

# Jewish Camp for Children with Disabilities and Special Needs



# Acknowledgement

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by a generous donation from  
Dr. Allan and Nan Lipton of Hershey, PA  
to the Foundation for Jewish Camp.

# Introduction

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- As an organization, FJC aims to enable more children to experience the magic of overnight Jewish camp regardless of physical, emotional, or intellectual challenges.
  
- Goals of the survey:
  - Seeking to gain an understanding of the nonprofit Jewish overnight camp environments in which children with special needs are currently being served well, where the most significant gaps in service lie, and how we might move the field forward.

# Methodology

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- 13 in-depth interviews with directors and inclusion specialists from a variety of camps under the FJC umbrella. These included camps that have well established programs to serve children with disabilities/special needs as well as those who do not.
- Group discussion with directors and leaders of camp movements to further explore the issues camps face in this arena.
- The poll was fielded online from February 26- March 28, 2013. Margin of error is +/-3.4%.
- The survey link was distributed by the Foundation for Jewish Camp to 161 camps via 170 directors/professionals who in turn forwarded the survey to their camp staff, parents and campers. Additional social media outreach led parties to a survey link on the FJC webpage.
- Individuals from 124 unique camps completed the survey. Only those associated with one of the camps under the FJC umbrella were accepted to fill out the survey.

# Camp Positions

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<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>828</b>
Directors	143
General Staff	215
Inclusion Staff	65
Parents of Children with a Disability/Special Need	131
Parents of Children without a Disability/Special Need	131
Campers	141

# Definition Provided

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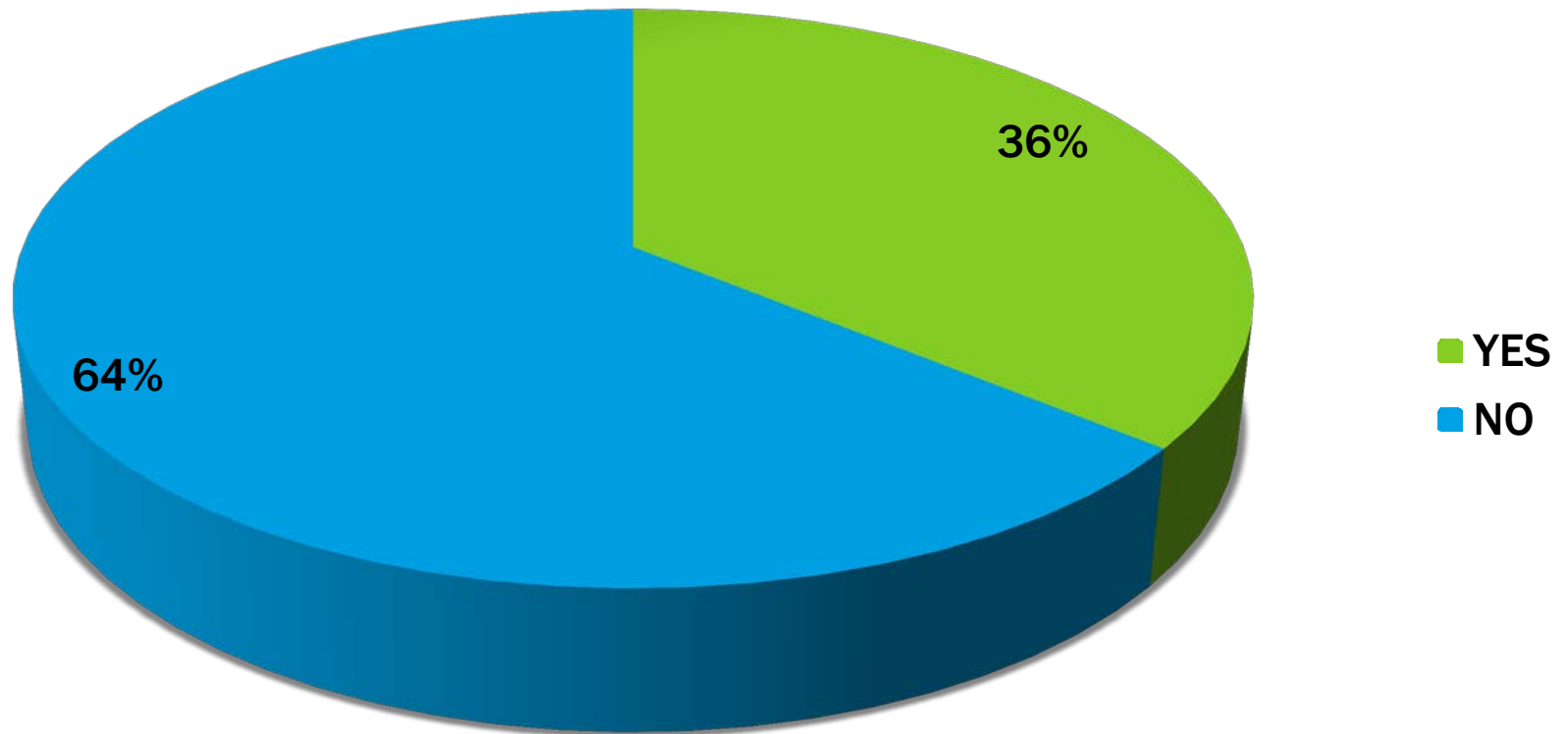
For this survey, we are examining services and programs available to children with more "traditional" disabilities/special needs such as, Down syndrome, blindness, Autism/Asperger's, challenging behaviors, hearing impairments, ADD/ADHD, seizures, intellectual or developmental disabilities and physical impairments.

