RESPECTABILITY

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Jennifer, you may begin.

I think JFN is kicking us off.

Yes, hi, everyone, thank you for joining us today for this wonderful webinar. My name is Melissa Rosen. I am the program manager for our grant initiative and we're delighted to be hearing from Jennifer Mizrahi about disability rights and inclusion and what funders can be doing to ensure that ‑‑ I'm going to read the title. Ensure their grants do not support discrimination. JFN, for those who are less familiar with us, is a membership, is a global membership organization and we work with Jewish funders at the individual and collective levels to improve the quality of their giving and to help them maximize impact as they try to make the changes they want to see in the world. We're really a global network for philanthropists. I help them network with each other and maximize the effort of the network because we find we do the most good when we do it together

So that's a little bit about us. We base all of our program on a variety of Jewish values and this one I think needs no introduction, it's about inclusion. We call that in Hebrew and also this. Meaning we're a pluralistic organization and see opportunities for everyone in the community. So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Jennifer and she's going to take us through her presentation.

Thank you so very much for having me and thank you to those of you who have joined this conversation. I'm really glad to be with you here today. I want to just set the tone for explaining what I think disability funding is. It is not just funding organizations that specifically do work with the Jewish community. If you give funding to a school or a library or a camp or a day school, anything that you fund should be non-discriminatory. You know, I have very expansive views about what discrimination for me is, I wouldn't want something to discriminate against people based on race or gender or sexual orientation or identity. Likewise, I don't want to see any organization that I donate to, to discriminate against people with disabilities. So this is about a lot more than just supporting disability organizations. It's about enabling people with disabilities to participate fully just like anybody else in the funding that you're already doing for the organizations that you already support. And how to evaluate some of the disability organizations. I want to point out a couple of things about how we're doing this webinar technically. First of all, my PowerPoint was created in a way that it is something called screen reader accessible. That means that anybody who is blind can access the PowerPoint through a screen reader so that it will talk to them. It will say what all the words are on the screen and it will describe any of the visual components to them. And I believe that all documents should be created that way according to, you know, the 508 guidelines and it just takes a little bit longer to create your PowerPoint but it means people who are vision impaired can fully participate.

Additionally, you might have noticed that we have captions. I believe that it's important to have captions in anything that has a visual component and an auditory component, because people who have hearing impairments should be able to fully participate in everything just like anyone else. And so you'll notice that there is the captions at the bottom of the presentation. I have a ton of slides, I am not going to read all these slides or go through all of these material. I am going to highlight the things I think are most important so we can have a conversation and we can really engage in a dialogue but let me first go through some key things. When you think about people with disabilities, how many people are we actually talking about? It's one in five according to the U.S. Census. One in five Americans has a disability but within the Jewish community we probably have a higher propensity for disability than the non‑Jewish community for a couple reasons. One is that in -- in eastern Europe for example there was a lot of inner marriage for a long period of time. And so you see genetic disorders among Jews that don't exist in other populations. Additionally because of our real commitment to education which is, you know, really a core value of our community, many people in the Jewish community go to college then to grad school and wait to get married until they're older than their non‑Jewish peers and so on average Jews have babies when they're ten years older than non‑Jews and because advanced parental age is linked to down syndrome, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and autism we have higher rates of those disabilities than the non‑Jewish population. So it is also very important to understand that disabilities are very broad. In other words, some people think a disability is only people who have something you can see. Like I have a colleague sitting next to me right now who is a wheelchair user and I can tell that he has a disability because he uses a wheelchair but people with mental health differences and people with autism or many other disabilities you can't see them. Some disabilities are permanent and some are temporary. Disability is the one community that you can join at any time due to accident, age, or illness. 56 million Americans have a disability, and I'd like to point out just a couple of terms. One, it's very important, is accommodation. It's part of the American with Disabilities Act. And accommodation is when somebody asks for something like captions or American Sign Language or making sure that there is a peanut free meal, for example, that's an accommodation when they ask for something that will allow them to fully participate in an activity or an event.

And it's a workaround for their disability. Ableism, you know, all those "isms" are in most cases bad. Racism, sexism. Ableism is when you have prejudice towards people with disabilities.

