

- Tell us what you want to do
- Establish goal using ABCD
- Environmental scan
- Research - find out if others have done this
- Create tentative plan for the creation of the project with dates
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- List resources and outline of session
- Develop an evaluation tool

Jewish Home Funeral

L.A.'s only family-participatory tahara – an inexpensive, healing, and very green Jewish death care option.

PROJECT	STEPS TAKEN SO FAR	STEPS YET TO BE TAKEN
Establish a business	<p>I own a business called LA Community Chaplaincy Services, a referral agency for myself and other chaplains in private practice. It has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a bank account - a business license, and - mental health counselors insurance <p>Jewish Home Funeral will be a service of this company.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investigate liability and legal issues (to confirm funeral director claims that they will carry these responsibilities. - Consider getting bonded - Consider becoming a non-profit
Marketing		
Web Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bought the domain "JewishHomeFuneral.com" - Added a Web site on my business account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write, design & publish - Market it online - Make a video and post it
Brochure		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write, design & print
Price List	Wrote first draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get input from Funeral Directors - Finalize and publish as a brochure insert

Business Card		Design & print
Build visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish referral relationships with all Jewish cemeteries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribute brochure to area mortuaries & cemeteries - Call my contacts at the Jewish Journal
Speaking engagements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have added Jewish death care practices to the list of topics I can lecture on with the medical speakers bureau that uses me 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare a PowerPoint on this - Book gigs jointly with other home funeral professionals
Internal Team (Subcontractors & volunteers)	<p>I have initiated relationships with the following, toward hiring them as subcontractors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Singer/musicians - Other roshes willing to do a job when I can't - Shomers 	<p>I need to find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Jewish man (preferably a nurse or embalmer) - Other crew members - Volunteers? <p>Draw up contract & have them sign it</p>
External Team (Referral Network)	<p>Met with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 local home funeral providers - 3 local Jewish mortuary/cemeteries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 more to Jewish cemetery to go; Need contracts/ agreements w/ them
Create Home Tahara Washing Kit	Made a list	<p>Acquire the items and set them up in a really accessible arrangement, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - wooden boards - buckets & cups, - soaps and chemicals - skin sealant stuff ...
Get Green Funeral Certified		Consult with Green Burial Society
Answer "the water problem"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bought a Tent! - Have a commitment for a gurney & a table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Buy inflatable tub/pool & Wet vac - Research definition of a "kav"
Tachrichim	I have patterns	Sew them

Dolls	I am designing patterns	Sew them,
Obtain more experience	I have asked every tahara team and home funeral team in town to invite me along	Get back in touch because no one is calling
Liturgy	Studied it	Make it into a handy, laminated worksheet
Study musical options		Learn niggunim, chant (i.e. Shefa Gold), lullabies ...

I intend to define “Jewish” as suits me, a transdenominationally ordained, Conservative/Reform/ Renewal practicing, liberal American rabbi. I will approach this work as I do the weddings and funerals that I officiate – well schooled in halacha and minhag, but in no way blindly beholden to them. I will draw from them authentically, while striving for a balance with the competing value needs of the family, such as for

- *shalom bait*, if family members disagree in their observance levels, or religions,
- *kavod hameit* and *kavod av v'em*, if I feel an approach would be undignified for the decedent, or disquieting to the family,
- *chinuch banim*, modifying or simplifying my content to the level needed to be welcoming and instructive to a given family
- *hiddur mitzvah*, the value of glorifying a mitzvah by adding sensorial beauty – flowers, scented soaps and oils, music and the like.

Mission Statement (What We Do)

Sacred Waters/Mayim Kedoshim brings the full range of Jewish end-of-life ritual to those who want a meaningful and loving transition.

Vision Statement (Why We Do It and What We Hope)

We are Jewish celebrants trained in the ancient traditions of tahara (purification) and shmira (guarding), who believe that by sharing these practices with families, we can honor the dead, comfort mourners, and plant seeds of community in Jewish hearts.