Many camps provide accommodations for a variety of campers who need extra support for things like food allergies, divorcing parents, anorexia, bereavement or anxiety. Although they may be "flagged" for more attention and services, these are not the campers or services this survey examines.

***Every effort was made to use consistent and respectful language. For the purpose of this survey we will refer to campers with disabilities/special needs.***

# MAPPING SERVICES FOR CAMPERS WITH DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS

# OVER ONE-THIRD OF CAMPS ARE OFFERING A SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR CAMPERS WITH DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS

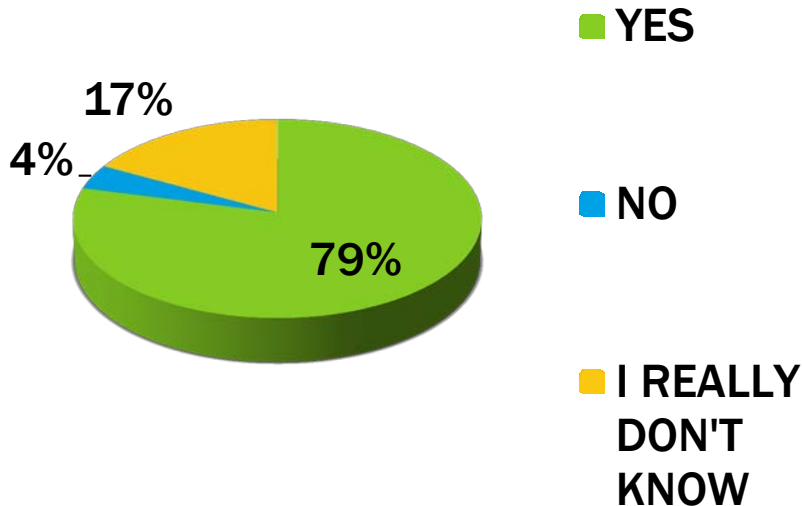


Does your camp currently offer a special program for campers with disabilities/special needs? (D)

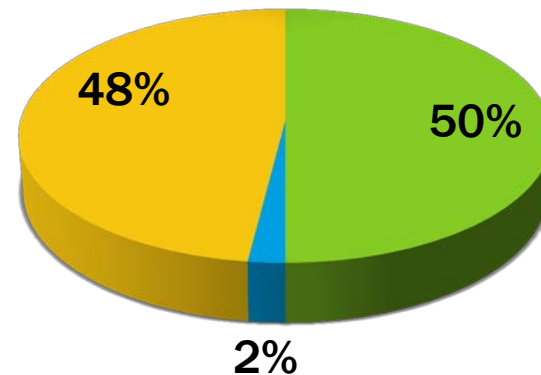


# MORE THAN ¾ OF CAMPS ARE SERVING CAMPERS WITH DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS BUT IT IS LARGELY UNKNOWN IN MARKETPLACE

