

SO THAT ALL MAY STUDY TORAH

Communal Provision of Jewish Education for Students With Special Needs

JESNA

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Jewish Education Service of North America
(JESNA)

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Abstract

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Maimonides' *Mishnah Torah* (1:8) affirms that every Jew is required to study Torah, whether poor or rich, healthy or ailing, young or old or weak. In many communities in North America, central agencies for Jewish education (boards and bureaus) have the primary responsibility for ensuring that quality Jewish education is available to all segments of the Jewish population in their community, including those with special needs.

Through their special education departments and consultants, central agencies provide a variety of services (including on-going and special programs, support groups for families, teacher training and professional development, sensitivity training, development and dissemination of curricular materials, referrals, and accessing funding). In providing such services they collaborate with and receive support from other communal agencies to greater and lesser degrees.

This paper reports on results of a survey of special educators in central agencies for Jewish education in North America designed to gather descriptive information about:

- the types of services they provide, coordinate and administer; and,
- collaborative efforts with other communal agencies and institutions.

It explores some of the issues involved in community organization and inter-agency collaboration: What advances the work? What constrains it?

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Respondent Communities¹

Bureau of Jewish Education, Los Angeles
Agency for Jewish Education, San Diego
Bureau of Jewish Education of San Francisco, The Peninsula, Marin & Sonoma Counties
Central Agency for Jewish Education, Denver
Commission on Jewish Education, Hartford
Board of Jewish Education of Greater Washington DC
Commission for Jewish Education in the Palm Beaches, West Palm Beach
Associated Talmud Torahs of Chicago
Community Foundation for Jewish Education, Chicago
Jewish Education Committee, New Orleans
Council on Jewish Education Services, Baltimore
Bureau of Jewish Education, Boston
Talmud Torah of St. Paul
Central Agency for Jewish Education, Kansas City
Bureau of Jewish Education, Omaha
Jewish Educational Services of the United Jewish Community, Bergen County, NJ
Jewish Education Association of MetroWest, NJ
Carolina Agency for Jewish Education
Educational Resource Center, Akron
Bureau of Jewish Education, Cincinnati
Jewish Education Center of Cleveland
Toledo Board of Jewish Education
Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education, Philadelphia
Bureau of Jewish Education, Houston
Jewish Education Council, Seattle
Milwaukee Association for Jewish Education
Jewish Education Council, Montreal
Board of Jewish Education, Toronto
Winnipeg Board of Jewish Education

¹The material in this report does not include information from the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York for technical reasons. However, it is important to note that the BJE runs an extremely active and comprehensive special education center which sponsors programs such as the Association of Jewish Special Educators, vocational guidance, parent programs, and a graduate school program as well as an array of school services.

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I. COMMUNAL STRUCTURES FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

Some General Background on the Role and Function of Central Agencies

Jewish education in North America is provided through an interconnected network of schools, local / regional agencies, and national bodies. The most direct transmitters of Jewish education and enculturation, beyond the home environment, are schools, youth groups and clubs, retreats, summer and other informal / co-curricular programs. Most of these institutions receive direction and support, to greater or lesser degrees from their national ideological or denominational organizations.

In addition, there exist some 64 local / regional communal agencies for Jewish education, established by communities to serve as their central address for Jewish education. The first American Jewish community organization which recognized the principle of community responsibility for Jewish education and applied it in developing its educational policies on a community-wide basis was the New York Kehillah. Soon after the Kehillah was established in 1909 it ordered a community-wide study of Jewish education. The study concluded that the only way to provide effective Jewish education on a community-wide basis was through a coordinated approach. Thus, the first bureau of Jewish education was established in New York in 1910.

Today, communal agencies for Jewish education (central agencies, bureaus, boards, federation committees, community schools and educational resource centers) are still critical to the effective provision of educational services on a community-wide basis. They exist in nearly all large and large-intermediate size federated communities (with Jewish populations of 10,000 or more), and many smaller ones as well. The mechanisms by which they plan, coordinate and provide services for Jewish education vary from community to community depending on community size, organizational culture and structure, and local approaches and priorities regarding Jewish educational and other communal services.