Sacred Waters/Mayim Kedoshim provides a loving transition between the death of a family member and their departure from the home: the Jewish washing ceremony known as *tahara*, or purification. Our Jewish clergy specialists guide families to cleanse, dress and bless their loved ones according to this biblical custom, now enjoying a resurgence for its environmental sensitivity, affordability and healing spiritual riches.

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ABCD OF SACRED WATERS CLIENTS

Audience

Jewish & Jew-ish people

(Liberal L.A. Jews who find Jewish customs beautiful yet are not limited to only their most traditional expression, and people on the periphery of Jewish life who might be drawn closer if exposed to its deepest spiritual riches)

For whom a hands-on approach to death would be normative and attractive

(Because they are “hippy-type” Baby Boomers; have a medical/emergency/funeral services background; or have become accustomed to providing day-to-day physical care to their dying loved one)

Behavior

Hire Sacred Waters to counsel and comfort a client Circle of Care before, during and after a home death. Roles may include:

- Jewish Hospice Chaplaincy
 - o Jewish spiritual counseling on end-of-life, funeral planning and bereavement
 - o Jewish “Last Rites” (*Viddui*) ritual with family
- Vigiling with song*
 - o No One Dies Alone (NODA) –style before-death presence,*
 - o Visits from *Ma’avar*, the Jewish Threshold Choir*
 - o After-death continuous presence until burial (*Shmira*)*
- Family-Participatory Jewish Washing Ceremony (*Tahara*)
 - o Washing, dressing and blessing of the decedent.
 - o This can take place at the family home, a residential facility or a mortuary.
 - o If the traditional amount of water is desired, the ceremony can take place under a beautiful tent in the yard.

Conditions

At a point in life when end-of-life plans are needed, because someone moves to senior living, is on hospice, or has just died. The ideal timing would be to engage Sacred Waters early enough to negotiate family buy-in and orient members to the ritual.

Degree

With a high degree of reliability and professionalism, compassion and sensitivity, yielding positive customer feedback that reflects well on all parties.

* NOTE: This section is just visionary at this point, I have no immediate plans to pull it together.

ABCD OF SACRED WATERS PARTNERS

Audience

People who help others make end-of-life and post-death planning decisions, such as senior living facility staff, hospice chaplains and social workers, and funeral home sales people and administrators.

Behavior

Connect families to Sacred Waters via one of the following avenues (i.e. business models):

- Private Payer

Families can hire Sacred Waters directly for specific line-item services.

- Hospice

Sacred Waters can be a contracted part of service for participating home hospice agencies.

- Funeral Services

Sacred Waters can be a contracted part of a home or outsourced funeral plan.

It is a particularly good match for “green”-oriented funeral directors seeking a Jewish option, and vice-versa.

Sacred Waters can provide family-inclusive ritual at a residence or at a mortuary.

Conditions

- Calling on Sacred Waters to help educate the public about Jewish funeral practices.
- Mentioning Sacred Waters home tahara when discussing funeral options with Jewish clients.
- Bringing Sacred Waters professionals onto the spiritual care team.
- Referring cases to Sacred Waters when they cannot provide for a client's needs themselves.

Degree

With a high degree of reliability and professionalism, compassion and sensitivity, yielding positive customer feedback that reflects well on all parties.

Request for Tahara

General

Date and Time of Death _____

Height & weight of meit/ah _____

Circumstances/condition _____

Religion/Observance Level of Meit/ah _____

DPOA #1: Name _____ Phone _____ E-mail _____

Religion/ Observance Level _____

Permission to perform tahara _____

DPOA #2: Name _____ Phone _____ E-mail _____

Religion/Observance Level _____

Permission to perform tahara _____

DPOA #3: Name _____ Phone _____ E-mail _____

Religion/ Observance Level _____

Permission to perform tahara _____

Other Permissions Needed:

Location & Participation

Mortuary _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Contact _____ Phone _____

Funeral Director _____ Phone _____

Hospice: _____

Hospice Nurse: _____ Phone _____

Location for Tahara (Address): _____

Mortuary Facility Hospital
At Home: In Bed Outdoors Other

Expected participants:

