In the interest of minimizing in-person interactions, the JPC recommends that virtual interviews continue to be used until the last/final round, when a congregation can choose to bring in a candidate for a weekend or weekday interview. We recommend that each congregation only bring in a candidate once. This recommendation is to continue safeguarding the health and well-being of rabbis, their families and members of congregational communities, while recognizing that communities and candidates are eager to meet before making a decision.

The JPC recognizes that communities and candidates will have different levels of comfort with renewed in-person interactions. Also, communities have varying policies. Prior to bringing a candidate for an in-person interview, please have an open and transparent conversation with each other about the following policies in your community:

- Vaccination and/or testing policy – Is this dependent on age? Are there exceptions?
- Mask Policy – Both for congregants in the pews and for those on the bimah.
- Travel – This includes air travel and transportation to and from the synagogue.
- Housing – Where will the candidate be staying? Will it be with other people? Is it walking distance to the synagogue? Is it in a safe neighborhood?
- Meals – Will there be food inside or outside? How many others will be present? How are meals being prepared?
- Capacity and Social Distancing – Is there a maximum number of people attending each event?
- Hybrid/Zoom/Livestream – Will events be broadcast online? Will the candidate need to use technology on Shabbat to administrate this type of hybrid event? Will the electronic format of services change if circumstances of the pandemic change?
- Ventilation – Will most things take place inside? What is the ventilation like? Will it be moved inside for weather?
- Tour of Community – Will this be done in person? Can a video be used instead?
- Will you be inviting the spouse and/or family of a candidate? How does this change any of the policies above?

As always, your regional USCJ Synagogue Consultant is a fantastic resource to think through each of these pieces before your candidate conversation. Please connect with them to make sure you are able to showcase your synagogue and highlight all you have to offer in a safe way.

The JPC will continue to evaluate this policy as circumstances around the pandemic change. We appreciate your partnership in creating a safe space and opening the conversation with candidates about these complicated and fraught issues. Your ability to navigate these topics together is the first step in your working relationship.

The professionals of the RA, USCJ, JTS and ZSRS are always ready to offer support and guidance. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact [Emily Hendel](#), Director of Career Services at the RA.

*The Joint Placement Commission ("JPC") is 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"), and is charged with developing procedures and policies governing rabbinic job search in congregations within the Conservative/Masorti movement.