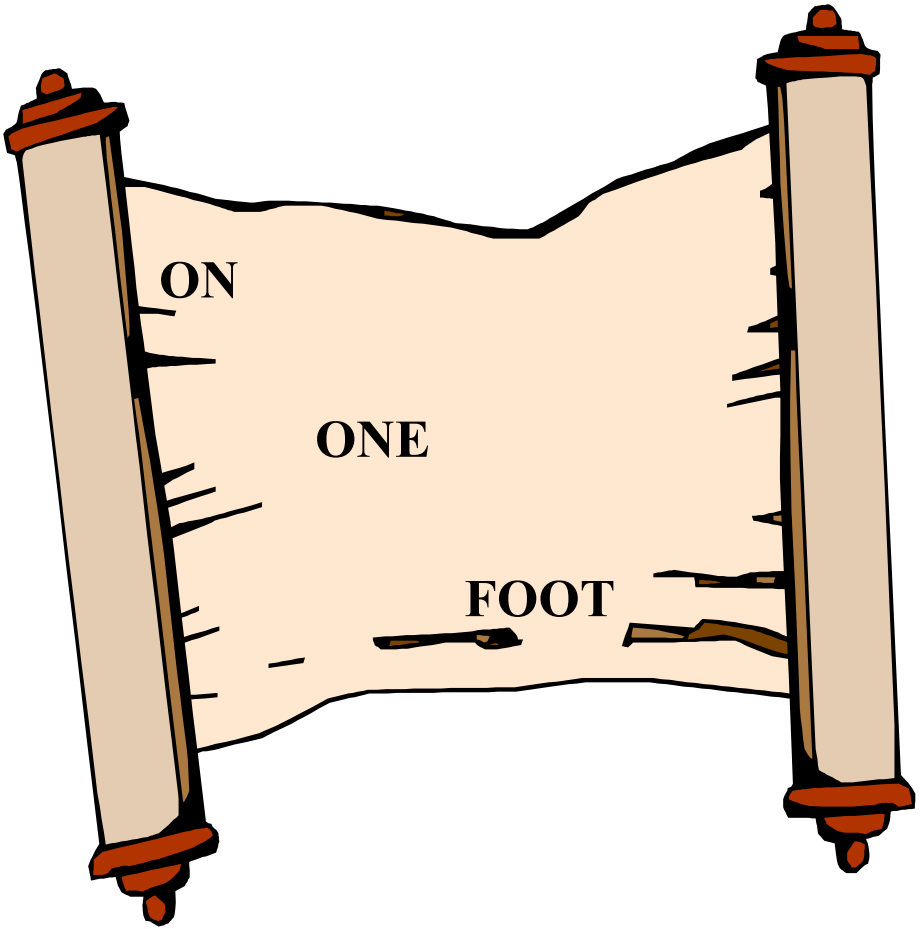


REENA

ALL ABOUT REENA'S JUDAIC POLICY



1. What exactly is the Judaic policy...and why is Judaic programming so important at Reena?

Reena's philosophy is based on the belief that people with developmental disabilities have a place in the mainstream of Canadian society, close to family and friends. As an agency, we strive towards maximizing the potential of all the individuals we service, and fully integrating them into the community.

What makes Reena truly unique is our emphasis on providing Judaic programming and a Jewish environment for our clients, through which they may develop spiritually and grow to feel a connection and sense of belonging to their roots, culture and community. This makes us different from all other organizations serving developmentally disabled adults in Toronto, and provides a very special quality to *all* of our endeavours at Reena.

Reena first began in 1974 through the efforts of a group of Jewish people in the Toronto area, made up of parents with developmentally disabled children of their own, and other concerned members of the Jewish community. They came together to set up a Jewish alternative to the already existing non-sectarian or Christian oriented services being provided to developmentally disabled adults in Toronto. Initially their mission was to provide a top quality residential service within a Jewish environment. Jewish parents wanted their developmentally disabled children to feel "at home" in an environment similar to the one in which they grew up, where Jewish rituals, customs and traditions were practiced.

