

The Tucson SRE Task Force

A Case Study of a Jewish Communal Approach
to Safety, Respect, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion



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By Phyllis Braun

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Executive Summary

Safety, respect, and equity, along with diversity and inclusion, are a collective set of values designed to create workplaces and communal spaces that are free from discrimination and harassment. SRE network, which encompasses Jewish nonprofit organizations and communal entities across North America, was launched in 2018 as SafetyRespectEquity Coalition in response to the #MeToo Movement around sexual violence and harassment that went viral in 2017. Building on the work of individual local Jewish agencies and organizations devoted to fostering a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion, the Jewish community in Tucson, Arizona, is among the first to advance the work of SRE Network in a collective manner, signaling a broad commitment to shifting the culture of local Jewish agencies and organizations. The short-term takeaways of implementing this community-wide approach are the recognition that this work is ongoing and fluid, and, that to create a trajectory for true change to take place, it must be approached from a foundational standpoint beginning both with a commitment to financially prioritizing SRE training and implementation, and with an honest analysis and continued assessment of where the community currently stands. Over the last four years that work has been implemented on a community-wide level in Tucson, stakeholders from participating organizations and agencies have come away with the understanding that, while there is not outright resistance to SRE and DEI work in the Tucson Jewish community, a lack of organizational band-width, as well as foundational knowledge around these concepts contributes to a lack of buy-in, particularly when it comes to participation by synagogues. Similarly, fiscal challenges, including the need for a funding mechanism for potential outside investigations, present barriers to the evolution of this work in the community.

SRE Network commissioned the Tucson SRE Task Force Case Study to provide a road map for other Jewish communities that are considering a communal approach to promoting safety, respect, equity, diversity, and inclusion for all, including employees, Board members, volunteers, clients, and other constituents of community organizations.

Leaders of two local Jewish organizations formed the Tucson SRE Task Force in December 2018 and encouraged other organizations to join and commit to the SRE Network Standards.

¹ Graham Hoffman resigned in July 2022.

As outlined on the SRE Network [website](#), an organization that joins now is “1) committing to being on a journey toward implementing the SRE Network Standards, 2) committing to assessing your progress on that journey through the SRE Network Standards Assessment, 3) joining a learning community committed to creating safe, respectful, equitable workplaces for all, 4) committing to furthering gender equity and addressing gender-based discrimination and harassment in Jewish workplaces.”

This report aims to answer the following questions:

How well is SRE integrated into the Tucson Jewish community?

Has the Task Force strengthened the workplace culture of the Tucson Jewish community?

Have other intersectional issues such as race and disability been part of the work?

How have member organizations implemented the principles of SRE?

By documenting the Tucson Jewish community’s process, including any gaps or missteps encountered along the way, the report can serve as a resource for other Jewish communities seeking to engage in a united SRE effort.

Current Member Organizations

Tucson SRE Task Force



As with the larger SRE Network, the Tucson SRE Task Force’s work is a journey rather than a finite project. The Tucson SRE Task Force currently has five member organizations that are proceeding with implementation of SRE at different rates. Synagogues and additional community organizations are considering membership. It is important to note that an organization that makes a commitment to the SRE Standards must make SRE training and implementation a priority in its budget, although the intensity of the work may fluctuate over time.

Starting in March 2020, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic forced organizations to cope with lockdowns and shifting health and safety protocols, and Tucson SRE Task Force members did not have the time to meet regularly. However, many member organizations focused even more intensely on what they had learned about safety, respect, and equity as they navigated pandemic-related layoffs, furloughs, and issues of both physical and psychological safety. In February 2022, Task Force members and other community leaders began working with consultants from the national nonprofit **Sacred Spaces**, an SRE Network grantee, on its Keilim Policy Toolkit, taking an even deeper dive into developing policies and practices to prevent and respond to harassment and discrimination.

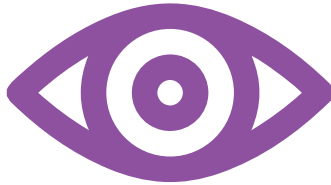
“An organization that makes a commitment to the SRE Standards must make SRE training and implementation a priority in its budget”

2. JPSA comprises Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona (JFSA) and Jewish Community Foundation of Southern Arizona (JCF). Graham Hoffman has been JCF president and CEO since September 2018 and in June 2020, Hoffman added the presidency of the JFSA to his portfolio. In May 2021, the community voted to unify the governance and operations of JFSA and JCF under a new Arizona nonprofit corporation, Jewish Philanthropies of Southern Arizona.

Tucson SRE Task Force Road Map

1. Hold gathering for agency and synagogue professional leaders to introduce SRE concepts
2. Ask each agency/synagogue to meet with its Board about joining SRE Network
3. Establish a Task Force with professional leadership from community agencies
4. Evaluate resources to animate the process and secure necessary funding
5. Create an opportunity for Board and professional leadership to engage with the work, such as a large event/seminar/workshop
6. Create Task Force mission and vision statements
7. Hold training workshops for Board members and staff
8. Continue discussions with agency/synagogue Boards to broaden understanding of SRE topics
9. Revisit organizations that may not have committed to SRE Network and complete SRE standards assessments
10. Consider organizational culture trainings with Ta'amod: Stand Up! for professionals at local agencies/synagogues
11. Use Sacred Spaces Keilim Policy Toolkit to complete policy and procedures reviews for each organization
12. Continue outreach to uncommitted agencies/synagogues
13. Complete SRE Network annual renewals and standards self-assessments at each organization

Vision + Mission



We envision a Tucson community, inspired by Jewish values, in which all people are safe, respected, trusted, valued, and supported.



We foster an authentically open environment where individuals are accepted for their unique contributions, strengths, and expertise, are provided equitable access to opportunities, and as a group are encouraged to advocate for fairness for one another.

**tucson jewish
community**

in partnership with

sre
safety respect equity

Formation of the Task Force

The Tucson SRE Task Force got its start at a meeting of Tucson Jewish community agency executives in December 2018. The JPSA convenes monthly meetings with leaders of JFSA beneficiary and affiliated agencies and community partners. The JFSA beneficiary agencies in December 2018 were Handmaker Jewish Services for the Aging³, JFCS, Tucson Hebrew Academy (THA, a K-8 day school), the Tucson J and UA Hillel. TJMHC is a JFSA community partner.

At the December 2018 agency executives meeting, Michelle Blumenberg, then UA Hillel Executive Director,⁴ raised the subject of SRE, having recently attended the Hillel International Global Assembly, which included a presentation about the SRE Network, then the SafetyRespectEquity Coalition. Similarly, Todd Rockoff, Tucson J President and CEO, had learned about SRE at the May 2018 JCC Biennial and was talking with leaders of JCC Association about SRE as a JCC movement initiative. Blumenberg and Rockoff agreed to serve as Co-Chairs of a Tucson SRE Task Force.

The initial members of the Task Force included representatives from the Tucson J, UA Hillel, JCF, and JFCS, later joined by a THA staff member and a TJMHC Board member, although the TJMHC and THA did not join the SRE Network at that time. In June 2021, the TJMHC Board voted to join the SRE Network; THA has not yet joined but recently began participating in Sacred Spaces' Keilim policy review along with Task Force members.

“On a grand scale, says Blumenberg, success for the Task Force would start with everyone in the Tucson Jewish community being aware of the issues of safety, equity, respect, diversity, and inclusion.”

While awareness is hard to quantify, she says, it should lead to more concrete identification of problems and solutions, as professionals and Boards review policies and procedures to ensure that harassment and discrimination are defined and that all employees and users of communal spaces know what steps are in place to report, investigate, and respond to any allegations. Blumenberg notes that breaches of SRE may arise in many areas, including but not limited to sexual harassment, bullying, and lack of equity in pay.

As agency directors, the Tucson SRE Task Force Co-Chairs already have full plates, says Blumenberg, but they took on the SRE responsibility “because it’s so important to our community to shift our culture.”

One unexpected but deeply gratifying outcome of the Tucson SRE Task Force’s efforts is that a representative of the Task Force spread what she had learned far beyond the Tucson community, leading a plenary session on safety, respect, equity, diversity, and inclusion at the annual conference of the **International Association of Jewish Free Loans**.

³ Handmaker Jewish Services for the Aging was sold in January 2021 to MED Healthcare Partners, a for-profit company. Although it is no longer a Federation beneficiary agency, Handmaker, MED Healthcare Partners, and JPSA have a Board reconstitution agreement, in the interest of preserving community involvement in the organization’s governance.

⁴ Blumenberg left the University of Arizona Hillel Foundation at the end of June 2021. She was Interim Executive Director at the Tucson Museum & Holocaust Center from May 2021 through March 2022.

Task Force Events and Programs

“From #MeToo to #WeToo”

The first program the Tucson SRE Task Force created was a community-wide event on May 21, 2019, to introduce the topic of safety, respect, and equity to staff and lay leaders from across Jewish community agencies. Tucson synagogues were invited to join the Task Force in the run-up to this event, which was called “From #MeToo to #WeToo.” Although no synagogues have joined as yet⁵, four local synagogues from the Conservative and Reform movements were co-sponsors of the event, along with the JFSA and its beneficiary agencies, and the Jewish Women’s Foundation of New York.