Determination of the role and mission of the central agency for Jewish education in most communities is an ongoing, evolutionary process. The majority of communal service agencies currently see planning for Jewish education on a community-wide basis as integral to their missions. Significantly fewer of them view their roles as supervising, overseeing or imposing standards on schools and educators. Most see themselves in a supportive role, providing resources and consultations to schools and other educational institutions and educators. Few view themselves primarily as operators of schools or other educational programs. Many view part of their role as identifying Jewish educational needs in the community, and therefore work with other agencies and institutions to assure these needs are met -- whether by providing them on a community-wide basis when appropriate or by supporting and advising individual or joint efforts by other agencies and organizations.²

Eighteen of these central service bodies for Jewish education have departments or professionals on staff devoted to providing and supporting special needs education to institutions and individuals in their communities. On the continental level, the Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education was developed to strengthen special needs education through central agencies for Jewish education and to provide a context in which communities' special needs educators can build a professional network. Its mandate is articulated in the "Call for Action" found below. The Consortium is affiliated with JESNA and was co-founded by Rabbi Martin Schloss, Director, School Services; Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York, and Sara Rubinow Simon, Director, Special Needs; Board of Jewish Education of Greater Washington.

²For additional information about central agencies for Jewish education, see *Profiles: Communal Service Bodies for Jewish Education*, Dr. Leora W. Isaacs, Mandell L. Berman Jewish Heritage Center at JESNA, 1993.

Call for Action

Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education

In recognition of the obligation to provide a religious education for all Jewish persons with special needs, the Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education, in conjunction with the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA), urges all Jewish communities throughout North America to develop and support systems to:

- identify Jewish persons with special needs including individuals with developmental, learning, behavioral, neurological, physical, medical and sensory disabilities;
- deliver Jewish educational services to special persons that will enhance and enrich their Jewish lives and those of their families. Such services include special educational programming in early childhood; day and supplementary schools; continuing adult education programs; and programs in residential, social / recreation and camping settings;
- explore various funding sources for the provision of these services through federal, state and local government entitlements and foundations as well as local community and private sources.

The Consortium, in conjunction with JESNA, endorses this proactive approach to provide services to Jewish individuals with special needs.

"It is enough that an individual is disabled. Let us not disable him or her as a Jew as well."

II. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THIS INQUIRY

In Fall 1991, JESNA published a *Preliminary Survey and Listing of Jewish Special Needs Programs and Classes in North America*. Continuing and expanding upon previous similar initiatives of the Special Education Committee of the Commission on Jewish Education of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the survey included national offices of the denominations, central agencies for Jewish education and federations. The primary goals of that survey were three-fold: to create an impressionistic overview of the field based on completed surveys; to develop a database for use by practitioners, planners, researchers and parents; and to publish a listing which would include helpful information to facilitate networking among professionals with common interests and goals in Jewish special education. In addition, it was hoped that analysis of the responses to the survey would reveal trends and patterns in the area of special needs with regard to: how communities provide Jewish education for students with disabilities; which agencies sponsor special Jewish education programs and classes; characteristics and qualifications of teachers; characteristics of students; curricular areas taught; and ancillary programs provided in conjunction with Jewish special education programs and classes (e.g., sibling groups, parent organizations, and sensitization programs for the community).

That report and the significant efforts of the Consortium reinforced the pivotal role of central agencies in providing Jewish special needs education. As part of JESNA's work with central agency staff (in general) and its affiliation with the Consortium of Special Needs Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education (in particular), it was determined that a profile of their services and collaborative activities in the area of special needs education would be of use to the community as a means of highlighting their present and potential role and suggesting areas for further growth and development.

