

Jewish Family Service of Rochester

Case Statement

Hillel:

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me?

And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"

Pirke Avot 1:14

Mission Statement

Jewish Family Service of Rochester (JFS) helps individuals and families navigate life's transitions and challenges with compassionate solution-focused social services, grounded in the time honored Jewish traditions of dignity, kindness, and improving the world.

Purpose

We must ensure that JFS continues as the community's social service safety net as it has for almost ninety years while retaining the flexibility to address emerging needs.

JFS helps our community face its problems

Social services is a broad term. For JFS, it means we are the source our community turns to for help with food, shelter, family dynamics, challenging life transitions, isolation, and educational programs that enhance quality of life.

JFS responds to needs throughout the life cycle. We take our mission of improving the world to heart. Our programs: help build families through adoption; offer mental health counseling to children, adults, couples and families; provide care management to elders at home; address hunger; and provide emergency family assistance to those in our community who have nowhere else to turn.

Since its earliest days, JFS has provided programs that meet our community's ever-changing and ever-increasing needs. JFS program development is responsive and relevant, whether resettling refugees seeking religious freedom or helping those whose lives have been impacted by job loss and economic downturns. It is through JFS that our community draws on its best traditions and cares for each other in times of need.

JFS Programs and Services

JFS has provided high quality, person-centered social services for more than eight decades. We are united in partnership with the people we serve, in the spirit of Tzedakah, helping those in need. Our mission is woven into the fabric of the community through the delivery of the following services:

JFS Emergency Family Assistance Program

Maimonides, the great Jewish scholar, regarded as the highest level of charity: giving an interest-free loan to a person in need; forming a partnership with a person in need; giving a grant to a person in need; and finding a job for a person in need; so long as that loan, grant, partnership, or job results in the person no longer living by relying upon others.

It is Maimonides' wisdom that frames the JFS Emergency Family Assistance program. For those vulnerable individuals and families facing issues such as hunger, eviction, or loss of utilities, a call to JFS assures that their short-term needs will be addressed. We have been providing small interest free loans or grants and food to those in need for many decades. History has shown that with JFS support many of these individuals are able to move from short term vulnerability to long term stability. More recently, the Brighton Food Cupboard (BFC) has offered JFS the opportunity to strengthen our mission by meeting the most basic of needs, that of food.

JFS opened the Brighton Food Cupboard (BFC) in November 2010. The BFC is committed to the prevention and reduction of hunger and food insecurity for individuals and families living in Brighton and surrounding communities. In the first six weeks of operation, the BFC served 425 individuals and is going strong.

Hunger and/or food insecurity do not occur in isolation. Where they exist, so do other social service needs. The BFC case manager extends the program beyond the walls of the food cupboard and delivers food to the clients in their homes. Once there, the BFC case manager is able to offer clients information and advocacy to help resolve any additional social service need they may be facing.

JFS is acutely aware that in challenging economic times, many are just a paycheck away from crisis. Chronic stress about food, finances, and family can trigger depression and other concerns. The BFC provides more than food by working with clients to reduce food, housing and financial instability as well as mental health concerns. JFS does more than just give food. We connect clients to the resources that will move them towards independence, stability and wellness. JFS does what no one else can.

Adoption Program

The reasons that prompt an individual or family to adopt are intensely personal. Once the decision to proceed with adoption has been made, JFS expertise helps move the process forward. JFS believes that every child deserves to have a permanent family that will offer unconditional love and help him or her reach their full potential. Whether building families through domestic, international or foster care adoptions, JFS strives to find homes for children. In any given year, enhanced by our Hague Certification, JFS works with approximately eighty families wishing to adopt.

Our commitment to families includes assistance and support that begins with their first phone call and continues beyond the finalization of their adoption. Waiting to adopt a child can be a lengthy and frustrating process. Over the years, the Adoption Program has established an excellent reputation based on warmth and understanding of the family experience. Aspiring parents know that when they come to JFS they are accessing not only a sliding fee scale but also expert staff who will act as their guide during the adoption process. Those who need the support of counseling services can speak with a JFS Counselor at any stage in their adoption.