Name _____ Phone _____ E-mail _____

Name _____ Phone _____ E-mail _____

Name _____ Phone _____ E-mail _____

Name _____ Phone _____ E-mail _____

Materials Supplied

	Mortuary	Hospice	Family	SW	None
Towels					
Sheets					
Cleaning supplies					
Bathing supplies					
Protective Gear					
Shroud					
Tallit & Kippah					
Clothing					
Sovev					

Boards					
Earth					
Shards					
Buckets					
Cups					
Candle & lighter					
Casket					
Tent					

Clothing

Shroud: Handsewn linen Cotton muslin

Extras: Bonnet Kippah Tallit

Permission to desecrate tallit _____

Size/Special needs _____

Grooming

Nail polish: Remove Do Not Remove

Makeup: Remove Makeup requested

Feature Setting: None Viewing planned, features may be set

Casket

Present at Ceremony? _____

Type _____

Delivery Scheduled _____

Traditional Elements

9 kavim

Israel earth

Pottery shards

Egg & wine

Customizations

Music/Musicians

Poetry/Liturgy Requests

Flowers

Mementos, Pictures

Presentation to Gamliel Class on Sacred Waters

So far in this class, and in all those I've attended for Gamliel, and in most of the discussions I've participated in through our Jewish Burial Society of So Cal, and with tahara providers I've learned from here and everywhere, there has been one baseline assumption:

Jews belong to Jewish communities. They attend synagogues. They live as part of a congregation that is "there" for them in times of transition in their lives. They "have" a rabbi. They can be reached through these communities, and, if properly informed, they will become interested in involvement in bikkur cholim, kavod hameit and nichum aveilim, for the sake of their fellow congregants.

I am a rabbi with board certification in interfaith healthcare chaplaincy, and I have chosen to bill myself as a referral agency called LA Community Chaplaincy Services so that I can collect small jobs, rather than take one full time. I currently work in three hospitals, four hospices, two county jails, and more than a dozen senior living and skilled nursing facilities. And I am contacted by members of the public to perform funerals and weddings, provide private practice spiritual care, and to give talks on cultural sensitivity and end-of-life customs to medical professionals.

I have met and counseled hundreds if not thousands of people who call themselves "Jews in Los Angeles". And I have to tell you – they do not belong to Jewish communities. Maybe one in four or fewer has ever joined anything, has any real Jewish knowledge, has anyone they can turn to for Jewish comfort. Their connection to Judaism is one of identity and spirit. To have a rabbi to talk to amazes them. They don't know what to do, Jewishly, in times of transition. They hire rabbis for weddings, bar mitzvahs and brises, and may choose a Jewish cemetery. But otherwise, when they are sick, dying or bereaved, Judaism may not even come to mind.

So my vision is to be the Jewish public's end-of-life professional, providing a continuum of care based around my existing work connections, and expanding on them.

So, to respond to the list given in Unit 1:

*** Tell us what you want to do**

I want to make the benefits of participating in a tahara-like ritual available broadly, to anyone for whom it would be meaningful, in any form that I experience as respectful, but especially, to people who would never have considered it otherwise.

*** Establish goal using ABCD**

Here is an abbreviated version of the two ABCDs I posted:

ABCD Goals for Clients

Audience: Jewish & Jew-ish people, for whom a hands-on approach to death would be normative and attractive.

Behavior: Hire us to counsel and comfort their family and caregivers, before, during and/or after a home death, via Jewish hospice chaplaincy, vigiling

with song, family-participatory tahara, and bereavement support.

Conditions: When the time is right, and preferably early enough to train participants and overcome barriers

Degree: To the satisfaction of all parties! Often enough to generate a flow of business!

ABCD Goals for Partners

Audience: People who can make referrals and share cases, namely, hospices, funeral professionals and senior living facilities.

Behavior: Invite me to speak, refer families to me and remain involved.

Conditions:

- Hospices:
Invite me to speak to staff
Subcontract your Jewish spiritual care to me, or hire me as your Jewish chaplain
Provide a nurse to be present during the ritual along with me.
- Funeral Services:
Refer families who request home tahara to me, and I will refer families to you
Provide a funeral director to be present during the ritual along with me.
- SNFS & Hospitals
Invite me to speak to patients/residents, families and staff
Refer cases to me, permit tahara ritual in your facilities, provide a nurse

Degree – To the satisfaction of all parties! Often enough to generate a flow of business!

