



MILWAUKEE
JEWISH FEDERATION

HOST FAMILY GUIDE 2022-2023

Milwaukee Jewish Federation

Partnership2Gether

Shin Shinim Program

Sovev Kinneret Region



הסוכנות היהודית
JEWISH AGENCY
לארץ ישראל
FOR ISRAEL



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Sovev Kinneret | Milwaukee - St. Paul

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I Thank You

Let us begin by saying, “Thank you!” Your decision to open your home will bring great rewards to your entire family, as your family becomes a “living bridge” to our partnered communities in the Sovev Kinneret region, around the Sea of Galilee, in Israel.

The following material is intended to answer basic questions and provide some guidance to help you make the most of this opportunity.

II About the Shin Shinim Program

The Shin Shinim program was created by the Jewish Agency for Israel together with the Jewish Federations of North America and has been operating for many years.

a. Who are the Shin Shinim?

Shin Shinim (the Hebrew “Shnat Sherut” or Year of Service) are two 18-year-old Israelis, often from Milwaukee’s sister region around the Sea of Galilee – Sovev Kinneret. They are deferring a year of military service to volunteer in Milwaukee as informal educators in the community and to serve as “the face of Sovev Kinneret”.

They went through a rigorous selection process, which included interviews in Israel, psychological screenings by the Jewish Agency, workshops, and final interviews with representatives from Milwaukee. Selection was based on previous experiences in group work, leadership skills, and English language capability to name just a few of the criteria evaluated.

These talented young people have made the difficult decision to put off their army service for a year, and instead, to offer themselves as ambassadors of their country in to service for the Jewish people. This is a significant sacrifice on their part and for this alone they deserve our admiration. While our program is part of our P2G partnership, the Shin Shinim will seek to bring all of Israel to our Milwaukee community.

b. What will they be doing?

They will serve our community in a variety of ways. They will teach about Israel and Israeli culture in the JCC, MJDS, Nicolet High School, synagogues, pre-schools, summer camp and other locations throughout Milwaukee. They will help prepare community-wide programs about Israel and they will assist with our youth groups. They will touch virtually every part of our Jewish community, and the non-Jewish community as well. At times there will be additions or changes to their schedules, of which we will inform you immediately.

The Shin Shinim are a tremendous asset to our community, and we look forward to working with you to make it the most successful experience possible for everyone.

c. Program Goals

In Schools

- Provide informal educational support to schools participating in the program such as the Milwaukee Jewish Day School, the JCC Gan Ami Preschool, Nicolet High School
- Serve as an educational resource on Israel for preschools, day schools, congregational schools, and teachers
- Create and implement school-wide programs that bring Israeli life and culture to students
- Develop and participate in extracurricular activities to promote Israel activism and awareness
- Create public displays to promote awareness of Israel and the Sovev Kinneret Region
- Serve as role models for students about leadership and Israel relationships
- Develop personal connections with students and their families
- Share information with educators about access to programming and curricula provided by the Jewish Agency with help from the Community Shlichim

Teens

- Engage teens in learning about Israel, building personal connections with them
- Create and implement teen-oriented programs for youth groups and to build identity and solidarity with Israel

Community

- Serve as a living bridge through the Milwaukee partnership to connect the community at large with the Sovev Kinneret.
- Serve as a spokesperson for the Sovev Kinneret on an as-needed basis, including presentations to agency leadership, synagogues, JCC's Men's Club, the Jewish Home and Care Center, the Jewish Museum and other community organizations.
- Create and implement Israel programs for the Jewish community and the community at large

III Life at Home

First things first, **It's your home!** The Shin Shinim will become a part of your household. We encourage you to treat them as family members with the same warmth and understanding as well clear expectations for behavior. They must live by the rules of your home. We encourage you to speak candidly about how your home functions.

Note: Please remember that at times they will be totally overwhelmed by their experience, not to mention the language. You may need to repeat certain things in order that they understand. This is especially valid if you are their Host Family for the first session!

