

# **RECONSTRUCTIONIST PLACEMENT GUIDELINES**

Approved by  
the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association  
and the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation

November 2002 / Kislev 5763

# RECONSTRUCTIONIST PLACEMENT GUIDELINES

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## THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST PLACEMENT COMMISSION

The Reconstructionist Placement Commission is a standing Commission of the Reconstructionist movement, including representation from the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.

The Placement Commission works to establish guidelines that can help rabbis and congregations navigate successfully through the challenging and sensitive issues involved with rabbinic placement. The Commission monitors existing procedures, identifies and proposes updates, emendations, additions and deletions regarding current procedures, and also, when necessary acts as an arbitrator to help resolve issues.

The Placement Commission is charged with formulating and proposing policies that are adopted and ratified by the boards of the RRA and the JRF. At the time of the approval of these Guidelines by the RRA Board (October 8, 2002) and the JRF Board (November 7, 2002), the Placement Commission members were:

For the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association:

Rabbi Carl Choper  
Rabbi Lewis Eron  
Rabbi Richard Hirsh  
Rabbi Linda Potemken (Commission co-chair)

For the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation:

Daniel Cedarbaum  
Richard Klein  
Esther Miller  
Lani Moss  
Marc Nussbaum (Commission co-chair)  
Judy Bitman Wortman  
Rabbi Shawn Zevit

For the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

Rabbi Gail Glicksman  
Rabbi Linda Holtzman

Ex-officio

Rabbi Joel Alpert, Placement Director

We wish to acknowledge the work and commitment of the professionals who have previously served as the Placement Director for the Reconstructionist movement:

Rabbi Elliot Skiddell  
Rabbi Daniel Siegel  
Rabbi Sue Levy

This printing of the Placement Guidelines anticipates continuing conversations of the Placement Commission during the 5763 / 2002-2003 year, focusing on additional sections the Commission has identified as needing discussion. These will include:

- guidance regarding circumstances where a rabbi seeks possible placement while within an existing contract period;
- guidance regarding the respective roles of arriving and departing rabbis during times of rabbinic transition in a congregation;
- guidance regarding sample contracts and contract language.

When the Placement Commission has completed recommendations on those subjects, and the recommendations have been approved by both the RRA and JRF boards, those sections will be incorporated into a revised version of these Guidelines.

In the meantime, the Placement Commission is pleased to present to rabbis and congregations this first comprehensive revision of the Reconstructionist Placement Guidelines since 1985.

# RECONSTRUCTIONIST PLACEMENT GUIDELINES

APPROVED BY THE RRA BOARD (OCT. 2002) AND THE JRF BOARD (NOV. 2002)

## I. Introduction

(The Reconstructionist Placement Commission urges rabbis and congregation leaders to read and review the Reconstructionist report "The Rabbi-Congregation Relationship: A Vision for the 21st Century" before embarking on the placement process. The following introduction is adapted from that report.)

A. The relationship between God and the Jewish people imagined by the writers of the Bible is named brit (covenant), which is also used to signify a solemn pact between individuals. The term implies mutuality, and suggests that each party in a relationship has obligations towards the other. In addition to being a contractual record of promises, a brit is a combination of expectation, trust, loyalty and affection.

The relationship between rabbi and congregation should be understood as a brit, in which each party covenants with the other in mutual devotion for a common sacred purpose.

B. The placement process is the first step towards what may become a relationship between a rabbi and a congregation. Such a relationship is built over a period of time. It begins with the application and interview; continues with the offer, negotiation, and contracting; moves into the arrival, orientation, and integration; and is central to contract renewal. The relationship grows through a series of stages as the rabbi and congregation come to know and trust each other. At each stage of this process, beginning with the initial steps of placement, there is the potential to strengthen the relationship. Making choices with that in mind is a primary way in which congregations and rabbis build and maintain healthy relationships

C. Rabbis choose their work in order to teach Torah; to apply Jewish liturgy, wisdom and ritual to moments of life passages; to lead and shape spiritual communities; and to encourage acts of tikkun olam, repair of the world. Conversely, congregations exist to provide sacred Jewish communities for study and prayer, sharing of moments in the life-cycle, and acts of tikkun olam, among others.

Rabbis did not become rabbis to engage in employment negotiations; congregations were not created in order to function as businesses and employers. These are, however, necessary roles that appropriately engage and define a part of the relationship between rabbi and congregation. And during the placement process, the roles of employer (congregation) and employee (rabbi) are visible and central. At all times, but especially during placement, the rabbi and congregation should remember the sacred purposes that they embody, and strive to act in ways that will strengthen the potential rabbi-congregation relationship.

## **II. The Placement Process: Overview and Resources**

A. The Reconstructionist Placement Office is jointly administered and supervised by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA) and the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation (JRF). The movement Placement Director works closely and cooperatively with both the RRA and the JRF, as well as with the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC).

B. The policies and procedures in this booklet are therefore the result of a cooperative arrangement between the rabbinic and congregational organizations of the Reconstructionist movement. These procedures have been approved by the governing Boards of both RRA and JRF. The information in this booklet reflects a mutual sense of what works best in terms of efficiency, integrity and fairness for all parties.

C. The primary resource for rabbis and congregations in the placement process is the Placement Director. The professional staff of the RRA and the JRF are additional resources that can assist congregations and rabbis. Senior students at RRC can benefit from the RRC faculty and administration who work closely with the Placement Office as well as from the RRA and JRF staff.

D. The Placement Office is charged with helping match rabbis and congregations. On a formal level, the Placement Director manages the administration of the placement process, including the processing of congregant application inquiries and rabbinic resumes, the maintenance and distribution of the placement list, and the resolution of questions regarding placement policy and procedures.

On an informal level, the Placement Director also serves as a coach, confidante and counselor both to rabbis and congregations. Upon request, the Placement Director can also be a continuing resource in the stages of making/responding to an offer, negotiations and contracts.

E. Optimally, the placement process serves mutual goals with a minimum of conflict. Occasionally, rabbis and congregations may feel they need an advocate rather than a broker. Rabbis will normally then turn to the RRA and congregations to the JRF as needed.

### **III. Procedures for Working With The Reconstructionist Placement Service**

A. The purpose of the placement system is to ensure mutual credibility, confidence, compatibility, integrity and accountability. JRF affiliate congregations and RRA rabbis are part of the same movement. The opportunities for a mutually satisfactory relationship are strengthened when both rabbi and congregation begin from the same shared set of approaches and understandings.