The May 2019 event was held at the Tucson J with more than 150 people attending. Modeled on the event at the Hillel International Global Assembly, the Tucson event began with the lights in the room dimmed while volunteers read aloud a 20-minute version of “Stories of Harassment in Jewish Communal Life,” anonymous victim stories compiled by the Jewish Women’s Foundation from Jewish communities across North America⁶. Two volunteer therapists from JFCS were on hand to speak to participants who might be triggered by the accounts. Although the #MeToo movement was widespread by this time, with revelations of sexual harassment and assault by and of public figures frequently broadcast on news and social media, many audience members were shocked by the stories of such incidents happening in Jewish spaces. As Blumenberg then told the local Jewish newspaper⁷, just as with other problems in the wider community, such as alcoholism, child abuse, domestic violence, or drug abuse, people in the Jewish community tend to think that “this doesn’t happen with the Jews.” The reality is that the Jewish community is no more immune to such problems than any other demographic.

Although there are no officially documented cases of harassment or discrimination in the Tucson Jewish community, there are stories of disrespectful conduct in a variety of settings. This can create unease, mistrust, and even fear, which is why it is important for the Tucson SRE Task Force to shift the culture to one of respect and empowerment for all.

For Hoffman, as the new CEO at JCF, which had been led by female executive directors for more than 25 years, “it was important to me to champion these efforts as an ally, and to make sure that me being someone who identifies as a male wasn’t a step backwards for the community.”

The readings at the Tucson J were followed by a panel discussion with Benchimol; Hoffman; Melissa Zimmerman, JFCS Vice President of Clinical Services; and Anne Hameroff, who was then incoming Chair of the Jewish Community Foundation Board. Among other topics, the panel addressed how Jewish values can be applied in tackling these issues, the sometimes fraught nature of donor-staff relationships, what men can do to be more aware and empathetic, and how best to move forward to address and curtail these issues in the Tucson community. After the panel discussion, the audience broke into three affinity groups (Board

⁵ Congregation Anshei Israel, which is considering membership, is participating in the Sacred Spaces Keilim task force policy review.

⁶ See Appendix A

⁷ <https://azjewishpost.com/2019/metoo-event-encourages-community-wide-conversation/>

members/volunteers, professional/agency staff, and Tucson J summer camp staff) to write their thoughts on banners with sections marked “I Learned,” “I Feel,” and “I Commit To.” Participants were then asked to walk around the room and place colored “like” stickers on banners next to the commitments they felt most strongly about. Some of the “I Commit To” ideas included “Speaking up, “Being a safe person for others to come to, to listen and validate,” and “Restorative justice for victims.”⁸

Funding for the May 2019 event came from the Saul Tobin Fund held at the JCF.

While planning this event and in the months that followed, Task Force Co-Chairs Blumenberg and Rockoff consulted with Benchimol and leaders at other national organizations, including Jamie Allen Black, CEO of the Jewish Women’s Foundation of New York; Lisa Eisen, SRE Network Founder and Advisory Board Chair, and Co-President of Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies; Mimi Kravetz, then Chief Talent Officer at Hillel International; Joy Brand-Richardson, Vice President and Director of Training and Professional Development at the JCC Association of North America; Shira Berkovits, Esq., Ph.D., President and CEO of Sacred Spaces; and Judith Belasco, Executive Director of Sacred Spaces. They had their first conversation with Elana Wien in November 2019, one day after she was installed as Executive Director of SRE Network.

“We Need to Talk”

The Tucson SRE Task Force, which had been meeting monthly since January 2019, next organized two workshops dubbed “We Need to Talk” in February 2020, with Benchimol leading both sessions. The Feb. 16 event, for members of various community Boards, had more than 50 attendees, including representatives of two synagogues that had not been among the sponsors of the May 2019 event. More than 100 people attended the Feb. 17 event for staff members of various organizations. The “big questions” both sessions were designed to address included “How and why is respect the foundation for safety?” “What is included in the range of behaviors that derail respect and damage organizational culture?” “What are appropriate responses to harassment and other forms of misconduct?” and “What can we do on a practical level to create safe, respectful, and equitable Jewish spaces?” Wien sent a prerecorded video message that was played at the Feb. 16 event.

To spark discussion at these trainings, a variety of scenarios⁹ that had been created and revised by Benchimol together with Jewish organizational leaders and professionals as stories of inequity, discrimination, and harassment continued to be revealed in Jewish spaces were used. The following example is indicative of the complexity of the issues addressed:

A victim learned that a former colleague who is the head of an institution is being investigated by the institution for sexual misconduct. This person wants to speak up but is afraid and also does not trust the institution since they are doing the investigation internally. No one from the institution has reached out to former staff.

⁸ See Appendix B
⁹ See Appendix C

- How does your organization look into allegations made about employees?
- Is there a place for internal investigations? How do you invite victims to speak up and what do you do to ensure you listen to them? How do you handle historical allegations?
- How would/could you be inclusive of those no longer in your organization?

The chairs of the Tucson SRE Task Force were looking forward to deepening the SRE work among Boards and staff of member organizations after these training sessions. Instead, just a few weeks later, the Tucson J and other agencies were dealing with sudden closures prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To continue moving forward with SRE work despite the pandemic disruptions, says Rockoff, in June 2020, the Task Force used some of the remaining funds from the \$5,000 JCC Association grant, along with \$2,000 from the Tucson J's SRE budget, to engage Nancy Parkes, Founder and Lead Educational Consultant at JTeachNow, to work with the Task Force representatives, via Zoom, on a vision and mission statement. In July 2020, the Task Force held a Zoom meeting to update and check in with agency executives, Board Chairs, and Task Force liaisons.

Since that time, says Blumenberg, agencies were so preoccupied with pandemic-related issues that Task Force members have not had the capacity to hold another large meeting. The plan was for each agency to work on its own policies and complete either an initial or annual SRE self-assessment. Updates on the Task Force's work have been part of JPSA agency executives' meetings.

In fall 2020, Rockoff and Wien began discussing funding to advance the work as a collective and to create a case study report for other communities. Wien had already begun connecting Rockoff and Blumenberg with leaders of other, larger Jewish communities, including Atlanta, Detroit, and Minneapolis, who were interested in learning more about the path Tucson is charting.

In November 2020, the SRE Network awarded the Tucson SRE Task Force \$36,000. Along with funding the case study, the award was meant to provide microgrants to synagogues and/or agencies to help them with policy review and deepening their involvement in the SRE process. These funds were allocated to Sacred Spaces to support the work of seven Tucson organizations.

JCulture Changemakers

Through the JCulture grant from JCC Association, three Tucson J department heads, including Monica Rosenbaum, Director of Member Relations, took part in an intensive JCulture "Changemakers" training from [Ta'amod: Stand Up!](#), an SRE Network grantee that offers trainings through a Jewish lens to help organizations build healthy, safe and equitable workplaces. Three Tucson Jewish Community Center department heads are taking part in a yearlong JCC Association 'Changemakers' training program designed to help them train others in the local Jewish community about SRE.

The Tucson J is one of six initial JCCs to participate in this pilot training, says Rosenbaum, who explains that the goal is for the Changemakers to be able to train other staff members in their own organizations about SRE and then branch out to other organizations in the wider Jewish community. Another five JCCs later joined the program.

“Three Tucson Jewish Community Center department heads are taking part in a yearlong JCC Association ‘Changemakers’ training program designed to help them train others in the local Jewish community about SRE.”

Along with about 16 hours of intensive training with Ta’amod in November 2021, the three Tucson J staff members are participating in a yearlong program with monthly webinars plus “learning pods” with participants from other pilot JCCs to discuss challenges and best practices. The three staffers also have in-house meetings with Tucson J President Rockoff.

The Tucson J has started to roll out its “JCulture 2.0” training, based on the Ta’amod work, to the J’s leadership team with a 25-minute PowerPoint overview. It also built leadership cohorts to attend the full training between mid-March and the first week of May 2022. Trainings for all JCC staff will be attended within the first six months of the new school year (August 2022-January 2023).

Rosenbaum says these trainings overlap with “J-Ed,” a training and professional development program for Tucson J staff that she co-created with Josh Shenker, the Tucson J’s Chief Program Officer, which features both core (mandatory) and elective seminars.

One such core seminar focuses on the Tucson J’s safety and security protocols, which were recently updated with the assistance of the Tucson Jewish community’s security directors¹⁰. Training on the new safety and security protocols began at small department meetings and larger all staff trainings occurred, says Rosenbaum.

New Tucson J staff members receive a Tar-Boot (Hebrew for “culture”) orientation before they begin working, which includes an introduction to the J’s SRE commitment.

“We do go through the entire commitment form at that training, so we’re not waiting to start,” Rosenbaum emphasizes.

As for rolling the program out to other agencies, she says the JCC Association grant includes a brainstorming session with Ta’amod founders, which will be followed by meetings with individual agency leaders to determine the best approach for each agency.

Along with ascertaining whether agencies’ policies and procedures are in line with SRE, and whether they have reporting mechanisms in place, she says, “the other large piece is the psychological safety piece.” Rosenbaum explains that at an SRE training, participants should feel able “to speak up and be vulnerable without the fear of retribution or concerns about their employment or their role.”