Two Basic Principles of Hosting

1. Make regular time to share about your life and be interested to learn about their lives
2. Be available to lend a helping hand, counsel, and to give more than occasional hug

As host parent you are a caregiver seeing to it that your teens are properly housed, fed, and protected from harm:

- You need to provide them with their own bedroom
- A modicum of private space is important
- You are a teacher who is introducing your teen to life in America
- You are a willing (and non-judgmental) ear who is interested in how the day was

When there are problems that seem institutional, please do not wait to reach out to your P2G Coordinator, Susie Rosengarten.

a. Talking about House Rules

The Shin Shinim will have a unique role in your home. She/He is a guest, but we also hope that as times passes, they will become part of your family. Israeli teens generally enjoy more freedom than their American peers, so it is important for them to have an understanding about how your home and family operate. Below are just a few topics that we suggest that you discuss together

- What time do they need to be home?
- What time is dinner? Does the family eat together? How would you like the Shin Shinim to communicate with you about their presence at dinner?
- How late can they accept phone calls?
- What are the rules for your stereo, television, computer and using the net?
- What do you expect about dishes in the sink?
- Does everyone take a turn bringing out the garbage?
- Are they welcome to go in the refrigerator and kitchen cabinets? *Hint:* Find out what foods your Shin Shin likes or dislikes
- Who changes the bed sheets?
- How does the shower work? How frequently may they use it?
- Where do you keep the towels, the toilet paper, etc.?
- How does your family handle the laundry?
- Do you have a family bulletin board for messages?
- What is acceptable clothing to wear around the house?

b. Accommodations

The Shin Shinim living with you should have her/his own room, just like any other teen living at home. This is her/his personal space, though obviously following any rules that you have at home (keeping their rooms tidy, etc.)

Food is particularly important in the hosting relationship. Since the time of Abraham, the Jewish people have placed a strong value on welcoming guests with meals. Food conveys strong cultural meaning about your hospitality. A lack of food makes an equally strong statement! As with all members of your family, please be sure they know the rules of food in your home. As you would with your own teen, please be sure they have food to eat. They may be too shy to ask, so you need to! If you are going out to dinner, as you would with your own teen, please be sure they have food to eat if they are not joining you. Please take them shopping once or twice with you so that you can have a chance to find out what they like to eat.

c. Family Activities/Trips

When planning family activities during school vacations or weekends, please consider including your Shin Shinim in order to make them feel like part of the family.

If you are going away, whether or not you plan to take your teen with you please be sure your community coordinator knows your plan. The Shin Shinim enjoy traveling and may take trips on their own with their family's permission. **The Shin Shin Coordinator will require that they have a signed letter from their parents in Israel to travel alone.**

We understand that there are family events and/or vacations that come up during the year that can require your family to travel out of town. When possible, it is always a good family bonding experience to include your Shin Shin, but there is absolutely no obligation to do as this may be an added family expense.

If the adults will be gone from the home overnight, the Shin Shinim supervisors need to know. The supervisors can help find alternative accommodations for a short period like a weekend or week, while you/your family are out of town.

d. Holidays

Holidays are an opportunity for you to introduce your Shin Shinim to the way in which the American community celebrates. This is a time for you to explain how your family celebrates the holidays as well. You can use this opportunity to learn more about your shin shin's family and their observances.

Holidays can be very difficult. Jewish holidays are the national culture of Israel. Holidays inevitably bring a longing for family and friends. Your teen may be disheartened as they recognize themselves as "outsider". They may become wistful and subdued. Before a holiday, share with your Shin Shin about how your family observes. There is not much more you can do but try to be sensitive, include them, and show them that you understand, and you care!

Tips & Tricks

- Purchase a good Hebrew-English dictionary if you do not have one
- Provide your Shin Shin with a house key
- Provide your Shin Shin with an emergency contact list including all cell phone numbers for members of your family

IV Issues and Concerns

a. Feelings

There are tremendous similarities in culture and values between Israelis and Americans. After all, a Jewish mother or father is the same throughout the world! However, there are also significant cultural differences. Be aware and encourage your teen to talk about how they are feeling. They will experience culture shock and they need your help and guidance to work through their feelings. Some students have traveled previously, but for others, this is the first time they will be outside of Israel. Please be sensitive to the issues that come from this. At times, you are a cultural advisor who will need to explain behaviors that seem odd. The intertwining of differences and bonding based upon what we share, is what living bridges are all about!