B. JRF affiliate congregations and RRA rabbis are expected to work with and use only the Reconstructionist Placement service. Congregations may not place advertisements in print, internet or other media. RRA rabbis may not advertise for employment.

C. When a congregation advertises in public, the possibility of receiving applications from rabbis with questionable training and credentials, as well as with no connection to a movement that could vouch for the rabbi and also hold him/her accountable under guidelines for professional behavior, is increased. When a rabbi responds to a congregation that is advertising in the media, there is often no way to ascertain the validity and viability of that congregation. It will also be difficult to know if the congregation is in any legal, financial, contractual or ethical conflict with a current rabbi.

D. RRA rabbis may not respond to advertisements, from JRF or any other congregation. Rabbis should instead contact the Placement Director with information about congregations that are advertising for rabbis. The Placement Director can then contact the congregation directly to ascertain interest in listing with the Reconstructionist Placement service, and ascertain that any applicable regulations are being followed.

E. JRF congregations may not respond to unsolicited rabbinic resumes/inquiries that do not come through the Reconstructionist Placement Office. If a congregation receives such resumes directly, whether from a member of the RRA or any other rabbi, the chair of the rabbinic search committee should contact the Placement Director, who can then contact the rabbi to explain the regulations of placement.

F. The Reconstructionist Placement service serves both rabbis and congregations in ensuring quality control, thereby minimizing the risk to each of entering into a process with a problematic partner. Working within the Reconstructionist placement system ensures that both congregations and rabbis will have confidence in each other.

#### IV. Unaffiliated Congregations

A. The Reconstructionist Placement service will consider listing unaffiliated congregations for rabbinic placement at the discretion of the Placement Director, in consultation with the JRF Executive Vice-President and RRA Executive Director. Consideration will be given to the number of JRF affiliates seeking placement and the availability of candidates, among other issues.

B. Unaffiliated congregations pay an initial non-refundable \$500 listing fee. Unaffiliated congregations are also provided with a copy of the "Reconstructionist Service Expectations" (see section V below) indicating the expectation that RRA rabbis will give priority to an equivalent offer from a JRF affiliate. Any RRA rabbi who has not fulfilled those expectations must obtain a placement waiver, which may or may not be granted.

Unaffiliated congregations will also be informed that the Reconstructionist service expectation stipulates a limit of one rabbinic placement for unaffiliated congregations.

C. Upon successful completion of a rabbinic placement through the Reconstructionist Placement Service, unaffiliated congregations will be billed an additional service fee, normally payable in full within the first twelve months of the rabbinic contract. Upon request, payment can be made over a maximum of a twenty four month period.

1. Congregations up to 150 households/membership units: \$3,000.
2. Congregations of 151-300 households/membership units: \$7,500.
3. Congregations over 300 households/membership units: \$10,000.

Unaffiliated congregations that affiliate with JRF during the first rabbinic contract period will have the service fee credited toward JRF dues. Congregations where the affiliation process is completed during a second rabbinic contract period may also have the service fee credited to their JRF dues. Congregations that do not complete an affiliation process with JRF by the end of the second rabbinic contract period but subsequently affiliate with JRF are not eligible for credit of the service fee.

D. Initial listing fees and any subsequent fees will be divided on a proportionate basis between RRA, JRF and RRC parallel to the percentage of financial support each organization contributes to the staffing and support of the placement service.

E. Unaffiliated congregations will be referred to the JRF to ascertain the potential for opening discussions regarding eventual affiliation.

## **V. Reconstructionist Service Expectations**

A. The RRC, JRF and RRA expect that new rabbis seeking a congregational position (and other RRA rabbis seeking a first congregational placement) will give priority to applying to openings in JRF congregations. The RRC has as a major part of its mission the training of rabbis for Reconstructionist congregations; the RRA, as the rabbinic arm of the movement, supports the placement of Reconstructionist rabbis in JRF congregations; and JRF wants its congregations to strengthen their identification and affiliation with Reconstructionism by working in partnership with rabbis trained in the Reconstructionist approach to Judaism.

B. Waivers: Extenuating family, financial, personal or professional circumstances may on occasion limit a rabbi's availability to apply for JRF openings in a given placement year.

A temporary waiver of the Reconstructionist service expectation may be granted by the Placement Director with the agreement of the RRA and JRF Executive Directors (and in the case of a graduating RRC student, the RRC Dean of Students). Assuming the absence of extenuating circumstances in a subsequent rabbinic placement, any rabbi who received a waiver is then expected to apply to suitable JRF congregational openings.

Rabbis serving on the staff of RRC, RRA and/or JRF are considered to have fulfilled the Reconstructionist service expectation, as are rabbis who have served a WUPJ affiliate (since JRF is an affiliate of WUPJ) or a JRF Associate Congregation outside of North America.

C. Because of the timing and indeterminacy of rabbinic search processes, rabbis will occasionally be in active placement with both JRF and other congregations. Since the rabbi has no way of knowing in advance if s/he will be made an offer from any congregation at all, or whether an offer will be acceptable, it is reasonable for a rabbi to provide him/herself with more than one option in seeking a position. It is the expectation of the RRA, JRF and RRC that, all things being more or less equal, priority will be given to offers from JRF affiliates.

D. Until an RRA rabbi has fulfilled the Reconstructionist service expectation, a written request for a waiver, including an explanation of circumstances, must be submitted by the student or rabbi to the Placement Director. This should be submitted if the rabbi wants to reply to an offer from and/or enter into negotiations with a Reform, Conservative or unaffiliated congregation that is listed with the Reconstructionist placement service. Rabbis should consult closely and regularly with the Placement Director.

## **VI. Regulations Specific to Senior RRC Students**

A. Senior RRC students who seek a congregational rabbinic position go through a two-step process of approval for placement. They first must receive preliminary approval from the RRC faculty; such approval is normally given at the December RRC faculty meeting and communicated to the Placement Director.

B. With preliminary approval, seniors can request that their resumes be forwarded to congregations. Congregations that may already be receiving rabbinic resumes from RRA rabbis thus become aware that additional applications may soon be forthcoming. However, the congregations receive a cover letter indicating that they cannot invite RRC seniors for interviews until final RRC faculty clearance for placement is given, normally in late January or early February.

C. Once the Placement Director has been notified by the RRC administration that a student is cleared for interviewing for congregations, the Placement Director will inform the congregations to which the student's resume has been sent that they may proceed with interviews if they wish.