## TOTAL RESPONDENTS

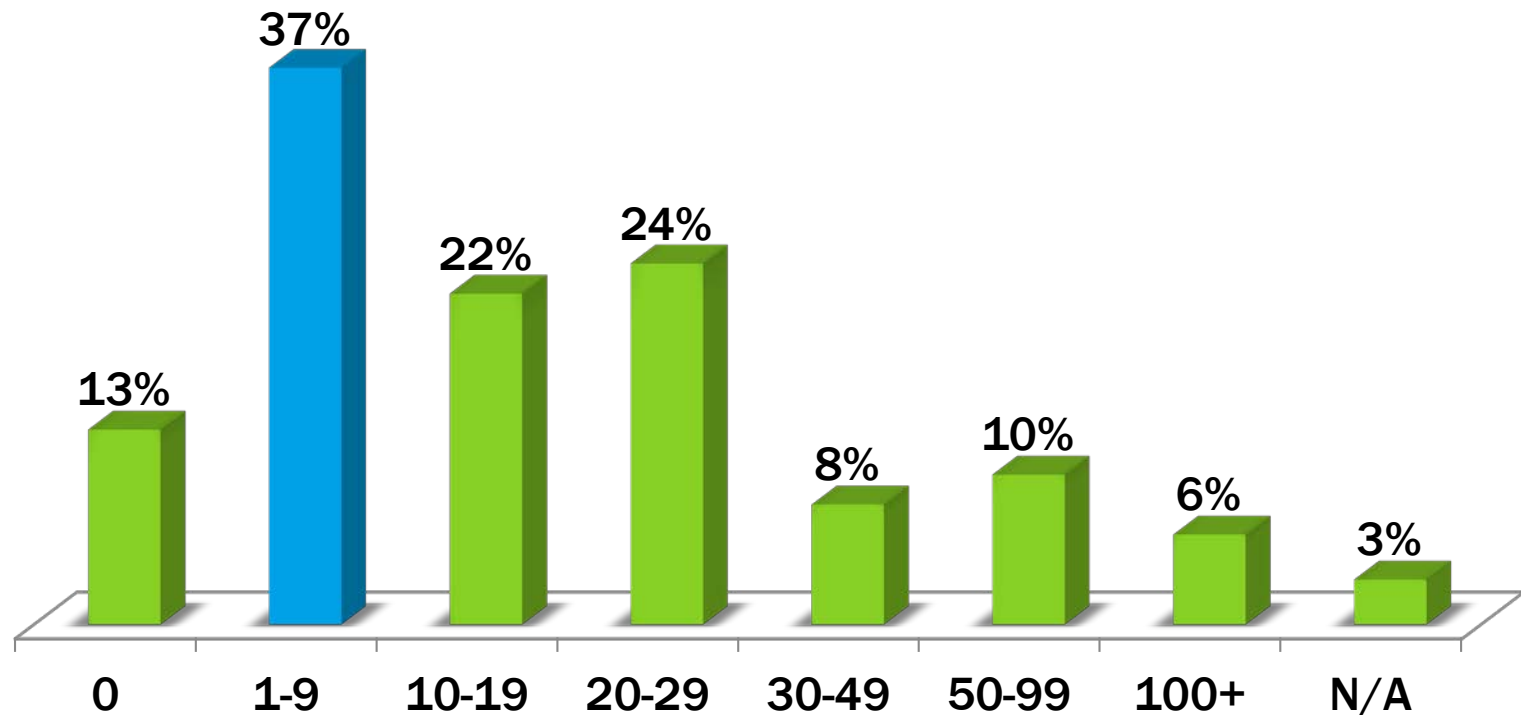


## PARENTS OF CAMPERS W/OUT DISABILITIES



Regardless of whether there is an official or special disability or inclusion program, does your camp serve any campers with disabilities/special needs who need additional help or accommodations to have a successful summer? (S,P)

# MOST CAMPS ARE SERVING UNDER 20 CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS



Roughly how many campers with disabilities/special needs does your camp serve over the course of a summer?

*DO NOT INCLUDE VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS (D)*

# CAMPS OVERALL ARE SERVING MORE CHILDREN THAN WE THOUGHT

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2340 - 2590

\*Based off of the camp respondent providing the smallest and largest estimate of campers served from each camp. Includes camps that only serve campers with disabilities/special needs.

# BUT THERE ARE POTENTIALLY MORE JEWISH CHILDREN WHO AREN'T YET AT JEWISH CAMP

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While there are not direct apple to apple comparisons to camp age children across America, the best statistics available are provided by the U.S. Department of Education. Used widely by experts in the disability field, they state that 13.1% of American children age 3-21 are being served for a disability in public school.

In 2010- 70,000 Jewish children went to Jewish overnight camp.\*

13.1% of those campers would be 9,170.

\*Camp Works, Steven M. Cohen, Ron Miller, Ira M. Sheskin, Berna Torr, Spring 2011

# CHALLENGES, HOPES, AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

# KEY FINDINGS

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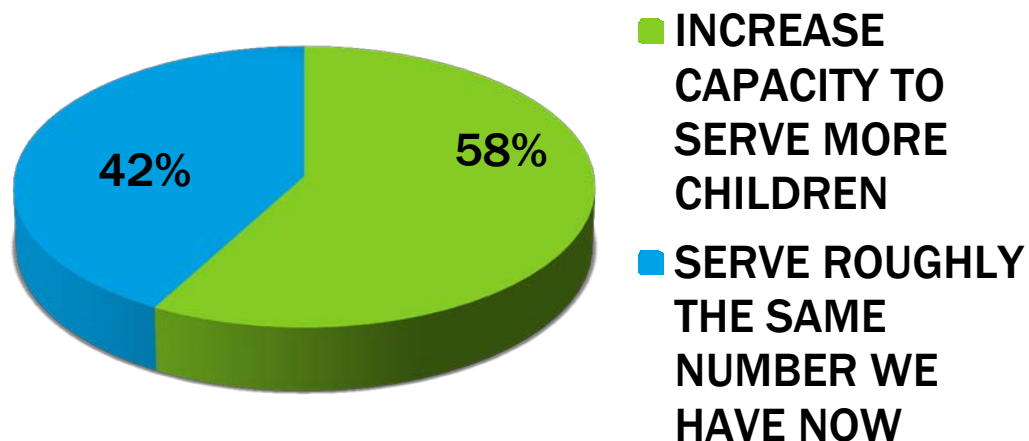
- There is *interest and apprehension* in expanding services and capacity for children with disabilities/special needs.
- The biggest barriers are **NOT** attitudes or wheelchair ramps— they are *lack of training and knowledge* followed by funding.
- More camps are serving children with disabilities/special needs than are publicizing it.

# OVERWHELMING SUPPORT: **EVERY** JEWISH CHILD SHOULD BE ABLE TO ATTEND A JEWISH CAMP

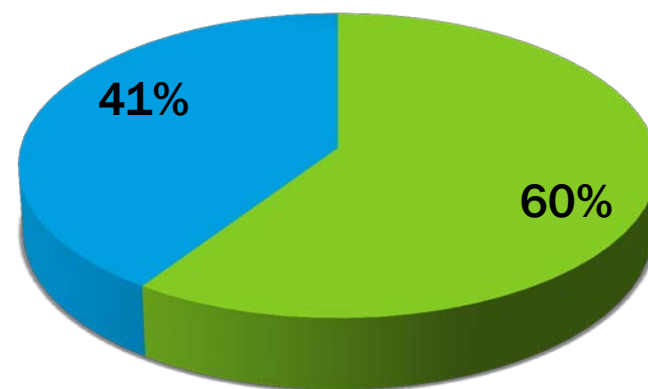
Which do you think is the best way forward for Jewish overnight camps in general to serve children with disabilities/special needs, with a reasonable accommodation? (S,P)	TOT	DIR	PAR W/DIS	PAR W/OUT
Every Jewish child, regardless of a disability/special need, should be able to attend a Jewish camp with campers without disabilities/special needs that offers some type of inclusion program, but not every camp will be able to serve each need.	<b>76%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>71%</b>
Campers with disabilities/special needs should be able to access a camp experience, but in many cases it should be done at specialty camps that are designed and staffed for campers with disabilities as not to negatively impact camp for campers without disabilities.	14%	17%	9%	<b>21%</b>
Every Jewish camp should be fully inclusive and open to children and staff regardless of the level of their disability/special need.	11%	<b>3%</b>	15%	9%

