



## CEDARS-SINAI CREATES AN INNOVATIVE JEWISH EXPECTANT PARENT WORKSHOP

By Rabbi Jason Weiner, Senior Rabbi & Manager of the Spiritual Care Department, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center

Each year, more than 7,000 babies are born at Cedars-Sinai, and over 20% of their parents identify as Jewish. Recognizing a need, the Jewish Chaplaincy team has developed a unique Jewish Expectant Parent Workshop to educate new parents from across the spectrum of Jewish life about the critical questions they will face in bringing a Jewish child into the world. Not only a childbirth preparation class, it's a parenthood preparation class. When I first became the Jewish Chaplain at Cedars-Sinai I found that many new parents were requesting a visit from the rabbi because they were suddenly being faced with questions they had never considered before, such as how to choose a Jewish name, how to find a *mohel*, which prayers to say, or how to create a Jewish home. We thus realized that people would do well to consider these issues ahead of time and make informed Jewish decisions. Now, when an expectant parent looks over the list of official prenatal education, labor and infant care classes offered by Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, one of their choices is the "Jewish

Expectant Parent Workshop." This three-hour, one-time session, led by myself and a female educator, gives participants the opportunity to learn and ask questions about such important issues as naming traditions, baby welcoming ceremonies, making one's pregnancy meaningful, and much more.

While offering this resource to expectant parents, we realized that we had another, unique opportunity. With fewer Jewish families affiliating with synagogues, many of our participants may not be attracted to or willing to enter a synagogue, but are nonetheless curious about Judaism. In an effort to ensure follow-through and create a bridge from the Medical Center to the local Jewish community, 21 local synagogues have partnered with Cedars-Sinai by offering a one-year complimentary membership to class participants. That is one reason why ours isn't a typical parenting class. Rather, it is about shoring up the future of the Jewish people, one baby at a time.

In addition to matters specific to Jewish parents, the class also deals with more general psychosocial issues. It creates a safe space to explore such concerns as how the new baby will affect the family structure, shift the dynamics between parents and grandparents, and the couple's relationship. If the Jewish parenting workshop continues to prove successful, Cedars-Sinai plans to expand it to other religions and cultures, since many of these questions and concerns are universal. Each of the workshops has attracted about twenty participants, many of whom have kept in touch with each other after the class. This program is so innovative that it has even been covered by TIME magazine (<http://healthland.time.com/2012/04/06/whats-a-bris-l-a-hospital-launches-workshop-for-jewish-parents-to-be/>).

For additional information, please contact our Spiritual Care Department, at 310-423-5550.

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