



ETHICS ACCOUNTABILITY WORKPLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Updated March 2024

The URJ affirms its commitment to creating a culture of ethics accountability as a foundation for our communities of belonging in accordance with our Reform Jewish values. More information is available on the [URJ Ethics Accountability webpage](#).

Outcome	Commitment	Progress	Dates	Next Steps for 2024
Establish leaders of the URJ's Ethics Accountability work.	Form a task force to lead the URJ's ethics accountability work and direct work teams in critical areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The URJ formed an Ethics Accountability Task Force comprised of lay leaders, professional staff, community partners, and survivors/victims. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feb 2022 - present 	The task force will soon conclude its part in the process and a new Accountability Practices Committee will own the continued Ethics Accountability work.
Establish working teams to guide the URJ's Ethics Accountability work.	Working teams will implement recommendations in the areas of accountability practices, congregations, volunteer/lay leader training and education, restorative processes, and other areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The URJ formed working teams of lay leaders, staff leaders, and victims/survivors. These teams focused on strategies for supporting a culture of accountability, safety, and protection for all. Team members' names were posted to the ethics accountability webpage. Work team progress reports are noted in detail below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2022 - 2024 	The work teams have concluded their work and prepared recommendations for the next phase of our ethics work to be reviewed by the task force. These include recommendations for a new accountability practices committee that will own the continued ethics accountability work.

<p>Center victims/survivors in the URJ's work to continuously improve the culture.</p>	<p>Strengthen the culture of accountability for safety and protection by centering voices of victims and survivors in conversations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The URJ invited survivors/victims to join the Ethics Accountability Task Force and work teams. • We invited survivors/victims to participate in focus groups and share harms and needs for restorative justice. • We included anonymously provided feedback in decision making. • We publicly shared our survivor-centered Roadmap to Accountability, describing harms and needs expressed by survivors/victims and plans for restorative justice. • The URJ invited survivors/victims to participate in monthly listening circles. • URJ leadership centered ethics accountability by recognizing survivors/victims at the URJ 150th anniversary event through an array of presentations, including leading a communal <i>Mi Shebeirach</i> prayer for survivors/victims. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 • 2023 	<p>On January 10, URJ hosted two important sessions with URJ leadership and survivors/victims. Over 200 attendees joined a 90-minute panel discussion with URJ President Rabbi Rick Jacobs, Vice President and General Counsel Missy Johnson, and Executive Vice President Julie Lerner alongside survivors Rabbi Marina Yergin, Ronit Zemel, and Devorah Lesk. The conversation was moderated by Dr. Alissa Ackerman and Dr. Guila Benchimol as part of our restorative justice initiative, the Very Narrow Bridge Project. Attendees included survivors, URJ staff, movement leaders, congregation members, former staff, and alumni who were joined by leaders of other branches of the Reform Movement as well as leaders from other parts of the North American Jewish and broader faith communities via Zoom. We invite you to view the recording of the program and the accompanying guide.</p> <p>A private discussion followed, moderated again by Drs. Ackerman and Benchimol. This conversation included survivors who were part of a restorative justice cohort and members of the URJ Ethics Accountability Leadership Team. Participants shared their experiences with the restorative justice process, initiatives and activities that have been created and implemented to address past harms and prevent future harms, what survivors and URJ leaders have learned throughout the restorative justice process, the outcomes of the URJ's Ethics Accountability work thus far, and their hopes for the future.</p> <p>Promote continued listening circles to encourage participation from victims/survivors.</p> <p>Expand conversations to include URJ leaders who have undergone restorative justice education.</p> <p>Advance individual and small group listening sessions with survivors and URJ leadership.</p>
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<p>Create and promote reporting mechanisms that are well-known and easy to access. Respond to reports in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Expand reporting protocols by creating an independent ombuds position to respond to questions, provide reporting guidance, and serve as an additional confidential reporting channel for complaints of abuse and misconduct.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caroline Cuneo was retained as an external, neutral, independent, and supportive ombuds. Her retention was promoted in emails and on the URJ Ethics webpage for reporting incidents of abuse or misconduct. Caroline can be reached at ombudsurj@gmail.com. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 - ongoing 	<p>Expand the ombuds role to include confidential camp-related reports and investigations.</p>
<p>Create and promote reporting mechanisms that are well-known and easy to access. Respond to reports in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Establish an additional independent resource to investigate allegations by individuals who have experienced or witnessed any harassment, abuse, or misconduct at a URJ worksite, camp, or program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We established an outside reporting channel for people who have experienced or witnessed harassment, abuse, or misconduct at a URJ worksite, camp, or program (outside counsel). • This reporting channel was removed in December 2022 due to lack of reporting. • Reports may still be made through the URJ Ethics webpage links for reporting incidents of abuse or misconduct. • Links to URJ reporting channels were added to Movement partners' reporting information. • Flyers with QR codes for reporting abuse and misconduct were sent to program participants and physically posted at program sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 • 2023 	<p>We will continue to provide these resources and seek additional ways to increase accessibility to information and resources.</p>
<p>Create and promote reporting mechanisms that are well-known and easy to access. Respond to reports in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Establish an additional independent resource to investigate allegations of violations of the URJ Code of Ethics by URJ lay leaders or volunteers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We established an additional independent resource to investigate allegations of URJ Code of Ethics violations by URJ lay leaders or volunteers (Attorney Karen Elliott, Esq., kelliott@fordharrison.com). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 - ongoing 	