D. The purpose of these regulations is to avoid having senior students and congregations enter into a placement process before the RRC faculty has ascertained that the student will in fact graduate and receive ordination that year. It would be awkward and potentially problematic if a congregation contracted with a senior student who subsequently was not graduated.

## **VII. Reform & Conservative Placement Cooperation (“Cross-listing”)**

A. When a JRF affiliate has considered and rejected all available/interested applicants from the RRA, or if there are no available/interested applicants, the congregation may request permission from the Placement Director to cross-list with either the Reform or Conservative movement placement services. A congregation affiliated with the Reform Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) or the Conservative United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ) may ask to use the Reconstructionist Placement service.

Because the placement offices of these three movements share a commitment to serving their congregations and rabbis, there exists a series of agreements among them that help regulate all requests for cross-listing.

B. Cross-listing between two movements needs to be discussed with and authorized by the Placement Directors of both movements that are involved. Congregations and rabbis must abide by any regulations governing such cross-listing so as to avoid conflict. This applies to part-time and interim positions as well.

C. Permission for JRF congregations to cross-list with the Reform or Conservative movements normally expires on October 1 unless otherwise noted.

D. Rabbis who belong to the RRA and also to another rabbinic association may only use one movement’s placement service in a given Jewish year, and must notify in writing the Placement Directors of each association of their choice.

E. Congregations that are dually-affiliated should consult with the Placement Directors of each movement to ascertain how to list.

F. All arrangements with the placement services of the Reform and Conservative movements must be approved in writing by the Placement Director in consultation with the Executive Directors of the RRA and JRF.

### **VIII. Beginning the Placement Process for Rabbis**

- A. When a rabbi wants to seek placement, s/he must inform the Placement Director. The Placement Director will ascertain that the rabbi is in good standing and is eligible for placement.
- B. RRA members must have their membership dues paid and be members in good standing of the RRA in order to use the Placement Service.
- C. Rabbis also need to be in compliance with any conditions regarding eligibility to seek placement, and/or notification of a current employer as may be required in a current contract.
- D. The Placement Director normally informs the RRA Executive Director in confidence when a rabbi has asked for placement so that the RRA can verify that the rabbi is eligible.
- E. When a rabbi indicates interest in a congregation, the Placement Director will provide the rabbi with a copy of the congregation's "Request for Candidates" form. No rabbinic resume will be sent to a congregation until the rabbi has read this form. This is to help the rabbi ascertain if the congregation seems to be an appropriate potential partner before engaging the congregation's search committee.
- F. When a rabbi wants his/her resume sent to a congregation, the request to the Placement Director must be in writing (e-mail is acceptable). This ensures that there is a record to which reference can later be made should there be disagreement about when and where resumes were sent. Rabbinic resumes can only be sent through the Placement Service; rabbis may not submit a resume directly to a congregation unless the Placement Director gives written permission to do so.
- G. Rabbis may have resumes submitted to not more than five congregations at any one time.
- H. Rabbis should submit five clean copies of a current resume to the Placement Director. Where possible, an electronic version of the rabbi's resume should also be submitted to the Placement Director.
- I. The Placement Service operates with confidentiality. However, rabbis are advised that any time they choose to submit a resume while under current employment, even with the best of intentions and assurances, there can be no guarantee of confidentiality.
- J. To avoid any real or apparent conflict of interest, unless listed as a reference by the rabbinic candidate, RRA members may not comment on other RRA members regarding their candidacy for any positions, congregational or otherwise. Rabbinic search committees should refrain from asking RRA members to comment on other RRA members. For the same reasons, as a general professional standard, rabbis should also refrain from commenting on rabbis of other denominations unless listed as a reference.
- K. When a rabbi decides to resign a position, the rabbi should consult with the RRA Executive Director and/or the Placement Director before submitting the resignation in writing.
- L. Rabbis and congregations are both required to submit copies of letters of resignation/termination to the Placement Director.

## **IX. Beginning the Placement Process for Congregations**

A. The relationship between rabbi and congregation should be understood as a brit, in which each party creates a covenant with the other in mutual devotion for a common sacred purpose.

A rabbinic search is an opportunity for a congregation to focus its identity, determine its priorities and assess its strengths and weaknesses. While challenging and complex, a rabbinic search is also an opportunity for growth for the congregation.

The congregation can benefit from the experience and expertise of the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation and the Reconstructionist Placement Service. Congregation leaders may or may not have prior experience and comfort with interviewing and hiring a rabbi. Early consultation helps focus and mobilize congregation resources, and avoids some common mistakes that often occur in the early stages of the placement process.

B. Before a congregation appoints a rabbinic search committee or committee chair, the President should consult with the Placement Director. This is an important opportunity to open a channel of communication, to get a preliminary assessment of the congregation's situation and expectations, and to help the Placement Director anticipate the congregation coming into the placement process.

The President should also consult with JRF staff. There are basic recommendations and best practices that have been identified as serving the needs of congregations in rabbinic placement. JRF staff can advise regarding size and composition of a search committee, timetables and procedures, budgeting for a rabbinic search, etc.

C. If the congregation currently has a rabbi, the Placement Director must ascertain that appropriate written notice has been given by the congregation to the incumbent rabbi of the intention to seek a new rabbi. If the opening results from a decision by the incumbent rabbi to leave the position, the Placement Director will request a copy of the rabbi's letter of notification to the congregation.

D. The Placement Director will check with JRF to ascertain that the congregation is current with its dues and is otherwise in good standing. Placement services are only available to JRF congregations when they are in good standing.

E. When an opening arises at a congregation late in the placement season (generally from mid-April onwards) the Placement Director and the RRA and JRF staff will work closely with the congregation to assist in any way. Experience has shown that some excellent and long-lasting rabbinic placements have occurred late in the placement season. If a placement cannot be arranged, or if the congregation decides to defer a search, the Reconstructionist movement organizations will work with the congregation to help arrange interim rabbinic coverage.

## **X. Part-Time Rabbinic Positions**

A. When first deciding to bring a rabbi to the congregation, many JRF affiliates choose to hire a rabbi part-time. Often this is a fiscal decision, but it can also be a preference for reasons indigenous to the congregation. Congregations undecided and/or uncertain about whether to hire a rabbi for full or part-time should consult with the JRF staff and/or the Placement Director before entering the placement process.