Your Shin Shin may go through periods of guilt about not being in Israel while their friends are serving in the army. This can be especially difficult during periods of tension in the region. Just as you would with your own teen, please reach out and engage in conversation. However hard it is for an American teen to talk about feelings, imagine that magnified by the limitations of trying to express yourself in a foreign language - English! Remember that speaking in English can be stressful and exhausting at first. Host parents have commented that it often takes four to six weeks for things to come together.

Note: Especially in the first half of the year, the shin shinim are going through huge adjustments. Keep this in mind if you are hosting in the beginning of their time here.

Hosting takes a lot of work, but the rewards are ample!!

b. Time Management

Some host families have found that their Shin Shin is so busy with community work and preparations that it becomes a challenge to find times when the host family and the Shin Shin are both free. Sometimes the Shin Shin is spending too much time on preparation for their programs that they do not have time to relax, or even sleep properly. In those cases, we urge you to contact Susie, she can help take care of this.

c. Finance

The Shin Shinim will receive a stipend of \$250 per month for their personal incidentals. They are here to volunteer, and their visa does not allow them to work otherwise. Aside from the stipend they will receive a stipend for winter clothes, and for summer camp gear before going to the JCC Camp Interlaken.

Though as a member of the household it is reasonable to ask for help periodically (as you would of any family member), your Shin Shin is here in America to work on behalf of the Jewish community. They are not here for the purpose of providing domestic service or childcare. However, they may be approached by families or friends to occasionally babysit for some additional pocket money.

d. Health Insurance

Each Shin Shin has a major medical type of policy through the Jewish Agency. This policy requires them to pay for medical expenses and then to submit them to the company for reimbursement. The Shin Shinim and their parents participated in a complete briefing from the Jewish Agency about the coverage and the procedures for reimbursement. Dr. Sharyl Paley has been the Shin Shin doctor for the past several years. Dr. Paley has her offices at the Children's Medical Group.

e. Drugs and Alcohol

There is not any room in our program to tolerate illegal drug use. All Shin Shinim have received written and verbal assurance that they should expect to be sent home should this be a problem. Please do not wonder if calling us is the right thing to do. Call immediately should this be an issue!

V Logistics

a. Transportation

The two emissaries share one car and are fully insured through the JCC's insurance policy. They are the only ones allowed to drive the vehicle. The insurance policy also does not allow the shin shinim to transport additional passengers in the car. They are not permitted to drive out of State in this car, but occasional trips to Madison and northern Wisconsin have been permitted. They are reimbursed for gas and repairs as authorized by the Community P2G Coordinator and JCC Shin Shin coordinator Rabbi Shari Shamah. At your discretion, you may allow them to drive your cars as long as your insurance covers them.

They will also get additional driving instructions upon arrival to get acquainted with the laws in the US and they will get special winter driving tutoring with the first snow fall.

b. Cell phones

The Shin Shinim are provided with a sim card to use within the US. They will have the opportunity to make international calls from their office.

c. Vacation time and conferences

The Shin Shinim will have a scheduled vacation to return to Israel for a mid-term break, generally around mid- February. Ideally, they will both go home and return to the States at the same time.

In November they usually go for a weekend to a Shlichim/Shin Shinim conference organized by the Jewish Agency (exact dates at the end of this document). Some years there might be another weekend planned in early spring in Chicago.

VI Visitors

Family or friends of your shin shin may want to come and visit. Visitors must make their own arrangements for overnight accommodations. Host families in the US are not expected to provide housing to their shin shin's visitors, and it is our policy that the shin shinim may not ask their US family to host their visitors. A shin shin's significant other may not spend the night with the shin shin at their host family's home.

VI In Conclusion

Let us end, the way we began, "Thank you!"

We hope you find the information in this Guide helpful in making your family's experience a special one. The *Shin Shin Program* provides a rare gift to the Jewish community of Milwaukee—the opportunity to develop a close personal relationship with Israelis and Israel. Many of the Shin Shinim in other communities have indicated that the host family experience was one of the highlights of their experience. Every family's experience will be unique, so your input is invited, and valuable.

If you have questions (and you will), please do not hesitate to call your Shin Shin supervisors.

Contact list supervisors and agency contacts:

Daily Supervisors

Susie Rosengarten, P2G Coordinator

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