Survey questionnaires were mailed to all 64 central agencies for Jewish education in Fall 1993. They were sent directly to Consortium members and special needs professionals wherever possible and to the central agency executive director in all other cases. Twenty-eight responses were received: 12 from special needs directors / coordinators and consultants and 16 from central agency executives (many of whom indicated that they provide only limited services).

The survey focused on four areas:

- Services provided by the central agency (including designation of those judged to be most successful and those in greatest demand);
- Community profile (description of the schools, congregations, other educational institutions and programs as well as the individuals receiving special needs services from the central agency);
- Staffing (including information about professional positions and staffing patterns, responsibilities, education and professional background, and salaries and benefits for central agency staff providing special needs education services); and
- Funding (including communal funding sources and budgets for special needs services and programs provided by central agencies).

III. FINDINGS

A. What services are currently provided by central agencies?

Like other aspects of central agency function, much of the activity in the area of Jewish special needs education concerns planning, consultation, and professional growth and development. There is less emphasis on research and data gathering, evaluation and accountability monitoring, and direct services (*i.e.*, running programs).

1. Planning

Table 1

**Central Agency Service and Programs
Planning for Special Needs Education**

Number	Service / Program
23	Joint planning with principals
17	Joint planning with other agencies Examples of projects: Jointly planned programs Sit on each other's committees Joint task forces (<i>e.g.</i> AIDS) Inter-agency communication Collaborating agencies (various configurations of): Jewish Family (and Children's) Service Jewish Community Center Jewish Children's Bureau PTACH (Local Chapter) Jewish Vocational Service

Continued on next page

14	Joint planning with federation
13	Joint planning with other departments of the central agency for Jewish education
5	Other Planning with Special Education Committee at BJE National agencies (<i>e.g.</i> , PTACH, Torah Umesorah, United Synagogue)

The greatest number of respondents reported involvement in programmatic planning with principals ($n=23$) and with other agencies ($n=17$), and in accessing funds to support those programs ($n=19$).

Only half of the respondents indicated that they are involved in the more encompassing endeavor of joint planning with federations. As ever increasing numbers of federations become involved in planning and

providing for Jewish education (especially in the advent of the "Jewish continuity" initiatives in North America), the importance of raising the priority of special needs education on the communal agenda becomes more and more vital. These commissions (and other community-wide planning initiatives for Jewish education) have as their mandate ensuring that all Jews in the community have a variety of opportunities to engage in meaningful, exciting Jewish education. It is a very sad commentary that in the rhetoric of inclusion and outreach which typifies the continuity deliberations and which extends to so many other sub-populations (the intermarried, the non-traditional family, the elderly, teens, college students, etc.) the sub-populations of physically, emotionally, and mentally challenged individuals and their families are rarely mentioned or considered and therefore, plans are rarely made for meeting their needs.

2. Data-gathering and Research

Table 2

**Central Agency Service and Programs
Data-gathering and Research**

Number	Service / Program
18	Conducting needs assessments to determine unmet needs
13	Conducting enrollment census
12	Conducting program census
2	Other Survey of parental satisfaction with programs Collecting department statistics of services (consultative) to schools, community, etc.

The most common form of data-gathering and research conducted by respondents are needs assessments. Nevertheless, further inquiry is needed to determine what percentage of the total potential population (in any given community) is receiving services, and what barriers (if any) exist for those who do not.

Nearly half of the respondents reported conducting enrollment and program censuses. However, because over half the respondents are executives in central agencies which were involved in very limited programs and services to special needs populations, and even though the question asked specifically about special needs programs and populations, it is unclear whether such enumerations were actually focused on special needs populations.

No respondents reported research or data gathering (either independently or in collaboration with an academic institution) on curriculum, methodology or effectiveness of programs (although one respondent did report a study of parental satisfaction)³. Unfortunately, there has been only one paper relating to Jewish special education (on the use of symbolism by a seminary student with a hearing impairment) reported at the annual conference of the Network of Researchers in Jewish Education over the past eight years. The need for theoretical, descriptive and prescriptive research is clear.

