



Proposed resolution from.
UAHC National Committee on Temple Youth
June 1995

Open Youth Group Membership

Background

The attachment to Judaism, which begins in the home and continues with childhood education, is immeasurably strengthened by affective informal Jewish educational experiences during the teen years, such as participation in youth groups, camping, and Israel trips. These experiences help to develop strong life-long bonds and are an integral part of the educational process. Often these experiences begin with participation in youth groups. As we look to the fixture of Judaism, we know that we must do everything within our means to provide the opportunity for these experiences.

A special dilemma confronts our congregations when parents decide not to continue synagogue membership after the last Bar /Bat Mitzvah. Congregations see the need to be open to children who want to continue in youth groups but also fear that to permit it will weaken the financial base of the congregation. Our congregations must continue to make every effort to foster life-long commitment to Reform Judaism for all family members, but we know that some families will leave congregational membership after the last Bar/Bat Mitzvah, whatever the wishes of their children. We must find ways not to turn them away.

THEREFORE, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations resolves to:

1. Urge all member congregations to:
 - a. Enroll all religious school students as members of their junior or senior youth groups in order to begin the affiliation/identification process;
and
 - b. Establish provisions to allow Jewish youths to participate as members of their youth groups whether or not their parents are congregation members,
and
2. Gather examples of successful programs in congregations and make them available to congregations seeking to establish open youth group membership.