

JEWISH COMMUNITY VOICE

Published by the Jewish Federation of Southern New Jersey

We must remember to focus on security again and again

JEWISH FEDERATION AT THE SHORE

August 10, 2022

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I am in touch with other Jewish communal colleagues around the country on a pretty regular basis. Often, we find ourselves discussing/debriefing from a security issue of concern that impacted a Jewish organization in one of our communities. Sometimes it is a threatening phone call; sometimes it is a person of concern showing up at their facility; sometimes it is vandalism; always it raises great concern for the well-being of members of our Jewish communities.

If we are going to have meaningful opportunities for worship, study, and fellowship, we must first ensure that our

facilities and programs are safe places to gather. It is unfortunate and disheartening that we live in a time where security protocol needs to be on the to-do list every day. But we do. Every day.

Security must be 24/7 and 365—it is when we don't maintain security policies and procedures consistently that we create the opportunity for incidents of concern to occur. Earlier this year, one of my articles focused on security. I wanted to emphasize this critical collective responsibility again (and again and again) because it should be the basis of all we do.

Security measures are not beyond our reach—security for organizations must have certain components to be effective:

- Jewish organizations must develop relationships with their local police departments before any incident occurs. Organizations should ask for an annual risk assessment to cover the facility and property. You may not be able to afford to follow through immediately on all suggestions from law enforcement, but you can most likely put many of their suggestions in place as well as develop a wish list of items to take care of moving forward.
- Security skills are perishable. Policies and procedures must be created, staff and lay leaders trained, security discussions must occur regularly, and everyone should be open to refining policies as conditions warrant—and continue to train and discuss security.
- We need muscle memory when it comes to security. We must practice procedures regularly to create “muscle memory;” in the event an emergency does occur, that muscle memory will help us respond in the best possible manner.
- EVERYONE should be held to the same security policies. Our professional and lay leaders need to model the behavior we need everyone to follow.

We have to harden our targets when it comes to security. Hardening our target DOES NOT mean making our organization uninviting to our community— in fact, quite the opposite. Hardening our targets means making our organization look uninviting to those who might want to do harm while letting those who are supposed to be there know that procedures are in place for everyone's safety. When someone wants to do harm to our organizations, they don't want to be noticed. One of the easiest ways to harden our targets is to greet each person before they walk into our facilities.

- Shabbat Shalom, I haven't met you before, are you new to our community?
- Are you related to the family celebrating the simha today?
- Good morning, do you have an appointment with one of our staff members today?

That first line of defense can be accomplished without spending a penny—it simply requires a group of dedicated volunteers willing to be trained and to commit the time to help during services and other organizational events.

The hardest part about security is that we can do everything right and bad things can still happen. It is important to remember if we don't make the best possible decisions, the outcome will be the worst scenario. We don't get do-overs with security—if we wait to think about what we should do when an incident is occurring, the train has left the station. We need to be prepared before something happens.

The best way for organizations to be as secure as possible is for every person to be on the security team.

What does that mean? It means:

- We each pay attention to and follow security policies and procedures. I always tell those who think the rules don't apply to them that the rules are in place to keep them, their children, and grandchildren—and entire congregation or organization— safe. Please don't be the weak link on the security team.
- When you have a concern or question about a policy, rather than complain, you go to the right person to bring the concern up in a respectful way.
- You are willing to listen to facts you may not be aware of.
- You don't ignore security concerns when you see them— If you see something, say something. If something doesn't look or feel right, tell someone so it can be checked out. It is better a million times over to have something checked out and have it be nothing than the other way around.

Here is the best part: When we work to be as security prepared as possible, we don't need to be scared. Help our congregations and other Jewish organizations be prepared 24/7 and 365 so that we can all focus on worship, education, and social opportunities.

We are stronger together and we are better together. Together, *b'yachad*, we can enhance security protocols throughout our Jewish community.

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