



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Friendship Circle family!

**Our belief is that we need every person to be a part of our community and every person needs a community to be a part of!**

We aim to create an accommodating and supportive community that gives your child and family the opportunity to form meaningful friendships and access our rich Jewish heritage in an inclusive and welcoming environment.

Friendship, acceptance, and a chance to participate in bonding opportunities are critical to achieving the inclusive Jewish community we dream of.

All updates, program details and options to RSVP are sent out via email and posted on social media. Please be sure our emails are being sent to your inbox (not spam or promotion folder) so that you can be kept updated on all the fun!

Looking forward to discovering the many abilities of your child and a special year of friendships, together.

Rabbi Shaya and Shayna Gopin

**Friendship**  
Circle  
of Greater Hartford



## Friends at Home Parent Guide

The goal of the Friends@Home program is to facilitate friendships for your child in the comfort of your child's home or at a designated spot around town. We hope these weekly visits will also be a source of respite for other family members and an opportunity for your child to develop social skills that will carry over to other areas of your child's life.

Teen friends are sent in pairs to your home or where you choose to meet up on a weekly basis (while school is in session) and the visit lasts one hour.

### **Communication is the key to success:**

#### **Communicate to schedule visits**

Working with FC staff, the day and time of the week for your weekly visit will be established at the start of the school year. You can discuss upcoming schedules at the end of the visit. Moving forward, you should text a few days before your visit to confirm - for example, if you meet on Sundays, text or call on Thursday to confirm. This helps establish mutual expectations and eliminates confusion over the timing and day-of cancellations.

#### **Communicate to make the experience meaningful**

You know your child best! Assist our teen friends how to maximize this experience for the benefit of your child, encourage your child - and if necessary you can assist - to communicate favorite activities, successful ways to have conversation etc. *Like all new friendships, it may take time to feel natural and comfortable. Be patient and take the time to show your new friends fun activities your child enjoys and a quick tour of space and toys that are available to use. Also, mention any activities that your child finds stressful or would better not partake in.*

#### **Communicate with FC Staff**

Talk to us about anything - really anything! If you anticipate a change in your child's routine, please let us know. Additionally, we'd love to celebrate special milestones with your child but need to know about them in order to do so, graduations, birthdays, special performances...

We do our best to set up FAH for success but in the event that the match is not working out, let us know immediately. We will assess, provide further coaching for our teen friends or find a more suitable match.

We are available any time and we place great emphasis on addressing your concerns promptly and effectively!

Note: FC staff will respond to communication from Sunday-Friday until sundown and after Shabbat on Saturday.



# Friendship Circle

We hope this will be an easy and heartwarming hour for you! At the same time, a parent or adult over 18 must be present during the visits. If your child is meeting at a site other than your home you need to be on site for the duration of the visit. The volunteers are not medically or professionally trained. They may need your assistance. Should you require a babysitter and find your FC friend to be an ideal candidate, please arrange this directly with the teen and his/ her parents **at a time other than their regular Friends at home visit.**

## **Most of all**

Safety is our number one priority. If you see anything concerning during the visits, please bring it up immediately to a FC staff member who will keep it in absolute confidence and address it accordingly.

Looking forward to a fantastic year of **friendship!**



Below is the Friends at Home calendar for this year- always subject to change. Over minor school holidays, we encourage you to be in touch with your child's friends and arrange to meet if possible.