



Student Handbook

5785/2024-25

Start Date

Arrival for all students is Wednesday, September 3 (arrive by 6pm). The rest of the calendar will be posted later this spring.

Getting to and from Pittsburgh

There are various ways to travel to Pittsburgh:

- 1) Fly into Pittsburgh International Airport. The airport is about 30 minutes away.
 - 2) Megabus and Greyhound is an especially affordable way to come to Pittsburgh. The bus station is about 15 minutes away.
 - 3) Driving time from the NY and NJ area is between 6-7 hours.
- Lyft and Uber are good options for students to get from the airport or bus station to their dormitory.

School Contact Information

The Seminary is located at 6404 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15217. Letters and packages for students may be sent to this address. Most Limudei Kodesh and arts classes as well as meals take place in the Seminary building. *Supplies may arrive at seminary within a week of the student arrival date.*

School Office Number (412) 521-1197 (please leave a message for non-urgent matters)

For admissions-related questions please contact Hindy at tzoharforms@gmail.com.

Cleanliness

Students are expected to keep their seminary and dorm spaces clean and tidy for the benefit of all. At seminary this applies to all spaces and surfaces, especially student desks and storage areas. Students are responsible for taking care of their weekly seminary chores. Similarly at the dorms students are expected to keep their personal and communal spaces clean and pleasant for the good of everyone. Weekly dorm cleanup is each Wednesday evening at 9:00pm. This cleanup will be guided by the dorm mother and madrichot. All students are expected to participate and complete their weekly chores.

Dorm Accommodations

Noise

- Please be aware of your fellow students and neighbors when it comes to maintaining respectful noise levels.
- Bedroom Quiet Time each weeknight is 11:30pm. Any music or other forms of audio should be listened to on headphones after that time.

Laundry

- Don't forget to clean the lint screen in the drier. Lint fires are a real hazard chas v'shalom.
- Keep washer lids open when they are not being used.

Showers

- Please limit showers to 10 minutes or less.
- To avoid mold and mildew, please keep any bathroom fans on

Other

- Students may not bring visitors into the dorm under any circumstances.
- Pets are not allowed.
- Please make sure all lights, air conditioners, fans, space heaters are turned off when you leave. Don't leave it to someone else. Tzohar pays for utilities.
- Please take out garbage Monday night and return the plastic containers on Tuesday.
- Please don't put holes in the walls. 3M makes tape that can hold posters and be removed.
- Please avoid dragging heavy furniture on wooden floors, rather lift with a few people and move or slide on a blanket.
- Students may only "sunbathe" outside with modest dress.

If something does break, please tell your Dorm Mother, thank you!

Food and Meals

Breakfast is provided daily and consists of cold cereal, milk, oatmeal and fruit. Lunch is provided Monday through Friday, and a catered dinner is provided each evening.

Students have access at seminary to skillets, toaster ovens, sandwich-makers, microwave ovens, and hot water urns. Our seminary kitchen, including all cooking appliances, are milchig. There are fleishig serving utensils for fleishig-catered dinners that may be washed in the boiler room sink.

We do our best to meet special dietary needs; however, there may be times that those with special needs, such as gluten-free, dairy-free or vegetarian diets will need to supplement what seminary offers. There are plenty of choices available for purchase within walking distance at the local grocery and kosher store. Please let us know about any food allergies on the accompanying questionnaires.

On Shabbos, students eat their meals together at seminary, dorm, or at the homes of local families. Pittsburgh is known to have a warm, inviting community, and many families are looking forward to hosting students for Shabbos. We recommend that students "chip in" once in a while to buy flowers for host families (flowers should be delivered before Shabbos). A Melave Malka meal is provided after Shabbos during the fall and winter months, and Shalosh Seudot in the spring months. Students are expected to dress appropriately for all Shabbos meals.

Attendance, Timeliness, and Investment

Our year will be focused on spiritual and creative growth. For that to happen in the most effective way possible, everyone accepts responsibility to be present and on time for classes and programming. Besides enabling you to get the most out of your time at Tzohar, your attendance also shows your respect for your classmates and teachers and allows them to benefit from your unique contributions. If you ask a student from a previous year at Tzohar, she's likely to tell you that one of her only regrets was not putting in the effort to be at every class every day. You're here because you want to be here -- you chose to spend a year at Tzohar, so make the most of it!

To obtain maximum benefit from their courses, students must participate fully. This implies attending regularly, engaging in course activity, completing assignments on time, and making up work missed due to absence. It is each student's responsibility to let the course instructor know if she will have to miss a class due to an extenuating circumstance (which has already been excused by Rabbi Hordiner).

Students who arrive more than 20 minutes after class begins will be marked absent. Unexcused absences from more than 20% of the sessions for a particular course will result in a one-letter grade reduction from your final grade in this course. More than 35% unexcused absences will result in failure of the course. There is no opportunity to make up this component of your grade.

Also keep in mind that you may want to submit a Tzohar Seminary transcript to another institution of higher learning for credits for your classes here so good attendance and grades could save you significant time and money in the near future. Some students have received up to a year's worth of credits at Jewish universities.