¹⁰ Two former police officers, Paul Patterson and Chelsea Gutierrez, serve as Security Directors for the Tucson Jewish community, funded by the Jewish Philanthropies of Southern Arizona

“It’s crucial to make sure that we are all naming things, and using the same language,” she says. Since challenges to safety, respect, and equity can involve people who are not staff, “we have to make sure that the expectations are clear across the board, and that those that are not employees also understand that they have many of the same protections and the same responsibilities.”

She’s heartened by the community’s interest in SRE.

“It’s amazing that we have so many organizations in our community that have stepped up to say yes, we want to be a part of this, even if their track has to run a little slower. It’s heartwarming ... to see that the community is invested and wants to stand together on this, because that’s not the case everywhere,” she says, noting that in other Jewish communities, a JCC or Federation may be the sole organization to join the SRE Network.

Rosenbaum expects that the culture of SRE will permeate even Tucson organizations that haven’t joined, and that others may still come on board.

“I think there’s some organizations that need to see the proof in the pudding before they pick up that spoon,” she says.

A Closer Look at Tucson SRE Task Force Member Organizations

Overview

While there are no documented cases of sexual harassment in the Tucson Jewish community, Blumenberg and others have heard stories of female staff at local Jewish agencies who “were treated inappropriately by older male donors. And people were told, ‘It is the way it is and that is what you have to do, put up with it.’” She’s also heard of cases where disrespectful behavior was reported to the CEO of the agency, and the CEO tried to manage the situation and act as a “buffer” for their staff. These incidents all happened prior to the formation of the Tucson SRE Task Force, she notes, and she doesn’t believe any education took place to convey to the individuals concerned that their behavior was objectionable.

Blumenberg hasn’t heard of any such stories arising since the Tucson community started its SRE process, but says this may be due to the pandemic: “On Zoom, you eliminate some of that stuff.”

Ori Green, Legacy Officer at JPSA and a Task Force representative, believes the people who are drawn to SRE training are those who care about the topic. She wonders if the Task Force is reaching those who might need a culture shift the most.

“Maybe the skill that we are most likely to teach is, how not to allow this to happen to you or to colleagues, as opposed to reaching the people who might perpetuate this kind of behavior,” Green says. She’d like to see the training be mandatory for all staff and Board members, to help convey the message “that your organization has your back around this issue.”

However, even just reaching a self-selecting group is helpful, she adds, “in that everybody can do better.”

For Hoffman, the Task Force bringing together “the five generations in Jewish life that we’re trying to engage with as constituents” to have some of these difficult conversations, is itself “a remarkable feat.”

There is still much to do, Hoffman says, “but I think that we have a keener understanding of what that needs to look like and how to begin to equip our community, both with external resources and with those that we already have indigenous to our community to continue to advance this work.”

The Task Force Co-Chairs were anxious to discover whether general staff at the three largest Jewish Community agencies — the Tucson J, JFCS, and JPSA — are aware of the Task Force and its work. Responses from staff members at these agencies, which are included anonymously in the sections below, indicate that more outreach is required to ensure that Tucson SRE Task Force members’ commitment to the principles of SRE is widely known.

Best Practice - The Tucson J's Code of Conduct

One effective vehicle for conveying the concepts of SRE is the Tucson J's Member, Participant, Guest and Staff Code of Conduct,¹¹ which could be adapted by other organizations.

All Tucson J members were required to sign off on the multi-page document, which was distributed to members and staff in fall 2021, and is posted prominently on the Tucson J website. The Code of Conduct references the organization's 'Commitment to Safe, Respectful, and Equitable Jewish Workplaces and Communal Spaces' and lays out policies for everything from authorized methods of gaining entrance to the facility to reporting suspicious packages. It states that "All people using the JCC are expected to behave in a mature and responsible manner, and to respect the rights and dignity of all other members, participants, guests, and staff," and encourages reporting of suspicious or inappropriate behaviors to JCC staff. The Code of Conduct outlines "disruptive behaviors" in which members, participants, guests, and staff agree not to engage. These include, among others, "Angry, vulgar, or abusive language, including swearing, name calling, and shouting," "Any demonstration of sexual activity, or sexual contact with another person," "Harassment or intimidation by words, gestures, body language, or menacing behavior," and "Carrying or concealing weapons, objects, or devices that may be perceived as weapons."

The Code of Conduct goes on to specify that "The JCC, through its CEO and Board of Directors, reserves the right to remove from the premises any individual acting in inappropriate manners, and further reserves the rights for additional disciplinary actions including but not limited to: cancelation of membership, or involvement of local law enforcement."

When asked how this was received by members, Rockoff says, "We may not have changed things dramatically but we wanted each member to see the Code of Conduct and sign the Code of Conduct about the way that they will behave here at the J, how they will talk to staff, how staff will talk to them. It really becomes kind of a *b'rit* (covenant) under the safety, respect, and equity guidelines."

The majority of members have been wonderful about signing, he says. "A few said, 'I don't want to sign this and it's ridiculous' – we said, 'That's fine, but you won't be able to be here if you don't sign that,' and most people are pretty reasonable at that point."

¹¹ See Appendix D

Tucson Jewish Community Center

The Tucson J has been the recipient of SRE grant funding both directly and indirectly, with some of the funds earmarked to help the wider Tucson Jewish community move toward gender equity and safe, respectful work and communal spaces.

In September 2019, the SafetyRespectEquity Coalition gave JCC Association a \$150,000 capacity-building grant. The Tucson J was one of six initial JCCs to join a pilot program that not only funded support and training for its staff, but also provided a \$5,000 stipend to create programming for the wider community. The Tucson SRE Task Force decided to use part of this stipend to convene the two “We Need to Talk” training sessions to promote SRE awareness, says Rockoff. Since much of the SRE work of the pilot JCCs was paused due to the pandemic, JCC Association extended the time period to use the funds and added more JCCs to the original cohort.

The commitment from JCC Association is one factor driving the Tucson J’s SRE implementation. In its first year after joining the SRE Network, says Rockoff, most of the agency’s work on these issues came directly from him working with the Board Chair. Commitment from the Board as a whole is another key factor: in May 2021 the Board formed an SRE committee of six people to examine the organization’s personnel practices and policies through a lens of safety, respect, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Perhaps the easiest part of the policy review, says Rockoff, was changing male pronouns to gender-neutral language. Other policies that needed scrutiny included the facility’s dress code, which Rockoff and the Board agreed favored males over females, with restrictions focusing on midriff-baring or low-cut shirts. A no-visible tattoo policy may have been normative when the policy was written in the 1990s, when tattoos were less common, but today, “the reality is we would have to let go a whole bunch of people if that policy was still in place,” Rockoff says. He adds that there will still be language barring hate speech or inappropriate tattoos, similar to how T-shirt logos are handled in the dress code. Rockoff notes that an old piercing policy said people may only have earrings, one in each ear. The new policy permits piercings as long as they don’t interfere with the person’s work, although again, no inappropriate imagery is permitted. If the Tucson J’s old no-visible tattoo policy were still in force, many employees would not be able to work there.

The Tucson J is also changing its sick leave policy to be more equitable. How time is earned has been revised, from a half day per month to a full day per month, since people generally are out sick for at least a full day. Rockoff emphasizes that the policy also states that mental health is a legitimate reason to take a sick day. A 60-day accrual allowance stands, because it allows for a catastrophic illness. The organization also created a sick leave “bank” to which employees may contribute unused days to help a colleague in need. The Tucson J’s sick leave policy states that mental health is a legitimate reason to take a sick day. The Tucson J created a sick leave ‘bank’ to which employees may contribute unused days to help a colleague in need.

Along with the Tucson’s J’s Code of Conduct, highlighted above, its website’s [“Mission, Vision & Values”](#) page includes its non-discrimination policy, which states “We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex, national origin, age, veteran status, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression in any of our programs or activities.” It also details the organization’s equal employment opportunity policies.

The Tucson J's sick leave policy states that mental health is a legitimate reason to take a sick day.

Tucson J Board member Elise Lopez, DrPH, MPH, is the inaugural director of the University of Arizona Consortium on Gender-Based Violence, where she has done research on prevention and response, and created programming around sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and sexual harassment. The Tucson SRE Task Force invited Lopez to join as a subject matter expert. Her involvement and leadership were valuable and she was later asked to join the Tucson J Board, where she serves as the SRE chair.

In most organizations, Lopez says, “if and when they decide to address things like sexual harassment, diversity issues, other types of gender-based discrimination, leaders tend to put out a statement saying that it’s important. That’s usually the extent of their involvement; maybe they delegate to somebody in their organization to make sure their sexual harassment policy is in line with the EEOC,¹² and maybe bring in a consultant to do sexual harassment training.”

Instead, she’s found leaders like Rockoff attending SRE meetings and training sessions, reviewing policies, “and being willing to have hard discussions.”

Lopez says she and other committee members have been surprised at how many factors can come into play when addressing safety, respect, and equity. The discussion on tattoos revealed a spectrum of opinions, she says, explaining that for some people, tattoos can be reminders of the Holocaust, so covering them could be seen as a sign of respect in a Jewish workplace. As noted above, ultimately it was decided that tattoos are now so ubiquitous that the Tucson J’s policy needed to be less restrictive.

