

Yedid Nefesh Advisory Group – Who’s Who?



Dr. Esther Altmann - Esther Altmann, Ph.D., is the Director of Pastoral Education at Yeshivat Maharat and is a clinical psychologist in private practice. Dr. Altmann has expertise in adolescent development and young adulthood, eating disorders, ADHD, and female cancers. She specializes in marital and family therapy and enjoys working with adults across the lifespan.

Formerly on the teaching faculty of New York University, Adelphi University and YCT Rabbinical School, she has also been a supervising psychologist at several New York City hospitals. Dr. Altmann consults to schools and communities on eating disorders, and writes and lectures on mental health topics.



Amy Bram - Amy brings over 20 years of camp leadership experience to AIJC. She recently launched the inaugural summer for Tiyul Summer Adventures Day and Overnight Camp at the Pearlstone Center. Previously she opened Horizon Day Camp, serving children with cancer and their siblings, directed Camp Milldale out of the Baltimore JCC, served as the Outdoor Adventure Coordinator at Camp Louise and worked as the Director of Exceptional Experiences at Ramah Darom in Georgia. Her roots lie in outdoor and environmental education with 10 years as the Day Camp Director of the Chattahoochee Nature Center's Camp Kingfisher in Atlanta and the Co-Director of the Teva Learning Center in NYC. She is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin.



Helene Drobenare - Helene Drobenare, MSW, MA, holds a Master of Social Work from Yeshiva University and Master of Administration in Organizational Change Management from the New School of Social Research. Helene has been working with youth for 20 years. She grew up in BBYO and went on to work in their leadership camp programs at Perlman and Beber camps. She has also served as the coordinator for the March of the Living program, and the director of programs for Masada Israel Summer Programs. Helene lived in Israel for four years where she worked for TRACKS Adventures as Director of Youth Programs & Marketing. Helene has spent years committed to improving the lives of children in Africa through

her volunteer work in South Africa and Tanzania. Helene has served as the director of CYJ Sprout Lake since September 1999.



Dr. Samantha Fuld - Samantha Fuld (she/her/hers) is a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Master's program at the University of Maryland School of Social Work where she teaches both foundational and advanced courses in human behavior, social work practice with individuals, advanced clinical interventions and cognitive behavior therapies. She received her DSW in clinical social work from New York University's Silver School of Social Work where she focused on the impact of trauma and stigma on mental health in people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and worked to promote a critical social model of understanding mental health and disability in social work practice and education. Dr. Fuld has held a variety of supervisory,

clinical, administrative and consulting positions throughout her career which included work as a mental health clinician and clinical supervisor at a New York City agency providing services for people with IDD, serving as director of a summer camping program for teens on the autism spectrum, and program development, grants allocation and advocacy in the fields of mental health and disabilities. She also has post-graduate training in Schema Therapy. Dr. Fuld is committed to breaking down the stigma surrounding mental/behavioral health and creating supportive, inclusive spaces that value neurodiversity.



Dr. Aviva Levine Jacobs - Aviva completed a joint degree in Psychology and Judaic Studies at Brown University. She received her PysD in clinical psychology from the CA School of Professional Psychology in San Francisco with a focus on children and families. Aviva has worked as a therapist supporting children, teens, and families in both clinic settings and private practice. Aviva has a long history with Camp Ramah in California as a camper, counselor, unit head, and staff trainer. She currently serves as Director of Camper Care at Ramah CA, in the role of safeguarding the social-emotional well-being of campers and staff members, supporting staff training and education, and supervising the camper care team. She also serves as the Senior Yoetz Coordinator for

the National Ramah Commission and as a mental health consultant for the Childcare Network of Evanston. Her favorite camp moments are the conversations and connections that come alive at camp and her favorite camp food is blueberry muffins on shabbat morning.