The following is Tzohar Seminary's protocol for seminary attendance:

- Students may take up to 5 sick/wellness days per semester. This must be communicated no later than the morning of absence to both the Dorm Mother and Office Manager.
- To be excused from a specific class (e.g. therapy appointment), students must communicate their reason for absence to Sarah Clark no later than the class of absence.
- Each student is allowed up to 7 unexcused absences each week (this equals 75% of class time which includes all required classes, the minimum number of elective classes, and davening).
- If a student has 1 week with 8 or more unexcused absences, the student will meet with Sarah Clark to review the attendance policy.
- If a student has another week with 8 or more unexcused absences, the student will receive a warning.
- If a student has another week with 8 or more unexcused absences, the student will be sent home and will need to sign a contract re-commitment before returning to seminary.

Taking Time Off from Seminary

Time spent in seminary is precious. It is important that all students remain at Tzohar when the seminary is open. While school is in session, students may only leave seminary with permission from Rabbi Hordiner. In these unique cases, permission will only be given according to the following policy.

If you have a simcha in your immediate family, please approach Rabbi Hordiner for official permission to leave before making travel arrangements. Please do not "notify" that you have already booked the ticket. That puts us all in a very uncomfortable position. Once you ask permission, Rabbi Hordiner will do his best to get back to you within 48 hours.

To balance between meeting the needs of individual students and the integrity of Tzohar Seminary, we have created the following "taking off" policy. As always, students must request permission from Rabbi Hordiner for any travel plans at least 2 weeks in advance (unless it was not known earlier). All plans will be cleared with a parent.

We're dividing Simchas into three categories: Type A, Type B, and Type C. Please note that under this policy we combine Friday and Shabbos as one full day.

Type A Simchas include siblings, uncles, and aunts. A student will be given automatic permission for Type A Simchas, without any yearly limit, in the following manner. Students may miss up to 2 full seminary days including travel. For example, if a Bar Mitzva or L'chaim is on a Tuesday night, the student may leave anytime on Tuesday and must be back no later than 10:00pm Wednesday night. Likewise, if the Simcha is Sunday night she may leave any time on Friday and must be back by 9:30am Monday morning. For a Siblings' Chassuna, a student may miss up to 4 full days, including days of travel. For example: if the Chassuna is on a Tuesday night, the student may leave any time on Monday and return by Thursday night by 10:00pm.

Type B Simchas include a cousin's wedding or immediate family gatherings that the student or parents deem extremely necessary for the student to attend. For these simchas there is a limit of 1 per year, and the amount of time allotted is 2 days. These simchas must not conflict with any seminary programming the seminary deems essential.

Type C Simchas include any simchas of non-family members that the student deems extremely necessary to attend. For these simchas there is a limit of 1 per year, and the amount of time allotted is 2 days. These simchas must not conflict with any seminary programming the seminary deems essential.

Additionally, students may request to leave for medical reasons (Type D) and on rare occasions other situations (Type E) are deemed excusable. While there is no restriction to how long a student may leave for these types, we ask that you minimize time away from school.

Curfew

Curfew is at 10:30 pm. While students are enrolled in Tzohar Seminary, it is the responsibility of the administration to ensure the safety of each student. Therefore, it is imperative that curfew is kept. If students are out of their dorms past curfew, the administration cannot fulfill the primary obligation that it has, namely, the well-being and safety of each student enrolled in Tzohar Seminary.

Therefore, each student, by her signature on the consent form, agrees to be bound by the following obligations: (1) each student will be in her residence by 10:30 pm each night, unless a prior arrangement has been made with a staff member (2) If a student cannot keep curfew, Tzohar Seminary cannot assure her safety and will send the student to home so she can return to the responsibility of her parents, until such time as the administration and student feel that the curfew time can be kept.

Cell Phones

To have the type of seminary experience that allows each student to be focused on her personal goals and spiritual growth, it is important that technology be used in a way that gives each student the opportunity to thrive.

We require all students to bring a cell phone for safety purposes. Cell phones should have the ability to send and receive texts, as well as have access to Whatsapp which is often used to communicate with students. For the well-being of all students, it is each parent's responsibility to install appropriate filters.

Students will not use their cell phones during class time unless it is needed for educational purposes. Phones also may not be used during programs such as Farbrengens, Malave Malka, Purim Seudah, etc.

Personal Computers and Music

Students will have access to school computers for school assignments and e-mail. Personal laptops or iPad/tablets may be used in class only for class-related purposes and with permission from the classroom teacher. It is each parent's responsibility to install appropriate filtering software.

Since the seminary year is one of immersion, we highly recommend that students bring and play only Jewish musical content. Out of respect and for the comfort of all students, shared music (played aloud) may only be Jewish music; non-Jewish music may be played on headphones only. Other media like online videos should also only be played on headphones out of respect for the comfort of others.

Side Jobs and Spending Money

In order to allow students to focus on their studies, we recommend that students do not work while at seminary. If students would like to get a job as a mother's helper or the like on Friday afternoons or

Sunday mornings when there are no classes, this is an option to be discussed with Rabbi Hordiner. Students may also lead Shabbos groups at one of the local synagogues.