B. When a rabbi is engaged on a less than full-time basis, the specific issues of defining the expectations of the rabbi in terms of roles, hours, services (communal and individual), availability and priorities need to be addressed. Quantifying a rabbi's work on an hourly basis is nearly impossible. Congregation leaders should identify and agree upon a reasonable set of rabbinic responsibilities and expectations tied to a basic schedule that is mutually agreed upon. Identifying priorities and responsibilities for the rabbi is a key component in creating a workable job description for a part-time rabbinic position.

C. Rabbis who work part-time should understand that while office hours, meetings, educational responsibilities and religious services can normally be confined to a schedule, officiating at life-cycle events such as funerals, or ministering in times of illness, cannot be subject to the same boundaries. It is important that the congregation be assured of the rabbi's availability, within reason, in times of need.

## **XI. Interim and Sabbatical Placements**

A. Interim rabbis are rabbis who serve a congregation in the period between the departure of the previous rabbi and the engagement of the next rabbi.

Interim rabbis may be engaged for a variety of reasons. A congregation may decide to defer engaging a new rabbi and instead seek an interim rabbi as a result of the timing of the previous rabbi's leaving; in light of financial or organizational constraints and concerns; or in consequence of other issues, including the nature of the ending of the previous rabbi-congregation relationship or the state of the congregation. Congregations that seek rabbinic placement but are unable to engage a rabbi may also decide to engage an interim rabbi.

B. The Reconstructionist Placement Service, the RRA and the RRC cooperate and collaborate to help congregations that may need or want an interim rabbi. Congregations should consult with the Placement Director about options in this regard.

C. As a general guideline, interim rabbinic appointments are usually short-term, and an interim rabbi is normally engaged with the understanding that s/he will not be eligible to apply as the regular rabbi. This avoids the appearance of giving an interim rabbi an unfair advantage when the congregation does undertake a search, and also avoids, for the congregation, some of the pressure and intensity that accompanies the search for a rabbi where the intention is a long-term relationship. It should also be noted that if an interim rabbi is a candidate for a continuing position, other rabbis may be discouraged from applying, on the assumption that the interim rabbi has the "inside track."

D. In some instances, an interim rabbi and a congregation may find that they desire a continuing relationship. If a rabbi and congregation have decided that the relationship is one they wish to maintain, the congregation will normally not go into placement. If a congregation has any intention of engaging an interim rabbi on an ongoing basis, the congregation leaders should consult with the Placement Director.

E. Sabbatical rabbis are rabbis who are engaged to serve during the sabbatical of the congregation's rabbi. The Placement Director can assist congregations in finding a sabbatical rabbi. The congregation's rabbi should be an active member of any committee designated to find a sabbatical rabbi. The selection of a sabbatical rabbi should ideally be mutually agreed upon by the rabbi and congregation.

F. In some instances, when a Reconstructionist rabbi or rabbinical student is not available, the Placement Director may be able to work with the Placement offices of the Reform or Conservative movements to secure interim or sabbatical coverage.

G. Because the same sensitivities and concerns concerning cross-movement cooperation (see section VII) and rabbinic credentials (see section III.C) apply in interim and sabbatical placements, congregations should consult with the Placement Director and JRF staff before entering into conversations or interviews with candidates for an interim or sabbatical position.

## **XII. Forming a Search Committee**

A. It is recommended that prior to appearing on the Placement List and thereby being expected to respond to inquiries, the congregation devote time to a series of preliminary steps that will help ensure a productive placement process and make best use of the volunteer time of search committee members. While there can be a need, desire and even an urgency to receive rabbinic resumes, experience demonstrates that a few hours devoted to preliminary processes can save time and energy later on.

The congregation will be asked to complete a "Request for Candidates" form, which functions much the same as a rabbinic resume. This form is the initial presentation of the congregation to potential applicants, and should be carefully completed. The form should be reviewed by the congregation president before being submitted.

B. After consulting with the Placement Director and JRF staff, the President in conjunction with either an Executive Committee and/or the Board should appoint a chair and members to the rabbinic search committee. It is important to appoint people who are personally active in areas that are pertinent to the anticipated roles of the rabbi. While a non-active congregant with expertise in management may seem like a good choice, the better choice is, for example, a congregant who regularly attends Shabbat services, or one who takes adult learning classes, or one who serves on a committee or someone active in the school.

Rabbis have many questions of congregations. Search committee members who are active are able to respond accurately and helpfully. The committee should include a cross-section of the congregation, reflecting the diversity as well as the priorities of the community.

C. A rabbinic search committee should be large enough to ensure productive meetings even if one or two members cannot attend, and small enough to be efficient as well as not overwhelming to rabbis. A committee of between five and eight members is recommended. As the President may at some point need to be available as a mediator or negotiator, it is recommended that s/he not be a member of the rabbinic search committee, although the President should be in regular communication with the committee chair.

D. A helpful first step in a rabbinic search process is congregational self-reflection. Leaders should assess the state of the congregational system, and consider where the community is in its development. A congregation that is clear about its identity, where it is in its history, what stages of development and/or cycles it is in, and what the recent, current, and near future issues facing the congregation are, is likely to have an effective and productive rabbinic search.

### **XIII. Communicating About the Congregation**

A. The role of the rabbi as envisioned by the congregation should reflect the congregation's mission. Some congregations have a mission statement in hand when beginning a rabbinic search, while others do not. Where such a statement exists, the board should review it as a starting point for shaping the role of the rabbi. Where such a statement is missing, the board can informally prioritize the rabbi's responsibilities by seeking general consensus regarding the major values, goals and activities of the congregation. JRF staff as well as the Placement Director can assist in this process.

B. The rabbinic job description is an instrument of communication. It communicates to applicants the congregation's vision of itself and of the role of the rabbi. It also helps with relationship-building, because it serves as the basis for discussion of an applicant's interests and abilities and shapes the rabbi's understanding of the congregation. The rabbi's job description should accurately reflect reasonable expectations, priorities and responsibilities. Both the president and the chair of the rabbinic search committee should review the proposed job description and secure board endorsement for it before it is made available to potential applicants.

C. Because the rabbi-congregation relationship is a covenant informed by Jewish values, the job description should strive to embody the sacred dimensions of a covenantal relationship. While on one level a potential employer-employee arrangement is being explored, the engagement of a rabbi is not primarily a business decision but an invitation from a community for a rabbi to enter into a relationship.

#### **XIV. Responding to Resumes**

A. Resumes are forwarded from the Placement Director to the chair of the search committee, who should, within a week of receipt of a resume, acknowledge receipt and indicate approximately when the rabbi should expect to hear back from the congregation. In addition to being courteous and respectful, this helps alleviate anxiety on the part of the rabbi. It also helps the search committee keep to a schedule so that it can make maximum use of committee members' volunteer time.