# SIGNIFICANT INTEREST IN EXPANDING SERVICES FOR CAMPERS WITH DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS

**TOTAL RESPONDENTS**



**No/DK Serve Children w/Disabilities**



When thinking about serving children with disabilities/special needs, would you like your camp to ...? (S,P)



THERE ARE DIFFERENT MODELS OF PROGRAMS FOR CAMPERS WITH DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS. PLEASE CHECK OFF ALL OF THE MODELS THAT YOUR CAMP OFFERS AND WHICH WOULD BE MOST FEASIBLE FOR YOUR CAMP TO CONSIDER IN THE FUTURE. (S,P)

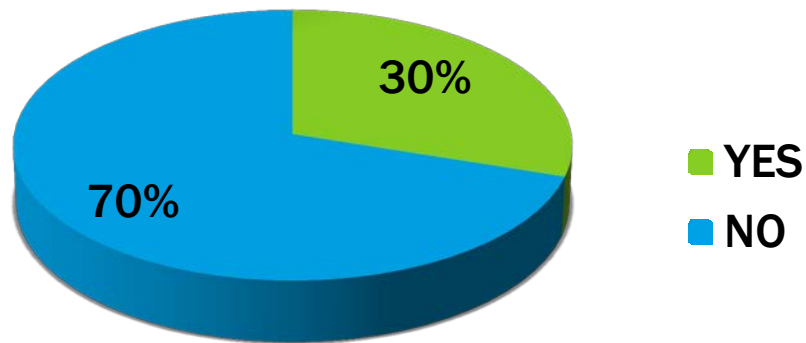
	<u>NOW</u>	<u>FUT</u>
Inclusion/Mainstream- Campers with disabilities/special needs may need extra support[ie shadow or extra counselor] but they sleep in bunks with campers without disabilities and are a full member of the cabin and typical activities	50%	35%
Camp Within a Camp- Campers with disabilities/special needs sleep in their own bunks with their own counselors but are included in some camp activities with campers without disabilities/special needs	30%	29%
Full Inclusion- Campers are accepted on a first come, first serve basis regardless of the nature of their disabilities or behaviors and they are included fully in camp with proper supports and accommodations	29%	21%
Family Camp with Inclusion- Campers with disabilities/special needs and their families are included with families whose children do not have disabilities	13%	23%
Camp Exclusively for Campers with Disabilities/Special Needs- Only serves campers with disabilities/special needs [i.E. Physical, mental, intellectual, social, behavioral etc.]	9%	13%
Disability/Special Needs Only Family Camp- Only for families with a child with disabilities special needs	9%	20%
Other	4%	4%

# LARGE MAJORITY POSITIVE TOWARDS INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS TEMPERED BY APPREHENSION

Even if none are exactly right, which statement comes closest to your views on serving children with disabilities/special needs at YOUR camp? (S, Pw/out)

Including campers with disabilities/special needs is a meaningful and intentional component of our camp community. We value the impact on our staff and campers with and without disabilities.	56%
We see the importance and are interested in doing more but we are not properly staffed or funded and are nervous about what it all entails.	27%
Over the years campers with disabilities/special needs have applied to our camp for a variety of reasons such as our location or sibling attendance. We are trying to properly serve these campers but are not really interested in establishing anything beyond that.	8%
Jewish campers with disabilities/special needs are often more comfortable and served best at a camp that specifically focuses only on their needs.	6%
While it works for some camps, including campers with disabilities/special needs generally has a negative impact on the experience of typical campers and community at our camp.	3%

# CAMPS ARE NOT PUBLICIZING SERVICES



Is there information on your camp's website specifically about programs and services for children with disabilities/special needs? (S,P)

	DIR	CAMP W/DIS PROG	CAMP SERV CHL W/ DIS
YES	26%	71%	41%
NO	74%	29%	60%

Does your camp formally advertise or market that you serve children with disabilities/special needs? (D, IS)

# WHAT IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE TO SERVING CAMPERS OR MORE CAMPERS WITH DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS? [COMBINED] (D, IS)

We are only able to accept a certain level of disability and can't have campers with more severe issues	62%
We don't have enough properly trained staff for it	43%
Physical accommodations can't be made to include campers with physical disabilities	32%
We haven't thought about it/ there hasn't been a demand for it	28%
We are at capacity accepting any campers at camp not just specifically campers with disabilities/special needs	25%
We need to strike a balance in how many campers with disabilities/special needs we include and we are at that ratio	25%
Camp is too expensive for families of children with disabilities/special needs who often have many medical and other special expenses	23%
Programmatic accommodations are too difficult to make	20%
Parents of campers without disabilities/special needs don't want their kids bunking with kids with disabilities/special needs	7%
We don't have board support for this initiative	5%
Other (SPECIFY)	23%