It was important to the founders of Reena that this continuity of the Jewish family's rich heritage and values be ensured in all aspects of programming. In this way, Reena clients would not feel that they had a "double" handicap: being developmentally disabled, and being Jewish in a non-Jewish milieu. Instead they would be encouraged to feel proud of their Judaic heritage, thereby improving their ability to function in both the Jewish and the general community.

While Reena has experienced tremendous changes and growth since its inception in the early “70’s, this Judaic philosophy and mandate has remained the same. Our experience has shown the hopes of the founders were correct. Our Jewish clients have made great strides, improving their functioning in general and increasing their pride in being a part of the Jewish community. At the same time, to our clients who are not Jewish, our focus on Judaic programming has brought added awareness of a different culture as well as their own.

2. *What is this “Judaic Programming” all about?*

Clients at Reena learn skills in many areas including self care, grooming and domestic skills. Learning these skills help our clients function more independently in the general community. At the same time our Jewish clients learn “Jewish skills” that will help them to function more independently in the Jewish community. By teaching our Jewish clients about the celebration of the Jewish Sabbath and Holidays and about following the Jewish Dietary laws (keeping kosher) we help them gain more knowledge of their heritage, and become more competent and comfortable as participating members of the Jewish community.

The major components of Judaic programming are the celebration and observance of Jewish holidays, the weekly celebration of the Jewish Sabbath and the daily observances of the Jewish dietary laws.

All of this programming is done within the context of a Jewish environment ... Most of our residential programs have kosher kitchens, Jewish paintings, *Mezzuzahs* on the doorposts, books, and religious articles on hand, and are situated in Jewish neighbourhoods ... There may be Jewish music on the stereo as clients eat their kosher supper, after having said a short Hebrew blessing thanking G-d for their food ... After supper the clients may go to the Jewish Community Centre for some athletic or cultural activity ... They may stop in at a Kosher Deli for a snack after their evening program ... In this way, we try to include Judaic programming in *all* facets of the clients’ life at Reena.

3. “I don’t know anything about the Jewish Sabbath, holidays or dietary laws. How could I work at Reena?”

There is no requirement for staff or volunteers at Reena to be Jewish, or to have any previous knowledge of Judaism. However, there *is* a requirement for all Reena staff and volunteers to have an open mind to learning about Judaism, and willingly accept the added challenge to their job of the Judaic component of the Agency’s programming. In order to provide ongoing consultation and training in all aspects of “Judaica”, Reena has a Judaic Advisor on staff. There is a wide variety of Judaic reference material at each Reena programme site, and more extensive resources are available at the main office.

There is an attempt to include as many practical programming suggestions, specific to the developmentally disabled population as possible, in all Judaic reference materials circulated at Reena. As in any job or life experience, often the most valuable source of information is one’s colleagues. Reena staff and volunteers are encouraged to turn to their experienced fellow workers, knowledgeable clients or supervisors at their work site with questions of a Judaic nature. By far, the most effective and meaningful training format in the area of Judaic programming, as in most other areas of one’s work, is “hands-on” training. Certainly any specific help or additional input that is needed in the area of Judaic programming is no more than a phone call away to the Judaic Advisor at the main Reena office.

4. *What happens on the Jewish Sabbath?*

The Jewish Sabbath or *Shabbat* in Hebrew is sometimes referred to as Judaism’s weekly holiday ... and at Reena we truly encourage the Sabbath to be a “holiday” as well as a “*holy* day of rest”. It is a day which acknowledges that G-d created the world in 6 days, and then on the 7th day He rested ... and so too, all of his creations rest. *Shabbat* is from sundown on Friday evening until sunset on Saturday night.

The entire 24 hour period is devoted to as much quality time as possible including festive Sabbath meals, candle lighting, *Kiddush* over the wine or grape juice, traditional egg bread or *challah*, Jewish songs and stories, prayer services at the local

synagogues, study programmes, and visits with friends and family. This special *Shabbat* programming at Reena adds greatly to the uniqueness of the day and is widely enjoyed by almost all clients and staff at Reena.