<p>Communicate consistent and clear expectations to all stakeholders, fostering safe and respectful environments.</p>	<p>Ensure that staff, volunteers, parents, participants, partners, and the community are easily able to access and stay updated on URJ ethics accountability, safety, and protection plans, policies, and protocols.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We created our ethics accountability webpage to provide information and updates. The webpage includes our values statement, reporting channels, youth program protection protocols, restorative justice opportunities, resources, links, workplans, and more. • We introduced comprehensive progress reports and are providing regular updates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 • 2023 - ongoing 	<p>Continued enhancements to the ethics accountability workplan and progress reports to increase clarity, care, and consistency.</p>
<p>Communicate consistent and clear expectations to all stakeholders, fostering safe and respectful environments.</p>	<p>Implement new required training protocols for ALL youth programs and non-youth staff (permanent, seasonal, faculty) related to safety, abuse prevention, and reporting protocols.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every member of the URJ staff undergoes required training in preventing, recognizing, responding to, and reporting abuse. • Every staff member is required to participate in annual REDI, anti-harassment, and anti-discrimination trainings. • The URJ added enhanced training modules for anti-bullying, anti-racism, consent, and other subjects. • The URJ consults and contracts seasoned experts to support these efforts including CampSafe, Center for Hope (formerly known as the Baltimore Child Abuse Center), Traliant, Rahel Bayar Group, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 - ongoing 	<p>Reviewed and updated annually to continuously improve our training and response protocols.</p>

Communicate consistent and clear expectations to all stakeholders, fostering safe and respectful environments.	Implement formalized background check protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The URJ has implemented protocols requiring <i>annual</i> background checks on every youth program staff member and background checks every three years for every non-youth staff member. The URJ has implemented protocols for required background checks for new employees, volunteers, lay leaders, vendors, guests, and visitors accessing youth sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2022 - ongoing 	Reviewed and updated annually or tri-annually.
Communicate consistent and clear expectations to all stakeholders, fostering safe and respectful environments.	Create and share <i>Brit</i> (Code of Conduct) for program participants and visitors to camp/youth programs to set expectations around a safe and respectful environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The URJ created, updated, and publicized a youth manual and <i>Brit</i> with a focus on youth protection, workplace protocols, anti-bullying policies/procedures, and consensual relationships between minors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2022 - ongoing 	Reviewed and updated annually.
Communicate consistent and clear expectations to all stakeholders, fostering safe and respectful environments.	Create and share <i>Brit</i> (Code of Conduct) for program participants and visitors to camp/youth programs to set expectations around a safe and respectful environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The URJ created, updated, and publicized a youth manual and <i>Brit</i> with a focus on youth protection, workplace protocols, anti-bullying policies/procedures, and consensual relationships between minors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2022 - ongoing 	Reviewed and updated annually.
Communicate consistent, clear expectations to all stakeholders, fostering safe and respectful environments.	Volunteers working with youth receive training in abuse and misconduct prevention and reporting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The URJ trained summer staff, volunteers who interact with minors, and lay leaders associated with youth programs on updated policies and procedures, reporting systems, and anti-bullying expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing 	Mandated and enforced annual training requirement for all staff, lay leaders, and volunteers.