B. If the chair of a search committee will be away for an extended period of time, s/he should designate someone to check on receipt of resumes and acknowledgments. It is also important to inform the Placement Director if someone is designated to act in place of the search committee chair.

## **XV. Basic Guidelines for Interviewing Rabbis**

A. Many congregations, especially those at some distance from rabbinic applicants and/or those with a high number of inquiries, prefer to conduct initial phone interviews prior to deciding who to bring to the congregation for an interview. When phone interviews are decided upon, all applicants should normally be treated equally, i.e., even those nearby should be interviewed by phone so as neither to disadvantage or privilege one or more candidates.

B. A phone interview works best when one or two members of the search committee ask the questions. As a general guideline, phone interviews of one hour usually work well. The search committee should establish basic questions to ask of all applicants. A goal for the congregation is to decide whom to bring out for an in-person interview. A goal for the rabbi is to gain additional information that can help her/him decide if s/he wants to pursue the application.

C. Video conferencing and/or internet access may in some cases supplement or substitute for a phone interview, assuming the technology requirements at each end can be managed.

D. If a congregation does its first round of interviews by phone, it is strongly recommended that the next stage be to invite the candidate for an in-person interview before a weekend visit in which the rabbinic candidate conducts services. This avoids a potentially awkward situation. The rabbinic candidate likely has not yet gathered enough information about the synagogue to respond effectively to its style; the search committee has likely not yet gathered enough information about the rabbi to invite the congregation to devote time to meeting and interacting with that rabbi. Either the rabbi or congregation might then discover on site that there are factors or issues that make further discussions pointless, but now the rabbi and congregation are committed to the weekend.

A rabbinic candidate is likely to have a more successful visit after she or he has had an opportunity to learn more about the congregation, the style of services, the demography and backgrounds of the congregants, etc.

For these reasons, it is strongly recommended that congregations invest the necessary resources to bring rabbinic candidates for a full on-site interview prior to inviting a candidate to spend a weekend.

E. It is recommended that an interview be approximately two hours, with a break at mid point. The interview visit should also allow for the candidate to see the facility and get some sense of the neighborhood/s and area. Most rabbis find it easier not to conduct or precede such interviews with a meal.

F. Optimally, after a phone interview and subsequent in-person interview, the congregation may decide to invite a rabbi to visit for a weekend. Such visits normally begin with a Thursday evening discussion with the search committee and/or other individuals. Friday should include meetings with other staff as well as some representative members (board or committee chairs, past-presidents, etc.)

G. Build in to a weekend schedule reasonable down-time for the rabbinic applicant. Friday afternoon before Shabbat should be left unscheduled. as should some time on Shabbat afternoon. Rabbinic applicants should be asked if they would like social or other arrangements for Saturday evening if there is no "official" part of the visit scheduled. Some rabbis may have family or friends they want to visit.

H. Many congregations find it helpful to assign one member of the search committee as coordinator and scheduler for a visit by a rabbinic candidate.

I. Professional courtesy and respect for congregational programming dictates that extended interview-visits should be scheduled and cleared with the incumbent rabbi. Time should be offered for both rabbis to meet. An incumbent rabbi should not attend public or private presentations by rabbinic applicants except when hiring an associate, assistant or sabbatical replacement rabbi, or a rabbinical student intern.

When a rabbinic candidate is coming for an interview, the incumbent rabbi should be notified.

J. Rabbis should be given an opportunity to see the area, including neighborhoods, schools, etc. It is advisable to prepare a packet of information on the area, including local newspapers, brochures, school information, etc. The real estate section of the local newspaper should be included as well.

K. Rabbis should be provided an opportunity to meet key staff people as part of the interview process.

L. Because a weekend visit is demanding, rabbinic applicants should normally be housed in a hotel to ensure privacy and downtime. If the rabbi does not travel on Shabbat and there is no hotel near the synagogue, whatever home hospitality is arranged should ensure as much privacy as possible.

M. Rabbis are normally hosted for meals, including Shabbat dinner and lunch which should be hosted in homes in keeping with the spirit of Shabbat. It is helpful to ask the rabbi in advance what levels of kashrut and other dietary concerns need to be accommodated, and to ensure that any families hosting the rabbi are informed.

N. During a weekend visit, the rabbi normally leads or participates in Shabbat services and/or study. S/he may also visit or participate in school activities or other congregational events. The visit usually concludes by Sunday afternoon. The chair of the Search Committee should let the rabbi know approximately when s/he might hear back on what, if any, next steps will be taken.

O. Congregations are expected to assume the expenses for travel, hotel and meals for bringing a rabbi to interview. When a rabbi is invited back for a second interview or extended visit, and the rabbi wants to bring a partner/spouse the congregation should cover the same expenses for the spouse/partner.

As a basic guideline, congregations should expect to cover reasonable travel/housing expenses for one additional person besides the rabbi (partner/spouse or child) for an extended visit. Single parents will often need to bring children with them. Special needs connected to a visit (child care, additional child travel, etc.) might be handled on a 50/50 basis between the rabbi and congregation.

P. While the rabbinic search committee is primarily responsible for interviewing candidates, the search committee should provide channels of communication whereby congregants can convey their thoughts regarding rabbinic applicants. Following a rabbinic candidate visit, the search committee might convene one or more open meetings to solicit feedback, and/or take open-ended comments in writing. Experience demonstrates that questionnaires or surveys keyed to specific issues are less informative and less helpful.

Q. Reference checking should occur before any offer is made. If confidentiality is not a concern on the part of the rabbinic applicant, s/he may be able to provide references earlier in the process. Normally, however, a rabbi will prefer to offer references when it has become apparent that there is a real possibility or likelihood of the rabbi being engaged by the congregation. This usually happens following the on-site interview.

R. A rabbinic search is one of the most important processes in which a congregation engages. Congregations should allocate the funds necessary to conduct a rabbinic search that reflects the understanding that the (potential) rabbi will be a valued resource of the congregation. There is a normal, but generally not helpful, tendency to use frugality as the guiding principle in a rabbinic search. While responsible administration of congregational funds is obviously important, it is equally important that the congregation graciously fund the costs associated with interviewing, engaging and sustaining a rabbi. Hiring a rabbi is the single most important staffing decision a congregation makes, and the selection process deserves the best resources the congregation can responsibly allocate as an investment in its future.