Since 2005, the number of international adoptions by families in the U.S. has dropped by almost half. JFS has responded to this decrease by piloting a new program with a local agency, Children Awaiting Parents (CAP). The pilot project's purpose is to help children in the U.S. find their forever families. Helping children in foster care find forever families is critical to the children's future. The earlier a child is adopted from the foster care system, the more likely he or she is to lead a healthy and productive life.

JFS is proud, honored and privileged to be involved in the creation of families. We are dedicated to the success of each adoption we undertake.

Aging Services

The Ten Commandments tell us to honor our mother and father. JFS Aging Services does just that each and every day, honoring the over 650 elders we work with and helping them to maximize their quality of life.

People are living longer than ever before. Those over eighty five are America's fastest growing population; the 85+ age group grew by 35% in Monroe County from 1990-2000. A survey by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) found that 89 percent of respondents would like to age with dignity at home if given the option. According to the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester *Count Me in Survey*, roughly two-thirds of those seventy to eighty years of age envision continuing to live in their current homes. JFS geriatric care management services must continue to meet the ongoing community based needs of these elders. Additionally, JFS must be prepared to meet the needs of graying "Baby Boomers" who are even more likely to want to age in their own homes. With increasing age comes increasing physical limitations, mobility problems and the risk of social isolation. These limitations impact the ability of older adults to remain independent, healthy and connected to the community.

That is where JFS fits in. Fortunately, JFS has the experience and expertise to help make one's home a good place to remain and thrive. JFS geriatric care managers help elders in our community age safely and comfortably in their own homes and assist with housing transitions. We also provide peace of

mind to caregiving family and friends who live near-by or at a distance and cannot personally monitor the well-being of their relative in Rochester. Whether utilizing JFS Express to provide transportation to medical or other appointments, or treating depression with our in-home counseling program, JFS care managers make sure our elders are receiving vital services that help them maintain independence and maximize self-determination.

We have replicated our success helping elders to age in their own homes through our NORC program, in which we help an entire community age at home. The NORC (Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities) is an innovative model that coordinates a broad range of social and health care services in a location where large numbers of elders are aging in place. JFS care managers work in three area NORCs, and JFS manages the NORC located at Ellison Park Apartments. The overarching goal of a NORC program is to maximize the health of its community.

A NORC program is a community building endeavor. At the core are social service and health care providers; housing managers or representatives of neighborhood associations; and, most important, the community's residents, especially its elders who consist of refugees from the former Soviet Union. JFS partners at Ellison Park include elder residents, Eastwood Management, the property owner and a variety of social service and health related organizations. For NORCs to succeed, government and philanthropic funding is essential.

A NORC program is built from the ground up, in response to community needs and interests. Rather than emphasize only the provision of services to individuals, the NORC program model also promotes community change. It offers opportunities to empower its residents to take on new roles in shaping communities that work for them, fosters connections among residents and maximizes the health and well-being of all elders in the NORC. Residents at the Ellison Park NORC benefit from an on-site Russian/English bi-lingual JFS social worker, health-related services and social and cultural offerings that in combination support satisfying and safe aging-in-place.

To live safely and live independently, older adults must access resources and services that address the increasing functional limitations that often accompany aging. Unfortunately, older adults are often unfamiliar with community resources, let alone knowledgeable about how to connect to them. They need assistance identifying, accessing and maintaining resources that will support continued independence and safety. In ever-increasing numbers, elders and their caregivers are turning to JFS for help with aging at home. For each of them, JFS geriatric care managers play a pivotal role in working to honor our elders' wish to remain at home as they age.

Counseling Services

JFS seeks to ensure that we can continue to offer high quality affordable mental health services and coordinated supports to the Jewish college student, separated from family, who is struggling with the pressures of college and self-identity; the children who struggle to cope with learning and attention issues, body-image concerns, the strain and uncertainty of their parents divorce, and peer group pressures; the single unemployed parent who is struggling with family and financial worries; and the recently widowed elder, struggling to make a new life at age eighty-four.