<p>Communicate consistent, clear expectations to all stakeholders, fostering safe and respectful environments.</p>	<p>Strengthen policies addressing consent between adults at camp.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The URJ conducted camp leadership and ethics team member discussions to develop policies about adult consensual relationships among seasonal and year-round staff for summer 2023. • Staff receive annual trainings on updated policies. • Added training for campers 18+ years old. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 - ongoing 	<p>Annual post-camp briefings and policy updates. Add training for older campers.</p>
<p>Reporting mechanisms are well-known, easy to access, and responded to in a timely way across programs</p>	<p>Establish new human resources policies and procedures for timely and proper response to staff complaints and concerns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The URJ revised and publicized staff policies on abuse, harassment, discrimination, reporting, grievances, and retaliation. • We implemented internal protocols for responding to and escalating complaints, maintaining confidentiality, and documentation. • We have implemented ongoing training for orienting and updating staff. • Policies and reporting protocols are posted and updated on the employee Service Center. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2021 - ongoing 	<p>Reviewed and updated annually or as laws and best practices dictate.</p>
<p>A culture of accountability for belonging, safety, and respect that is sustainable</p>	<p>Establish formalized documentation plans and records retention policies for past, present, and future human resources personnel concerning reporting, incident, and investigation data.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We created a records retention policy for legal, human resources, finance, and corporate documents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 - ongoing 	<p>Reviewed and updated annually or as laws and best practices dictate.</p>

<p>Reporting mechanisms are well-known, easy to access, and responded to in a timely way across programs.</p>	<p>Use virtual reporting tools to enhance record retention, data collection and analysis, and sharing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The URJ established and trained staff on our online incident reporting system and protocols for escalating and documenting issues, reports, complaints, concerns, injuries, and responsive actions and outcomes. • We used data analysis from summer program incident reporting to identify key areas of focus for next season's training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2021 • 2022 - ongoing 	<p>Data reviewed and updated annually.</p> <p>We are working with the URJ Business Systems team to develop higher-level incident reporting and data retention platforms.</p>
<p>Victims and survivors are centered in conversations to continuously improve the culture.</p>	<p>Enhance employee separation protections and reporting protocols, including exit interview protocols.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions have been added to the Staff Exit Interview Form and live interview queries requesting information on experiences of abuse or misconduct and knowledge of the existence of policies and reporting protocols. • The URJ implemented protocols for sharing and investigating reported information on abuse/misconduct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 - ongoing 	<p>Develop data management process and annual review of consolidated exit data.</p>
<p>Victims and survivors are centered in conversations to continuously improve the culture.</p>	<p>Revise severance agreement templates to protect former employees when reporting misconduct or participating in restorative processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation agreement templates and letters have been revised to affirmatively remove prohibitions on reporting through designated reporting channels or participating in restorative justice processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 - ongoing 	<p>Continue to publicize this policy.</p>

<p>Victims and survivors are centered in conversations to continuously improve the culture.</p>	<p>Clarify that survivors and victims who signed restrictive agreements may share their stories as part of restorative processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Former URJ employees were notified via current private email on record of release from prohibition provisions of prior agreements. • Public notice was provided in community communications and on our Ethics webpage to clarify that victims/survivors are not prohibited in any way from sharing their stories or reporting misconduct and abuse through designated reporting channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 - ongoing 	<p>Continue to publicize this policy.</p>
<p>Reform Movement standards and practices for safe and respectful environments are consistent and aligned.</p>	<p>Mobilized Congregations Work Team to recommend requirements for URJ membership, promoted and supported the creation and adoption of congregational ethics codes by all URJ congregations, and fostered access to resources for congregations to train and hold their leaders accountable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The URJ published updated congregational Code of Ethics resources. • Phase I: URJ mobilized board members to contact 800+ congregations regarding ethics codes. • 332 URJ congregations have created, are creating, or are preparing to create a code. • Two (2) URJ Ethics Committee coaches were trained and are being assigned to congregations to provide coaching for developing congregational ethics codes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 – 2023 • April 2023 	<p>Phase II: 272 calls in progress (spring 2024)</p>
<p>Reform Movement standards and practices for safe and respectful environments are consistent and aligned.</p>	<p>Publish list of URJ congregations that have implemented ethics codes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congregations have been provided with URJ ethics seals to post on their websites indicating that the URJ has reviewed their ethics codes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 	<p>A publicly available list will be posted on the URJ ethics webpage and in the Inside Leadership newsletter sent to all congregation presidents and others.</p>

