



MazelTot Pilot Phase Evaluation Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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MazelTotSM
Connecting young families to Jewish life



Executive Summary

This Outcome Evaluation

The aim of the outcome evaluation was to provide an evidence-based appraisal of whether MazelTot succeeded in “connecting families with preschool children (under five years old) and expectant parents to Jewish life in the Denver/Boulder area and to one another.” The timing of this analytic report coincides with the end of the initial 2-year pilot. Research methodologies included administering online surveys; conducting group and individual interviews; analyzing data submitted by participating organizations; empirically examining website usage data; and documenting the implementation process.

MazelTot Initiative Background

On February 2, 2009, Rose Community Foundation’s Board of Trustees approved a grant to create MazelTot. This initiative is a collaboration between Rose Community Foundation and Jewish organizations serving families with young children in Greater Denver and Boulder. The initiative is geared toward parents-to-be and families with children under the age of five that have at least one parent who self-identifies as Jewish. The initiative provides discounts, free offers, and comprehensive information on Jewish activities and educational programs in the seven-county Denver/Boulder area. Each family that signs up for MazelTot can redeem up to three discounts on hundreds of Jewish activities. According to the *MazelTot Policies, Procedures, and Information Guide*, MazelTot was created because:

The Foundation supports efforts to create and sustain a vibrant Jewish community, in part by funding new ideas that connect Jews to Jewish life and to each other. MazelTot was created to support organizations in their outreach to young families, to promote collaboration between organizations, to encourage young families to try new Jewish experiences and to make those experiences more affordable.

With 1,131 registered families as of June 2011, MazelTot has surpassed its original goal of reaching 20% of the 5,300 Jewish and interfaith families with preschool-aged children residing in Greater Denver and Boulder.

MazelTot is connecting families to Jewish life and each other. As a result of MazelTot marketing efforts, families are learning about the website. They are using the website to lower the information barrier about classes, family celebrations, events, preschools, camps and retreats. Moreover, according to the grantee reports submitted by the participating organizations, families with young children are using the discounts to “sample” organizations. In this way, the initiative is encouraging families with young children and expectant parents to try new and more Jewish experiences. In addition, the participating organizations are benefiting from the grantee roundtable discussions that were designed to increase their change management expertise. The initiative is also achieving its goal to showcase the diversity of Jewish cultural, social, educational, spiritual and religious opportunities for families with young children.

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Registered Users Are Diverse but the Majority Are Newcomers

The families tended to have one child under the age of five. The number of children in each age group was similar: 21% under one year old, 17% one year old, 20% two years old, 17% three years old; 15% four years old and 10% expectant parents. In comparison to the families surveyed for a 2007 community study conducted by Ukeles Associates, Inc. MazelTot families tended to be raising their Jewish at a far higher rate (79% vs. 47%). Fourteen percent of MazelTot families were raising their children Jewish and in another religion. Of this year's participants, 37% were Reform, 17% were Conservative and 18% were Orthodox. Nearly one-third of the registrants were secular, nondenominational, or not Jewish. In comparison to last year's early adopters, the families this year tended to be more Orthodox than Traditional and more Reform than Conservative. Eighty-eight percent of the families were married or partnered. Those who completed the *Registration Form* tended to be Jewish (86%). Of their spouses, 69% were Jewish, 3% "partially Jewish," 2% Jewish and something else and 24% were not Jewish. From Year one to Year Two, the percentage of interfaith families went up by over 100% from 14% to 31%. In terms of ethnicity, almost all the participants were white with a few Hispanic/Latino, multi-racial and African-American families. The parents of three families identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered (GLBT). The 2007 study defined "newcomers" as people living in the area for less than 10 years and found that 46% of 25-39 year olds were newcomers. By that standard, 58% of MazelTot families were newcomers: 9% of the families have lived in the area less than a year, 25% 1-4 years and 24% 5-9 years. Some of the families have lived in the Denver/Boulder area for a long time: 24% indicated 10 years or more, 9% lived in the area "all my life" and another 8% "almost all my life." In terms of where they live, 49% were from Denver, 18% from Boulder county, 17% from Arapahoe county, and the rest were from Adams (3%), Broomfield (2%), Douglas (7%) and Jefferson (5%) counties.

Most of all, the comments reveal that families with young children are seeking ways to become involved in Jewish life and they desire to see the community grow.

