Mikvah is a complex issue. For some women, it is a welcome and celebrated experience, for others it may be a harrowing and challenging one, while for others, it may just be something that they'd like to get through quickly and painlessly. Whatever the nature of the experience, it is a uniquely female and personal one. Many mikvaot are women-centered, safe and sensitive and they empower women to experience mikvah in a dignified, respectful, and healthy way. This is a list of Mikvah Best Practices that various Orthodox and community mikvaot currently have in place. It is our hope that in sharing this list of Mikvah Best Practices we can encourage all mikvaot to move towards meeting these standards.

**Mikvah Governance and Decision Making:**

The mikvah board is made up of a majority, if not entirely, of women who use/have used the mikvah.

If requested by a mikvah user and available within a given community, a Yoetzet Halakha, or other woman with certification in the laws of niddah and taharat hamishpacha, is consulted on halakhic questions, including whether a woman may use the mikvah during the daytime for a particular reason.

Mikvah boards identify two or three female ombudspeople to whom women may direct confidential complaints/concerns, and clearly publicize their names and contact information at the mikvah and on the mikvah’s website. Mikvaot establish a protocol, in writing, as to how to investigate and respond to such complaints/concerns.

The names of all members of the mikvah board and the supervising rabbi are clearly publicized at the mikvah and on the mikvah’s website, and there is a mechanism for women to contact the board and rabbi directly.

**Mikvah Design and Operations:**

Mikvah users make the decisions with respect to the design of the mikvah based on their knowledge and experience.

The mikvah is clean and sanitary and provides as much privacy and comfort for women as feasible given space constraints.

The mikvah has adequate space and toiletries, etc. for women to fully prepare in privacy on the mikvah premises.

The mikvah facilities are wheelchair accessible.
The mikvah has gowns and towels which are appropriate for women of all sizes.

The mikvah offers space in which women can resume their usual appearance prior to leaving the mikvah, including drying their hair.

The mikvah has a sufficient number of preparation rooms to ensure that the women in the community can get in and out in a timely manner. If there is a wait time for the mikvah, efforts are made to ensure that women's privacy and comfort are protected during such wait time.

The mikvah has information in the preparation rooms about self breast exams and detecting skin cancer, and information for women experiencing domestic violence.

The mikvah has a system that allows women to sign up for appointments online and a website that clearly indicates hours of operation and contact information.

Friday night and yom tov accommodations are made for women, including allowing women to arrive prior to Shabbat/yom tov, allowing women to use the mikvah prior to Shabbat/yom tov if approved by the local halakhic authorities, and/or providing a satellite mikvah, if feasible. A satellite mikvah is a small mikvah that women can walk to and use on Friday night or yom tov. Daytime hours are made available to women in particular cases such as with brides or converts or in other special cases at a reasonable cost to the user.

Women are not rushed through the mikvah process and are able to take extra time in the mikvah without an attendant if they so desire.

Mikvaot have a system for accommodating late arrivals, within reason.

Mikvaot have information available in the preparation rooms about what women might do in order to prepare for the mikvah and what to expect during the process, with contact information for halakhic authorities, including Yoatzot Halakha, the Yoetzet hotline, and/or women with certification in the laws of niddah and taharat hamishpacha, who may be consulted with questions or concerns.

The blessing for immersion, along with transliteration, is printed in large letters and clearly visible from inside the mikvah.

**Mikvah Safety and Security:**

Mikvaot retain a security firm to set up closed circuit surveillance cameras which are monitored by the women on duty during the mikvah's business hours.
The parking lot, walkways and doorways of the mikvah are well lit and have monitored surveillance cameras.

There are emergency backup lights in the preparation rooms and mikvah in the event of a blackout.

If there is a keylim (vessels) mikvah on the premises, the hours of use do not coincide with the hours that women are scheduled to use the mikvah. The entrance to the keylim mikvah is separate and distinct from the entrance to the general mikvah.

If there are offices (synagogue and/or other) connected to the mikvah, they have a separate and distinct entrance and are not accessible from the mikvah. To the extent possible, the offices are closed during the hours that women are scheduled to use the mikvah.

If the mikvah is available for use by men, hours for men and women are clearly established and followed. There is a gap between men’s and women’s hours.

No one is in the mikvah building unless accompanied by a mikvah employee and/or female board member. The mikvah is locked at all times and only female mikvah employees and female board members have the key to the mikvah.

Each mikvah employee and board member is assigned their own individual code to access the mikvah. Records are kept of who enters the mikvah at what point and periodically checked to make sure that no one was in the mikvah when not supposed to be there.

All mikvah employees and board members, including Yoatzot Halakha and halakhic advisors, are to be cleared by checking the state and federal criminal databases and the state central registry of child abuse and maltreatment.

The mikvah is periodically swept for surveillance equipment by security experts together with mikvah employees who are familiar with the mikvah and will recognize if something is out of place. The mikvah is kept neat and orderly so that if something is out of place, it will be noticed.

Mikvaot discourage users from bringing in extra bags and belongings unless necessary. Users are encouraged to only bring in what they need and are advised that they may be subject to bag search by mikvah employees for security reasons. There is a secure place available for mikvah users to leave extra belongings.

**Mikvah Shomrot:**

Shomrot are warm and welcoming, respectful to women and sensitive to users’ unique circumstances.
Shomrot are trained to be sensitive, and provide alternatives within halakha, to women who are afraid of the water or have other phobias/mental health conditions/medical conditions that make it difficult for them to use the mikvah.

Shomrot ask whether a woman wishes to be checked prior to using the mikvah and know that declining to be checked does not preclude the woman from making use of the mikvah.

Shomrot are trained to be respectful of women’s personal space and privacy and take steps to only see so much of the unclothed woman for as long as necessary to determine that she has fully immersed in the mikvah.

Shomrot leave the room or hold an opaque sheet or robe in front of them while the woman enters and leaves the mikvah waters.

The mikvah shomrot receive training in recognizing signs of domestic and/or child abuse, addressing such with affected women and reporting such as appropriate.

Shomrot allow women time alone in the mikvah following immersion, if requested. If requested, shomrot allow women to immerse alone or to bring their own shomeret.