<p>Reform Movement standards and practices for safe and respectful environments are consistent and aligned.</p>	<p>Lead development of Movement partnerships and coordination with the goal of ensuring a web of safe and respectful Movement institutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The URJ currently facilitates the URJ Leadership Council, a collaborative of Movement-affiliated leaders that meets to advance movement-wide alignment and priorities including ethics accountability. • Various URJ leaders currently participate in and lead CCAR, HUC, and other ethics committees, task forces, and work teams. • Exploration with Movement partners regarding development of harmdoer data sharing mechanisms to ensure safe environments across the Movement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 - ongoing 	<p>Continue to explore where we can partner within the Movement to ensure alignment.</p> <p>Movement-wide protocols and processes will be developed and shared publicly.</p> <p>Invite Reform Movement leaders to participate in next stages of URJ ethics work.</p>
<p>Reform Movement standards and practices for safe and respectful environments are consistent and aligned.</p>	<p>Partner with Movement entities to raise awareness and demand for congregational ethics codes by all professionals in the field.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The URJ is collaborating with the CCAR and ACC to include information on their congregational placement applications indicating whether or not a congregation has an ethics code. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 - ongoing 	

Cultivate a culture of accountability for belonging, safety, and respect that is sustainable.

Our Volunteer/Lay Leader Training & Education Work Team identified cohorts and recommended education and training strategies for the URJ's many volunteers and lay leaders to enable them to fulfill their roles while fostering a culture of accountability for safety and protection.

- The URJ developed and implemented required ethics training for all URJ lay leaders and volunteers including safety, respect, inclusion, anti-discrimination/harassment, abuse prevention, and reporting training. The following groups are completing required training and submitting required ethics affirmations: URJ North American Board, Committee on Social Action, all Camp Council and Committee members.
- Onsite entry at camp is not permitted while camp is in session unless an individual has completed training or is escorted by a staff member.
- Updated training for *L'Taken* youth chaperones.

- 2023 - ongoing

URJ Tech Team developing digital tracking system to record annual training data.
Develop common core training.

<p>Cultivate a culture of accountability, including fostering a communal sense of safety, compassion, and justice.</p>	<p>Restorative Justice Work Team to cultivate a culture of accountability, including restoration of a communal sense of safety, compassion, and justice.</p>	<p>Restorative Processes Work Team - including staff, lay leaders, and victim/survivors - created with objectives to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategies for restorative justice to help our people and communities restore trust and connection. • Facilitate Movement-wide collaboration with community partners (e.g. CCAR) • Implement a varied array of restorative opportunities to allow victims/survivors/community members the ability to experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Genuine <i>T'shuvah</i> from URJ institutions ○ Healing ○ Reintegration into the community ○ Renewed connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 - 2024 	<p>This work team has concluded its work. The next phase of our restorative justice work will be overseen by a new Accountability Practices Committee that will own the continued ethics accountability work.</p>
<p>A culture of accountability for belonging, safety, and respect that is sustainable.</p>	<p>Accountability Practices Work Team to partner on URJ strategy to ensure policies and protocols are effective, up-to-date, and aligned with cultivating a culture of accountability while providing subject matter expertise and serving as ambassadors for the URJ's culture of accountability, safety, and protection for all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The URJ conducts annual audits of HR policies and protocols. • Update and distribute URJ document retention policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 – ongoing • 2023 	<p>Establish a central repository for all reports, investigations, incident reports, and outcomes as well as complaints, adjudication outcomes, and correspondence that are forwarded to authorities and/or Movement partners (e.g., inquiries are forwarded to law enforcement, child protective services, CCAR Ethics Committee, etc.).</p>