Students may not work Monday-Thursday.

Driving

Pittsburgh is a walking community – students will be walking to and from school in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings. For liability reasons, students may not drive while at Tzohar (even with a valid license). All transportation that students require will be provided by the seminary, Uber, or by public bus.

Dress Code

We recognize that dress codes are challenging for certain individuals, and we are here to provide you with healthy avenues of self-expression. That being said, all Tzohar students are expected to dress *at all times* according to the following guidelines. Please sign after each guidelines to acknowledge your acceptance and commitment:

- ❖ Skirts cover the knees even when seated.
- ❖ Knee socks, tights, leggings, or stockings cover the legs.
- ❖ Pants are not allowed even under skirts – this includes jeans, sweatpants, and pajama pants.
- ❖ Elbows are fully covered even when arms are lifted.
- ❖ Collarbone is covered.
- ❖ Clothing should not fit too tightly.

Only piercings worn in the ear are allowed. Students may only get additional ear piercings at home (not while in seminary).

Students may not dye hair an unnatural color.

Any and all fashion and dress accessories need to be “*aidel*” in style and design and Tzohar reserves the right to decide what is considered appropriate.

Tzohar students may exercise and work out at the JCC according to the above clothing guidelines. Co-ed swimming is not allowed.

When students are volunteering in the Yeshiva Schools environment, the dress code of Yeshiva Schools must be followed, in particular, wearing earrings only in the lower lobe. When working or volunteering in a community organization, any additional dress code specifications must be followed. In addition, on days when you are teaching or involved in a community project, please dress in a more formal manner.

Tzohar students are role models for each other and especially for the girls of the Yeshiva Girls School who study across the street and will look up to you. Whether you're in class, walking on the street, or in shul please remember that you are a dugma chaya!

Laws of the Land

Though it may be obvious -- anything illegal in the state of Pennsylvania is not allowed at Tzohar! This includes but is not limited to the possession or consumption of alcohol, nicotine (including e-cigarettes and vaping products), and marijuana. In the state of Pennsylvania, it is illegal to purchase or consume alcohol and nicotine under the age of 21. Taking a sip of Kiddush wine on Shabbos is allowed.

Possession or use of any illegal substance, or even possession of a fake ID, is grounds for immediate suspension or dismissal from the seminary. Any resulting expenses will be the responsibility of the student's family.

Tzohar Seminary reserves the right to randomly administer drug tests to students and to conduct unannounced dormitory inspections – any refusal is grounds for suspension or dismissal.

It is important that any student who is addicted to any illegal substance should not attend seminary unless and until she is completely free of that addiction.

Other Rules

Bullying of any kind will not be tolerated and is grounds for suspension or dismissal from seminary.

Social contact with boys is not allowed, and boyfriends of any kind are not allowed to visit Pittsburgh under any circumstances. Violation of these rules is grounds for immediate suspension or dismissal.

Romantic relationships or inappropriate touching of any kind, including excessive cuddling or inappropriate touch or closeness with other girls or staff members, including sleeping in the same bed as another student, is not allowed in our program. Violation of these rules is grounds for immediate suspension or dismissal.

Students may not attend movie theaters, comedy clubs, bars, etc.

Although Squirrel Hill is known as a safe place, students must walk with someone after dark.

If parents or family members are planning a visit to Pittsburgh, please consult with Rabbi Hordiner so we can confirm that the visit will not disrupt learning commitments, projects, and performances in which the students are involved.

Health and Medical Insurance

If a student is sick, she must communicate with the Dorm Mother in a timely manner so the seminary can take care of her! Similarly, students must communicate with the Dorm Mother before going to urgent care or the ER for a medical issue. Remember, it is much easier to go to urgent care during the day than to go to the ER at night, so anyone experiencing pain during the day should discuss the matter with the Dorm Mother. This quick conversation will often save a lot of time, money, and lost sleep.

Staff are available, if needed, to help students make appointments, and sometimes can accompany students to appointments.

Any information communicated with a Tzohar staff member which involves the well-being of oneself or others may be communicated with other appropriate Tzohar staff so we can help you. This is an important exception to the general rule of confidentiality.

Tzohar reserves the right, under specific circumstances, to consult with community professionals as needed for the safety and well-being of the students, and we may require a student to attend therapy and/or counseling in order to remain in seminary.

For safety and liability reasons, Tzohar students are required to maintain active health insurance coverage for both emergency room and regular doctor office visits. You should check with your medical insurer concerning coverage for local physicians, mental health professionals, or hospitals in Pittsburgh in case you require care. If your health insurance does not cover out-of-network medical visits, you must purchase traveler's insurance while enrolled at Tzohar. This insurance will need to be purchased every time you return to seminary. The average cost for the school year is \$300. Our traveler's insurance agent is Mr. Nathan Hyman who can be reached at 917-613-0583.

Students with any pre-existing health conditions who may require being seen by a specialist (e.g. someone experiencing regular migraine headaches) should establish a physician relationship prior to her arrival in Pittsburgh. Appointments with specialists cannot be made last minute and often need to be made months in advance.