Perceptions Change: Jewish Community Now Seen as Welcoming

The families that registered for MazelTot after last year's launch responded to an open-ended question on the *MazelTot Registration Form* about their perceptions of the local Jewish community. The most salient themes that emerged from the families' descriptions of the local Jewish community were how hard it was to become engaged in the Jewish community, lack of knowledge of available activities, the fragmentation of the community, the uneven distribution of programs and activities, the high cost of participation in Jewish life and the benefits of living in a smaller community. Most of all, the comments reveal that families with young children are seeking ways to become involved in Jewish life and they desire to see the community grow. This year, one of the most salient themes was that the Jewish community is warm and welcoming. In particular, interfaith families felt welcome. The major change from last year is that there was not a single comment regarding the lack of knowledge of available activities.

Barriers Lowered

When registering, prior to their participation in MazelTot, 17% indicated that their family would become even more engaged in Jewish organizations or places if certain barriers were addressed including, particularly, the scheduling of programs or events. Of the families, 11% indicated the importance of location or transportation, 9% considered the "high level of Jewish literacy expected" a barrier, and 9% felt that non-traditional and/or interfaith families are not welcome. It is noteworthy that along the 15 potential barriers, there was a decrease from last year in almost every instance. It is noteworthy that there was a decrease from 28% to 17% in those who said that the scheduling of programs or events was a barrier.

Forty Percent of Families Learned About MazerTot Through Word of Mouth

In order to attract the attention and interest of families with young children and expectant parents, MazerTot marketed the initiative through search engine marketing, postcard mailings, radio stations, community newspapers, booths at events and flyers. Participants learned about MazerTot in the following ways: 32% from a participating organization; 24% from a friend; 12% from a flyer, advertisement, newspaper; 12% word of mouth; 6% family; 5% professional contact; 4% web advertising; 3% Google or other search engine; and 3% radio. While the percentages of those who learned about the initiative from radio or print (flyer, advertisement, newspaper) appear low, it is worth keeping in mind that 40% learned of the initiative from a friend, family member, or via “word of mouth.” On the *2011 Follow-Up Survey*, a parent wrote, “Your logo seems to be EVERYWHERE and I think that’s so important to families who are not connected.”

Parents Find Discounts Most Appealing Feature of MazerTot

Prior to registering for MazerTot, the families were interested in the initiative for social, educational, cultural, recreational, religious and spiritual experiences. Consistent with all the other data, the category that had the most responses was “social.” This is an indicator that new and expectant parents are interested in forming new friendships with other Jewish families. On the *2011 Follow-Up Survey*, the feature that most appealed to the parents was the discounts followed by “The opportunity to meet other Jewish families with young children” and “One-stop shopping for information about dozens of Jewish organizations at **mazeltot.org**.” Survey reports revealed why discounts were attractive to the families; 56% agreed that in the past five years financial costs prevented them from participating in Jewish cultural, educational, spiritual or recreational programs. In addition, 58% agreed that the discounts made it possible for them to afford participation in Jewish life in new or increased ways.

72% of families agreed that **mazeltot.org** played a significant role in connecting them to Jewish Life.

As of May 31, 2011, 764 discounts had been used. The number of families using one discount was 457, the number of families using two discounts was 131 and the number of families using three discounts was 15. The discounts are divided into categories. The following list includes the discount category, the number of discounts used and average value of the discounts: (1) Classes, 175 discounts used, \$71 average value; (2) Events, 283 discounts used, \$48 average value; (3) Independent Celebrations, 18 discounts used, \$188 average value; (4) Preschools and Camps, 239 discounts used, \$341 average value; and (5) Retreats, 49 discounts used, \$242 average value. Total discount funds used was \$121,294, which is 65% of the total funds granted as of May 2011.

MazerTot’s Website Plays a Significant Role in Connecting Families to Jewish Life

As a result of MazerTot marketing efforts, families are learning about the website, **mazeltot.org**. They are using the website to lower the information barrier about classes, family celebrations, events, preschools and camps, and retreats. For example, a parent wrote on the *2011 Follow-Up Survey*, “I love that it is a resource keeping me up to date on events.” Another parent explained that she benefited from the website by becoming “more open-minded about going to a program at an organization that I might have otherwise dismissed.” On the survey, 72% strongly agreed or agreed that “Information about things to do and organizations on **mazeltot.org** played a significant or very significant role in connecting my family to Jewish life.”