Professor Meg Owens - Dr. Megan Owens is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration at Western Illinois University. She received her doctoral degree from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign specializing in youth development practices in the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism. Megan has spent the past 20 years in positions that allowed her to design, implement, evaluate, and advise a variety of summer camp programs. Megan's multiple camp positions have informed her current role of educator and mentor to young adults preparing to enter the youth development field. Megan's research focuses on the development and facilitation of youth social-emotional

learning skills through out of school time programs with a particular emphasis on the youth-adult relationship in summer camps. She has presented research at several ACA National Conference Research Symposiums as well as been an invited speaker and staff trainer focusing on various camp-related topics. Megan is a member of the American Camp Association Healthy Camp IV Committee where she has been able to contribute to the membership's awareness and knowledge of camper and camp counselor Mental, Emotional and Social Health (MESH) needs.



Rabbi Rex Perlmeter - Rabbi Rex Perlmeter was ordained at HUC/JIR in 1985, and went on to serve as spiritual leader of Temple Israel of Greater Miami and the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. After serving on staff at the Union for Reform Judaism for five years, he has gone on to found the Jewish Wellness Center of North Jersey, a practice dedicated to supporting all engaged in "seeking Oneness in body, heart, mind and soul." In addition to having trained as a Jewish Mindfulness Meditation Teacher and a Spiritual Director, he received his Masters of Social Work from New York University in May 2016.

Rex also serves at the Central Conference of American Rabbis as Special Advisor for Member Care and Wellness.

Rex's relationship with Jewish camping goes back to childhood, when he attended an unaffiliated Jewish camp through high school. The relationship continued through rabbinic school, when he served on staff of URJ Camp Harlam. He and his family returned to Harlam beginning in 1996, when he and his wife, Rabbi Rachel Hertzman, joined the camp faculty, and their children Jackie, Sarah, Mitch and Nate began their years as campers and counselors. The relationship deepened when the camp community was a mainstay for the family as they began coping with the death of Mitch at age 17 in 2011. They established a scholarship fund in his honor, which the camp has since made the primary fund for assisting families in making Jewish camping possible for their kids. Rex's service to Jewish camping is inspired by his firsthand knowledge of the many ways in which it shapes and strengthens our children and their families.



Reuben Rotman - Reuben D. Rotman is the founding President and CEO of the Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies (www.networkjhsa.org). The Network was established in May 2017 as an international membership association with the mission of strengthening and advancing the Jewish human service sector. Today, The Network serves as the leading voice for the sector; the go-to for best practice research, innovation, and partnerships.

Most recently, Reuben served as the Executive Director of Jewish Family Service of MetroWest New Jersey, where he held several increasingly responsible positions for 21 years, and previously he held positions with UJA Federation of New York, Jewish Family Service of Metropolitan Detroit and Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit.

Reuben earned a double Master of Arts from Brandeis University; in the Management of Human Services from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management and in Jewish Communal Service from the Hornstein Program for Jewish Professional Leadership. Reuben earned his Bachelor of Arts in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and in Sociology also from Brandeis University.



Aaron Selkow - Aaron Selkow is a leader, devoted camp advocate, educator and coach.

Aaron served as Director of URJ Camp Harlam from 2011 to 2016, and in 2017 assumed the role of Executive Director. At Harlam, Aaron has helped to lead extensive growth and innovation. From 1994 to 2008, Aaron led Pinemere Camp. During that period, he was selected for FJC's first Executive Leadership Institute and the Mandel Center for Jewish Education's first *Lekhu Lakhem* Senior Fellowship. From 2008 to 2010, Aaron was VP of Program Services at JCC Association and Director of the Merrin Center for Teen Services leading the movement's camps, overseeing the Merrin Fellowship program, and managing various program areas (including the JCC Maccabi Games®).

Aaron has been featured in print, digital and visual media and has been recognized for his outstanding service as a professional, consultant and volunteer.



Dr. Jeremy Wernick - Jeremy Wernick, LMSW is Clinical Assistant Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Hassenfeld Children's Hospital at NYU Langone working in the Gender and Sexuality Service and Anita Saltz Institute for Anxiety and Mood Disorders. Mr. Wernick's clinical practice focuses on providing Evidence-Based care to children, adolescents, and young adults with gender dysphoria and co-occurring mood and anxiety disorders, many of whom engage in life-threatening behaviors. Mr. Wernick has completed intensive trainings in Dialectical Behavior Therapy through Behavioral Tech, LLC, foundational training in gender affirming care through the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, and participated in both the Olim and Cornerstone Fellowships while working at URJ Camp Coleman.