5. *What about the Jewish Holidays?*

There are many Jewish holidays and festivals throughout the year, each with its own rich and meaningful customs and rituals. For almost all Jews, from the least observant to the most orthodox, the Jewish holidays are very much a family time. Many of our Reena clients will want to celebrate at least a part of these holidays together with their extended “Reena family”. Before each of these special days the Judaic Program Consultant provides training and / or materials to the staff that will enhance the celebration and provide better understanding of the holidays to both staff and clients. Some of the holidays are days of rest like *Shabbat*, while on others we bring added joy to our regular weekdays through various unique celebrations and practices.

6. *What is meant by “keeping Kosher”?*

Keeping Kosher refers to all the rules and regulations from the Bible which guide the Jewish people in what we eat, and how we prepare our food. In very simple terms, certain foods, including pork and shellfish, are forbidden. In addition, meat and dairy foods may not be eaten or prepared together.

Keeping kosher is a way of life. Although eating is a universal physical need, Jewish people elevate this common daily function by shaping our diet and methods of food preparation to conform to G-d’s dictates. Keeping kosher makes a home a *Jewish* home ... it gives our meals a unique, traditional quality and forges a link with one’s family, one’s heritage and the grand chain of Jewish history.



Again, the Judaic Advisor provides training and reference materials, along with the standard on-the-job training, in order to ensure that a Kosher lifestyle is observed at all Reena homes and programme locations.

7. “What about the religious / cultural programming for clients who are not Jewish?”

At Reena, we formally promote the celebration of only the *Jewish* holidays and traditions. However, in keeping with our general philosophy of striving toward the maximum potential of *all* our clients, including the important area of their spiritual development, we encourage the expression of everyone’s cultural and religious roots, regardless of their background or denomination. For example, at Christmas time our Reena homes do not have Christmas trees in the living room or lights in the window. At that time of year Reena celebrates with *menorahs*, *latkes* and *Chanukah* parties. However, we do actively facilitate the celebration of non-Jewish holidays with family and friends outside of the home and attendance at Church services for any clients who wish to attend. Non-Jewish clients who wish to have a Christmas tree or other religious artifacts are encouraged to do so in their private areas (usually their bedroom). Before entering any Reena program, the client and family are informed of our Judaic policies and agree to accept a place in our service system with a knowledge and understanding of these policies.

8. “How will Judaic programming affect my role as an employee / volunteer at Reena?”

What all this means, is that there is an added dimension or challenge to your job. Part of your daily work will be directed towards helping your clients learn “Jewish skills”. As a staff person, you function as a role model for your client. At Reena, you will add to your role a basic knowledge of Judaism and the practice of numerous Jewish rituals and traditions. As staff and volunteers, you play a vital function in helping our clients explore their unique heritage and develop their spiritual identity. It is the responsibility of each staff person at Reena to take on the additional learning of the Judaic

component, and consult with the Judaic Advisor and/or Reena Judaic training manuals, in order to achieve this worthwhile goal.

9. *Why is this brochure entitled “On One Foot”?*

“On One Foot” refers to a famous story in Jewish legend about a man who was interested in learning all about Judaism. He went to a famous Jewish teacher, Shammai, and asked the teacher to tell him all about Judaism while he stood “*on one foot.*” Shammai refused the man, explaining that it takes years of study to learn even a little about Judaism. The man then went to the other renowned Jewish teacher of that city, Hillel, and made the same request. This time, Hillel explained that the essence of Judaism is expressed in the golden rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Then he said, “The rest is commentary – now, go and study!”

We can only “skim the surface” in this pamphlet with respect to Jewish knowledge. We are in fact, teaching you “all about Judaism while standing on one foot.” You may therefore have many questions which we would be pleased to answer at any time.

If you accept this challenge ... the challenge to strive to be a *mensch* – a decent, moral human being, and the challenge to study and learn more about Judaism, you will be helping Reena to fulfill its basic purpose as embodied in its name which means “joy” in Hebrew. You will be helping Reena clients to experience the joy of learning new skills that help them integrate more fully into the general and the Jewish community.





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*towards a better future...
integrating people with developmental disabilities
into the community*