The committee also discussed training staff to recognize child abuse and family violence, and how to model consent and conflict resolution for kids and teens. “Is it punitive, or is it restorative, where we’re teaching people that if you harm someone you’re responsible for repairing that harm to the extent possible, if that person wants it?” Lopez asks. “How do you take responsibility for your actions and hold yourself accountable? How do we hold others accountable by calling them in, rather than calling out and ‘canceling’?”

Modeling appropriate behavior should start with organizational leaders, Lopez says. “What if in the fitness center, one member makes a comment to another member about their body – what do we do about that? There’s all of these layers that you start to peel back and think about,” she says.

The Tucson J was faced with just that challenge, and it ended with the J expelling a longtime member.

Rockoff says that when this member’s derogatory comments were first reported, he met with the individual, who apologized. Accepting the apology, “staff in consultation with the Board determined that there is an opportunity in our tradition for teshuvah (repentance and repair),” says Rockoff, who points out that it was a mistake for him to meet privately with this individual, instead of having another person in the room as a witness.

This event took place before the Tucson J created its Member, Participant, Guest and Staff Code of Conduct.

¹² U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Three weeks after their conversation, there was another complaint about the same person. This time, the individual's membership was suspended, provoking a temper tantrum and obscene language directed at Rockoff and some Board members. The aggression shown "was enough for us to say, 'you're no longer welcome here at all,'" says Rockoff. "We had a set of guidelines and expectations for ourselves, and when you talk about the SRE Network Standards, leadership and accountability is the first thing."

Another issue involved a Board member, and after applying the principles of SRE, Rockoff says, it became apparent this person could no longer serve on the Board.

A third incident involved a staff member. In 2019, as the Tucson J was just beginning its SRE journey, an employee complained about being discriminated against within their department on the basis of race. The Tucson J set up a meeting to investigate and asked the employee to attend with a representative from the NAACP. "We had Board leadership in the room and we asked questions and we listened. It was our intention to center the experience of the complainant and our hope that they felt heard," says Rockoff. He explains that while critiquing the complainant's performance, a supervisor had used a word the complainant interpreted as a racial trope, although it was not on "the long list of words that could be offensive." All involved learned more about being sensitive to language, "corrective action was taken, the employee stayed where they were, and the incident presented us an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the breadth of this work," says Rockoff.

Lopez emphasizes that SRE work is about making the community safer and stronger, not about calling people out on policies and behaviors. It is about being proactive rather than reactive, she says, but it is a process that can be approached in "bite-size pieces," rather than expecting to resolve every issue at once.

Pandemic-related closures raised other issues of safety, respect, and equity for the Tucson J. Early on, the agency had to lay off or furlough many workers, says Allison Wexler, a former Special Abilities Coordinator at the agency who remains on the Task Force as a member-at-large after leaving the Tucson J to become Executive Director of the Tucson Jewish Free Loan.

"People who were not working couldn't get paid a salary, or their hours were cut – my hours were cut in half – but the J continued to pay the health insurance for everyone; I thought that was amazing," says Wexler, explaining this took place before the federal government established the Paycheck Protection Program.

Wexler was put in charge of applying for grants to help keep Tucson J staff employed.

COVID "was a big test," says Wexler, who believes Rockoff applied lessons he learned from SRE. "He kept people on as long as he could; he did what he could to keep the staff healthy."

Along with paying for health insurance for furloughed staff members, the Tucson J formed a medical advisory committee to help keep staff and members safe once it was able to reopen some of its programs, including Early Childhood Education (ECE) and the Taglit Day Program for adults with disabilities, which began meeting at an off-campus site. Along with the committee's advice, the Tucson J followed guidelines set forth by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the state of Arizona. It was so successful that a local TV news station ran a story in July 2020 titled "[Tucson JCC leads way in COVID safety protocol.](#)" Besides stepping up cleaning regimens and mandating mask wearing, the Tucson

J alerted all of its members any time a case of COVID was traced back to the facility, and shut down the affected part of the operation for two weeks.

The Tucson J also pivoted to provide many services remotely. Wexler remembers doing virtual programming for the Sparks cheerleading program, which involves participants with and without disabilities.

To promote economic equity and avoid creating a financial hardship for staff, early in the pandemic the Tucson J provided computers for staff members who didn't have the technology to work remotely, Wexler says.

Although she left the Tucson J before some of its biggest COVID-related successes, including opening the summer camp in July 2020, "I was cheering from the sidelines," she says.

While still at the Tucson J, Wexler attended a JCC SRE workshop in Dallas with other Tucson J staffers in February 2020. She also attended the virtual SRE convenings in June 2020 and 2021. In her new role at the Tucson Jewish Free Loan, she took her SRE knowledge into the broader Jewish world by moderating a diversity, equity, and inclusion workshop at the International Association of Jewish Free Loans 2021 conference. She explains that after telling the CEO of the Detroit Free Loan what she'd learned in Dallas, they decided to make DEI the major work of the conference, immediately following the keynote address. "There were 250 people in attendance, so it was pretty powerful," she says.

At the Tucson J, while rank-and-file staff members may be unfamiliar with the SRE acronym, the message behind SRE is getting through.

A teacher in the Tucson J's Early Childhood Education (ECE) program for 26 years says she did not know about the Tucson SRE Task Force, or what SRE stands for. She is aware, however, of the Tucson J's Member, Participant, Guest and Staff Code of Conduct.

This teacher has not experienced any harassment in her 26 years at the Tucson J. But she is aware of a few incidents involving coworkers. She remembers one in particular that took place before the J implemented its Code of Conduct, in which the father of a child in her class was making inappropriate advances to another teacher. After her coworker reported the problem, a male staff member was delegated to escort the father if he came to the ECE. This is in keeping with the spirit of the Code of Conduct that was later approved.

Jewish Family & Children's Services of Southern Arizona

JFCS signed on early in Tucson's SRE process, but the agency's SRE efforts predate the community strategies, due to the nature of the organization, says Task Force member Melissa Zimmerman, LMSW, Vice President of Clinical Services. "As a mental health and social services agency, I think our perspective is a little bit different; this has always been in the forefront of our minds," she says. "It goes hand-in-hand with being trauma-informed."

In addition to having SRE-related policies and procedures already in place, all JFCS staff go through annual sexual harassment/bullying trainings, Zimmerman says, adding that it is a topic that also comes up in group and individual supervision.

Zimmerman, who oversees a department of 40 clinical staff, including 30 therapists, can recall only one instance when SRE issues came into play, which took place before the formation of the Tucson SRE Task Force. She explains that one employee, despite being given clear expectations, repeatedly called clients “honey” or “sweetie.” The clients didn’t complain, but a few therapists overheard and brought it to Zimmerman’s attention. Such overly friendly language can constitute a lack of boundaries, which can be damaging for some vulnerable clients, Zimmerman says, and when the employee in question persisted after the problematic language had been discussed, corrective actions needed to be taken.

From the start, everyone on the JFCS Board was really invested in the SRE process, Zimmerman says. “We read through the SRE commitment as a group, out loud. We felt that it was important in addition to just putting it on paper in front of people, so that everyone could see the words and hear them.”

Zimmerman says she is looking forward to seeing the Task Force roll out SRE training not only to Jewish community agencies, but to the wider community. Susan Kasle, a former JFCS Vice President for Community Services who is currently a consultant with the agency, is eager to continue working with the Task Force as a member-at-large.

“It was exciting to collaborate with the national network, as well as hold an introductory program and local workshops,” she says. “We really had momentum going.”

When COVID hit, “member organizations understandably hunkered down to focus on delivering services, while doing the important work of SRE more from an internal perspective. As we come back together, I’m confident we’ll see momentum build once again into an even stronger community effort around SRE.”

A 12-year employee of JFCS who is not a therapist says she is unfamiliar with the Tucson SRE Task Force. However, she is confident about where to report if a client or fellow employee harassed her in any way, saying she would take the matter to her supervisor.

Jewish Philanthropies of Southern Arizona

The Boards of both JCF and JFSA approved SRE membership. The Boards were combined prior to the 2021-22 program year.

The combined Board has been reviewing and updating policies. For example, the policy manuals lacked an anti-molestation policy, Hoffman says, simply because such policies weren’t commonplace 12 or 15 years ago. Similarly, there was no whistleblower policy, and no mechanism for reporting and investigating complaints.

In fall 2021, JCF approved a grant to fund the community’s work with Sacred Spaces, alongside funds from the national SRE Network and some funds the Tucson J secured from the David and Lura Lovell Foundation. Tucson is part of a Sacred Spaces pilot cohort working with its Keilim Policy Toolkit, Hoffman notes, because like the Tucson SRE Task Force, Sacred Spaces is “building the field of this work as it goes.”

JPSA's Green says SRE training has made her more aware of her own actions and other people's boundaries. A hugger by nature, if she feels a hug might be appropriate at work, she now asks permission first. Exercising this care at work has also made her rethink patterns with family — for example, she now asks her young nephew if he'd like a farewell hug and a kiss or would rather just wave goodbye.