Website Traffic Is Growing

There are currently 1,149 families signed up for MazelTot. On average, there have been 55 sign ups per month for MazelTot. The website averages 1,385 visits per month—an increase over last year's 1,201. The average number of absolute unique visitors to MazelTot each month is 978, nearly 20% of the intended market of Jewish families in Greater Denver and Boulder with preschool-aged children. Last year, the average number was 764. Since the June 2010 analytic report, the site was visited 17,466 times. From September 2010 through May 2011, 53% of the visitors reached **mazeltot.org** via a search engine, 27% reached **mazeltot.org** by typing in the web address and 20% reached **mazeltot.org** through a link on another site.

MazelTot Family Networker's Outreach Is Effective

In encouraging families with young children to try new and more Jewish experiences, the **mazeltot.org** website is valuable but families also need to interact with a person. A MazelTot family networker was hired and provides guidance to newcomers, answers general questions about Jewish life and the community, encourages the development of play groups and other social events, and provides technical assistance in the use of the website and the discounts. Weekly emails are sent by the family networker to all registrants of MazelTot (unless they opted out of the emails), so each week that number grows; currently, 1,200 individuals receive the emails. The emails are usually sent on Wednesdays, although periodically more than one goes out a week if there is something more to highlight. In general, the emails present information on upcoming events and programs (Shabbat activities, other weekend activities, classes, retreats, etc.). Sometimes, an email is devoted entirely to one topic. For example, an email was dedicated to Passover options for families with young children. Another email was devoted to summer camps. There is also usually a section with instructions on how to receive free books from The PJ Library. Families interested in meeting other families in their area are provided with instructions to email their ZIP codes to the family networker, who will then connect them. In general, 34% of the families open the emails. A third (38%) indicated that they visit the website when they receive the weekly MazelTot email updates. Through the weekly emails MazelTot showcases all the programming that is currently available at the participating organizations. In this way, the initiative conveys to the families that there is “something for everyone.” The weekly emails also reinforce the idea that participating organizations are actively reaching out to families with young children.

Participating Organizations See Benefits

The greatest impact of the initiative was seen by the participating organizations in terms of making their programming more affordable as well as increasing the presence of their programs and their visibility in the Jewish community and increasing community awareness of what they do. The organizations are pleased with MazelTot and are very happy to be able to offer financial discounts to families. They like the fact that the website is comprehensive and reflects a vibrant local Jewish community. They are appreciative of the exposure that MazelTot gives them. “I love seeing our name in the MazelTot brochure and seeing the brochure available at the preschools.” They also like the fact that MazelTot recognized that participation would take administrative time and is compensating them for that time. Consistent with this finding, the factors that most influenced the organizations' decision to participate in MazelTot were the ability to post their information on **mazeltot.org**, the discount funds and the opportunity to participate in a network of organizations serving young families.

The participating organizations indicated that MazelTot added value to their organizations. On the 10-point scale (10 = “a great deal of positive change”), any score greater than 5 indicated that positive change had occurred. The scale was completed multiple times by the participating organizations as part of their quarterly reports. All the scores were above this threshold level, with most scores within the 6.0-7.5 range. On the following indicators, the organizations attributed this shift to MazelTot: marketing efforts, recruitment of new families, retention of current families, attendance, affordability of programming and connections among parents. Also, the participating organizations agreed that the convenings increased their knowledge of how to change marketing and web efforts to be more welcoming. According to the focus group discussions, the organizations tended to disagree that networking at the convenings increased their referral of families to other institutions, an explicit goal of the initiative. MazelTot appears to have had limited success in increasing collaboration. There were some anecdotes about referring callers to more appropriate resources, but in general collaboration does not appear to have changed. The participating organizations felt that they already referred people to other organizations prior to the initiative, although the baseline data indicates that the referrals and level of collaboration were minimal.

A consistent theme that emerged in the focus group discussions was that MazelTot is seen by the participating organizations to have many benefits for families. The focus group participants agreed that this initiative strengthens the Jewish community as a whole.

Families Increase Participation in Jewish Life: Information Is Key

The *Spring 2011 Follow-Up Survey* was sent to all registered MazelTot families (n=1,131) in May 2011. There was a 30% response rate. This is regarded as a relatively high response rate for a survey of this type. The families were asked to indicate whether there were changes in their Jewish life since signing up for MazelTot. Of the families, 75% strongly agreed or agreed that since signing up for MazelTot, “I am more aware of the diversity of opportunities at Jewish organizations,” 62% said “Overall, the number of activities my family participates in at Jewish organizations is increasing” and 58% indicated that “The Jewish life of my family is growing at home.” In addition, 53% strongly agreed or agreed that they are increasing their participation in programs at Jewish organizations that were already familiar to them, 51% indicated that they are trying programs at Jewish organizations that are new to them and 50% said that they use **mazeltot.org** to make informed decisions when selecting programs. These findings suggest that MazelTot achieved its goals for the families, especially in terms of encouraging them to take advantage of existing programming and “choosing Jewish not only for their children, but also for themselves.”