Mental health is as essential as physical health to our overall state of well-being and quality of life. Mental health concerns such as depression and anxiety can derail an otherwise fulfilling life, impair our ability to maintain employment, connect with our loved ones and pursue our dreams. A 2008 study by the Center for Disease Control reported that 9% of youths 12-17, 10% of adults 18-64 and 20% of those over 65 had experienced a major depression in the prior twelve months.

Depression is not a normal part of life or of aging. The skilled, professional counselors at Jewish Family Service offer results-oriented therapy and problem-solving skills to those struggling with depression, anxiety, and life transitions. In-house referrals to JFS programs add a broad supportive dimension to the counseling process. When clients face issues such as financial stress due to job loss or caregiver burden or infertility issues, referrals to the JFS emergency family assistance, aging services program and adoption program, respectively, can help by providing support and pragmatic solutions. Along with the sliding-scale fees based on income, these referrals differentiate the work of JFS from private practitioners.

The JFS Counseling program extends well beyond the classic fifty minute counseling session. In addition to assisting clients manage the emotional upheavals that brought them to counseling, JFS staff offer referrals and follow-up to resources that help clients meet their needs for housing, employment stability, access to health care and appropriate interactions with their children. JFS counselors even make home-visits when appropriate to remove barriers to therapy and assess the natural living environment.

The JFS counseling program provides mental health counseling that reduces the needs of vulnerable families and individuals for emergency and crisis services by helping clients maintain mental health stability and emotional wellness. Within the context of short-term solution-focused therapeutic relationships, clients are helped to identify their problems, define plans to resolve problems, and, finally, to implement the plans. JFS Counselors and their clients work together, so the client can once again be in control of his or her life.

Making Good Choices - Family Life Education Programs

JFS program staff facilitate Family Life Education programs, workshops and ongoing community outreach programs in different venues throughout our community. The purpose is to provide information and education that will enable our clients to adapt to change, reach their maximum potential and lead fulfilled lives. These offerings include programs such as the following:

- Baby Safe Sleep
Between 2007 and 2011, in Monroe County, 42 infants under twelve months of age died after being placed in an unsafe sleeping environment. The babies were sleeping in a position or a place where their breathing became obstructed and they were too young to be able to move away. JFS is partnering with the Baby Safe Sleep Coalition to educate parents about the importance of babies sleeping by themselves, on their backs in a crib without blankets, toys, pillows or bumpers. Our goal is to reduce and, even eliminate these tragic deaths by increasing community awareness so that all babies are put to sleep in a safe, risk-free environment.
- Bereavement Support Group
Twice a month, JFS staff facilitate a community-based bereavement support group to help those who have recently lost loved ones, as they experience the varying stages of grief.
- Bubbe and Zayde Tech
This program supervised by a JFS social worker, provides elderly refugees from the former Soviet Union, a weekly opportunity for social recreational programming at the JCC. The elders participate in acculturation activities including, learning English in classes run by volunteers and socializing with their peers.

JFS is uniquely qualified to be our community social service safety net

Jewish Family Service has always been there: as a first responder in times of crisis and, as the local social service safety net, for both our Jewish and wider communities. Human service needs have emerged, evolved and changed along with the society in which we live, and JFS continues to meet them.

Our client-centered focus cuts across all our program areas and is a foundational element in our work. JFS clients are not put into programmatic silos based on their presenting problem. They benefit from a cross-program integration that helps us understand the whole person and address their needs and concerns. We pride ourselves on being a one-stop agency that looks beyond the original request for help. JFS routinely identifies other areas in our clients' lives that would benefit from additional JFS advocacy and support. If an area of concern emerges, JFS works with the client to change things for the better. It is this integrated approach that distinguishes us from others.

JFS is the standard bearer for a strong, caring and compassionate community. Because of JFS, our community is connected to a mission that insures that each of us is cared for from childhood to old age. At JFS, we live and breathe our mission of repairing the world.