*** Environmental scan**

There is nothing like this available anywhere on earth, as far as I can tell.

Most tahara is provided by traditional chevra kaddishas, in mortuaries, with family excluded, and with an orientation toward tradition trumping innovation. Even with our new Jewish Burial Society, that is what's available in L.A.

*** Research - find out if others have done this**

The closest thing is what we have seen in a few blog descriptions – congregational rabbis such as Zari Weiss in Seattle and Rachel Barenblat in the Berkshires, being asked to lead a congregant in a home tahara, and they accommodated. But it is not a concerted effort by these rabbis to specialize in marketing and providing this service, and they would only make it available to their own congregants, so that's no competition either.

That leaves the home funeral industry. Here in L.A. there are two funeral directors and a growing number of officiants offering non-Jewish home funeral. I have met with all of them and they are eager to have me in the picture to refer their Jewish clients.

*** Create tentative plan for the creation of the project with dates**

Abbreviated version:

Goal Deadline	Task	Status
Materials		
	Write Elevator Pitch	Done
	Name company	Done
	Pamphlet	Done
	Acquire Web Address	Done
6/1	Write "Death Care Directive"/Waiver form for families	In Process
6/30	Forms, pricing & relationships with 4 FDs and 4 hospices	In Process
6/5	Build & launch Web Site	In Process
6/10	Market Web site online	
Talks & Marketing		
	Prepare & Book Talk #1: Inside the Tahara Room	Done
	Make a teaching video with doll lecture, for Web site	
July	Outreach to hospices & senior living facilities (for both JBSSC & SW/MK)	In Process
June	Prepare & Book Talk #2: Ethical wills & Advance Directives	In Process
July	Prepare & Book Talk #3: Conscious Dying	In process
August	Prepare & Book Talk #4: Does the Soul Survive?	In process
First Client		
	Find candidate, get family buy-in, train participants	Done
	Revise "Final Kindness" liturgy	Done
Company Paperwork		
6/15	Set up team (other rabbis, participants, musicians)	In Process
6/30	Compile equipment & kit	In Process
6/30	"Open for Business"	

- * Flesh out things that need to be done for each of the deadlines - very clear to me
- * Create outline for each of the steps - very clear
- * Fill in details of the outline - abcd - very clear
- * List resources and outline of session -

If the point here is to generate a statement for doubters as to the halachic legitimacy of my work, I have realized that my position is this: There is no such need.

If someone wants traditional tahara, there are plenty of ways to obtain it here in L.A. and be assured that “all” the water is poured, “all” the privacy is maintained, and that all participants are gender-assigned, Shomer Shabbas, recently mikvah’ed and in the case of women, non-menstruating.

My clients don’t have these questions. My clients don’t necessarily read Hebrew, don’t know anything about the traditional approach, and are glad to take my word for it that what we are doing is fine. Because it is. There is no halacha to tahara. There is no such thing as an “incomplete” tahara. The only thing that matters is *kavanah*. And I would never do this unless my kavanah, and that of all participants, was good.

That said, I do plan to make available via my “Death Care Directive” form, both traditional and “modern” versions of the tahara ritual elements. Families can choose to:

- Pour 9 kavim, and I will provide a tent for their yard, and a table. Otherwise, we do it on the bed using plastic sheeting, cups and towels.
- Decline to participate, and I will do the ritual behind a closed door with my team.
- Require gender-aligned staff, and I will provide a male officiant.
- Require casketing, and I will have the funeral home bring it over.
- Have a shomer, and I will coordinate their volunteers or provide paid professionals – with an option of a musician.

* Develop an evaluation tool

- Did I get any referrals? – This I will know immediately by who calls me
- Were families satisfied? – This I will determine as part of my bereavement follow-up.
- I’d be glad to develop a questionnaire for facilities’ staff after I speak.