"I feel like to some extent as a Jewish community we're raised with 'bubbelah,' and the pinching and the squeezing," she says. "As a Jewish community, we sometimes don't focus on boundaries."

Another JPSA staff member remembers being invited to the February 2020 Task Force training, although she was unable to attend. A good portion of the staff attended, she says, but she hasn't heard much about SRE since. As for mechanisms to report an incident, her default is always to refer to the employee handbook. "I assume it's basically you can report to your manager; if you don't feel comfortable reporting to your manager you can report to HR, or any senior level staff member," she says, adding that at an organization she worked for previously, the payroll company provided a reporting hotline.

University of Arizona Hillel Foundation

The Hillel movement instituted SRE training for all North American staff and incoming employees starting in summer 2019, says Blumenberg, the former UA Hillel Executive Director.

Blumenberg completed her two-hour training in person while at the Western Hillel Organization Conference in 2019, but says that even prior to COVID, many people did their training online because that was easier to arrange. The online training sessions were excellent, she says, and included a presentation, case studies, and discussion groups to talk through issues based on real-life incidents within the Hillel movement. For policy review, individual Hillels waited for Hillel International to issue new templates that expanded and updated information about discrimination and harassment; UA Hillel revised its personnel handbook in May 2020. UA Hillel shared segments of its SRE assessment at every 2021 Board meeting, to keep Board members up to date on the process. The only piece of the puzzle missing for UA Hillel, Blumenberg says, is an investigative procedure at the local level. Hillel International has contracted with Sacred Spaces to provide investigative services if an investigation beyond what the local Hillel can arrange is needed.

Jessica Emerson McCormick, who joined UA Hillel as Executive Director on July 1, 2021, and Assistant Director Abbi Cook have both been part of Tucson's Sacred Spaces Keilim Policy Toolkit cohort. McCormick says she inherited a very good set of policies, but plans to review them with the Hillel Board this summer.

While Cook participated in an SRE training session at a Western Hillel Organization conference prior to COVID, McCormick has not participated in a formal SRE training with Hillel.

McCormick says her focus is "radical accessibility" at all levels of UA Hillel, which will include building protocols around SRE for Board and staff onboarding. It's important not only to onboard diverse people, she says, "but to make it a safe place for diverse staff and Board members to stay long-term and thrive." One area she'll be looking at is job descriptions, to make sure each one starts with a strong diversity statement, which is then backed up with a safe, respectable and equitable workplace.

Cook adds that training student leaders around SRE issues is also important to make sure all students feel safe at Hillel.

McCormick appreciates Tucson's communal approach to SRE, which she says makes agencies "less siloed."

"It gives all of us a chance to hear other voices, hear from perspectives we might not be thinking about," she says, noting that she heard unique perspectives even in the first Sacred Spaces Zoom session.. She's also grateful this work was a priority at UA Hillel before she arrived. "I don't think this is work that really finishes. I would like for Hillel to always be in a constant stance of being willing to iterate and being willing to evolve our practices to be as equitable as possible," she says.

Tucson Jewish Museum & Holocaust Center

At the Tucson Jewish Museum & Holocaust Center, the promotion of Gugulethu Moyo from Director of Operations to Executive Director in November 2021 was seen as a DEI breakthrough, with Moyo hailed as the first Jew of Color to lead an American Jewish museum. She resigned six months later, and in a widely shared interview with Jewish media¹³, accused the TJMHC Board of racism and sexism. In a May 6 newsletter to the TJMHC community, Eric Schindler, the new Board President, said there were inaccuracies and misinformation in what was written and shared in the media and on social media platforms, and stated that the TJMHC "elected not to engage with those spreading the misinformation, as it involved personnel performance matters that the organization chose to remain confidential." The newsletter added that the reaction by some community members to Moyo's resignation "brought clarity to work that needs to be done to grow from this experience and create a stronger organization. This work will be done with guidance from our staff, donors, volunteers, patrons, community, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) consultant(s)." Calling the TJMHC "a relatively new organization," the newsletter cited the TJMHC's lack of "a strong operating culture and some systems necessary to create a sustainable organization," along with the lack of a long-term strategic plan.

From May 2021 through October 2021, under the guidance of Blumenberg as Interim Executive Director, the TJMHC Board crafted a set of 11 new policies, including a Personnel Handbook, Board Code of Ethics, Board Member Responsibilities, Conflict of Interest Policy, Risk Management and Control, Social Media Policy, and Whistleblower Policy. The TJMHC also signed onto the SRE Network standards. The Board undertook a nationwide search for a new executive director – something it had not done before promoting Moyo – and created a search committee that included Board members and other community stakeholders. On March 1, 2022 the TJMHC announced that its new Executive Director as of March 16 would be Lori Shepherd.

The Board also engaged in DEI workshops led by consultant Trayce Peterson in November and December 2021. Schindler noted that "similarly to virtually all organizations in this challenging time in America, our Board recognized the need to deepen our understanding of SRE and DEI and to deepen our commitment to ensuring a more just and equitable organization and society. We recognize that this is an ongoing process and will keep this work as a part of the organization's focus."

13 Asaf Shalev, "First Jew of color to lead an American Jewish museum resigns, citing gender and racial discrimination," Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 30, 2021, <https://www.jta.org/2021/04/30/united-states/first-jew-color-lead-american-jewish-museum-resigns-citing-gender-and-racial-discrimination>.

Synagogue Buy-in Is Slow

To date, although many local synagogues have taken an interest in the work of the Tucson SRE Task Force, only one has thus far voted to become a member. JFSA's Hoffman speculates that one reason may be capacity.

Synagogues have a small professional footprint vs. Jewish agencies, Hoffman explains, with a rabbi or two on staff, plus, often, religious school and/or early childhood education teachers and perhaps an executive director or administrator. With a small staff, it's hard to make time for SRE work, he says, and while it might be something a devoted group of synagogue volunteers could take on, such groups tend to be focused on "pressing matters" such as engaging young families and navigating emergence from the pandemic, and might see SRE as a secondary issue.

Benchimol offers another reason for the slow synagogue buy-in: "synagogues don't think of themselves as workspaces, even though they are." She adds that synagogues might dismiss themselves from the pool of membership candidates if their denominational movement has joined the SRE Network, thinking that the movement will deal with any SRE problems that arise. The Union for Reform Judaism and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism are both SRE Network members, but only a handful of individual synagogues across the country have joined.

Wien echoes this idea of synagogues assuming "de facto membership" if the denominational movement has joined. Often it takes an internal champion to encourage an organization to join, she says, adding that the SRE Network recently started to take a closer look at "who's not at the table."

“Synagogues might dismiss themselves from the pool of membership candidates if their denominational movement has joined the SRE Network.”

In the summer of 2020, the Tucson SRE Task Force Co-Chairs made a presentation to the Community Roundtable, a JFSA-convened group that includes rabbis and synagogue lay leaders, agency executives and lay leaders, and key JFSA staff. There was buy-in, says Blumenberg, but several synagogues and agencies have changed leadership since that time.

Along with the challenges of weathering the pandemic, two of Tucson's Reform synagogues have been preoccupied with joining forces to become a new entity. Another small Reform synagogue in Tucson decided to adopt the URJ's "Audacious Hospitality" initiative, launched in 2020, which focuses on building communities rooted in principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion and in some ways overlaps SRE.

Along with Hoffman, Rockoff suspects the main reason for the lack of local synagogues joining the Task Force is operational bandwidth, but wonders if the Task Force can do more to make synagogues feel invited and welcomed. One Board member reported that her synagogue's Board voted in favor of SRE membership, but objected to the idea that future Federation allocations may be limited to organizations that sign the SRE Network commitment. Blumenberg says eventually Federation funding may indeed be tied to having SRE policies in place.

[Congregation Anshei Israel](#), Tucson’s oldest Conservative synagogue, is participating in the Task Force’s Sacred Spaces Keilim Toolkit policy workshops.

Rabbi Sara Metz, who became the spiritual leader of Anshei Israel in July 2020, is the fourth rabbi, and the first woman, to lead CAI in its 91-year history, although the congregation employed a female Assistant Rabbi/Education Director from 2005-2010. CAI also has a female Cantor, who has been with the congregation since 2014.

In an email, Metz provided some personal reflections on SRE along with a statement of the synagogue’s views.

“I can say that Congregation Anshei Israel, its Board, leaders, and clergy affirm that each and every person is created in the image of God,” says Metz. “Each is equally deserving of care and respect. Homophobia, transphobia, and hate of any kind is not welcome in our loving community.”

For her own part, in her education and career, Metz said, “I have experienced micro-aggressions of people underestimating my abilities as a leader and Rabbi. I have been passed up for positions because they already had a cantor who is female or they have never had a rabbi who was female.

“It is challenging although I am quite fortunate to be serving an open, caring and respectful congregation such as Congregation Anshei Israel, says Metz, adding that people should not have to use the qualifier “female,” as in “female rabbi,” when they do not commonly say “male rabbi.” “I am a rabbi and I am also female,” she says.

Metz has not experienced any harassment or disrespect at CAI. “The members, lay leaders, and Board of CAI and I are partners working together to strengthen our connections with each other and God. My gender is part of me, as is my eye color. Neither change how I serve CAI and how the congregation and I work together in partnership.”