³ Since delivery of this paper an extensive needs assessment has been conducted by Flora Kupferman, Special Education Consultant of the Bureau of Jewish Education of San Francisco, The Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties.

3. Evaluation and Accountability Monitoring

Table 3

**Central Agency Service and Programs
Evaluation and Accountability Monitoring**

Number	Service / Program
12	Reviewing and monitoring school allocations
12	Writing referrals (e.g. IEPs)
10	Reviewing and monitoring school effectiveness
4	Administering student achievement testing
2	Granting school / program accreditation
2	Other Informal consultation; early childhood diagnostic screening Consultation and observation reports

Judging from responses, the focus of evaluation and accountability monitoring varies among central agencies with special educators and those without. As might be expected, central agencies with special educators on staff are more likely to conduct individual evaluations (e.g., Individual Educational Programs). On the other hand, more central agencies without special education staff are involved in reviewing and monitoring school allocations. Fewer than half of the respondents (n=10) indicated that they review or monitor school effectiveness, which is consistent with the current general pattern of central agency activity.

4. Direct Services

Table 4
Central Agency Service and Programs
Direct Services

Number	Service / Program
Special education programs in day schools	
12	On-going
2	Occasional
Nature of the program	
13	Resource rooms
5	Self-contained classrooms
2	Special schools
Special education programs in supplementary schools	
12	On-going
4	Occasional
Nature of the program	
16	Consultations with education professionals
15	Consultations with families / referrals of families to resources
13	Sensitivity training for community
11	Staffing lay committee
8	Programs for adults with special needs
8	Other community-wide programs (e.g., promotion of school-based self-contained program to serve as community program, including facilitation of Federation funding; camps, JCC programs, family programs; summer programs, mainstreaming program with a resource center home base; speakers at conferences and other forums)
7	Self-contained classrooms
7	Resource rooms
7	Joint programming with other agencies / institutions (e.g., Joint school with Jewish Children's Bureau; parent programs, sensitivity awareness; sibling support group with Jewish Family Services; Board of Rabbis, Jewish Community Center, Jewish Family and Children's Services, Jewish Vocational Services)

5	Special schools
5	Support groups for families
4	Programs for siblings
2	Other (e.g., AIDS Education)

Direct services may be provided in the context of other institutions (e.g., schools, JCCs, etc.) or conducted by the central agency itself. It seems clear that direct services provided by most central agencies themselves are limited to programs and services which need to be centralized whether for the sake of efficiency or effectiveness. With regard to on-going teaching or individual interactions, most have forged partnerships with other schools, agencies and institutions, and perform functions which are largely in the realm of planning, administration and organization, educational support and consultation.

Among central agencies, the most commonly provided services are consultations with education professionals, with families, and through referrals of families to resources. In addition to these centralized services, departments also conduct occasional community-wide programs and workshops (such as sensitivity training), as well as programs which cannot be provided by any individual agency (e.g., programs for adults with special needs).

Fourteen respondents reported involvement with special education programs in day schools, mostly in resource rooms. Only two special schools were reported. Sixteen respondents provide special education programs in supplementary schools through special schools (n=5), self-contained classrooms (n=7) and resource rooms (n=7). Other sections of this survey clarify that most of these programs are under joint auspices and support of the central agency and schools, synagogues or JCCs.

5. School Services

Table 5

**Central Agency Service and Programs
School Services**

Number	Service / Program
21	Consultations to educators
12	Conducting in-school sensitivity programs
10	Conducting on-going in-school programs for special needs students
9	Consultations to school boards
8	Administering program grants
7	Conducting occasional in-school programs for special needs students
0	Other

Consultations to educators (n=21) and to a lesser extent to school boards are the predominant form of school services provided. Other services provided to schools include conducting programs for students with special needs, as well as sensitizing others to those needs. Respondents from eight communities are also involved in administering program grants. This function may become more common and important as communities explore new ways to support synagogue and other Jewish education programs.

