



JFS Participates in An Agency Evaluation

By Lynne Sheffer
Chair JFS

On August 2-5, Jewish Family Services participated in an agency evaluation process. This study was initiated by the JFS board to help evaluate the present level of services as well as to assist in prioritizing and planning for the agency's future. The study was conducted by Bert Goldberg, director of the National Association of Jewish Family and Children's agencies in Kendall Park, New Jersey.

We hope to achieve many things from this review. The board wanted to know the following about Jewish Family Services:

- Are we providing good care?
- Are record keeping and documentation as it should be?
- What are the Agency's strengths and weaknesses?
- How do we compare to other Jewish communities our size?
- Are we properly staffed and are we operating efficiently?
- Are we offering too few or too many services?
- How can JFS better serve the Jewish community?
- What is our potential for the future?
- What are the next important steps for long range planning?

The board will prepare a report for the Federation and the community which will reflect the findings of the agency and its influence on future goals and objectives for Jewish Family Services.

Dear FRIENDS:

The board of Jewish Family Services thanks the Jewish community for its wonderful support of our annual Friends campaign.

This 1992 campaign was a tremendous success. We were able to raise \$21,000 which was over a 50% increase from the previous year. Thank you to the many people who have supported the Agency in the past several years as well as to the many families who gave their first contribution this year.

We are very excited and appreciative of the financial support we have received, as well as your confidence and concern for the welfare of this Agency. Jewish Family Services is vital to the Charlotte Jewish community and your dollars will enable JFS to provide needed services and programs this coming year.

"Thank you" is such a simple word to say, but please know that we say this from our hearts.

Sincerely,
Lynne Sheffer
Chairperson

Thoughts from Adrienne

By Adrienne Rosenberg, JFS Director



I recently received a telephone call asking me to write an article for the October issue of the *Next Step*. This is a monthly newspaper for an organization known as Step One. Step One is located in Winston-Salem and is the Governor's Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse among Children and Youth. I was asked to write this article on alcohol and drug abuse from the Jewish perspective.

I am not the expert on this topic. But I do know because of what I've seen as Director of Jewish Family Services and in my work on one of the subcommittees of the Mecklenburg County Drug and Alcohol Commission that Jews of all ages do indeed abuse alcohol and street or prescription drugs. It is the stereotype that there are no Jewish alcoholics and the shame if one is identified that help keep denial in our communities. In fact, studies indicate that perhaps the greatest deniers of alcoholism among Jews are

physicians and rabbis. The reticence of the Jewish community only perpetuates the myth of Jewish immunity to addictions, which makes someone Jewish feel they cannot get support from the Jewish community.

I have chosen to indeed write the article in hopes that if someone reads it who is Jewish and who has a problem, they can know there is support from the Jewish community. I also hope our Jewish professionals who encounter these problems will learn more about what the symptoms of substance abuse are and what community resources are available. Denial, shame and ignorance only add to the problem. A copy of the article follows. Please feel free to call me at 364-6594 and give me your reaction.

Addiction and the Jewish Perspective

In 1798, Immanuel Kant wrote that Jews do not get drunk because "they are exposed through this eccentricity and alleged chosenness to the attention and criticism of their community, and thus cannot relax in their self-control." Unfortunately, Kant was wrong. But this stereotype has continued, and it is the stereotype that there are no Jewish alcoholics that creates denial in our communities.

Jews don't do bad things. They do not drink to excess, pop pills, snort cocaine, or smoke pot. Good Jews don't abuse their spouses or their children. Good Jews don't get AIDS. Good Jews don't have eating disorders, and they certainly are not addicted.

However, the truth is that statements such as these are not grounded in reality. Jews are as susceptible to social problems as anyone else. Alcohol and drug abuse are no less prevalent in the Jewish community. But, they are rarely discussed or seen as a Jewish "problem." National estimates indicate from five to 20% of the general population have some type of addiction. And this number includes Jews.

One of the problems for Jews who want recovery and support groups is the feeling that their Jewishness is not emphasized. One significant way of helping people control addictions is the Twelve-Step programs such as

AA (Alcoholics Anonymous). Spirituality and "the Higher Power" are integral parts of AA's tried and true "Twelve Step" recovery program. But for Jews in recovery, the spiritual aspect can become problematic because the majority of many AA or other Twelve-Step programs that meet are held in churches. The recovery process and the words, "Higher Power," are meant to be non-denominational. But because the meetings are held in churches, the settings and program are perceived to be Christian oriented. Thus, Jews can feel uncomfortable and alienated.

With this in mind, a new nation-wide organization has sprung up called JACS (Jewish Alcoholics, Chemically Dependent Persons, and Significant Others). But there are only about 35 chapters of JACS in the entire country. The purpose of JACS is intended to provide a network for Jews in recovery to meet other Jews who are experiencing the same problem. The Jewish setting is a source of spiritual comfort and identity and is a supplement to the Twelve-Step programs.

Jews struggling to overcome an addiction or family members trying to cope with the abuse (be it alcohol, prescription or illegal drugs, food, or sex) often face problems of denial and alienation more severe than non-Jews. For all the beneficence the Jewish community shows the world, for all the social outreach programs Jews take in, the myth still holds that Jews aren't subject to the disease of addiction. Thus, the guilt Jewish addicts feel is immense. They often feel that if you say you are an addict, you are not a good Jew.

I was recently sent a book entitled *Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery* by Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky and Dr. Stuart A. Copans with introductions by Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman and Dr. Abraham T. Twerski. Those clients who I have encouraged to read it have found it to be comforting. There can be support from other Jews. It also gives me hope that there is less denial among some Jewish professionals. Then we can be responsive to those Jews within our community in a more helpful way.

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—R.M.

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