S. Some rabbinic search committees may want to visit the rabbinic applicant's current congregation (if applicable) to observe a service led by the rabbi. Such visits should be coordinated with the rabbinic applicant, and appropriate acknowledgment should be given to the applicant's need to preserve confidentiality.

## **XVI. Rabbi as Person/Personal Questions**

A. The Placement service, representing Reconstructionist movement principles and policies, will refer candidates without regard to gender, marital status, sexual orientation, birth religion, age, ethnicity or disability. Congregations are expected to evaluate all candidates fairly, and should not discriminate against candidates on these same grounds.

B. Even if legally permissible, search committees should *not* ask rabbinic candidates about:

- marital/partnered status
- sexual orientation
- parenting status/children
- age
- disability
- birth religion
- ethnicity

C. The potential rabbi-congregation relationship, however, goes beyond employee-employer. While rabbis remain employees and thus always have a different status than congregants, congregations rightly expect the rabbi to be a part of the community and not just an employee. Congregations appropriately want to know who their potential rabbi is as a person, and rabbis should want their potential congregation to know who they are as well.

D. It is inappropriate for the search committee to ask at any time, whether by phone or in person, about issues relating to the rabbi's personal life. But while a congregation as an employer may be restricted from asking certain questions, the congregation as a potential partner in a relationship deserves to know basic issues about the rabbi it may be hiring. In addition, if rabbis want to be taken seriously as people and not only professionals -- i.e., to have their personal needs taken into account -- they should help congregations know them as people.

E. Many rabbis, especially those who may feel vulnerable to discrimination, will choose not to disclose personal information during initial interviews. The rabbi should not include on her/his resume personal information regarding marital/partnered, sexual orientation, and/or parenting status.

Rabbis who have been invited to a second in-person interview and/or extended visit are strongly urged to communicate with the search committee chair about marital/partnered status, parenting status, and any other issues, including sexual orientation, that help to define who the rabbi is as a person. After all, if engaged into a relationship with the congregation, the rabbi should want that setting to be one in which her/his personhood is respected and welcomed.

There are a number of approaches to navigating such issues. Since the congregation is restricted in terms of what it can ask, it is the prerogative and responsibility of the rabbinic candidate to decide if and when to disclose personal information.

## **XVII. Inviting a Rabbi Into Negotiations**

A. When a rabbinic search committee has agreed upon a candidate to recommend to the synagogue board (and/or membership, depending on applicable congregational by laws, provisions or other rules), and has secured approval to invite the rabbi to enter into negotiations leading to engagement, the rabbi should be contacted by the chair of the search committee and invited to enter into negotiations.

The invitation to enter negotiations should be made orally and confirmed in writing. The parameters of compensation as listed on the "Request for Candidates" form should be assumed by both rabbi and congregation when proposing negotiations.

B. When a rabbi receives an invitation to enter into negotiations, there are four basic options:

1. "Yes." The rabbi has decided that s/he wants to join this congregational community, and is prepared to begin negotiations.
2. "No." The rabbi has decided the s/he does not want to join this congregational community, and does not want to enter negotiations.
3. "I would like a few days to think it over." This is the most common response from rabbis. Most rabbis need to step back when an invitation is extended, to be sure this is the right choice. Rabbis will want to talk with family and friends as well as colleagues. The rabbi will usually take up to a week to get back to the congregation.

The most common response from congregations is to wait for the rabbi's reply. A congregation will usually give the rabbi up to a week to respond. The congregation may also decide to go to the next choice. Search Committee chairs can contact the Placement Director for guidance.

4. "I need to complete my visits to other congregations" or "I need to complete the placement process." This is a common response that congregations may receive when the rabbi is a candidate at more than one congregation and expects to hear from each of them within a relatively close period of time.

Rabbis may want to make sure they have fully explored their options; or, a rabbi may have a first choice from which s/he has not yet heard. If the rabbi does not know or is uncertain when s/he will hear from the other congregation, the Placement Director will work to ascertain this information. It might be a few days or it could be a few weeks before the rabbi can respond to the invitation to enter negotiations from the first congregation.

The congregation may wait for the rabbi to respond; may agree to wait but negotiate a date by which the rabbi needs to respond; or go to the next choice. Search Committee chairs should contact the Placement Director for guidance.

C. When there is an affirmative response from the rabbi to the invitation, the congregation's negotiator (see section XVIII on negotiations) should have a preliminary phone conversation with the rabbi outlining the basic components of the proposed compensation package. This should be followed by sending the rabbi a detailed written proposal. After the rabbi has some time to look over the offer a formal conversation or meeting should be arranged to negotiate the terms of the contract. The parameters of compensation as listed on the original "Request for Candidates" form should be assumed by both rabbi and congregation during negotiations.

D. An invitation to enter into negotiations expresses the congregation's intent to engage the rabbi. Accepting that invitation on the part of the rabbi expresses the rabbi's intent to accept the position.

Nonetheless, both parties should be clear that *entering into negotiations does not constitute an acceptance by the rabbi of the offer until negotiations are successfully concluded.*

E. As a general guideline, the terms of the contract should be negotiated within thirty days of the rabbi's acceptance of the offer to negotiate.

F. When an invitation to negotiate has been made and accepted, the chair of the search committee should immediately contact other applicants to inform them. Congregations often believe it better not to tell other applicants, in case the negotiations are not successful and the search must be resumed. However, the rabbinic and Jewish community is a small network, and information travels quickly. Open communication is always preferable.

Most rabbis prefer being told they were the second choice, or even the third, rather than discovering upon arrival that what everyone in the congregation knows -- i.e., that this rabbi was not the first choice.

In addition, rabbinic applicants may have other offers pending or anticipated, and knowing their status with a congregation helps them proceed appropriately.

## **XVIII. Negotiations and Contracts**

A. The rabbi-congregation relationship is a sacred covenant guided by Jewish values. Negotiations and contracts, while attentive to economic and legal realities inherent in the employer-employee relationship, should reflect covenantal concepts, behavior and language.

B. Congregations should approach negotiations cognizant of the professional and personal resources the rabbi offers to the congregation. Negotiations should presume genuinely sufficient, respectful and respectable compensation that is commensurate with the demands of the rabbinic position and the qualifications, skills and abilities of the rabbi.

C. Congregations often need to make hard choices about allocation of resources. Occasionally, congregational boards mistakenly approach negotiations with a rabbi on the assumption that saving money, or offering the lowest salary -- below what a congregation can in fact afford -- is a good negotiating strategy. Experience demonstrates that such an approach often results in protracted and difficult negotiations that can have a long-lasting negative impact on the relationship with the rabbi.