6. Teacher Services

Table 6
Central Agency Service and Programs
Teacher Services

Number	Service / Program
14	Facilitating teacher placement
4	Implementing community-wide salary scale
3	Granting teacher certificates and licenses
0	Other

In terms of teacher services, the most frequent role for central agencies is facilitating teacher placement.

7. Professional Growth Services

Table 7

**Central Agency Service and Programs
Professional Growth Services**

Number	Service / Program
19	Offering in-service courses and services for teachers into whose classes children are mainstreamed
15	Conducting teacher conferences
15	Offering in-service courses and seminars for special needs educators
5	Other (e.g., teaching courses as assistant professor at Hebrew Theological College; facilitate training in existing academic institutions in community)
4	Staff development for central agency special needs educators
3	Administering teacher grants

The data seem to suggest that one of the primary roles of central agencies in the area of special education is the provision of in-service courses and seminars for special needs educators and for general teachers into whose classes children are mainstreamed. Given the limited number of specially trained professionals in the field, this function is critical.

8. Resource Dissemination Services

Table 8

**Central Agency Service and Programs
Resources Dissemination Services**

Number	Service / Program
13	Publishing resource materials (<i>i.e.</i> , bibliographies, teaching tips, symptoms of which to be aware) for <i>educators</i>
9	Publishing resource materials (<i>i.e.</i> , bibliographies, teaching tips, symptoms of which to be aware) for <i>families</i>
8	Publishing directory of community resources
7	Operating resource center for special needs
7	Publishing curricular material
3	Other (<i>e.g.</i> , placing special needs resources in agency resource center; publishing resource materials for learners with special needs)

Publication of resource materials (especially for educators) is the dissemination service most frequently offered by respondents, with operating resource centers for special needs, publishing curricular materials, or publishing a directory of community resources less prevalent. It would appear that this is one potential area for future development.

9. Community Liaisons**Table 9****Central Agency Service and Programs
Community Liaisons**

Number	Service / Program
20	Liaisons with Jewish community agencies
12	Liaisons with local public school systems
8	Liaisons with medical professionals
7	Liaisons with government agencies

Continued on next page

3	<p>Other (e.g., liaison with state department of education, CAPE, disability groups; liaison to “Keshet” parent support and advocacy for special needs; educational support group for parents providing speakers on topics of interest to parents and families of students with developmental disabilities; making connections between families and agencies)</p> <p>Examples of inter-agency collaboration in communities:</p> <p>Professional advisory committees looking at needs in total community</p> <p>Joint task force or commission on special needs</p> <p>Reciprocal seats on other agencies' special needs committees</p> <p>JFS grant to central agency to train non-Jewish workers in special needs placements</p> <p>Joint programs (e.g., sibling support group with JFS; AIDS Sensitivity Workshops; joint sponsorship by central agency, Board of Rabbis and JFCS of socialization group for developmentally delayed adults)</p> <p>Participation in JCC Expo for physically / developmentally challenged individuals</p> <p>Federation committee on special needs</p> <p>Programs that highlight available activities for children with special needs</p> <p>Schools sharing special needs professional (e.g., day schools, early childhood programs)</p> <p>Joint programs (e.g., sibling support group with JFS; AIDS Sensitivity Workshops; joint sponsorship by central agency, Board of Rabbis and JFCS of socialization group for developmentally delayed adults)</p> <p>Programs that highlight available activities for children with special needs (e.g., JCC Expo for physically / developmentally challenged individuals)</p> <p>Schools sharing special needs professional (e.g., day schools, early childhood programs)</p>
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Forging liaisons with other Jewish community agencies is an important function for most central agencies. Respondents recognize the need for community collaboration in providing for the needs of challenged individuals, which goes beyond the efforts of any individual school, agency or institution.