One out of every five Jews that has a disability in polls has said they have been turned away from Jewish events and activities in the community because their abilities were not accommodated and they did not feel welcomed. And this is a real problem not just for the individual with a disability who is turned away but we see in polling that for young Jews it's a value inclusion of people with disabilities is something they are very, very passionate about. In fact, this is a poll of Jews in America, and we see that it rises in importance to them as a value. Higher than things like raising their children Jewish some day or caring about Israel or having a spouse who's Jewish. Like, inclusion is a supreme value to the millennials so it's very important for organizations to be inclusive to the people without disabilities. And we also see all kinds of different ways in which Jews with disabilities have left participation including even trips to Israel. So what is inclusion? It's interesting to be on this journey because a lot of Jewish organizations think that inclusion of people with disabilities means that an organization three times a year, Passover, high holidays and Hanukkah that they do an event with people with disabilities. And they think that's inclusion. But that is not inclusion. That is exclusion inclusion is in the lower right‑hand corner. That is when every single Shabbat because Shabbat happens every week that every week people with disabilities can participate fully in Shabbat services. Inclusion means that Jewish camp or Jewish schools welcome, serve and include people with disabilities.

So if somebody says they're inclusive you have to ask them, what their definition of inclusive is. There's nothing wrong with having an event for Jews with disabilities at an institution but it can't be in lieu of full participation in all other activities. Here's another graphic because involvement is what you want for your inclusion. You don't want people with disability to come to an event and sit on the side. You want them to feel fully included and values just like anyone else and this is just some text that you might want to use as to why people want to have inclusion and being respectful and how it can help in your grant making and you can refer to this later. I put up here the graphics of, you know, how many people there are with disabilities in New York. If you want for any state I have it for every single state.

This is the population overall. You have massive populations of people with disabilities in New York, for example. We're talking very, very large numbers of people. And very small percentage of them who are employed if they are working age. But these are just New Yorkers age 18‑64 and this is particularly important because people with disabilities are disproportionately experiencing poverty because only one out of three who are of working age has any job at all and any of those that are working are only working part‑time or subminimum wage workshops. Poorest of the poor.

Inclusion is not like a light switch that you turn on and off. It's really a dimmer switch. So you have to go in phases and stages. Commitment to doing it successfully is the most important thing so you have to envision what that inclusion looks like and then you work backwards with your strong theory of change. Good intentions will never get you inclusion without an action plan that has a timeline next to it. And so key tactics, you know, be very clear about your goals. Don't expect people to come to you. You're going to need to go to them to recruit people with disabilities to be involved in the conversation and the action with you. You need to focus on the outcomes, not just the output. It's not just, you know, sending out e‑mails. If nobody comes you have a problem, you need to go find out how to get them and really be upbeat and smile about it. It's fun to do this. The number one thing to find if it's going to be successful in an organization or not is if the leadership at the very top, we're taking the lay leader and the staff leader really committed to inclusion and that they communicate about that on a very regular basis. Then it will be successful. And another key ingredient is that people with disabilities need to be a part of the decision‑making process. That is what is called nothing about us without us. They absolutely must be a part of the decision‑making process. And that you need to walk the walk not just talk the talk. And that you need to have an actual communication plan that repeats over and over again that you want to be inclusive because saying it once at a high holiday service and then again on Jewish disabilities awareness month does not build a culture of respect and dignity for all the people.

These are just some examples of some things that you would use and this is the kind of lexicon person-first language because you don't want to be using language that makes you look like you're prejudice and there is a lexicon that goes with this. Really hear some examples of that and some accommodation language that you want the people who you are funding to have on their forms. Some more examples. And here's just a picture of a synagogue entrance way that didn't have a ramp. So people with wheelchairs couldn't get in and they took that process of the renovation as an opportunity to communicate their commitment to inclusion putting up a banner that says please pardon our appearance while we're making ourselves more accessible. And people who have never gone there could see now they're going to be accessible to people who are wheelchair users and you have this, like, the gluten free table and everything and the large print and screen readers and hearing loops from a synagogue service here. And it's always good to have an event checklist to make sure everything's in place. I'm not going to read any of these. I just want you to know that those things and the policies and practices and the hiring intentional diversity stuff is all here as is the training, some examples of signage. Programming really the key is what we call ATP. Ask the person. If you don't have to be an expert in every kind of disability, what you have to do is make sure that if you're funding an organization that is serving the public that they have a line on all their forms that asks for people to let them know if they need an accommodation and what they need for that accommodation and then have a person who is assigned as their inclusion point person that that is place before they come to the event. It doesn't have to be a paid staff person. Usually you'll find a special educator, someone who works as a local public school who is qualified and will do it as a volunteer. Creating Affinity Groups and hear by the way is a wonderful guide. Soup to nuts on everything that a non-profit organization needs to know to make their events and their building accessible. It's really a terrific guide and just to let you know we have some background and content here about who has a disability 51% of American has a loved one with a disability. The percentage that are not at work. You know, the labor-force participation rates.