Challenges and Next Steps, Diversity and Inclusion

Two local Jewish agencies, TJMHC and THA, initially declined to take part in the Task Force. In June 2021 the TJMHC voted to join the Task Force, and in July 2021, the SRE Network updated its original standards, moving intersectional issues such as race and gender identity front and center, instead of listing them as “Additional Standards to Consider.”

SRE Network came out with its refreshed standards “in response to what we were hearing from members, particularly when the pandemic hit and then over the summer of 2020 when there was a broader racial reckoning happening in our society,” says SRE Network’s Wien. The changes to the standards can be reviewed [here](#).

It may be too soon to tell what integrating DEI work looks like in terms of implementation, Wien says, adding that it is a hopeful sign that 90% of SRE members renewed their membership in 2021 with the new standards. In addition, 20 new members have joined since the standards were refreshed.

New THA Head of School Johanna Shlomovich, who joined THA in July 2021, has been taking part in the Task Force’s policy review sessions with Sacred Spaces. She recently asked the THA Board of Trustees to form a mission and vision task force, and says the first draft of its new mission, vision and values statement talks about diversity, equity, and inclusion, which were not explicitly part of THA’s previous mission statement.

Shlomovich is not aware of any SRE-related problems at THA, but recently she dealt with a situation that required a response, when a 5th-grader announced to the class they wanted to use they/them pronouns instead of he/him pronouns. Shlomovich contacted the child’s parents to ask if they knew about this request, and to let them know she was going to communicate with other parents about it, “because the kids are all going to go home talking about it.” She also informed parents that she was contacting JFCS to send in clinicians to help run a workshop with the students about gender identity and pronouns.

JFCS was “an amazing resource for us,” she says, adding that she sat in on the workshop so she could communicate with parents about what the kids heard. She brought the JFCS clinicians back to do a training session on gender identity for the faculty. “We strive for an environment where students and staff feel safe and heard,” Shlomovich says.

Audrey Brooks, chair of the THA Board of Trustees, recalls that when the issue of SRE membership was presented to the Board in 2020, the previous chair was against it and the board voted no. Brooks is not opposed to joining and will be pursuing more information with the Task Force Chairs.

Wexler, a Tucson SRE Task Force member-at-large, comments that she has not witnessed outright resistance to SRE and DEI work in the Jewish community. What she has seen, she says, is that for some people, it is difficult to understand these new concepts. As she puts it, “It is hard for people to speak the language before they speak the language.” Sometimes when it is hard, people will divert the conversation, perhaps unconsciously, she says. Hoffman agrees that rather than outright resistance, there may be a lack of knowledge around these issues, even among the professional staff. “It’s a matter of educating ourselves and each other,” he says.

At the February 2020 “We Need to Talk” event for Jewish community Board members, Wexler says, people at her table were “absolutely open-minded to addressing the work.” But when it came to conversation, she says, they were afraid to be vulnerable or to disrupt the status quo, for example in confronting the Ashkenazi-centric component to Jewish work in the community.

Green sees a lack of diversity and inclusion in the Tucson Jewish community, not only in terms of Jews of Color, but also in financial terms – she’d like to see community members with wider income ranges involved in community decisions. She also believes that there are groups of Jews, including those who are genderqueer and those who are not Zionists, who often feel disenfranchised from established community organizations. Along with ideological challenges, there are fiscal and operational challenges to implementing SRE.

One major challenge for the Tucson community in moving SRE work forward is setting up a funding mechanism for potential outside investigations. This could be necessary if, for example, a CEO or board member who might ordinarily be in the reporting and investigation chain is the person accused of a transgression.

“If you undertake a serious third-party investigation, it can cost anywhere between \$20,000 and \$50,000. I don’t think there’s anyone in the community prepared to invest those kinds of resources,” Hoffman says, adding that Sacred Spaces has found that when communities start to promote their commitment to safety, respect, and equity, often “people come forward and say, ‘This thing happened X number of years ago.’ And so, we need to be prepared to deal with this in a holistic, thoughtful, respectful, and also practical manner.”

The task force discussed establishing a community coalition that would step in when outside investigation is needed, Hoffman says. But it might still be necessary to hire legal experts. “We may need to build out a community fund to help to defray the costs of that or negotiate a pro bono relationship of some kind or see if we can find a national resource that can be helpful,” he says.

One major challenge for the Tucson community in moving SRE work forward is setting up a funding mechanism for potential outside investigations.

The financial impact of outside investigations can be huge, Blumenberg says, so while an outside investigation may be necessary at times, “hopefully you can take care of it at the lowest level possible within the organization.”

There are a variety of instances where an internal investigation is appropriate, Wien affirms. Reporting can be another tricky issue, especially in a small organization, says Hoffman. “How do you make sure that when something is reported that it actually makes its way through the process? So we may need to look at a community-wide resource for that as well.”

The Tucson SRE Task Force was hoping to work with B’Kavod, a national nonprofit that had provided an anonymous reporting hotline and other services, but B’Kavod ceased operating its hotline when it reemerged as Ta’amod, Blumenberg says. Ta’amod’s Resource Bank includes two firms, one based in New York and one in California, that can help organizations nationwide with investigations as well as workplace culture assessment and training.

SRE Network recommends that individuals who may be currently experiencing harassment or abuse call the RAINN National Sexual Assault hotline at 800.656.HOPE (4673). Individuals and organizations can also report issues to the [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#). SRE also recommends they reach out to the [TIME’S UP Legal Defense Fund](#).

In addition, says Wien, in fall 2021, SRE Network made a grant to Sacred Spaces for a program that will give victim-survivors of abuses of power the opportunity to add their voices to organizational case consultations.

This report documents responses from various community members that indicate that knowledge of the Tucson SRE Task Force and its vision and mission is not yet widespread. Continued outreach and programming are warranted to encourage membership, particularly among synagogues, and to increase awareness among staff, Boards, and other groups. In January 2022, the Tucson JCC, JPSA, Hillel, TJHM, and THA begun participation in the Sacred Spaces’ Keilim policy review cohort, set to conclude at the end of January 2023.



About the Author

Phyllis Braun is the former Executive Editor of the Arizona Jewish Post. In addition to a 25-year career at Southern Arizona’s Jewish community newspaper, which was a program of the Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona, she has been Communications Manager at the Tucson Jewish Museum & Holocaust Center since March 1, 2021.

Appendices

Appendix A - Stories of Harassment in Jewish Communal Life

Revealing #metoo as #wetoo in Jewish Communal Life
JCPA Version
April 24, 2018
Stories of Harassment in Jewish Communal Life

JAMIE: The stories you are about to hear are true. And there are hundreds more.

NICOLE: The incidents that occurred were mostly with our partners.

GLENN: ... board members.

CAROL: ... with donors.

JAMIE: ... with colleagues.

NICOLE: I had a boss who joked about going to the bathroom with me.

GLENN: I had a boss who massaged my shoulders while I was working.

CAROL: I had a boss who liked to have public conversations about my sex life.

JAMIE: Part of what makes it rewarding to work in the Jewish community is the familiarity and intimacy, but that can also be very, very challenging, if not a slippery slope.

NICOLE: I'm on the bimah and a congregant says, "Don't you think that skirt is a little short for a rabbi?"

GLENN: I'm on the bimah and the rabbi whispers in my ear, "I like your pants that tight."

CAROL: After pretending to have a lascivious phone call with another Jewish organizational leader about having three-way sex, my board chair put his head in my lap on the way to a fundraising meeting.

JAMIE: He was overly intimate--making inappropriate comments--calling me "baby," "honey," telling me that I sound sexy when I had a husky voice from a cold.

GLENN: The sexual harassment during rabbinic school was a semester-long nightmare. The professor constantly made sexual jokes and once had pornographic images on his computer that were visible to more than just him. He asked, what would it take for me to date him. I tried to dodge the question; he persisted. At the end of the semester, once my grade was submitted, I filed a complaint with the school. It went through their formal process and the

accused was found liable for his actions and no longer able to teach there. While I was heartened by the supportive response, sadly, it was clear that this man was known for his behaviors.

NICOLE: When this elderly couple “hosted” me for dinner on my monthly visits to their isolated congregation, I would pick them up at their home in my rental car, drive them to a nearby restaurant and then drive them home. Things already felt awkward when I got to their home and the husband was still getting ready. I walked past their room to the bathroom. He had left the door open and was in boxer shorts, looking straight at me. Was this intentional? I wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt, but I felt vulnerable and extremely uneasy. I was a rabbinic intern; not yet ordained. I had absolutely zero experience in teaching older folks in a religious or spiritual setting. Was this an innocent accident?

After dinner, the husband and I helped my congregant into the rental car. Then, standing together in the cold, while his wife sat snugly inside, our bodies were uncomfortably close.

Then he told me a “joke.” My brain has not allowed me to remember the details, but I remember that the “punchline” was about a woman being raped...in a rental car.

[Pause] CAROL: I have been hit on by many prospects, lay leaders, congregants, and a couple of colleagues. Sometimes I told my superiors. Their response was to ask me not to meet with the culprits.

