

Shōmer

COLLECTIVE

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025 - 2027



The Need

Studies* show that 90 percent of Americans say it's important to discuss their wishes for end-of-life care, yet only 30 percent actually do so.

"Jews do death well," people told us when we were figuring out the first steps in our work. Yet what we know of Jewish wisdom and practice around death is largely focused on what happens *after* someone dies. Too many of us still find ourselves in moments of crisis around end of life because we're missing guidance for what happens *before* death.

Crisis occurs when we haven't faced the reality of our mortality, haven't talked about or planned for the inevitable. This isn't a uniquely Jewish problem; this is a contemporary challenge, felt acutely in the United States.

The result can be devastating, both for the person facing death, and for those left to mourn. Without the benefit of planning, education, and frequent conversation, too often, patients die in ways contrary to what they would have wanted. Too few professionals are trained to help in these vital areas in Jewish communal life. And loved ones in mourning are crushed by a mountain of paperwork, haunted by unanswered questions.

What were mom's wishes?

Where did she keep her important documents?

How did dad want to be remembered?

Who can help us now?

**Source: The Conversation Project*

Our Response

Shomer Collective is leveraging Jewish wisdom and tradition to inspire and transform how American Jews navigate mortality. We effect this change by working with organizations and communal systems, while retaining a pulse on emergent needs through our offerings to individuals.

With our accessible programs for individuals and families, we maintain a vital connection with the realities people are facing today. As individuals from across the country turn to us in crisis, we curate and iterate on much-needed resources. This then informs the development of a powerful toolkit for the professionals we serve.

Our trainings and partner engagements equip professionals with the tools to foster early conversations about death. And we don't stop there; we also build their abilities to support grieving individuals *after* death, supported by Jewish wisdom and practice.

End-of-life professionals leave our trainings better prepared to serve their clients with more Jewish wisdom, while the Jewish communal professionals we serve become more comfortable talking about death and grief. This is how we change the landscape.

Through the work of training and bringing people together through our convenings, Shomer Collective is uniquely positioned to foster a Jewish end-of-life ecosystem that is interconnected in its approach and transformative for end-of-life preparation and grief support in our Jewish communities.

Together, we can empower more people to benefit from the wisdom of Jewish tradition about life and death and normalize these conversations.

Join us to talk about death, Jewishly.

Melanie

Rabbi Melanie Levav, BCC, LMSW
Executive Director



SIGNATURE OFFERINGS:

Shomer Collective is proud to offer a host of signature programs and offerings, each designed to address a **unique facet of death and dying.**



What Matters: About End of Life

Values-driven Advance Care Planning (ACP), with an additional focus on post-death considerations



Professional Trainings

Role-specific support for those working in Jewish communities. This includes facilitator trainings and workshops focused on end-of-life topics.



Death Over Dinner: Jewish Edition

With a Jewish lens, these structured conversation spaces encourage participants to explore how they choose to live their lives, knowing that life is finite.



Shiva Circle

Shiva Circle combines a digital platform, expert guidance, and accessible resources to create a world where no one grieves alone.



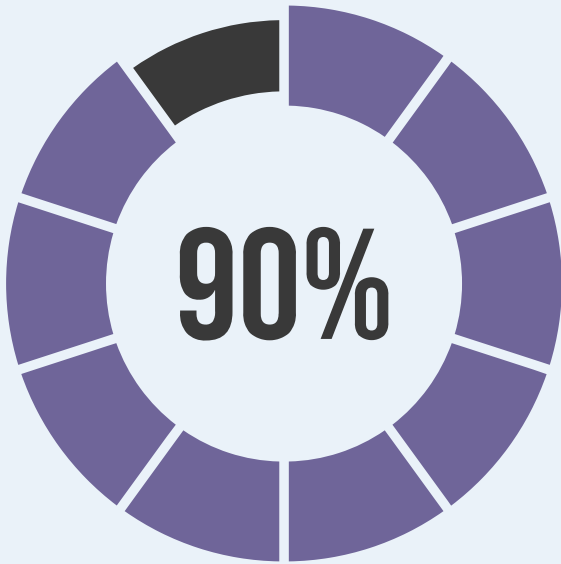
Collective Convening

An annual online gathering for the Jewish end-of-life field to come together and tackle timely topics in the world of death and dying.