D. Congregations should be aware that they are engaging a highly skilled and trained professional. The compensation for the rabbi should reflect that reality. The JRF, RRA and Reconstructionist Placement Office can provide guidance on considerations to take into account in arriving at fair and appropriate rabbinic compensation.

E. Rabbis and congregations respond best to each other when each feels that the other is making its best faith effort to negotiate fair and appropriate compensation. Those representing the congregation should present a written offer, including proposed salary and benefits to the rabbi. The rabbi is not an independent contractor bidding for a job and should not be asked for his/her salary expectations.

Rabbis for their part need to understand and respect the congregation's fiscal responsibilities and financial realities. It is in the best interest of both rabbi and congregation for congregational financial information to be shared. Congregations using the Reconstructionist Placement Service are asked to provide basic financial information about the congregation as part of their application for candidates.

F. While conducting negotiations, congregation and rabbi function primarily in employer-employee roles. Especially in negotiating a first contract, when there has not yet been a sustained opportunity to shape a relationship between rabbi and congregation, care should be taken so that the negotiations do not damage the personal and professional relationship that is forming.

G. One way to reduce potential points of friction is to reduce the number of issues that need to be negotiated. The JRF and RRA recommend several standard items for inclusion in all rabbinic contracts. When these items are incorporated into the congregation's offer to the rabbi, experience demonstrates that negotiations move more quickly and with fewer problems.

H. Rabbis and congregations often inquire as to the wisdom of having intermediaries conduct their negotiations. A compelling case can be made that in service of the larger rabbi-congregation relationship, it is better to minimize the employer-employee roles and allow third parties to handle the negotiations. Other opinions suggest that direct negotiations serve the larger rabbi-congregation relationship by keeping the parties in direct contact.

For some rabbis, the financial and employment intricacies of negotiations are intimidating, awkward and/or uncomfortable. This can often be exacerbated if the congregation chooses more than one person to be its representative in the negotiations.

A rabbi should have the right to choose someone to represent him/her in negotiations if that is his/her preference. Because the contract does potentially have legal implications, both rabbi and congregation should have it reviewed by an attorney.

I. Choosing a negotiator for the congregation is a sensitive issue. The person designated to represent the congregation should be someone the rabbi met during the interviewing process. This might be a member of the rabbinic search committee or a board member. The president should not be a negotiator as s/he may need to intervene at some point.

J. The contract between rabbi and congregation functions best when it records the basic terms of employment in the briefest possible way. Just as one goal of negotiations is to reduce the number of issues that can prolong those negotiations, a contract should avoid extensive legal language that may have little relevance to a rabbinic contract and obscure the covenantal nature of the rabbi-congregation relationship. Such complex documents often create tension and needlessly aggravate and/or prolong the process of agreeing on contract terms. The use of the sample letter of agreement (see appendix) is preferable to having a legally-drawn contract.

K. The purpose of a rabbinic contract is to define the congregation's legal and fiscal responsibilities and obligations to the rabbi as employee. Because of the power and economic imbalance between the rabbi as employee and the congregation as employer, contracts primarily protect the rabbi, not the congregation.

L. To give the rabbi the opportunity to review an offer carefully, the congregation should present the offer in writing. Sometimes a relatively fast and friendly verbal negotiation which left all parties feeling good disintegrates when the actual document is presented to the rabbi. Those who negotiate for the congregation should ensure that both the tone and terms of the written contract reflect the tone and terms of the negotiations.

M. In all negotiations the synagogue board should vest negotiators with the authority to work within approved parameters. When a rabbi agrees to negotiated terms, s/he should have the confidence and comfort of knowing that those terms are not going to be subject to further discussion and approval by the board or congregation. If the board has appropriately vested negotiators, and the proposed contract faithfully reflects the parameters established, the board should only need to review and formally approve the proposed contract before it is finalized with the rabbi.

N. Before a contract is proposed to the Board for final approval and presented to the rabbi for review and signature, it should be reviewed by the congregation president. The president should ensure that the contract conveys a sense of partnership and covenant, and reflects appreciation of and respect towards the rabbi. Especially in a first contract, the document represents not only the substance of the agreement but sets the tone of the relationship as anticipated by the congregation. The contract may also be reviewed on request by RRA or JRF staff and/or the Placement Director.

O. The rabbi's privacy should be respected. A balance should be reached between a board's need to know, and any congregant's right to know, the terms of the rabbi's compensation. The terms of the rabbi's compensation should be handled with discretion, and normally kept within the board rather than publicized to the congregation. Specific inquiries about the rabbi's compensation are best directed to a private discussion with the board president or treasurer rather than debated at public meetings.

P. The job description should be attached to the contract but not be absorbed into it. If later subject to revision, board action may be required to in effect emend the contract, a bureaucratic burden best avoided. The job description serves as the basis for the ongoing monitoring of the rabbi's roles and as a benchmark for whatever forms of evaluation are subsequently agreed to by the rabbi and the lay leaders.

## **XIX. When A Rabbi Is A Candidate For More Than One Position**

A. Because of the timing, delicacy and sensitivity of the issues involved with multiple applications, rabbis and congregations should consult with the Placement Director regularly, and specifically when an offer to enter negotiations has been made. Each situation is unique and comes with its own set of complexities. The Placement Director is the primary resource for rabbis and congregations and can help clarify procedures and expectations, as well as help avoid problems that can arise.

B. It is inappropriate and unprofessional for a rabbi to maintain any other active application upon agreement to enter negotiations and while negotiating with a specific congregation.

C. Congregations may only extend an invitation to negotiate to one rabbi at a time. A congregation may not extend an invitation to negotiate to another rabbi until either a) the first rabbi and congregation agree that the attempt to negotiate has concluded without agreement; b) the congregation has rescinded the offer to negotiate before the rabbi has accepted the offer; or c) the first rabbi has advised the congregation that s/he will not be entering negotiations.

D. When a rabbi who is a candidate for more than one position receives an offer from a congregation to enter into negotiations leading to engagement as rabbi, and the rabbi wants to accept that invitation and enter into negotiations, the rabbi must notify as soon as possible the appropriate person (normally the chair of the search committee) at any other congregation/s where s/he has submitted a resume and/or interviewed, indicating that s/he has received an offer to enter into negotiations with another congregation and is doing so.