The fact that only 51% complete high school and some for the minority for those who are African-American and the sexual abuse issues which are very, very, very significant. I, myself, as a rape victim when I was a child, I myself have a disability, caused very low self‑esteem when I was a child. I trusted someone I shouldn't. I ended up getting raped. That is sadly very common for children with disabilities and those with intellectual disabilities are frequently victims of sexual assault and other assault so it's very, very problematic and also the issues as you've probably seen from the report on disability and police shootings and how there's a connection really for people with disabilities going from the school to prison pipeline that, today, we have 750,000 Americans with disabilities who are currently behind bars and these are just some details on some of these issues. This is a report that we did that gives you a lot of information on that and this is a lot of discrimination of course in the elections process and voting is very important. So as you're doing your grant making there's some questions that I put in my grant and so here's what some of the questions are that you're free to look at and then that's my contact information and if you want to see any of my personal forms that I've gotten. Like when people have applied to us for funding, what their answers are, and to talk to me about it, you can just e‑mail me and I would be very happy to share that with you. So now I am ready for questions. And operator, maybe Michelle, you can explain how people can ask questions. Yes, thank you. For those of you who have called in you may press 7 followed by the # sign or the hash key to queue up your question. That's 7 followed by the hash key on your phone or if you're on the web you can submit the questions via your chat window on the lower left‑hand corner.   
So far there's no questions and I'm still looking for them but let me just tell you a couple of things that I think are really exciting.

One is that I, this morning, was at the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington where they have a wonderful person who is a Jewish inclusion coordinator for the entire federation system here in Washington, and they're working on an online tool that all the Jewish agencies who get funding from the local federation plus all the synagogues can use to do a self‑assessment on their inclusion readiness which I think is absolutely phenomenal and they're really ahead of the curve on this and creating that as a free tool for any Jewish agency to go on and do a self‑assessment. I've been very thrilled to work with the Jewish federation of New York on a synagogue inclusion process.

And I know that Rebecca has done such things and she's on the line, in New Jersey, metro west, that have been incredibly successful and we're seeing some real, real progress but I will tell you that nothing happens successfully unless lay leaders have bought in and there is an actual inclusion committee that includes people with disabilities. So that is very, very important for the success of the operation. On Monday there's going to be an upcoming announcement about Jewish Funders Network grant and so we're to stay tuned on that and on that same day the Ford Foundation is expected to announce major policy changes on inclusion in their philanthropy which is important because they're the second largest foundation in America. And it'll impact a half billion dollars a year in philanthropy which is quite exciting. So do we have any questions at this point?

We have no questions on queue or on the chat.

Okay. So if I can ask the people online is there something they want to share with us to let people know about their work or their thoughts on this particular topic because I'm very happy if someone had something they wanted to share with those of us who are online at this moment. Well, given that everybody's been really quiet I want to thank everyone for coordinating this and I want to thank our conference operator and our captionist for being with us today. The PowerPoint is available and I want to point out to you that you can use it and you can use the slides if that's helpful to you in your own work. Additionally, we have quite a lot of information about Jewish inclusion that is on our website which is, you know, RespectAbility USA has a whole section on Jewish inclusion and we also have on our twitter we have a Jewish inclusion twitter account and on Facebook is RespectAbility for all Facebook account is on Jewish inclusion for those of you who look for a place to learn about inclusion there is a special publication online called the New Normal which is a part of the New York Jewish Week which writes about Jewish inclusion and is terrific and there are especially online publications like Disability Scoop and The Mighty and Ability Magazine where you can always find out about disability issues. We're working really hard at RespectAbility on trying to raise awareness in the general media. We've been very thrilled to see that Born This Way has gotten three Emmy nominations. That's the show starring seven people with down syndrome. So we'll know very soon whether it wins or not and that the parolympics has started and that this year NBC is giving it a full 60 hours of average. 60 whereas parolympics four years ago got only two hours of national coverage so that's an incredibly big difference. However, the Annenberg School just yesterday released a major report on the film industry. And we saw that 2.4% of characters in films are people with disabilities. Only 2.5% despite the fact that we are fully 20% of America so we have a very long way to go in terms of stigma, in terms of employment, in terms of sexual assault, in terms of poverty. But also within all of our institutions, again, Jewish day schools, synagogues, camps, JCCs, etc., to ensure that people with disabilities can participate in all activities just like anyone else so thanks to JFN for hosting this.

If anyone has any further questions later, please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

[Pause]

End of webinar.