



In recent weeks, a number of individuals formerly affiliated with JOFA have raised concerns about sexual harassment, retaliation, and our workplace environment. These discussions have sparked renewed introspection for all of us at JOFA, as we listen to our colleagues and community members who have spoken out about the ongoing impacts of these issues, and how we must do better going forward.

Most of these concerns, which date back many years, were previously shared with JOFA. At the time, JOFA took a number of significant steps, including an external assessment of a 2018 report of sexual harassment; introducing robust anti-harassment and whistleblower policies (which can be found on [JOFA's website](#)), and providing substantive training in safe and appropriate workplace behaviors for all board and staff. In 2018, JOFA's leadership subsequently asked for the resignation of the board president whose conduct was at issue.

Despite these efforts, we recognize that there are still unresolved concerns within our community and that these circumstances require humility, rather than defensiveness in order to learn the important lessons of this experience and grow as an organization. You are our partners in that work.

We have explored our mission as an Orthodox feminist organization in the face of very real criticism of actions taken by our prior board president, and how we as an organization responded to those actions. We believe in JOFA's mission and know that we must continue to expand women's rights and opportunities in order to build a vibrant and equitable Orthodox community.

To continue pursuing our mission, we must fully confront the past to inform the future. To assist us in doing so, JOFA has retained Cozen O'Connor's Institutional Response Group, to conduct an external review of our workplace and board culture, JOFA's response to concerns raised by former JOFA employees, as well as any additional workplace and/or board-related concerns that may come to light. We are doing this because we understand that speaking out for women must start with listening to the lived experiences of the women within JOFA. This requires removing barriers that may have prevented them from speaking at an earlier time.

Cozen O'Connor has decades of experience conducting sensitive investigations into sexual and gender-based harassment and violence, and other forms of misconduct, including within faith-based communities, assessing the nature and quality of institutional responses, and assisting institutions in implementing trauma-informed, fair, and impartial prevention and resolution processes. The review will be led by Gina Maisto Smith and Leslie Gomez, co-chairs of Cozen O'Connor's Institutional Response Group ([Cozen O'Connor: Institutional Response Group](#)), and former career abuse, interpersonal violence, and sex crimes prosecutors. Gina and Leslie are known for providing frank and candid assessments and tailored recommendations, and we encourage their candor here.

JOFA will cooperate fully with the external review. To ensure the neutrality and impartiality of the process, we have appointed a subcommittee of three Board members to facilitate Cozen O'Connor's work. None of the subcommittee members were directly involved in the circumstances to be addressed by this review. As the review progresses, we will also be seeking the guidance and advice of our stakeholders and subject matter experts.

We encourage anyone who may have relevant information about the issues under review or JOFA's workplace culture to connect directly with Gina and Leslie by emailing them at [lgomez@cozen.com](mailto:lgomez@cozen.com) and [gmsmith@cozen.com](mailto:gmsmith@cozen.com).

We thank you most sincerely and gratefully for your support in this process, as we recommit ourselves to rebuilding your trust and resuming our work to fulfill our vital communal mission.

Thank you,  
Pam Scheininger, President  
Mindy Feldman Hecht, Incoming President  
Daphne Lazar Price, Executive Director