The families were asked to indicate which features of MazelTot played a significant role in connecting them to Jewish life. The feature that had the highest rating was “Information about things to do and organizations on **mazeltot.org**” (72%) followed by the discounts (70%). Since signing up for MazelTot, 34% attended one Jewish organization or synagogue for the first time, 26% two organizations, 10% three organizations and 5% four or more. This means that 75% of the families tried an organization for the first time. In its theory of change, MazelTot stated that it aims to encourage families “to try new and different institutional offerings.” It appears that MazelTot is succeeding in doing so.

Families Attribute Change in Their Jewish Lives to MazelTot

To what extent did the families attribute change in their Jewish lives to MazelTot? The families were asked to indicate the level of their change in terms of understanding Jewish customs and practices, ability to deepen Jewish living and learning for their families, positive and meaningful experiences at Jewish institutions, engagement in the Jewish community, and friendships with other Jewish children/families. In all cases, positive change was found.

To determine whether MazelTot “enhanced the Jewish lives of families at a formative moment in their Jewish journeys,” the *Families’ Engagement in Jewish Life* scale was developed. This scale was developed so that the measurement of Jewish identity would not be limited to the performance of Jewish rituals (e.g., lighting candles on Shabbat). Thus, the scale contains items that relate to families’ cognitions, emotions, actions and ways of partaking in community. The full list of items that comprise the quotient appear in the full report. Moreover, one’s relationship to the Jewish people is far more complex than a simple “yes/no” on a list of behaviors. The frequency in which they engage in cognitions, emotions, actions and ways of partaking of community provides far richer (and more accurate) information. For example, instead of asking whether parents light Shabbat candles or not, the parents are asked to indicate how frequently they light candles (never, sometimes, usually, always). Instead of asking whether they celebrate Jewish holidays or not, the scale asks how regularly they celebrate Jewish holidays with other families. So, too, families are asked to indicate the intensity of their attendance at religious services at a synagogue and not whether they are members of a synagogue or not. In this way, the changing intensity of the families’ engagement in Jewish life may be tracked.

An analysis was conducted to discern whether those families who had been affiliated with MazelTot the longest had the highest scores on the quotient. Indeed, this was found to be the case. One possible explanation is that the early adopters started off with higher scores. To rule out this explanation, the scores of the families who joined in 2010 were compared to those who joined in 2011. The *Baseline Survey* is completed prior to families’ participation in MazelTot. The analysis revealed that the scores from 2010 and 2011 were more similar than different (i.e., a statistically significant difference was not observed). In fact, an additional analysis—that was conducted on November 2009 data—showed that the early adopters had scores on the quotient that were even lower than the rest of the families who joined during the first year. Thus, the positive change that was seen in the *Follow-Up Survey* was not due to pre-existing differences among the families.

As mentioned earlier, the percentage of interfaith families on the *Follow-Up Survey* was found to be 31%. The families with two Jewish parents tended to have higher scores on the quotient than the interfaith families.

The intensity quotient was computed by assigning a number of points to each item on the scale (that is, all items in the scale had the same weight). This “intensity” quotient can be understood as the summed total of a number of ways that Jewish families with young children may demonstrate their engagement to the Jewish people, past and present. One person, for example, may have an intensity rating of 10 and another person, 8. The higher the score, the more intensive the participants’ connectedness to Jewish life. At baseline, prior to families’ participation in MazelTot, the level of engagement in Jewish life tended to be low to moderate. For example, 65% never or rarely attend religious services at a synagogue; 75% never or rarely attended Jewish cultural events, film festivals, educational lectures or workshops;

72% never or rarely wear clothing or jewelry that shows that one is Jewish; 68% never or rarely sang or listening to Jewish or Israeli music; 65% never or rarely read Jewish websites, books and magazines; 65% never or rarely attended events and/or programs at the Jewish Community Center or other Jewish organizations; 56% never or rarely said Jewish blessings; 51% never or rarely told stories about Jewish events or holidays; 50% never or rarely celebrated Shabbat (e.g., light candles, special family dinner, say blessings). Of special relevance, 66% never or rarely participated in a Jewish program for families.

