

## Shomrim Handbook Outline

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Based on the 2018 Shomrim Handbook from Adath Jeshurun Congregation,  
Minnetonka, MN

- Title page
  - Name of handbook
  - Institution
  - Author(s)
  - Date
  - Photo(s)/graphic(s)
- Table of Contents
- Description of what shmirah is and where the custom came from
  - Web site references
  - books
  - Text sources
- Description of the role of the shomer/et
- Who is eligible to become a shomer/et
  - Requirements, if any, regarding Jewish status and/or level of observance
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Requirements, if any, for membership in any particular synagogue and/or any other organization
  - May family and/or friends participate? (and under what circumstances)
- What to expect
  - Approximately how often you can expect to be contacted for a shmirah opportunity
  - Whether the casket will be in the room with the shomer/et
  - Whether the shomer/et may have someone else with them
    - If so, how many people and who may or may not come with them
  - Length of the shift
  - Environment
    - Quality of lighting, especially for reading
    - Adequate HVAC or too hot in the summer and/or too cold at night and/or in the winter
    - Any background music and/or public address system
    - Likelihood of staff or others walking by or entering the room
    - Available seating
    - Art/decorations in the room (non-Jewish funeral homes may have a cross in the room, for instance)
    - Electrical outlets
    - Space heater and/or fan
    - Water cooler
    - Additional candles and matches
    - Pillows and/or footrests
    - Blankets

- Resources in the room, such as:
  - Death notice and obituary
  - Scrapbooks, stories, pictures of the meit/ah
  - Tehillim – Hebrew, transliteration, English
  - Journal
  - Books
- What kinds of feelings may come up
- Pay: Be explicit if this is being done on a volunteer basis. If not, be clear about:
  - Pay rate(s)
  - Any deductions
  - What happens when the next shomer/et (or the person taking the casket to the funeral) does not show up on time
  - Overtime policy
  - Does time paid include travel time
  - When payment will be made
- Instructions
  - What to wear
  - What to bring
  - Special instructions if you're the first or last shomer/et
  - Protocol for transitioning from one shomer/et to another
  - Who to contact/what to do if something unexpected happens, such as:
    - Family shows up
    - Family wants to open the casket to see the meit/ah
    - Odors/liquids emanate from the casket
    - Shomer/et who is supposed to arrive at the end of your shift doesn't come
    - Alarm goes off
  - How to act while in the room
  - Whether to keep the door(s) and/or window(s) open or closed
  - If casket is sometimes in the room with the shomer/et and sometimes not:
    - What is done differently depending on whether the casket is in the room
- Logistics
  - How you get on the list of people to do shmirah
  - How you will be notified when there is a shmirah opportunity
  - How you report you are available for a particular shmirah
  - Address(es) and phone number(s) of where shmirah will be done, and for each:
    - Driving directions and/or public transportation directions
    - Where to park
      - Cost of parking, if any
      - Hours/days when parking meters or parking lot fees are not applicable
    - Hours/days when the facility is open to the public and when it is closed
    - Where and how to enter the building when the facility is open to the public
    - Where and how to enter the building when the facility is closed to the public
      - Keys/entry codes
      - Alarm codes
    - Location of elevator(s) and any required keys or codes
    - Building map
    - Location in building of where shmirah is done

- What resources are provided at each site
    - Location of restroom facilities
    - Availability of water cooler and/or drinking fountain
    - Accessibility
  - Instructions on how to adjust the room's heating/cooling, if available
  - In case of emergency:
    - Location of stairwells
    - Location of first aid kit
    - Location of defibrillator (if any)
    - Location of available phone(s) to call out and instructions, if needed
    - Location of fire alarms
    - Location of fire extinguishers
    - Emergency exits
    - Who to contact
- What, if anything, is different on Shabbat or other holidays?
  - Use of electronic devices
  - Communications when something unexpected arises
- After sitting shmirah
  - Resources if you want to talk about the experience
  - Who to contact with concerns, suggestions, and/or feedback
  - What you can tell others about it, and what you should not tell others
- Virtual shmirah
  - How to conduct shmirah at home or another remote location
    - Benefits, drawbacks
- Blended shmirah
  - Combining in-person and virtual
- Glossary
- List of resources and where to obtain them
  - Psalms in Hebrew and/or English
  - Related books
  - Related Jewish texts
  - Related poetry
  - Other readings
  - Related films/movies
  - Related songs
  - Related websites