



Talking Points on the Issue of Firearms in the Congregation

The following talking points are designed to guide congregations through the process of determining whether firearms will be allowed in the Synagogue, who will be approved to possess firearms in the congregation, who will make those decisions and how will the congregation ensure compliance. The presence of firearms is an individual congregation matter, however, there are things that may have not been factored into the decision-making process that are very important. The idea behind this list is to make those questions that may have not been asked available to all congregations contemplating this matter.

- State Laws need to be studied to determine if there are regulations regarding the presence of firearms. i.e. if the person is designated SECURITY a license may be required. Licensing is an entire other issue as some licenses allow for Firearm carry only while in Uniform etc. If the facility has NO FIREARMS ALLOWED signage, the facility may need to provide the person carrying the firearm with an official invite to avoid any criminal charges in the event they use the firearm.
- This matter should be discussed with your insurance company. The introduction of firearms brings about liability and you should be prepared to understand the liability. If a person is injured while “representing” the Synagogue and acting officially, is workmen’s compensation an issue?
- What type of training program will you have in place for firearms carriers? Because the mission is equal to that of the Police consider at minimum that level of training.
- How will you screen, train and supervise Firearm holders?
- How often will they be required to qualify at a firing range?
- How will you secure the firing range for them to qualify?
- Who will be responsible for securing the firing range, training, safety and safety equipment? What is the cost involved?
- Which weapons will be permitted? Even police departments have authorized weapons and unauthorized weapons.
- Where will armed members be posted?
- Will they be on patrol?
- How will they communicate with each other?
- What policies, procedures and restrictions are appropriate for the use of force and the use of deadly force?
- How will members evacuate persons during an incident? In the event firearms are displayed there must be a coordinated effort to remove congregants in the opposite direction of the confrontation.
- Because most concealed carry courses only focus on safety and the ability to fire a weapon, how will you introduce “Shoot Don’t Shoot” type scenario training? This is important when talking about firing a weapon inside a HOW where people are present.

- What if an innocent bystander is struck by an armed member's bullet? What if someone has a heart attack when a weapon is introduced? Can the firearms holder afford to defend themselves in a lawsuit or pay damages to someone harmed?
- The possibility of error in a shooting scenario is great. The armed person must be well trained and maintain adequate liability insurance.
- If you have public police officers in the congregation, consider using them for your armed presence.
- How will the armed persons distinguish themselves to the police in the event the police are called to an incident? The "good guy" holding the weapon may be mistaken as the "bad guy". Training for civilians should be just like the police, put away the weapon if the situation is safe and keep hands visible upon police arrival. This take calm and training and can be a costly mistake.
- BE realistic: Signage, policies etc. do not guarantee that bad guys or good guys won't bring firearms onto the property. Signage restricting the presence of firearms may not be wise.
- Screening with hand held or walk through magnetometers may help identify firearms but they are time consuming, costly and require training to operate. Persons wanting to bring in firearms can learn quickly smuggling techniques to avoid being caught. Additional metal items in pockets or on body etc.

Though this list is comprehensive it may not be all inclusive as there are certain circumstances that may change requiring decision changes one way or the other.

FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING THE JEWISH COMMUNAL SECURITY PROGRAM,
PLEASE CONTACT:

SECURITY DIRECTOR, SHAWN BROKOS sbrokos@jfedpgh.org or 412/992/5229

SECURITY PROGRAM COORDINATOR, ERIN WYLAND ewyland@jfedpgh.org 412/992/5252

VISIT OUR COMMUNITY SECURITY WEBSITE <http://jfedpgh.org/security>