



# **Student Handbook**

**5787/2026-27**

## Start Date

Arrival for all students is Wednesday, October 7th (arrive by 6pm).

## 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. *Supplies may arrive at seminary within a week of the student arrival date.* The seminary office number is (412) 521-1197. Please leave a message for non-urgent matters.

The Tzohar Dorm is located at 5645 Munhall Rd. Pittsburgh, PA 15217. Apartment #s forthcoming.

### Staff List:

Name	Position	E-mail	Cell Phone
Rabbi Dovid Hordiner	Head of School	dhordiner@tzoharseminary.com	(917) 930-1312
Rabbi Aaron Herman	Director of Chassidus Integration	rabbiaaron@gmail.com	(919) 637-6950
Dr. Crystal Fortwangler	Director of Arts Education	cfortwangler@tzoharseminary.com	(412) 742-3616
Mrs. Hindy Gurevitz	Director of Student Life & Wellness	hgurevitz@tzoharseminary.com	(917) 975-0165
Mrs. Chany Itkin	Office Administrator	citkin@tzoharseminary.com	
Mrs. Leah Lichy	Dorm Mother	llichy@tzoharseminary.com	(954) 651-3309
Mrs. Amy Schuler	Nighttime Emergency On Call	schuler.amy@gmail.com	(571) 338-6493

### **Who do I speak to about...?**

Education-related questions: *Rabbi Dovid Hordiner*

Integration of Chassidic ideas into arts projects and personal growth: *Rabbi Aaron Herman*

Arts-related questions: *Dr. Crystal Fortwangler*

Enrollment, Programming, Wellness, Food, and Permission to Leave: *Mrs. Hindy Gurevitz*

Schedules and Transcripts: *Mrs. Chany Itkin*

Dorm Life, Illness, and Shabbos Meals: *Mrs. Leah Lichy*

Nighttime Emergency On Call: *Mrs. Amy Schuler*

## Cleanliness

Students are expected to keep all seminary and dorm spaces clean and tidy for the benefit of all. At seminary this applies especially to student desks and storage areas in the main classroom. Students are responsible for taking care of their weekly seminary and dorm chores. Weekly dorm cleanup is each Wednesday evening -- all students are expected to participate.

## Dorm Accommodations

All dorm apartments are considered public spaces. This means that the Dorm Mother and Madrichot have keys and can enter at any time.

If something breaks, please message your Dorm Mother or Madrichot immediately. 24 hours notice will be given before any service call to an apartment.

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.

### Other Key Points:

- Students may not bring visitors into the dorm under any circumstances.
- For safety and liability reasons, students may not use the oven or stove range in the dorm.
- Students may use small, plug-in appliances with extreme care, making sure to turn them off after use. Toasters especially should be cleaned daily to prevent risk of fire.
- Pets are not allowed.
- Students may only flush toilet paper. Tissues, wipes, and any feminine products must not be flushed down the toilet. Any clog that needs to be fixed resulting from these items being flushed will be deducted from the apartment's security deposits.
- Please limit showers to 10 minutes or less out of respect to roommates.
- To avoid mold and mildew, use any available bathroom fans after showering.
- Clean the lint screen in the drier after each use. Lint fires are a real hazard chas v'shalom.
- Keep washer lids open when they are not being used.
- Make sure all apartment lights and fans are turned off before leaving the dorm in the morning and when a space is not in use. Tzohar pays for utilities!
- Take out garbage Monday night and return the plastic containers on Tuesday. Do NOT leave them out past Tuesday afternoon.
- 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 or slide on a blanket.
- Students may only "sunbathe" outside with modest dress.
- Any damage to the dorm space (not including normal wear and tear) will be the responsibility of the students or group of students in that apartment. Each family is responsible to pay a \$150 security deposit prior to arrival. This money will be used to pay for any damage, maintenance issues, or to clean up any personal belongings left behind at the end of the year. If the apartment is returned in clean and good condition, the deposit will be returned.

## 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. Shabbos meals are arranged for students.

Students have access at seminary to skillets, toaster ovens, sandwich-makers, microwave ovens, and hot water urns. Our seminary kitchen, including all cooking appliances, is 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.

Only Cholov Yisroel and Pas Yisroel products and ingredients may be brought into and consumed in the dorm and seminary building. Thank you for your cooperation in maintaining this standard for the benefit of all.

On Shabbos, students usually eat their meals together 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.

