



**The Reform Jewish  
Youth Movement**

**Resolution to Increase Accessibility for Participants**  
Presented to the NFTY General Board at NFTY Convention 2019

**BACKGROUND:** In NFTY, we are not all the same. There are so many things that differentiate us, whether it is race, gender, sexuality, or ability. We as a movement have always strived to maintain an inclusive space in which our differences are celebrated and accommodated. Regions have worked to make these essential changes, through actions such as analyzing how inclusive they are, making sure that individuals that are gender non-binary and transgender more included, and in some cases, gender specific cabin names were changed to be gender neutral. Similar steps have been taken on a North American level, as the general board passed a resolution that at all North American events, participants' preferred gender pronouns will be included on their name tag.

**WHEREAS,** One of NFTY's Thirteen Principles is Community, *Kehilah* - "The need for community to provide an outlet for the individual needs of all Jews," which stresses the importance of building a community founded on inclusion, and;

**WHEREAS,** One of NFTY's Thirteen Principles is Justice, *Tzedek* - "The obligation to work for justice for all," which stresses the importance of fighting for what is right and what will help people instead of standing idly by, and;

**WHEREAS,** NFTY embraces the Jewish value of *B'tzelem Elohim*, which states that all are equally made in the image of G-d, and;

**WHEREAS,** For the past three year, NFTY's North American Cabinet has incorporated an Inclusion Committee with the mission of making NFTY a more inclusive community through the creation resources and setting of tangible tasks for each region to implement and use to better NFTY. An example of past work has been the creation of NFTY's Inclusion Checklist. The committee has many focuses, which include a subcommittee on disability inclusion. This committee shows NFTY's renewed committed to this important issue, and;

**WHEREAS,** One of the URJ's 2020 vision priorities is Audacious Hospitality, which is defined on the website as "a transformative spiritual practice rooted in the belief that we will be a stronger, more vibrant Jewish community when we fully welcome and incorporate the diversity that is the reality of modern Jewish life." This project aims "to embrace our diversity and reach out to those currently not engaged in Jewish life... [as well as] create a Judaism that is inclusive and open" and has helped facilitate the creation of the Disabilities Inclusion Learning Center, and;

**WHEREAS,** "More than 8 percent of American Jews are disabled" as stated in a study done by Debra Nussbaum Cohen, and;

**WHEREAS,** Technology offers accessibility features for those with disabilities such as the use of a microphone at events as well as the addition of subtitles and manuscripts to videos used in programming and on social media, and;

**WHEREAS,** 1 in 59 children are on the Autism Spectrum. Participants, including, but not limited to, those with Autism may be easily overstimulated and need to calm down in an environment with less stimulants, and;

**WHEREAS**, a large proportion of Jews with disabilities opt out of Jewish activities due to the lack of accessibility, as seen in a study done by Debra Nussbaum Cohen, and;

**WHEREAS**, multiple NFTY regions, including NFTY-MAR and NFTY-SOCAL have already passed similar legislation in their own regions.

**THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT**, NFTY reaffirms its stance on creating a welcoming and accessible community for those who have a wide range of disabilities, and that it will strive to act on said reaffirmation through the following actions, and;

**LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**, NFTY will encourage the addition of visual descriptions on all new social media posts throughout the movement as a whole, on platforms compatible with applications that read the visual description audibly, such as Instagram, and;

**LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**, NFTY will encourage the addition of subtitles or manuscripts to all new NFTY videos, including promotional videos and candidacy speeches. All video used in programming at North American Events should include subtitles and manuscripts and encourage all regions to do that same at their events, and;

**LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**, NFTY will encourage the use of microphones when addressing groups in order to increase accessibility to those that are hard of hearing. If available, a microphone will be used at all North American events when address a large group and if not available, will work to ensure that all participants are able to hear what is being said. All regions will be encouraged to do the same at their events, and;

**LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**, NFTY will encourage the inclusion of a supervised quiet space for participants to calm down and relax throughout the programming. All North American events while have a designated quiet space and all regions are encouraged to do the same at their events, and;

**LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**, a resource will be created by the Inclusion Committee to help train NFTY leaders and staff on how to best implement the practices mentioned above as well as other practices that aim to create an inclusion community in NFTY for those of all abilities. This resource will be posted on the NFTY website as well as distributed to all Regional Communications Vice Presidents and the URJ Youth Communications Team, and;

**LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**, the North American Board, North American Staff, Regional Boards, and Regional Staffs will put forth their best effort forward to serve in a support role for all, regardless of physical or mental ability, gender/gender neutrality, TYG affiliation, or age.

Respectfully submitted,

Benjamin Haberman | NFTY-SOCAL Financial Vice President 5778-5779  
Fletcher Block | NFTY-SOCAL Membership Vice President 5778-5779

Co-signed,

Ione Heigham | NFTY Membership Vice President 5778-5779  
Zoe Terner | NFTY Social Action Vice President 5778-5779  
Beyla Richman | NFTY-MAR Communications Vice President 5778-5779  
Jake Forstein | NFTY-SAR Social Action Vice President 5778-5779  
Zane Harbison | NFTY-NW Membership Vice President 5778-5779



## **APPENDIX A:**

As quoted from the study by Debra Nussbaum Cohen. The first-ever survey of the American Jewish community on the issue of disabilities has found that the disabled are dramatically underrepresented among those engaged in Jewish life. The results indicated that most people with disabilities opt out of Jewish life, after feeling alienated by Jewish organizations like day schools, camps and synagogues, said Jennifer Mizrahi, CEO and president of RespectAbilityUSA, a new organization focused on employment for the disabled. The study was commissioned by RespectAbilityUSA and JerusalemU.org, an online Jewish education resource.

Conducted online, the survey polled 2,607 American Jews who subscribe to Haaretz or the Jerusalem Post, are on the email list of the disability blog The New Normal or are connected to organizations serving Jews with disabilities, including Gateways in Boston and Camp Ramah's Tikvah program. Eight percent of the respondents described themselves as having a disability of some sort, while just over 18 percent of the total population are disabled, according to the United States census.

Even among the targeted population of the poll, the results revealed that Jews with disabilities, and their family members, are strikingly underrepresented in the Jewishly-engaged population and that younger American Jews feel even more alienated than their elders.

**APPENDIX B:**

Molly Burke is a blind activist, YouTube personality, and professional motivational speaker on how a person's disability does not define them. Shown below is a recent Instagram post of hers to show a proper use of picture descriptions.

Verizon 7:48 AM 73%

Post

Liked by kailee.newman and 43,512 others

**mollyburkeofficial** Just rocking my @crystalwolf swag! @joeygraceffa, always killin' it! Oh, and yes, I'm wearing a sweater in the summer. EVERYWHERE IS BLASTING AC AND I GET COLD EASILY! 💕🌈☀️

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#accessibility  
[Photo Description: Molly standing against a bright yellow wall while wearing a mint green Crystal Wolf hoodie and a pink Crystal Wolf hat with a rainbow on it]  
#crystalwolf #supportfriends #alwayscold #sweaterinsummer

View all 254 comments

**puppygirl812** If I had a penny every time I watched your videos I would be RICH

**mollyburkeofficial** @puppygirl812 wow thanks 😂😁

3 DAYS AGO

Home Search Add Heart Profile