



Camp Ramah's Diversity and Inclusion Commitment

1) VALUE: JEWISH RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY: While Ramah is proudly a Conservative Jewish Camp, our population reflects sizable cohorts of diverse groups of Jews affiliating as Reform, Reconstructionist, Orthodox, Chabad, and others.

RAMAH IN ACTION: While public observance of ritual and practice will follow Conservative approaches, staff and campers alike will honor and respect diverse religious backgrounds and individual beliefs.

2) VALUE: SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER DIVERSITY: The Ramah community includes campers and staff of all sexual orientations and gender identities. With the recognition that gender identity and sexual orientation are distinct, Ramah seeks to simultaneously create a safe and welcoming environment for LGBTQ-identified kids, staff, and parents.

RAMAH IN ACTION: We achieve this by aiming to avoid heteronormative assumptions in our language and programming, and to educate our staff about the needs of gender non-conforming campers. In our bunking process, our goal is to support a child's well-being, which may include bunking according to gender identity, rather than birth sex. We recognize that this may represent a "learning zone" for some of our families and we are happy to provide additional information and resources.

3) VALUE: FAMILY DIVERSITY: Ramah welcomes and reflects families of all constellations, which include: single parents, same-sex parents, divorced households, blended families, non-parent guardians, and everything in between.

RAMAH IN ACTION: Ramah as an organization continues to improve its staff training, forms, and procedures to enable all Ramah families to feel at home.

4) VALUE: FINANCIAL DIVERSITY: Roughly ½ of Ramah families require financial support to send their kids to camp including 35-40% who receive Ramah financial aid.

RAMAH IN ACTION: Ramah will continue to aggressively look for all means of making camp more affordable and accessible. We maintain need-blind admissions and will continue to embrace camp families and campers irrespective of financial capacity. At camp, our community will continue to elevate relationships over materialism as we strive to keep camp accessible and affordable.

5) VALUE: CULTURAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY: Ramah campers and staff include Jews of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds including Sephardic, Mizrahi, Ashkenazi, Israeli, Persian, Russian, Jews by choice, Jews of color, and more.

RAMAH IN ACTION: Ramah seeks to be a home for Jews from all these diverse backgrounds, both as campers and as role models on staff. At Ramah, campers will learn about the diversity of the Jewish world through experiential education and create a culture of acceptance and celebration of traditions shared by Jews from around the world.

6) VALUE: LOVE FOR ISRAEL AND A DIVERSITY OF PERSPECTIVES: From its inception, Camp Ramah has maintained Israel and *Ivrit* as central pillars of Jewish identity and education. With hundreds of *shlichim* (Israeli staff) spending summers at Ramah and Ramahniks spending weeks, months, or decades living in Israel, the Ramah experience has also influenced Israeli society.

RAMAH IN ACTION: Ramah believes in infusing *Jvrit* and Israel experiential education into the camper and staff experience that reflects love for Israel. In an ever-increasing era of political polarization, we aim at Ramah to have civil discourse about Israel, led with age-appropriate education and values. Although not a formal part of our curriculum, our commitment to civil discourse extends to include the topics of U.S. and global politics.

7) VALUE: NEUROTYPICAL DIVERSITY: Camp Ramah has long been a welcoming place to campers and staff with disabilities. This has been a shining example of how communal diversity is a blessing and enriching for all.

RAMAH IN ACTION: Ramah maintains a commitment to further destigmatize differing abilities within and outside of the Tikvah community. We continue to find new ways to accommodate and support a broad range of needs of campers and staff throughout the camp experience and Ramah journey.

PREPARING CAMPERS FOR DIVERSITY

We are sensitive to the fact that our campers come from a wide range of life experiences. For many campers this will be one of their first opportunities to live in a communal setting with peers. We ask parents to talk with their campers in advance of the summer about the importance of being open to new friendships, especially with campers that might seem different from them. Summer after summer, we see friendships blossom out of such openness. At the same time, we ask that you remind your camper that they will be embraced by a loving community for exactly who they are.

A few talking points to get you started. Please encourage your camper to...

- Be open to meeting all kinds of wonderful kids, some of whom will become lifelong friends and others friendly acquaintances – but all deserving of kindness and respect.
- Be aware that each of us likely has something about ourselves that others might be interested in asking about, that we may not want to discuss. It is important to establish personal boundaries and imperative to respect the boundaries of others.
- Turn to an adult in camp with any questions or concerns. Those adults include:
 - *madrachim* (counselors)
 - *rashei edah* (unit heads)
 - *yoatzot* (the camper care team)
 - Dr. Aviva Levine Jacobs, Director of Camper Care
 - Ariella Moss Peterseil, Camp Director
 - Rabbi Joe Menashe, Executive Director
 - Elana Naftalin Kelman, Tikvah Director
 - Dr. Andrea Kasowitz, Marp Clinical Director