# TRAINING PROVIDED TO CAMP STAFF DOES NOT ALWAYS MIRROR WHAT PARENTS WANT

The following is a list of training topics that can be offered to camp staff. Please check off all topics that are covered with inclusion staff and all topics that are covered with general staff.	Gen	Inc	Parents Want
Safety	57%	77%	30%
Techniques to help with social skills and peer friend building	55%	64%	74%
Positive behavioral supports/best practices in behavioral methods	54%	60%	65%
How to help campers without disabilities accept and respect campers with disabilities/special needs	53%	62%	64%
Communications skills for interaction between staff and parents	53%	44%	44%
People first language- respectful language for talking about disabilities/special needs	51%	59%	30%
Helping on transitions between activities	50%	42%	56%
Program adaption and accommodation information	50%	36%	43%
Breaking down the skills necessary to complete and activity	49%	39%	51%
How to incorporate Jewish values and learning about disability and differences	45%	51%	N/A
"Aid and fade" - shadowing as needed rather than as a constant presence to facilitate peer relationships	39%	17%	60%
Strategies to connect children with disabilities to Judaism and Israel	36%	32%	N/A
Addressing physical access and least restrictive environment issues	36%	19%	19%
Intake procedures and information	34%	16%	17%
Legal issues regarding disabilities/special needs	32%	15%	10%
Universal design strategies	25%	16%	12%

# DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS THAT CAMPS ARE SERVING

Please check off all of the types of disabilities/special needs campers you have had at your camp in the past (D,IS)	Camp Reports	Parents of Children w/Disability/Special Need
Autism/Asperger's	93%	46%
Specific learning disability	72%	16%
Developmental delay	68%	36%
Emotional disturbance	64%	10%
Intellectual disability	57%	38%
Speech or language impairment	49%	23%
Multiple disabilities	43%	9%
Other health impairment	43%	13%
Orthopedic impairment	37%	8%
Hearing impairment	33%	4%
Deafness	20%	-
Visual impairment, including blindness	17%	2%
Deaf-blindness	9%	1%
Traumatic brain injury	9%	1%

# WHICH TYPES OF DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS DO YOU FEEL YOU ARE NOT EQUIPPED TO HANDLE THAT WOULD CAUSE YOU TO TURN DOWN AN APPLICANT?

PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.(D,IS)

	TOTAL	Dis Prgrm	No Prgrm
Poses a direct threat to the health or safety of him/herself or other employees/participants in the camp	85%	79%	91%
Can't feed themselves	65%	53%	79%
The accommodations are excessively costly, extensive, substantial, or disruptive, or would fundamentally alter the nature or operation of the camp	61%	50%	74%
Can't toilet or shower by themselves	61%	46%	78%
Physical disabilities- we don't have facilities to meet their needs	57%	42%	74%
Elopement/running away	56%	56%	55%
Campers that require a full-time shadow	38%	29%	47%
Campers social skills are not adequate to camp	17%	14%	21%
Camper's intellectual skills won't fit in at camp	14%	10%	19%
Too many medicines	5%	5%	5%
Other	6%	6%	6%

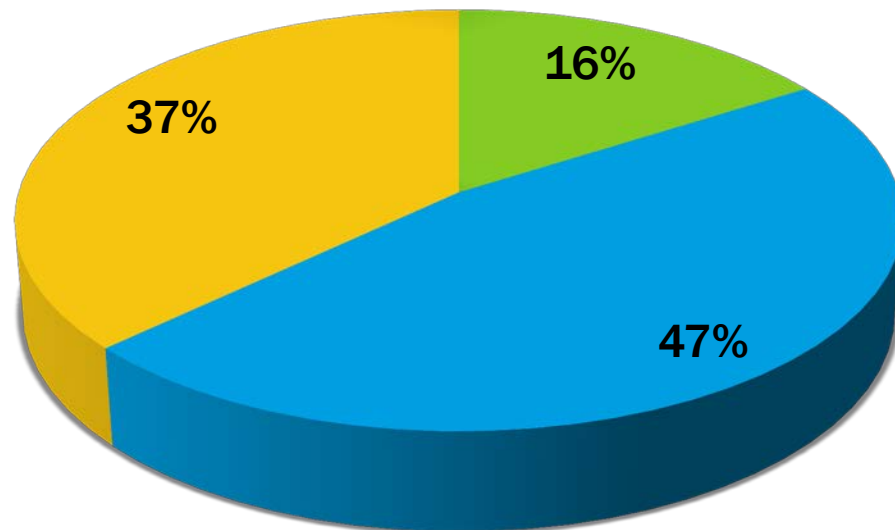
## NEARLY 70% OF CAMPS HAVE LIMITED OR NO WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBILITY

Yes, but it requires significant special assistance to work	16%
Yes, with minimal or no special assistance	15%
Only limited areas are accessible	26%
No, it is not possible at this time	43%

Can a camper in a wheelchair fully integrate at your camp with or w/out special assistance? (D,IS)



# MANY CAMPS DON'T FORESEE BEING ACCESSIBLE TO CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS



- YES, WE ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON IMPROVEMENTS
- YES, BUT IT IS NOT AN IMMEDIATE PRIORITY
- NO