A Statistical Note

For the sake of readability, this *Executive Summary* does not present the probability levels and all the details of the statistical tests. Interested readers are referred to the full report to see this information in detail. One statistical note: to determine whether change was observed, a series of statistical analyses were conducted. There are three possible outcomes from these analyses: negative change, positive change, or no change whatsoever in families' level of engagement in Jewish life. The statistical tests are employed to learn whether positive or negative change was "statistically significant." In other words, could the change in families' level of engagement in Jewish life all be due to chance, or was a "nonchance" difference found? The tests do not indicate the magnitude of the change. Given the families' low level of engagement in Jewish life at baseline, no change was expected. The statistical tests disproved this expectation. (In research terms, this is known as "rejecting the null hypothesis"). To see the magnitude of the change, the data are presented in the full report. In general, a shift occurred among the families in terms of their engagement in Jewish life: At baseline, a very low level of engagement was seen; by the time of this report, the families had shifted to a moderate level of engagement. Within the world of Jewish education, a shift of this type is uncommon.

Baseline and Follow-Up Scores

The scores of the families on the *Baseline Survey* and the *Follow-Up Survey* were compared. Thus, the scores of the families on the quotient prior to participating in MazelTot and now were compared. The "now" scores were higher than the "prior" scores and the differences were not due to chance. This finding validates MazelTot's theory of change and demonstrates MazelTot's impact on families' engagement in Jewish life.

Families Who Scored in the Bottom Third on the Quotient

Of the families, 58% agreed that "Since signing up for MazelTot, the Jewish life of my family is growing at home." These families scored within the bottom third on the quotient at baseline (e.g., they were the least "affiliated" or least "connected" group). If this group of families experienced positive change in their Jewish lives as a result of signing up for MazelTot, then MazelTot's theory of change is validated: "Helping Jewish families connect with each other to be friends, co-learners and colleagues will enhance their Jewish lives and the Jewish community."

The families who scored in the bottom third on the quotient agreed at a higher rate that the MazelTot discounts made it possible for them to afford participation in Jewish life in new or increased ways. Furthermore, these families actually used the discounts at a far higher rate. The families also agreed at a far higher rate that "I have become a member/regular user of a Jewish organization as a result of participating in MazelTot." The families who used the discounts at a high rate and indicated that the Jewish life of their families was growing at home had an important outcome: their "intensity" quotient scores on the *Follow-Up Survey* were higher and the higher scores were not due to chance. This is additional evidence of the impact of MazelTot on families who had room to grow in their connectedness to Jewish life. This also speaks of the value of the discounts as a means to engaging families.

Discount Usage and Engagement in Jewish Life

A key research question is the role of the discounts. The families were asked the following question on the *Follow-Up Survey*: “One of the features of MazelTot is the offer of discounts at Jewish organizations for classes, events and more. Have you used a discount?” In general, 67% used discounts. An analysis was conducted to see whether use of the discounts was associated with higher scores on the quotient. Indeed, this was the case: those who used the discounts had higher scores on the quotient than those who did not.

Conclusion

MazelTot is nearing the end of its two year pilot. The participating organizations and the families urge Rose Community Foundation to continue funding MazelTot. More than this, ideas were offered for strengthening or expanding the initiative. For example, one parent wrote, “I would love to see MazelTot grow into MazelKids or MazelFamily.”

This third-party, independent evaluation appraised MazelTot’s theory of change and outcomes among the participating organizations and families. It is clear that MazelTot’s theory of change is sound: Indeed, new and expectant parents are searching for resources, information, services and connections in new ways and that this searching creates a teachable moment, an opportunity for parents to explore the array of offerings and choices and to begin or deepen their engagement in Jewish life. MazelTot is achieving its stated goals.



“I would love to see MazelTot grow into MazelKids or MazelFamily.”

-MazelTot Parent

The complete MazelTot Pilot Phase Evaluation Report, is available at rcfdenver.org/reports/mazeltotpilot.pdf.

MazelTot is an initiative of Rose Community Foundation. Rose Community Foundation supports efforts to improve the quality of life throughout the Greater Denver community through its endowed grantmaking programs, and by advising and assisting donors who wish to make thoughtful charitable investments to better the community.

Rose Community Foundation's Jewish Life program area supports efforts to create and sustain a vibrant Jewish community. The Foundation funds new ideas that connect Jews to Jewish life and to each other, promoting partnerships and addressing emerging needs, while also strengthening institutions so they can respond to change. Learn more about Rose Community Foundation at rcfdenver.org.

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