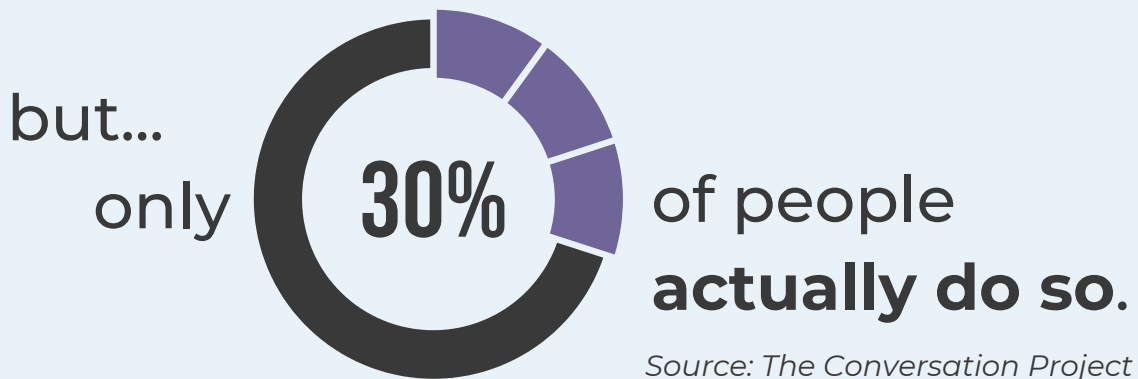


Jewish End-of-Life Doula Network

Networking, group learning, and resources for doulas accompanying clients between life & death.



of people say it's important to **discuss** end of life care and wishes.



Source: The Conversation Project

"I've never been part of a cohort that has such diversity of professional life. It's a testament to your work that you can be such a hub for a wide range of people."

-Participant, Educator Fellowship

OUR VALUES

Jewishly Grounded

Our work is rooted in Jewish wisdom and tradition, to support those who seek to benefit from Jewish insight on death and dying.



Collaborative

We strive to foster a sense of connection, especially for those who do not have communities of their own.

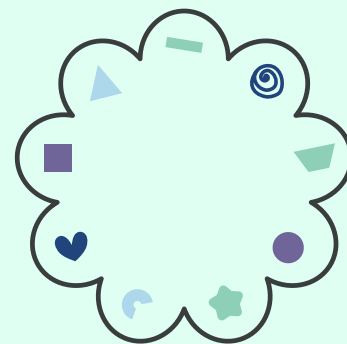
We accomplish this by partnering with organizations within and outside of the Jewish end-of-life sphere, joining together to reach those who seek to engage with Jewish wisdom around end of life.



Pluralistic and Inclusive

We seek to serve Jews from all backgrounds, cultures, identities, and degrees of knowledge.

All offerings are accessible and inclusive for a variety of backgrounds, including staff of Jewish organizations who are not themselves Jewish.



Shomer


COLLECTIVE

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

In Hebrew, *Shomer* means “guard.” The role of the *shomer* in Jewish practice is to watch over the body of the deceased between death and burial, providing **sacred accompaniment** to the soul as it begins the journey of separation from the body.

The aim of Shomer Collective is to bring this spirit of sacred accompaniment to living in the face of mortality. It is our intention to inspire entire communities to *collectively guard* the sacred opportunity that each day brings to live more fully, knowing that **death is a part of life.**

“Life’s ultimate meaning remains obscure



*“Your presentation was
suitable to those who come
from every flavor of Judaism
and even those who are not
Jewish. It was informative
and invaluable...in my
dealings with hospice
patients and families.”*

-Participant, Talking About Death training

unless it is reflected upon in the face of death.”

-Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

OUR MISSION

OUR APPROACH



THEORY OF CHANGE

OUR VISION

Shomer Collective leverages Jewish wisdom to transform communal culture around death and dying, fostering proactive planning and robust support systems for end-of-life moments.

Grounded in pluralistic and inclusive practices, we serve as a trusted, collaborative hub for the Jewish communal ecosystem.



To transform Jewish communal culture, we:

Train professionals within and outside of Jewish communal organizations by providing skills, knowledge, and curated resources.

Collaborate across the Jewish end-of-life landscape and offer field-wide convenings to enrich the ecosystem.

So that...

Professionals and organizations have the expertise and tools to proactively engage their constituents around end-of-life preparation and grief.