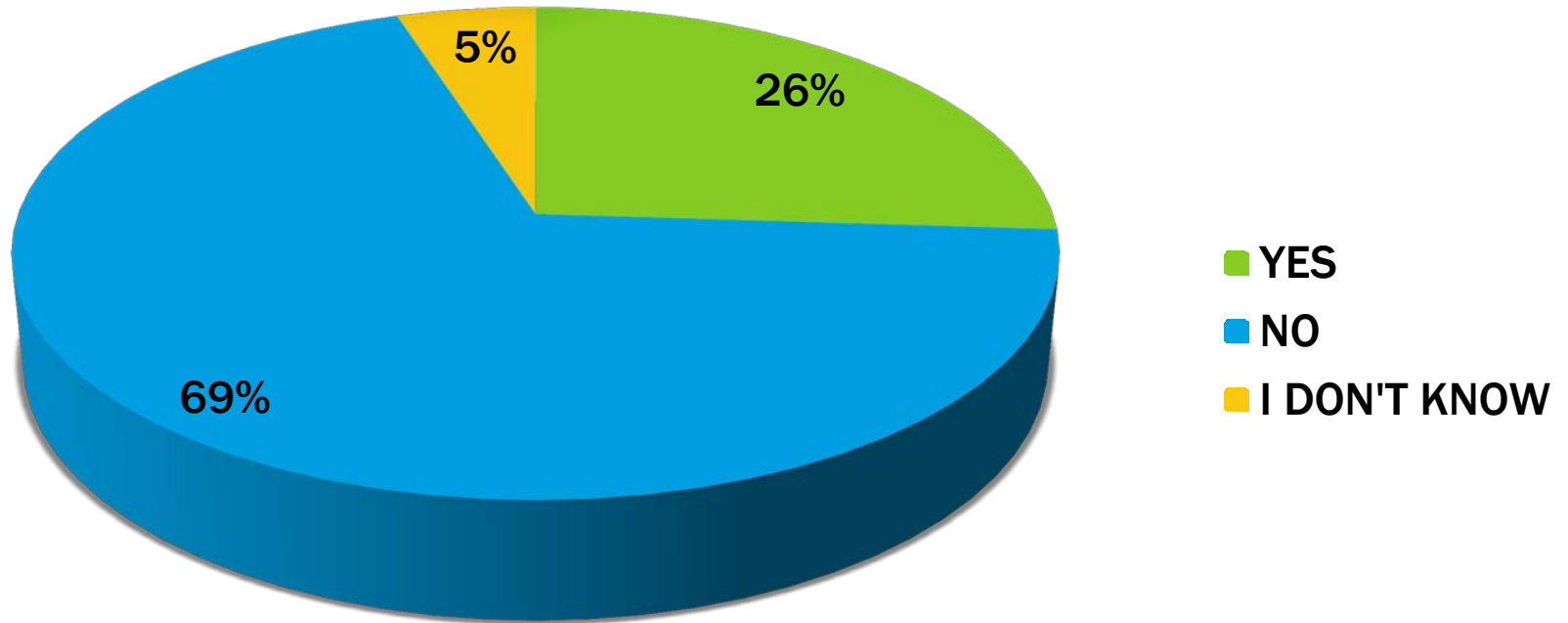
Do you foresee a time when your camp would be made physically accessible to someone in a wheelchair?  
(D)

# CAMPS NEED TRAINING AND KNOWLEDGE ABOVE ALL ELSE

If you could pick the resource that would be most helpful to serve children with disabilities/special needs at camp, which would it be? (D,IS, PW/DIS)

Training for staff	70%
Access to expert advice and best practices	50%
A job bank of qualified applicants to work with children with disabilities/special needs	39%
Funding for camp scholarships	39%
A manual on the soup to nuts of running a successful camp program for children with disabilities/special needs	35%
Funding for capital improvements to allow for physical accessibility at camp	29%
Database of what other camps offer to refer campers we can not accept	19%
Assistance in marketing programs and services for this population	13%
Other (SPECIFY)	5%

# NEARLY 80% OF CAMPS SERVE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS BUT ONLY 26% HAVE A MANUAL/HANDBOOK



Does your camp have a training manual/procedure handbook on how to serve children with disabilities/special needs related issues?(D)

# PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS

# KEY FINDINGS

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- While there are parents/kids/staff who want a specialty camp, **most want inclusion to be with typical kids.**
- Parents want a camp for their kids where *“They offer good supports and accommodations for children with a disability like mine.”*
- Parents feel they don't "*need*" to keep siblings together, agreeing that "It would be nice but it is more important that they each go to the camp that best serves their individual needs."
- Camps are getting **GREAT** marks on infusing Jewish values/learning serving the kids they already have.

# ACCESS TO JEWISH INSTITUTIONS

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- These children with disabilities/special needs are far more likely to go to public school than Jewish day school — and less than half attend religious synagogue school. For many, **camp and their homes ARE THE ADDRESS** for a lot of their Jewish content.
- Fully 25% of parents say their child with a disability reported that they have been turned away from a camp because of their disabilities. 16% were sent home. *More than 46% have been turned away from other Jewish institutions.*

# CAMPS SEE TRAINING AND KNOWLEDGE AS BARRIERS, PARENTS CITE COST FIRST

What are the barriers to overnight camp participation for your child with a disability/special need? (Pw/dis)

Cost of program	47%
Behavior management	38%
Staff is not adequately trained	32%
No program specifically designed for children with my child's specific disability	25%
Being aware of program opportunities	20%
Lack of or poor communication between camp staff and parents/caregivers	19%
Safety concerns	18%
Staff to youth ratio for individuals with disabilities	18%
No inclusive programming	17%
Bullying/cyber bullying	16%
Lack of scholarships	15%
Medication administration	10%
Being uncomfortable in public with how others perceive, judge, or stare at my child	8%
Hours of operations	4%
Other (Specify)	22%

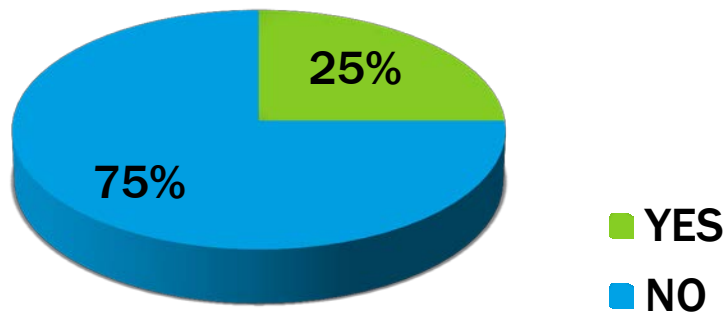
# PARENTS SEEK THE RIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR *THEIR CHILD*