<p>Cultivate a culture of accountability, including fostering a communal sense of safety, compassion, and justice.</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for victims and survivors to heal beyond and within URJ spaces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retained Dr. Guila Benchimol and Dr. Alissa Ackerman as restorative justice consultants to assist with the URJ's learning and development of restorative and healing opportunities with and for victims/survivors. Roadmap to Accountability released publicly. RJ101 presentation to North American Board Survivor Cohort listening circles URJ leadership RJ training Facilitated listening sessions between URJ leadership and survivors Closing public panel discussion featuring URJ leaders and survivors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2022 - Jan 2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue RJ and institutional harms learning for all who participate in URJ spaces. Continue to facilitate conversations between URJ and victims/survivors. Create additional healing opportunities for victims/survivors. Provide responses to victims/survivors' individual requests.
<p>Cultivate a culture of accountability, including fostering a communal sense of safety, compassion, and justice.</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for victims and survivors to heal beyond and within URJ spaces.</p>	<p>Harmdoer names removed from camp signage, scholarships, and other honoraria.</p> <p>Limited survivors/victims' exposure to harmdoers and celebration of harmdoers by limiting harmdoer access to camp, alumni, and other events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2022 - 2023 2022 - ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to seek out and correct areas where we continue to uphold and celebrate harmdoers.

<p>Cultivate a culture of accountability, including a communal sense of safety, compassion, and justice.</p>	<p>Convey URJ's ownership and amends for harm; Partner with Reform partners to develop communal <i>T'shuvah</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presented "On Repentance and Repair: A Reform Movement Program for the High Holy Days and Beyond" featuring Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg, author of the book, "On Repentance and Repair: Making Amends in an Unapologetic World," and Rabbi Jill Maderer, senior rabbi of Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia, was produced and made available for download on the URJ Ethics Accountability webpage. Widely publicized recorded <i>T'shuvah</i> message from Rabbi Rick Jacobs on behalf of the URJ with full throated accountability-taking, apology, and amends. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2022 2023 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore additional opportunities for Movement collaboration on restorative justice.
<p>Cultivate a culture of accountability, including a communal sense of safety, compassion, and justice.</p>	<p>Embed Restorative Justice principles and learning throughout the URJ.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> URJ staff and lay leaders are participating in the 2024 SRE (Safety Respect Equity) Network Restorative Justice Cohort for professionals and lay leaders who work in Movement organizations. This will provide a critical opportunity for us to learn with and from colleagues within our Reform Movement and across movements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2024 	
<p>Cultivate a culture of accountability, including fostering a communal sense of safety, compassion, and justice.</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for victims and survivors to heal beyond and within URJ spaces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retained expert consultant to facilitate restorative justice healing circle opportunities for victims and survivors. Training trainers to facilitate listening circles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of healing experience(s) for victims/survivors. Strengthening in-house restorative justice capabilities.

<p>Cultivate a culture of accountability, including fostering a communal sense of safety, compassion, and justice.</p>	<p>Embed restorative justice principles throughout the URJ.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URJ leadership participating in the SRE (Safety Respect Equity) Network Restorative Justice Cohort for professionals and lay leaders who work in denominational/movement organizations. This four-week program is sponsored by SRE Network and will be led by Dr. Alissa R. Ackerman and Dr. Guila Benchimol. • RJ principles reflected in all aspects of URJ life, including conflict resolution, Communities of Belonging, camps, URJ staff, and lay leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance restorative justice skills to further integrate RJ practices and ethos into URJ institutions, programs, and culture.
<p>Cultivate a culture of accountability, including fostering a communal sense of safety, compassion, and justice.</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for victims/survivors to reconnect with Reform Judaism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create “Clergy Connections” initiative to match victims/survivors seeking to re-establish meaningful ties to Reform Judaism with selected volunteer clergy members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024 	