E. The initial notification to other congregations should be by phone (to avoid proceeding with any arrangements the congregation may be making for interviewing that rabbi) followed by a written confirmation with a copy to the Placement Director. This will establish a record of communication on which the rabbi as well as the Reconstructionist Placement Director can rely.

F. What is the status of a rabbi's candidacy with other congregations while negotiating?

1. The rabbi may not continue to be an active candidate for any other congregation while in negotiations; this precludes further interviews and visits.

2. The rabbi can ask to have his/her application *withdrawn* from the other positions. However, since entering into negotiations does not guarantee that a satisfactory agreement and engagement will be concluded, the rabbi may not want to withdraw her/his candidacy at other congregations.

3. The rabbi can ask to have her/his application *suspended* pending outcome of the negotiations with the prior congregation. It is, however, the congregation's prerogative to decide; see below G.2.

G. What can a congregation do when informed by a rabbinic applicant that s/he is entering into negotiations with another congregation?

1. The congregation can *terminate* the application process with the rabbi.

2. The congregation can *suspend* the application process with the rabbi to see if the prior negotiations are concluded successfully.

H. If a congregation and rabbi agree to suspend the application and the prior negotiations do not lead to engagement, what happens next?

1. The rabbi should contact the Placement Director -- *not* the congregational search committee -- and ascertain the status of the rabbinic search at that congregation. This is to avoid having one colleague intrude on a process with another colleague that may be well along by this time.

2. The Placement Director will inform the search committee chair of a congregation of the rabbi's renewed availability. If the congregation remains interested, and has not extended an offer to another rabbi and/or is in negotiation with another rabbi, the Placement Director will inform the congregation of the rabbi's renewed availability. The congregation may then recontact the rabbi whose application was suspended.

## **XX. RRC Student Pulpits**

A. RRC students are governed by the RRC student placement regulations. Congregations engaged in hiring RRC students work directly with the RRC Dean of Students.

B. A part-time congregational rabbinic position may be equally of interest to RRC students and RRA rabbis. To avoid placing them in a position of unfair competition, the Placement Director and RRC Dean of Students will determine in consultation with the congregation whether such a congregation should first be listed as a rabbinic position or as a student position.

Should they not agree, the RRA Executive Director and JRF Executive Vice-President (if the congregation is a JRF affiliate) or the RRC Vice President for Academic Affairs (if the congregation is not a JRF affiliate) will assist in making a determination.

## **XXI. High Holiday Positions**

A. Congregations seeking a rabbi for the High Holidays only should contact the Placement Director. Listing policies are in agreement with those governing regular placement. Rabbis are expected to give JRF affiliates priority.

B. Many High Holiday positions may be equally suitable for a rabbi or rabbinic student. Inquiries may come to the RRC Dean of Students or the Placement office.

To avoid conflict the Placement Director and the RRC Dean of Students should always inform each other of such inquiries, and mutually determine which should go first to rabbinic and which to student placement. High Holiday openings are normally listed on a regular or supplementary Rabbinic Placement List. Because of timing issues this may not always be possible.

C. Any rabbis potentially interested in a High Holiday position should inform the Placement Director in writing, as late or last minute requests for rabbis can often only be handled by the Placement Director calling any potential applicants.

## **XXII. Grievances**

A. If a grievance arises during interviewing-negotiating-contracting, the Placement Director should be informed. Often an intervention can help the parties resolve the difficulty. Rabbis, senior RRC students, and congregations should also consult the appropriate staff people at RRA, RRC and JRF.

B. Violations of placement procedures should be brought to the attention of the Placement Director.

C. When a contractual grievance arises in an existing rabbi-congregation relationship, and resolution cannot be found, even after consultation with movement staff at RRA and/or JRF and/or the Placement office, then arbitration may be sought.

The Placement Director, RRA Executive Director, and JRF Executive Vice-President (and if the rabbi is an RRC student, the RRC Dean of Students) will jointly decide if the grievance falls within the purview of the Placement Commission. They may also refer the grievance to a different organization, staff member or body within the Reconstructionist movement.

Allegations of professional or personal misconduct on the part of a rabbi are not in the purview of an arbitration committee, but should instead be referred to the Chair of the RRA Ethics Committee. RRC students are governed by RRC's ethics guidelines.

D. Upon invitation of both the congregation and rabbi, the Placement Director, and the Executives of the JRF and RRA will jointly appoint a chair of an arbitration committee chosen from the members of the Placement Commission. The RRA and JRF will then appoint one member each from their respective boards for a committee of three. The decision of the arbitration panel will be binding.

E. Arbitrators serve without compensation; any reasonable expenses incurred, including phone, travel, meals and lodging will be reimbursed by the congregation.

F. It is recommended that agreement to abide by the Reconstructionist Placement Arbitration Procedures be written into rabbinic contracts.

### **XXIII. Change of Placement Procedures**

A. The Placement Commission normally proposes changes in these guidelines. Procedural changes may be approved by the Commission itself by a simple majority vote. Policy changes must be recommended by a 2/3 vote of the Commission, and be approved by the RRA and JRF Boards.

B. If the Placement Director, Executive Vice President of JRF and Executive Director of RRA agree, temporary procedural changes can be made as needed. Written notification of such changes must be provided to the Commission, to all RRA members, and to the chairs of all active rabbinic search committees.

## **Contacting the Reconstructionist Placement Office, RRA and JRF**

Congregations and rabbis should use the Placement Office as their primary point of contact:

Rabbi Joel Alpert, Director of Placement  
Reconstructionist Placement Office  
1299 Church Road  
Wyncote PA 19095

(215) 576-5210  
(215) 576-8051 (fax)  
jalpert@reconplacement.org (e-mail)

Rabbis may also contact the RRA:

Rabbi Richard Hirsh, Executive Director  
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association  
1299 Church Road  
Wyncote PA 19095

(215) 576-5210  
(215) 576-8051 (fax)  
<http://www.therra.org> (www)  
rhirsh@therra.org (e-mail)

Congregations may also contact the JRF:

Jewish Reconstructionist Federation  
7804 Montgomery Avenue, Suite 9  
Elkins Park PA 19027

(215) 782-8500  
(215) 782-8805  
<http://www.jrf.org> (www)

Judy B. Wortman, Executive Vice President  
ext. 21, [jwortman@jrf.org](mailto:jwortman@jrf.org)

Rabbi Shawn Zevit, Director of Outreach and Congregational Services  
ext. 24, [szevit@jrf.org](mailto:szevit@jrf.org)