



THE NAASE - USCJ JOINT COMMISSION FOR THE PLACEMENT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Harvey M Brenner, FSA, FTA
Chairman, NAASE Placement Services

Dear Search Committee Chairperson,

*This is an exciting time for your congregation . . . presenting opportunities for new and visionary organizational activity, innovative approaches to the synagogue's tasks and challenges, and a revitalized leadership alliance, the **Kley Kodesh**, committed to doing the Holy Work of the congregation in fulfilling its mission We are delighted to partner with you at this time in your search for the most fitting executive leadership available to you and your congregational community.*

The **NAASE-USCJ Joint Commission for the Placement of Synagogue Executives** welcomes this opportunity to assist you in the planning and implementation of your search for an Executive Director for your congregation. Before you set about completing the Placement Listing Form, we would suggest that your Search Committee be mindful of several factors that many years of experience have shown us to be relevant at this point

- NAASE (the North American Association of Synagogue Executives), USCJ (the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism) and the Joint Placement Commission can assist you substantially and confidentially with a variety of the elements of the search process. For consultation about structuring the administrative position, developing reasonable expectations, and the interactivity among the various leadership elements, the NAASE Executive Director, Susan Kasper, FSA, stands ready to assist you (215-872-2007 or office@naase.org). Please contact Susan with questions about the interview process, developing a workable and customized search strategy, or for information about the availability of candidates. A variety of written materials for committee study are available as well, from the NAASE office.
- There is no charge to any USCJ-affiliated congregation for the services of the Joint Placement Commission nor for the consultations associated with the process. The actual congregational "listing" process is done electronically by e-mail attachment. When the Commission disseminates placement information about position openings, it does so literally in minutes, also electronically to close to 300 experienced professionals across the North American continent.
- The Placement Commission functions year-round, with greatest activity occurring between February and May each year. But congregations do hire executive staff at any point in the programming year. The length of time for well-thought-out searches varies from several weeks to several months, depending on the nature of the position, the congregational needs, the remuneration package, the availability of candidates, and of course, the time of year. Congregations are advised to avoid waiting unnecessarily to initiate executive searches.

- This is an excellent time to review your existing staffing structure, organizational chart, long-range planning documents, and synagogue mission statement, to insure that the interviewing process is sufficiently reflective of the congregational realities, culture and aspirations, so as to yield the candidate most appropriate for the unique composition that is your congregation.
- When you complete the form to list the position, please recognize that the information you provide is essentially the only reliable information that candidates will receive, upon which to make their decisions about submitting resumes for your consideration. We cannot stress enough the need for completeness and openness about issues such as areas of responsibility, anticipated congregational or programmatic changes, long-term expectations, and remuneration packages.
- If the position vacancy follows the incumbency of an Executive Director, please complete (or provide for the time-fixed completion of) the professional obligations expected of USCJ-affiliated congregations as relates to their professional staff. These are outlined in the USCJ Guide To Congregational Standards. If there are questions in this regard, the Joint Placement Commission can refer you to knowledgeable consultants.
- Executives of many qualification levels request to be included on the “active placement list” of candidates. Meanwhile, congregations place their open administrative positions on a parallel “positions list”. Requests provided by congregations for candidates with specific experience levels and skill sets are made known to all actively searching candidates, and the respective individuals forward their resumes directly to the specific congregations. The availability of positions is distributed to all NAASE members by e-mail upon receipt by the Commission, with specifics provided discreetly to interested candidates.
- The service provide by the Joint Placement Commission is solely a referral service. . . no recommendations are ever made or withheld about individual candidates, nor are screenings applied to the experiences or skills of the respective candidates. Accordingly, the fiduciary responsibilities of synagogue leadership that applies to all areas of congregational life apply here very specifically . . . it is solely the responsibility of the synagogue’s Search Committee or designees to actively screen, confirm and validate whatever information is given it by candidates, both in writing and in any other form, that enter into the conversations, deliberations and negotiations of the search process.
- Most executive candidates referred to congregations by the Joint Placement Commission are members of their professional association within the Conservative Movement, the North American Association of Synagogue Executives (NAASE). It is generally expected that successful candidates who are not yet affiliated with NAASE at the time of commencing congregational service will do so in good time, to the mutual benefit of both the congregation and the professional.

Again, we bring you the best wishes of the entire Joint Placement Commission for a successful search, resulting in a long and productive respectful association between your new Executive Director, the other professional and lay leadership, and the dedicated members of your congregation and community.

Sincerely,

Harvey M Brenner, *FSA, FTA*
Chairman, NAASE Placement Services