



Policy: Disruptive Behaviour within the Synagogue Sanctuary

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Approved By: Board of the Shaar Shalom Congregation

Policy Statement

As a conservative congregation providing egalitarian religious services, and educational and cultural programmes to enhance Judaism for its individuals, its families, and its community, the Shaar Shalom Synagogue prides itself on being inclusive and forgiving. The synagogue celebrates diversity and welcomes all individuals. At the same time, the Shaar Shalom Synagogue has a responsibility to provide a safe, respectful, and welcoming environment for children and adults - both members and visitors – who attend services.

This policy reflects a commitment to maintaining a safe, respectful, and welcoming environment by establishing a framework to firmly and promptly address real or perceived threats to the physical, emotional, or spiritual well-being of members and visitors who attend services at the synagogue.

Definitions

Disruptive behaviour - any action that creates concern for the physical or emotional safety of children or adults. Disruptive behaviour includes actions that disturb synagogue services, disrespect conservative Jewish halakha, or weaken the synagogue’s ability to serve current and future members.

Member – an individual included in one of the following three classes of membership:

1. Single – a Jewish person over the age of eighteen (18) years who is not otherwise included in a Family Membership.
2. Family – includes:
 - A single Jewish adult with one or more dependent Jewish children; or
 - Cohabiting Jewish adults, with or without dependent Jewish children; or
 - Such other definition as designated by the Board.
3. Such other classes as may be designated by the Board from time to time

The synagogue office retains a list of the specific individuals covered under each class of membership.

Policy Objectives

The objective of the policy is to:

1. Establish expectations for the behaviour of everyone attending services at the synagogue; and
2. Describe a process to address disruptive behaviour that leaves less room for singling out a person based on stereotyping or personality conflicts.

Policy Application

Expectations for everyone's behaviour

While the Shaar Shalom Synagogue celebrates diversity and welcomes all individuals, it is responsible to maintain a safe and respectful atmosphere where such openness can exist within the observance of conservative Jewish halakha. When any person's physical and/or emotional well-being is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed firmly and promptly, even if this ultimately requires the removal of the offending person or persons.

Behaviours that are unacceptable at synagogue services and must be addressed:

1. Real or perceived threats to the safety of any adult or child;
2. Disruption of services;
3. Refusal to respect conservative Jewish halakha;
4. Diminishment of the appeal of the synagogue to its potential and existing membership.

Processes for addressing disruptive behaviour

The following processes guide the action to be taken when addressing disruptive behaviours:

If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the gabbaim and/or Spiritual Leader/Rabbi. The first step is to draw the disruptive person or persons aside and state that the behaviour is unacceptable. If the disruptive behavior continues, the offending person or persons should be asked to leave the service. If further assistance is required the caretaker will be asked to call the Police Department. The Spiritual Leader/Rabbi may need to consider suspending the service until such time as it can safely be resumed. If it is anticipated the offending person or persons will attempt to attend future services at the synagogue, it should be referred to the Ritual Committee and Spiritual Leader/Rabbi to be handled in the manner detailed in the next section (situations not requiring immediate response).

Situations not requiring immediate response will be referred to the Ritual Committee and Spiritual Leader/Rabbi who will respond in terms of their own judgment observing the following:

1. The committee and Spiritual Leader/Rabbi will respond to problems as they arise. There will be no attempt to define "acceptable" behavior in advance.
2. Persons identified as disruptive will be dealt with as individuals; stereotypes will be avoided.
3. The committee and Spiritual Leader/Rabbi will collect all necessary information.
4. To aid in evaluating the problem, the following points will be considered:
 - **Dangerousness:** Is/Are the individual(s) the source of a threat or perceived threat to persons or property?
 - **Disruptiveness:** How much interference with the synagogue service is going on?
 - **Offensiveness:** How likely is it that prospective or existing members will be driven away?
5. To determine the necessary response, the following points will be considered:
 - **Causes:** Why is the disruption occurring? Is it a conflict between the individual(s) and others in the service? Is it due to a professionally diagnosed condition of mental illness?
 - **History:** What is the frequency and degree of disruption caused in the past?
 - **Probability of Change:** How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?
6. A decision on the necessary response will be made on a case by case basis. However, the following two levels of response are recommended:
 - Level 1: The committee (or committee member) and Spiritual Leader/Rabbi will meet with the offending individual(s) to communicate the concern.
 - Level 2: The offending individual(s) is/are excluded from services for a specific period of time, with reasons and the conditions of return made clear.
7. Any action taken under 6 (above) may be appealed to the Board of Trustees of the Shaar Shalom Congregation.

Policy Exceptions

None identified.

Policy Monitoring

None identified.

Forms Included with this Policy as Attachments

None