



Mission & Goals of the Sandra Caplan Community Bet Din

A. Mission

1) In the free and open society of America, Jewish life has entered into an unprecedented era of individual choice. In this society, birth no longer determines one's destiny. The continuity of American Jewish life requires that Jews be a community of people who find significant meaning in Jewish identity, experiencing added purpose and value in life by embracing Jewish traditions, culture and faith.

2) Many people of other faith backgrounds will find spiritual and social fulfillment within Judaism. Serious efforts to encourage genuine conversions to Judaism can play a crucial role in the flourishing continuity of Jewish life in America. Educational programs can engage the interest of many individuals, some of whom may choose to join the Jewish people through conversion.

3) As Jews, we make no claim to exclusive truths or to Jews' having the sole path to salvation. Judaism does have particular answers and approaches to life that might resonate uniquely with people who discover them. We offer opportunities to discover Judaism to those who are seeking such opportunities.

4) Since 2002, the SANDRA CAPLAN COMMUNITY BET DIN has been involved at the end of the conversion process, waiting for sponsoring rabbis to bring their conversion candidates to us. Now we will also become involved more actively at the start of the process, by identifying prospective conversion candidates and directing them to sponsoring rabbis or educational programs. Both aspects of this work require and deserve support by the wider Jewish community.

5) Because the SANDRA CAPLAN COMMUNITY BET DIN is a pluralistic, interdenominational/transdenominational body and possesses expertise in conversions to Judaism, the SANDRA CAPLAN COMMUNITY BET DIN is uniquely positioned among Jewish organizations to support and promote conversion, in cooperation with other organizations, for the benefit of the entire Jewish community.

6) Properly ordained and trained Rabbis (as defined in the SCCBD Operating Principles, Part "D" section 2) are the traditionally recognized and official administrators of *giyur*, the process of conversion to Judaism. The SANDRA CAPLAN COMMUNITY BET DIN brings together rabbis from all progressive Jewish streams to cooperatively establish standards and procedures for accepting Jews-by-choice into the broad community of Jews and serve as dayanim.

B. Goals

- 1) Uphold publicly the full interdenominational acceptance of converts as welcomed members of the Jewish people.
- 2) Encourage Jewish awareness and knowledge among people who indicate interest in Jewish life and culture.
- 3) Promote widespread awareness of available paths into Judaism.
- 4) Contribute to an increased annual number of those who become Jews-by-choice.
- 5) Provide a system of ongoing financial support for the SANDRA CAPLAN COMMUNITY BET DIN OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.
- 6) Demonstrate the advantages to the Jewish community's multi- and transdenominational cooperation implicit in the structure of the SANDRA CAPLAN COMMUNITY BET DIN.
- 7) Support the education of rabbis concerning conversion issues.

C. Governance

1) The Board of Governors of the SANDRA CAPLAN COMMUNITY BET DIN has provided full rabbinic leadership for the Bet Din since 2002 when it was organized. Rabbi Elliot Dorff and Rabbi Richard Levy are the founders. The chairs of the governing board are Rabbis who are elected every three years. The Board of Governors created a pioneering set of principles and practices for the effective operation of a pluralistic Bet Din for conversion to Judaism. As of the date of this document, the Board of Governors includes 24 rabbis and one lay person as members representing many streams of contemporary Judaism: Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Transdenominational. The Board of Governors selects two respected rabbis to serve as *Av Bet Din* (Head Rabbi) and *S'gan Av Bet Din* (Associate Head Rabbi). As of the date of this document the Board of Governors has also trained 115 rabbis who currently serve as *dayanim* (judges). The SANDRA CAPLAN COMMUNITY BET DIN has authorized about 554 conversions to Judaism since its founding in 2002. Governing Board members and all *dayanim* serve as volunteers.

D. Trustee Giving Circle

- 1) A Board of Trustees of the Sandra Caplan Community Bet Din was selected initially by George Caplan in consultation with the Board of Governors. The trustees were respected leaders and rabbis from all across the Jewish community who embraced the principles expressed in this document.
- 2) In 2018 The Trustee Giving Circle (formerly Board of Trustees) was changed to an honorary committee of donors. Members were invited by George Caplan and founders of the SCCBD, or other members of the Circle, and are subject to approval by the Executive Director. In addition to respected lay leaders of the Jewish community, the Trustee Giving Circle may include rabbis who are *dayanim* of the Sandra Caplan Community Bet Din or Governors. The Trustees are financial supporters and advocates of the Sandra Caplan Community Bet Din within Southern California.
- 3) Each trustee is expected to give or get a minimum annual contribution of two thousand dollars to the Sandra Caplan Community Bet Din, a 501(c)(3) charity dedicated to exclusive support of the Sandra Caplan Community Bet Din.

Approved at 1/19/19 Governor's Meeting.