They offer good supports and accommodations for children with a disability like mine	43%
It is a Jewish camp where my child can connect to our heritage and community	34%
It is the only camp that will accept and serve my child	9%
My other children attend the same camp	6%
My child will make friends there	3%
They have fun activities	3%
It is near my home	2%

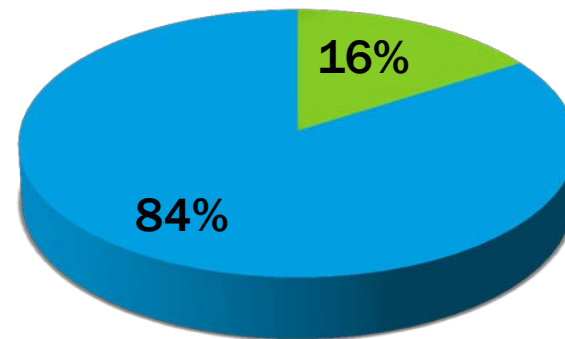
What is the biggest factor in which camp you choose for your child? (Pw/dis)



# EVEN FOR THOSE WHO WILL FIND A CAMP, SUCCESS IS NOT GUARANTEED



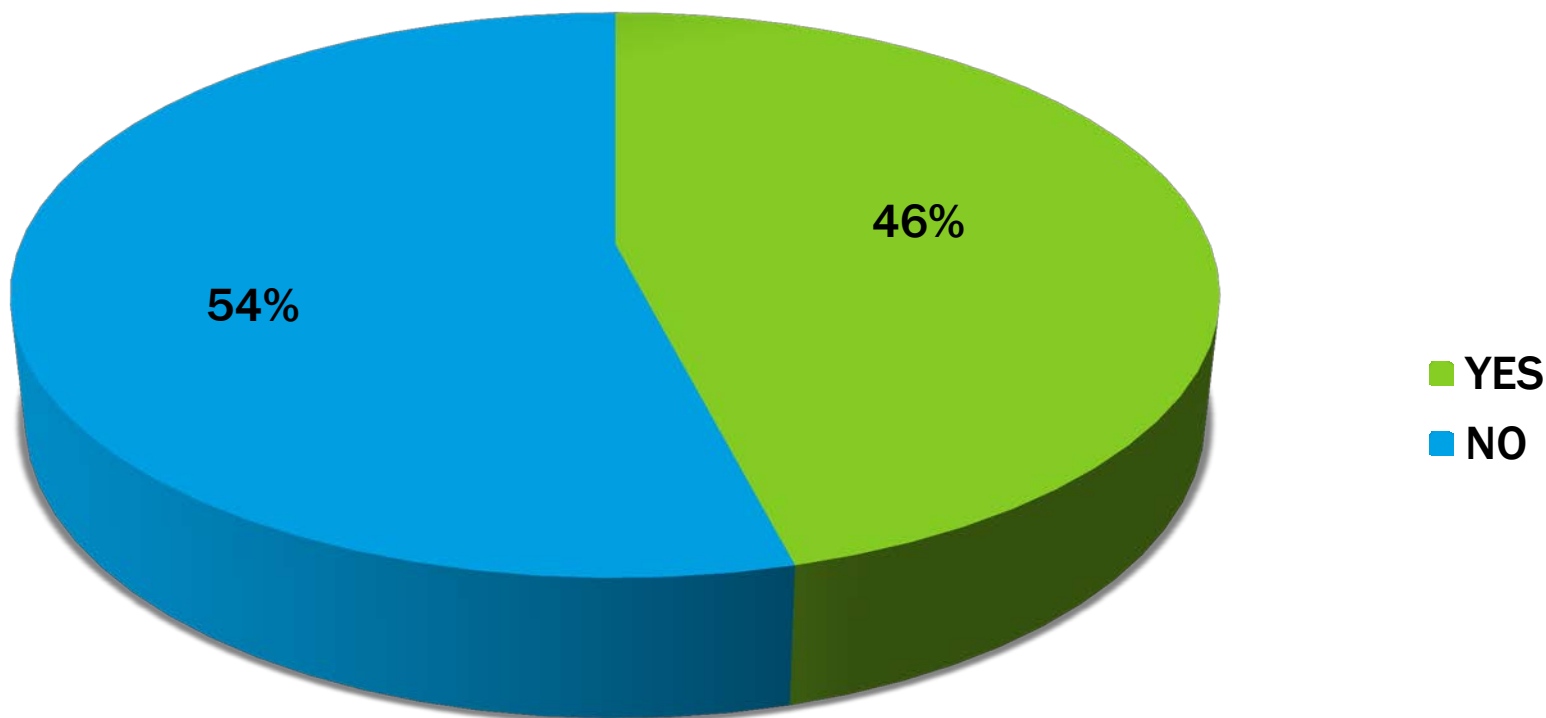
Has your child ever been turned away from an overnight camp because of the camp's inability to make a reasonable accommodation? (Pw/dis)



Has your child ever been sent home from camp because of a reason connected to their disability? (Pw/dis)

