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Expanded Push For Early Ed

A year-old interdenominational initiative in Colorado, focused on early childhood education and bringing synagogues together with the Jewish community centers movement, is set to expand beginning this summer.

The leaders of BUILDing Jewish ECE (buildingjewishece.org), founded by the Denver-based Rose Community Foundation, say the program has increased enrollment in the participating Jewish institutions and strengthened the Jewish connections of the participating families. (“ECE” refers to Early Childhood Education.)

The initiative, with an initial partnership between the [Union for Reform Judaism](http://www.urj.org) and the [JCC Association](http://www.jcc.org) — the [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism](http://www.uscj.org) will join this year — offers “coaching, training and guidance” from the partner organizations, and a “Toolbox of Resources” in such areas as websites and social media, search engine optimization audits, and software and database support, according to a statement issued by BUILDing Jewish ECE. The training and “toolbox” are valued at nearly \$100,000 per institution.

“The research is as clear as can be — everyone benefits when ECE centers and directors are resourced, supported and offered training and coaching that addresses all aspects of their operations,” said Cathy Rolland, director of engaging families with young children at the URJ. “BUILDing Jewish ECE takes the best practices from the secular business world, particularly marketing, enrollment conversion and customer service, and helps apply them to ECE and family engagement.

Rolland and Mark Horowitz, vice president of early childhood education and family engagement at the JCC Association, serve as mentor/coaches for the two JCCs and two Reform congregations in Denver and Boulder that are part of the program. Maxine Segal Handelman, early childhood specialist at the USCJ, will serve in a similar position for the participating Conservative congregations.

“We must bring families into Jewish communities at formative stages of their lives and their children’s development,” said Lisa Farber Miler, senior program officer of the Rose Community Foundation. “Together, we can improve early childhood education and Jewish family engagement, and make these crucial areas part of our national, communal agenda.”

Staff Report

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