## Private Music Lessons

Students may elect to take weekly private piano, guitar, voice, cello, violin, or saxophone lessons. Lessons on other instruments may be possible by request. One weekly 25 minute lesson on one instrument per semester is included in the cost of tuition. An additional weekly 25 minute lesson may be purchased. Registration for all music lessons and the \$350 fee for an extra set of lessons are both due by Monday, June 29th. A registration link has been provided in the accompanying email. Students may take the first week of lessons as a trial week, after which they can elect to drop or switch to a different instrument, *as long as other teachers can add them to their roster*. Students may switch instruments mid-year (but not mid-semester).

## 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 and program. 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 means attending regularly, participating during class, 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. Out of respect for your own learning and for the teacher, please do not walk out in the middle of classes, workshops, farbrengens, or programs unless you are feeling sick or need to use the bathroom.

Students who arrive more than 15 minutes after class begins will be marked absent. Students who are gone for more than 15 minutes during the middle, or at the end of class, will also 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.

Keep in mind that you may need to submit a Tzohar Seminary transcript to another institution of higher learning to receive 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 class and program attendance:

- Students may take up to 5 sick/wellness days per semester. A sick/wellness day must be communicated before or on the day of absence.
- To be excused from a specific class or program, students must communicate their reason for absence before the class or program begins.
- If a student has a week with more than 5 unexcused absences – this includes all classes, davening, weekly farbrengens, and mandatory trips/programs – the student will meet with the Head of School to review the attendance policy.
- If a student has a 2nd week with more than 5 unexcused absences, the student will receive a final reminder from the Head of School.
- If a student has a 3rd week with more than 5 unexcused absences, the student will be sent home and need to sign a contract of re-commitment before returning to seminary.

We will let students know in advance when there is a delay due to snow. Because our students do not rely on transportation to get to seminary, and because most of our staff are local, we are generally open on a regular schedule when it snows.

### **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. Students may only travel within a 45 minute driving radius of Squirrel Hill when not on excused time off from seminary (e.g. Ross Park Mall).

Students may take off time from seminary according to the following policy. Friday and Shabbos count as one day. Make sure to submit a request for time off form before making travel arrangements. Please do not "notify" us that you have already booked a ticket.

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 Mitzvah 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' Chassunah, a student may miss up to 4 full days, including days of travel. For example: if the Chassunah 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). While there is no restriction to how long a student may leave for Type D, we ask that you minimize time away from school.

Each student may request up to 1 Shabbos off per semester. Students may leave Friday morning and must return by Sunday at 10pm.

Please submit a request for time off at least 2 weeks in advance.

Requests for time off are generally cleared with a parent.

### **Curfew**

Curfew is 10:00 pm. All students must be in the dorm before that time.

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 agrees to be bound by the following obligations: (1) each student will be in her residence by 10:00 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 ask the student to return home immediately, so that 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 responsibly.

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 between the administration and the students. For the well-being of all students, parents are responsible for installing appropriate internet filters.

Students may 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, etc.

## Personal Computers and Music

Students will have access to school computers for school assignments and e-mail. Personal laptops or iPad/tablets may only be used in class 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 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. Similarly, other media like online videos may only be played on headphones.

## 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. Students may get a job as a mother's helper on Friday afternoons or Sundays when there are no programs or trips. 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.

- ❖ Skirts cover the knees even when seated. Skirts with slits extending to the knee are not allowed.

- ❖ 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. T-shirts are not allowed.
- ❖ The collarbone is covered.
- ❖ Clothing should not fit too tightly.

Only piercings worn in the lower ear lobe 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.

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, in shul, or eating a meal in their home, please remember that you are a dugma chaya!

If a student is not dressed according to our dress code, she will be sent back to the dorm to change. If we find this becomes an ongoing issue the student will meet with the Director of Student of Life to review the dress code. If the student is still not adhering to the dress code then she will meet with the Head of School and may be sent home to sign a contract of re-commitment before returning to seminary.

### **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 comedy clubs or bars.

Students may only travel within a 45 minute driving radius of Squirrel Hill when not on excused time off from seminary.

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 ahead of time with Mrs. Hindy Gurevitz 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! Regarding food when a student is sick, there will always be snack choices at the dorm, but please communicate with your roommates so they can bring you lunch or supper as needed.

Similarly, students must communicate with Mrs. Amy Schuler (nighttime on call) before going to the ER for a medical issue. It is much easier to go to urgent care during the day than to go to the ER at night. 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.

Making sure your daughter is covered will potentially save you a lot of money and stress from having to pay much more out-of-pocket if your daughter becomes sick or if CV'S she needs to visit the emergency room. You are required to upload proof of personal or traveler's insurance coverage for your daughter in the Emergency Contact Form (link in accompanying email). Each student must keep a copy of her insurance card in her wallet. All students who attend must also be immunized unless they have a signed medical exemption from a physician.

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 arrival in Pittsburgh. Appointments with specialists cannot be made last minute and often need to be made months in advance.