NICOLE: My boss would only act up when we traveled for business. All the female employees would play musical chairs to not sit next to him on flights or at events. It was annoying but I think we knew that he wouldn't take it further unless we gave him an opening. This was at a progressive organization that was all about fighting for human rights.

CAROL: As a young social worker in a Jewish affiliated hospital, I was honored to be asked to present a case at one of the hospital's Grand Rounds. I needed an article in order to complete my presentation. I asked the Department Head, an eminent mental health professional if I could stop by to pick up the article. He said that I could come by at 5:00pm. When I arrived at his office, he closed the door, grabbed me and began kissing me. I asked him to stop and he said, “Whenever a man asks you to his office after 5:00pm, this is what is expected.”

JAMIE: The summer of my senior year at Brandeis, I interned with the rabbi of a small synagogue. As we were curating his papers, we usually worked at his apartment. One day he called and invited me to use his wife's ticket to Mostly Mozart. We met at the Philharmonic, but soon I sensed that something was different, wrong. He took my hand. He looked at me with nostrils flaring. I sat through the concert thinking “I must be imagining this.” But when we got into his car he tried to kiss me. When I pushed him away, he said, “Let's go back to my apartment to talk. My wife is there.” I assumed that meant it would be safe, so I went. When we got there, I greeted his wife in the kitchen. The rabbi directed me into his study. As I always had, I took a seat on the couch. He came in and stood in front of me, unzipped his pants, and asked me to give him oral sex. I bolted out of there immediately. In shock and ashamed, thinking it was my fault somehow. But I knew something had to be done.

I spoke to the NY Board of Rabbis who said they knew about his behavior but could do nothing. They thanked me for being courageous and for speaking up. I told my story to a NY newspaper but they said I needed more women to come forward before they would print it.

After I graduated, I called him and asked him to meet me. Of course he didn't know why. I chose a neutral space. When I reminded him what had transpired, asking only for his acknowledgement, he said that he never had intercourse with any women besides his wife. He said that he did not remember....but that since I remembered in such detail it must be true! I told him that one doesn't have to have intercourse to violate a woman.

NICOLE: He "hugs" too close. He smells my hair, lingers just a little too long. I've learned to just shut down when I'm around him. I received a call from a colleague about him a year and a half ago describing the same behavior. I feel ashamed but I told her, "It's just part of the job."

CAROL: I just sucked it up, you know, "men of a certain generation."

NICOLE: There seems to be a pass for older employees - either by individuals, or the organization, or both. I think the attitude is, "He's from another time, he doesn't understand that behavior is harassment. Nothing is meant by it." But it's been going on a long time.

GLENN: What do you do when you are a man, looking to advance your career, and a woman in a position of power flirts with you ...a lot? What if you are discussing working for her and she is making highly sexual suggestions? What if, in the hiring process she takes you to dinner and spends the entire time telling you why she believes that our culture has it backwards when it comes to cheating on a spouse? "Cheating would make marriages so much better for everyone," she says. What if, after she hires you, she continues to send sexually descriptive texts? What if, at a board meeting she whispers in your ear things that would make a sailor blush?

I didn't speak out as it happened. I wanted my career to move to the next level and she had that power. I wasn't interested in her. Seriously, I wasn't (even now that I feel like I need to say it. It's so...sad). I didn't tell anyone about the text messages or the emails or what she whispered to me during the board meeting (which still makes me cringe). Who could I tell? Why would I? I wanted this job.

Within a week of taking the job I was in therapy. Within a month I was looking for a new job.

As I packed up my office, the director of HR came in to ask if there was anything I wanted to talk about. I told her, in sleazy detail, what my boss had done and I told her that I wasn't going to sue, but that it was important that HR know. I didn't write it up -- I said it as I walked out the door.

For the four months I worked there, I was depressed, my self-esteem was at an all-time low. I've struggled mightily to tell this story -- not because I'm embarrassed that it happened, but that I didn't do anything to make sure she couldn't do it to anyone else.

Even now, I'm shaking and sweating. For all you know I made it up to prove a point. But I didn't. It is rarely made up. Ask your wife. Or sister. Or mom. Or a woman in the coffee shop near you. This is not my attempt to say, "See, it's not just men who harass!" For most women, straight, lesbians, women of color, women without power — it is a lifelong reality. I truly wish I had spoken up. Mostly I hope that the public events of last year will make it stop. I suspect more stories will come out.

CAROL: I shared with a new board member that I'm a lesbian married to a woman. He started to ask incredibly invasive questions about my romantic life. As someone with "lots of lesbian friends," he wanted to know if I thought lesbians could actually be monogamous. He kept asking me if I was in a monogamous relationship. He wanted details that were so uncomfortable for me. Many of them bordered on having sexual undertones.

JAMIE: I still get sexual innuendo — as recently as a few weeks ago — from someone whose mentorship has been very important in my professional growth. I try to ignore it and haven't felt the cost of confrontation outweighed the benefit. Sadly, I can't say I'm proud of that.

NICOLE: I told our director about my experiences and he shrugged them off, saying "I spoke to him and he said he is sorry." There was never a formal apology, nor did he get written up.

CAROL: There's a problematic dynamic between board and staff. The tendency is for lay leaders and donors to engage in inappropriate behavior or comments that are tolerated for the benefit of the organization. This leaves staff feeling unprotected.

JAMIE: The board chair of a partner organization asked me to a lunch meeting. After lunch, he suggested we walk and continue our talk. We sat on a bench and he tried to kiss me. I turned my head, said goodbye, and ran back to my office in tears. The next day, he sent me a threatening email. I told my board members and the executive director of his organization. The other ED, a former mentor of mine, encouraged me to tell him off, but she never said or did anything.

CAROL: I filed a formal sexual harassment complaint with the school against a very well respected professor and author. One time he asked me to sit in the front row and unbutton the top three buttons of my blouse. Another time he cornered me in a stairwell and started kissing me and putting his hands all over me. He only stopped when someone appeared. And those are only two of a dozen examples. But after I filed the complaint, nothing happened. Except I failed his class. So I filed a complaint with the police. He fled the country to avoid prosecution. Everyone lauds him for making Aliyah and I still see his name as a keynote speaker for global.

GLENN: Who else was harmed because I didn't want to make waves?

NICOLE: Who else found no support?

JAMIE: Who else felt betrayed?

CAROL: Who else will never wear fishnet stockings to a work event?

NICOLE: I'm not coming forward – I saw how he ruined her career.

ALL VOICES: I was told, "It's part of the job."

CAROL: One donor put his hand high up on my thigh, leaned in, and told me he really liked my tights.

GLENN: One donor told me he would give if I came to a gala with him. When I didn't go, he actually wouldn't give because he thought I knew it was "an exchange." He told me flat

out that he was interested in dating me and that donations would be contingent on my responsiveness.

NICOLE: One donor told me “I wanted to meet with you to hear about your work, but I also feel about you how a man does about a woman.”

GLENN: One donor told me he would give \$10,000 a year, but wanted me to come visit him four times each year to get installments because it made him feel good. I felt...

NICOLE: Unclean.

GLENN: I felt...

CAROL: Unworthy.

GLENN: I felt...

JAMIE: Undone.

GLENN: I felt like I needed a shower.

[PAUSE] CAROL: At a conference, I saw the male head of a large foundation at a bar with about five young women. One was very intoxicated and the CEO clearly crossed the line into sexually inappropriate and explicit language with her. He had more positional power than all of us, and no one spoke up. We ended the outing and escorted the woman home before anything beyond talking happened.

NICOLE: I was soliciting the CEO of a major Federation who was overly familiar, commenting on my appearance, asking about my dating life, sitting too close, using flirtatious language, and showing clear preference that I come alone to our meetings. This behavior continued once I received funding. I felt I needed to play along to get and continue to receive the funds. Not fun.

GLENN: I was leading a roundtable discussion. One particular donor seemed really interested in our organization’s work. One by one people left, but he remained, asking questions and expressing interest. He moved chairs so that he could sit closer to me and told me he would support our work. A moment later he said “you know I felt so attracted to you from the moment you walked in the room and started speaking.” I ended the conversation. Later that night I received an email from him at 2:30am saying that he’d been thinking about me and our conversation, and he was so “inspired by my light.”

JAMIE: As the former ED for a national organization, I was sitting in the lobby of a hotel in Jerusalem with two prominent philanthropists, one our board chair. After the introductions, the other philanthropist said to my board chair, referring to me, “So, are you fucking her?” I froze, fake-laughed, and made the solicitation. We didn’t get it. I was so relieved I wouldn’t have to deal with this man again.

NICOLE: The director of a foundation made several advances -- called me late at night, touched my leg, sent me expensive gifts, asked me out for drinks, made inappropriate comments on Facebook photos. I told the people who had referred him to me - as well as

several other nonprofit professionals and directors of foundations. The people who referred him to me said “Oh, yes, he has that reputation...” I wondered why none of them had warned me.

GLENN: There was definitely a quid pro quo for donating. I just told my boss the guy didn’t want to make a donation after all. I didn’t say anything because I was fearful of the negative repercussions for my organization. This guy has a lot of power in the community.