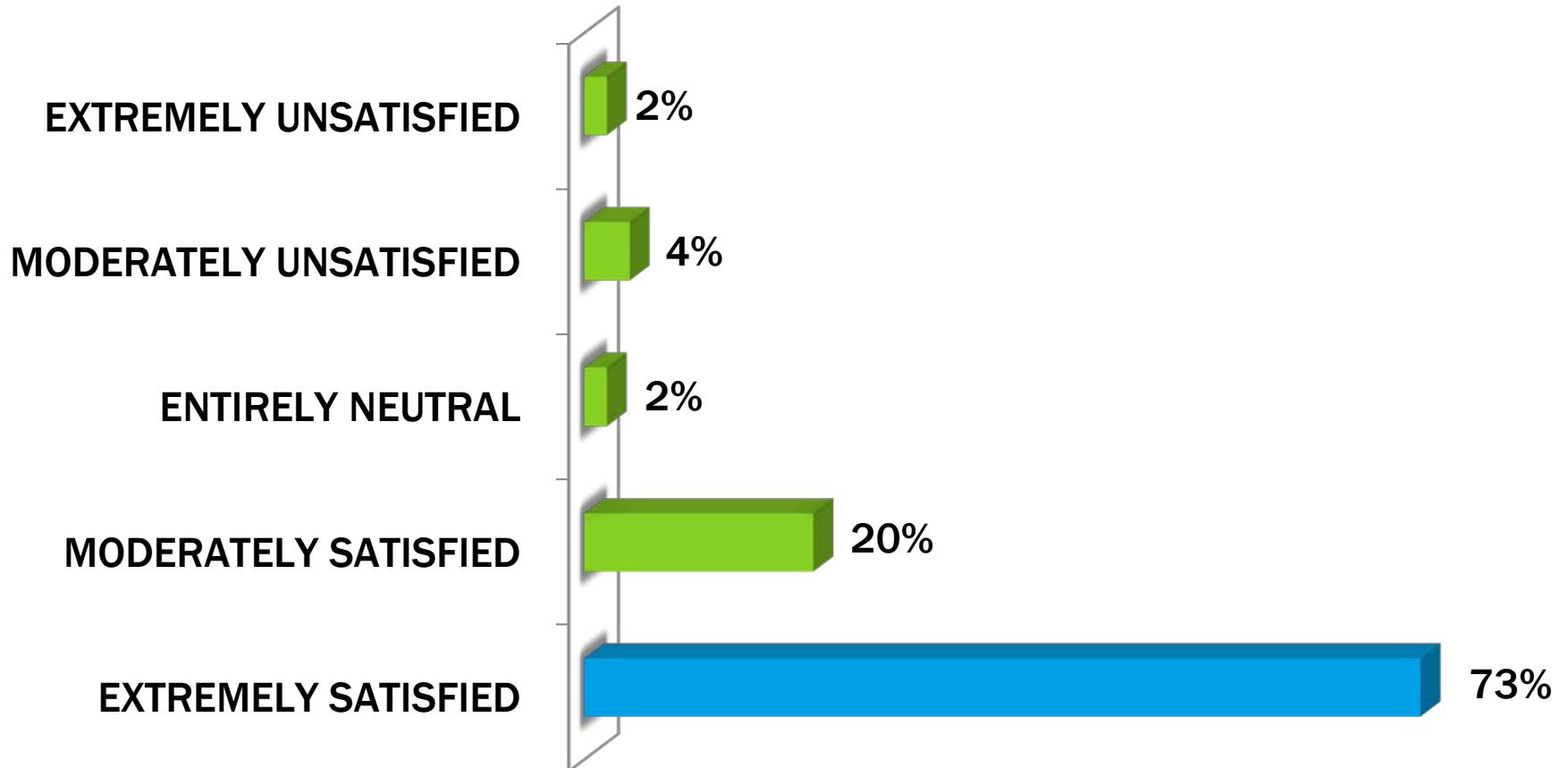
*\*Note- Questions did not specify if camp was Jewish.*

# CAMP PRESENTS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THOSE UNABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN OTHER ASPECTS OF JEWISH LIFE



Has your child ever been turned away from another Jewish program or institution because of their disability? (Pw/dis)

# HUGE SATISFACTION RATINGS!



Overall, how SATISFIED are you with your child's experience in Jewish overnight summer camp? (Pw/dis)

# CAMP OFFERS JEWISH IDENTITY, SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND A CONNECTION TO ISRAEL

Please rate how you feel about your campers experience at camp on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being not at all successful/positive and 10 being extremely successful/positive. (Pw/dis)	1-3	4-6	7-9	10
Makes friends with campers without a disability	23%	21%	30%	26%
Got a closer connection to Israel	20%	22%	27%	31%
Makes friends with campers with disabilities/special needs	12%	11%	41%	38%
Making friends	13%	15%	39%	34%
Enjoys equal access to camp activities	5%	15%	31%	48%
Relationships and interactions with camp staff	8%	6%	29%	57%
Fully welcomed at camp just like campers without a disability	6%	8%	20%	65%
Included at camp just like campers without a disability	7%	15%	27%	50%
Appreciating, enjoying, and connecting to Judaism	7%	8%	33%	52%

# Foundation for Jewish Camp

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646-278-4546

# KEY TO WHICH RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED QUESTION SETS

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A- All Respondents

D- Directors, Executive Directors, Assistant Directors

S- All Staff-Includes: Directors, Executive Directors, Assistant Directors, General Staff, and Inclusion Staff

IS- Inclusion Staff

P- All Parents

PW/DIS- Parents of Children with Disabilities/Special Needs

PW/OUT- Parents of Children without Disabilities/Special Needs

C- Campers