The Jewish end-of-life field is better coordinated, connected, and collaborative.

And over time...

Death and dying support is embedded within Jewish organizations where individuals preemptively and comfortably prepare for end of life, and feel supported in navigating their grief.

The Jewish ecosystem is intentional and interconnected in its approach to end-of-life preparation and grief support.

Allowing us to create a world where..

End-of-life matters are spoken about openly, thoughtfully, and frequently, creating opportunities for many more people to engage with Jewish wisdom, values, and practices.



OBJECTIVES

NURTURE

Jewish organizational transformation.

Shomer Collective's work will equip Jewish organizational professionals with the tools and expertise they need to proactively engage in conversations about death and dying, to support their constituents in navigating delicate moments regarding end-of-life and grief.

As part of our efforts, we will build strategic partnerships, fine-tune our menu of organizational trainings, and offer specialized support for Jewish professionals and lay leaders.

Through direct collaboration with organizations, we will elevate the impact professionals have on the individuals they serve while furthering our mission in the process.

INNOVATE

through our offerings to individuals.

Our signature programs will continue to include education and support for individuals and families.

We will continue to refine our offerings with purposeful experimentation, and curate materials for specific audiences.

The launch of Shiva Circle is designed to expand our post-death support, so no one has to grieve alone.

ELEVATE

the Jewish end-of-life field.

We are uniquely positioned to foster a Jewish ecosystem that is intentional and interconnected in its approach to end-of-life preparation and grief support.

Through collaborations and an annual field-wide convening, the Jewish end-of-life field will be better coordinated, connected, and collaborative.

Through the elevation of Jewish wisdom for end-of-life professionals serving Jewish communities and increasing knowledge and comfort in talking about death and grief to Jewish communal professionals, Jewish communal culture will be transformed.

ENHANCE

our internal infrastructure.

At this critical point in our organizational growth and development, we must ensure that our internal structures and systems can support our ambitious programmatic goals and our continual pursuit of organizational sustainability.

We will increase board engagement, create a plan to ensure financial sustainability and maintain brand clarity.

Read detailed objectives in the Appendix

SUCCESS

NURTURING of **Jewish organizational transformation.**

- 250 trained facilitators Death Over Dinner: Jewish Edition (60% growth)
- 150 trained facilitators for What Matters: Caring Conversations About End of Life (400% growth)
- An upgraded resource library
- Strategic partnerships with 60 organizations
- Development of a Jewish End-of-Life Doula Training

INNOVATION **through our offerings to individuals.**

- A full suite of online grief resources designed for individuals
- The national launch of Shiva Circle and Shiva Guide training
- Annual attendance of educational programs reaches an average of 500 per year, (100% growth), recurring signature programs reach an average of 600 per year (100% growth)
- Development of a downloadable advance care planning tool for What Matters: Caring Conversations About End of Life
- Population-specific offerings created in collaboration with partners across the field

LOOKS LIKE...

an **ELEVATED** Jewish end-of-life field.

- Quarterly thought leadership and publication
- Presentations at 12 conferences, elevating end-of-life topics
- The Collective Convening reaches over 500 professionals and lay leaders, generating revenue and highlighting timely issues
- Increased national conversation about grief in the Jewish community
- Coordinated efforts among partners to elevate the Jewish end-of-life field

ENHANCED internal infrastructure.

- An annual development plan
- Sustainable earned revenue streams
- Expanded board diversity
- Annual impact report
- Website updates reflective of our new strategic focus

GRATITUDE

This strategic plan is possible because of the diligence and dedication of many.

Thank you to our **Board of Directors**, for their leadership and input.

Thank you to our **Strategic Planning Committee**, for their vision and enthusiasm for the future of this vital work.

Strategic Planning Committee

Marnie Berk
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Tony Felzen
Sally Kaplan
Adina Poupko
Rabbi Melanie Levav
Rebecca Missel
Gila Silverman
Samantha Zellman

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David Steinhardt*
Sarah Gould Steinhardt*
Karina Totah

*Founding Board Member

UDE

Our gratitude extends to:

- Third Plateau, for their consultant support
- Ria Mapson, for her design
- Our donors, who make this work possible

Ready to partner with Shomer Collective in actualizing this vision?

Contact Executive Director, Rabbi Melanie Levav.

melanie@shomercollective.org



TALKING ABOUT DEATH, JEWISHLY.