CAROL: During the cocktail hour at a major event, one of the biggest philanthropists present whom I just met, called me over to join him and introduced me and my organization to the group. As he was praising my work, he began massaging my neck. I froze, and looked around the circle. Though his hand was clearly visible, no one seemed to react - they just kept laughing at his jokes. I ducked out from under his hand and moved to the other side of the circle. He followed me there and again began massaging my neck. This time, his hand crept down my shirt. Again not one of the five other donors said a word. I excused myself. Half an hour later, he encountered me at the food table, and again, started to massage me. Persistent in bad behavior.

NICOLE: I was standing with two men at a conference. One asked the other if he knew me. He responded, “I was trying to pick her up at the bar earlier.” To which the first guy responded, “Did you tell her you would make a gift if she made it easy for you?”

JAMIE: A male funder, after a couple drinks, spent the evening lasciviously looking down the front of my fairly modest dress. I didn’t do anything – I felt like I’d jeopardize our funding.

GLENN: Some Jewish institutions prize their donors to a degree that development staff won’t speak out when inappropriate behavior occurs.

NICOLE: Some Jewish institutions prize their donors to a degree that no one will speak out when inappropriate behavior occurs.

CAROL: My supervisor expressed empathy, helped intervene, and supported me through addressing issues with peers, but any instance with donors was shrugged off or defended.

JAMIE: As an intern, I told my boss what had occurred and she laughed and said, “Well, he gave 25K today so you must have done something right.”

CAROL: At a conference, the CEO of a very large Jewish institution invited me to a party in his hotel suite for senior staff. As the guests left, he asked me to stay to discuss a project. We were in a living room, not the bedroom. He was an older, married man whom I had heard good things about, so I didn’t feel suspicious or nervous. I sat on a chair and he sat on the couch, but things quickly changed. He kept asking me to join him on the couch. I kept refusing, saying that I was comfortable where I was. He grew angry so I got up to leave and at the door, when I stuck my hand out to shake his, he got very angry and said, “You don’t shake my hand. You kiss me.” He tried to grab my face but I was stronger and managed to get out of the room. In the years following that incident, I was silent about it but I learned that he tried to smear my name. He is a beloved figure in the community.

NICOLE: On a visit to his office, a very prominent national donor, whose name you would all know, asked me to walk across his office, locate a small statue and describe what I saw. It was

an ancient pornographic depiction of a sex act. The donor insisted that I describe what each figure was doing and kept egging me on until I finally did so just to stop him.. At the end of the visit, he propositioned me. I felt so ashamed and disgusted.

GLENN: I'm sure I wasn't the only one he did this to. Together we could have taken action. Alone, I'm not comfortable pursuing anything. It's difficult to express concerns when there is no HR or anyone to speak to confidentially.

CAROL: My titles are Rabbi and Doctor. They are not sweetie, honey, or sugar. I don't care how much money you have, how many times you've donated to my community, how much older you are than I, or how much life experience you have.

JAMIE: I want a public campaign so these individuals are attuned to the discomfort and shame they are inflicting on others.

NICOLE: We want to believe that because we are Jewish, our institutions don't encounter such behaviors. But they do. We are not immune. We have work to do...because it is not part of the job.

ALL VOICES: Me too. Gam ani. Time's up.

Appendix B

Top "I Commit To ..." Statements from the May 2019 "From #MeToo to #WeToo" Event in Tucson

Camp

- Being a safe person for others to come to, listen and validate 35
- Saying something when I see or experience sexual violence or harassment 28
- Speaking up 15
- Respect 12
- Speaking up and passing on what I learned tonight 10
- Being a voice for others when needed 10
- Standing up for victims' rights 10
- Being a teacher who is committed to intentionally teaching my students to be able to empower themselves so that they do not become victims 10
- Restorative justice for victims 8
- Stop staying silent 2
- Being aware and looking out of this situation 1

Lay Leaders

- Pay attention to how my words affect someone and address it immediately 23
- Acknowledge when this happens 16
- Being vulnerable to engage in different conversations around this issue 8
- Sharing what I heard with those around me 7
- To have difficult conversations 5

Standing up and speaking out when I see or learn of inappropriate behavior 4
To speak up and pay attention 4
Try to make a difference and do what I can to take this to those that did not attend 4
Listening and actually hearing others. Supporting their position 3
Keep telling my story of extreme abuse 3
Listen and allow others to be heard 2
Be an active listener 1
Being committed to this cause
To mentor Jewish professionals who need someone to help mentor them to deal with the politics in the community
Listen and self-introspection

Staff

Being the change 10
Listen actively 9
Thanking the person who stood up for me and standing up for others 5
Keep talking about this 5
Reporting even the small stuff 4
Awareness, observation, empathy and witnessing 3
Being more aware 3
Being open minded 2
Listen and look 2
Speaking up 2
Creating spaces free of shame 2
Creating a safe environment for all people of all ages 2
Listening 2
Less alone say something 1
Paying attention to those around me and speaking up if they experience these types of things 1
Speaking up for what I feel is right 1
Listen, listen again and listen more 1
Hear and listen
Speaking up - tolerance is not OK anymore
Create positive and safe spaces
Speak up through a lens of education and sharing

Appendix C

Additional SRE Case Study Examples from Guila Benchimol, Ph.D., Senior Advisor – Research and Learning, SRE Network

1. When a Jewish professional who had engaged in sexual misconduct was identified in the media, former mentees, students, and friends were in disbelief. As the number of complainants grew so did their confusion because they never would have suspected this person. They wanted to support victims but were unsure whether they should make a public statement. They also wanted to support the accused's family but did not know if they should reach out.

- What should they do and how should they do it?
- Is it our role to verify? How do we verify in a way that does not also lead to victim blaming and shaming?
- Is taking a stand when allegations come out regarding an organization you are affiliated with important?
- Is it possible to simultaneously stand with the victims' and perpetrator's family?
- What role does teshuvah play in the case of those who admit misconduct? What does it look like?

2. A middle-aged, married board member invites a new, single professional to what they think is a professional dinner. During the course of the dinner, the professional concludes the board member is flirting and that their intention was more social than professional. The professional is uncomfortable, and not sure how to respond to a board member. The professional rebuffs the flirtation, but the board member continues. The professional reports this to their boss but does not want their concern to be shared with anyone.

- Was a line crossed? If so, where?
- Who decides what is and is not okay? How is it communicated so that people know where the line is?
- What if victims don't want to do more than put the name of their perpetrator on a list of Jewish professionals who are said to have engaged in sexual harassment or victimization – how do we react?
- What are other grey areas/scenarios we encounter regularly that we have suddenly become unsure about?

Appendix D

Page 1 of the Tucson JCC Member, Participant, Guest and Staff Code of Conduct

The Tucson JCC is committed to providing a safe, welcoming, inclusive, and equitable environment for all members, participants, guests, and staff.

As adopters of the Commitment to Safe, Respectful, and Equitable Jewish Workplaces and Communal Spaces, we promise to implement comprehensive standards in our organization to achieve the goals of safety, respect, and equity. We adhere to a high ethical and legal standard for prevention and response to harassment and discrimination.

We ask individuals who enter the facility to act appropriately at all times and abide by the following policies:

1. All individuals shall enter the JCC in an authorized manner (swipe card or buzzed in).
2. All individuals must check into the facility by scanning their member key tag at one of the experience desks.
3. All youth under the age of 11 must be supervised at all times by a parent or guardian, when not attending a registered program. Minimum age to be unattended when not attending a registered program is 11 years of age and in 6th grade.
4. The JCC is a multi-use facility; attire appropriate to the activity is required at all times.
5. All people using the JCC are expected to adhere to the posted schedules for usage of each facility area. This includes: the gymnasium, public areas, pools, fitness center, Sarver

Tennis Center, ECE, etc.

6. All people using the JCC are expected to behave in a mature and responsible manner, and to respect the rights and dignity of all other members, participants, guests, and staff.

7. Any suspicious or inappropriate behaviors should be reported to JCC Staff. All JCC Staff are eager to be of assistance! Please do not hesitate to notify any staff if assistance is needed.

8. Packages and bags should not be left unattended at any time. People should report unattended packages or bags to any JCC Staff.

9. Members, participants, guests, and staff will not engage in disruptive actions. These include, but are not limited to:

- Angry, vulgar, or abusive language, including swearing, name calling, and shouting
- Physical contact with another person in an angry or threatening way
- Any demonstration of sexual activity, or sexual contact with another person
- Harassment or intimidation by words, gestures, body language, or menacing behavior
- Theft
- Behavior that results in destruction of property
- Carrying or concealing weapons, objects, or devices that may be perceived as weapons
- Smoking, including vapes. Smoking is not permitted in or outside the JCC, except in designated locations
- Use or possession of illegal substances on JCC property, in JCC vehicles, or at JCC sponsored programs
- Loitering on JCC property
- Aiding or abetting in the unauthorized entrance of any person
- Other conduct of an inappropriate, threatening, or offensive nature

The JCC, through its CEO and Board of Directors, reserves the right to remove from the premises any individual acting in inappropriate manners, and further reserves the rights for additional disciplinary actions including but not limited to: cancelation of membership, or involvement of local law enforcement

Appendix E – Contact information

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