Examples of inter-agency collaboration include:

- Joint Professional Advisory Committees examining needs in the total community
- Joint Task Force or Commission on special needs (lay groups)
- Reciprocal seats on other agencies' special needs committees
- Support from other agencies (e.g., JFS grant to central agency) to train non-Jewish workers in special needs placements

10. Other Services

Other services provided by one or more central agencies include:

- Special education camping programs and kallot
- Jewish living programs in Jewish group homes
- Social / extracurricular programs for adults with special needs and their families
- "Challenge" program for gifted and talented
- ESL (English as a second language)
- Speech Therapy
- AIDS Sensitization

B. Among the services provided, which are in greatest demand? Which are most successful?

Respondents were asked to list the five services or programs provided by their central agency in the area of special needs education which they felt were in greatest demand in their community.

Table 10

**Central Agency Service and Programs
Programs and Services in Greatest Demand**

Number	Service / Program
25	Consultation and support for educators
10	Consultation / support for schools and teachers
7	Teacher training / in-service
5	Resources and materials for teachers
1	Recruitment and placement
1	Activity / resource center
1	Interfaith conference on special needs
17	Programs for challenged students
5	Psychological services (including testing and assessment, early diagnostic screening, referrals, remediation)
3	Programs for children with developmental disabilities
2	Speech therapy and language
1	Workshops / classes for older children and young adults
1	Day school special education
1	Programs for students with physical disabilities
1	Student placement and monitoring
1	Activity / resource center
1	Summer programs
1	Early childhood identification and intervention
8	Programs for families
4	Resources and referrals for families
3	Family / sibling support groups
1	Activity / resource center
8	Planning and advocacy
4	Community consortium for students with significant disabilities (providing networking, referrals, directory)
2	Fundraising and grants

	1	Interfaith conference on special needs
	1	Advocacy
2	Programs for the general population	
	2	Sensitivity workshop series

While there is a great deal of variation among central agencies regarding the demand for specific programs, there seems to be some agreement about general service areas. Aspects of professional development, consultation and support for educators were most commonly mentioned as services in demand. Although providing programs for specific groups of students (and families in general) was the second most frequently cited service, other parts of the survey suggest that there is a trend toward coordination, consultation, referral, and providing resources rather than running programs directly out of the central agency. This is reminiscent of a popular commercial for a conglomerate: "we don't make the planes, we make them fly smoother; we don't make the carpet, we make it softer, etc." Thus, in many communities, the central agency seems to be assuming the role of the "enabler" with regard to programs, bringing together lay and professional coalitions to provide necessary services.

When asked to list the five most successful services / programs in the area of special education provided by their central agency, 14 of the 15 respondents to this question indicated that these coincide with the services reported in greatest demand. It is unclear whether this was a facile response or whether respondents view the high demand for particular services as proof of their success.

Many respondents had very definite ideas about service gaps, specifically, programs that are needed but not yet provided due to the lack of resources (human and / or financial). Programs for students with severe disabilities (especially in day schools) were most frequently cited, followed by year-round Jewish residential, camping, vacation programs and day care. In addition, there was a call for more direct services for students with moderate and specific disabilities (especially for the hearing impaired), and early diagnosis and intervention in early childhood.

C. Who is served by the programs and classes sponsored, coordinated and conducted by central agencies?

Special classes and programs for students with disabilities are offered in 16 of the 28 communities surveyed. While classes and programs are offered by synagogues and schools in six communities (with consultation from the central agency), and primarily by the central agency in three, seven communities report a mixture of programs: some offered both by synagogues and schools and others conducted by the central agency itself. In such cases, the general rule seems to be that the central agency provides classes and programs for students with severe disabilities (autism, Downs Syndrome, profound retardation, neurological impairment, etc.) while the programs in schools and synagogues are primarily for students with learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, etc.

Because most central agencies conduct the programs for students with severe disabilities, the number of classes and enrollment is more limited than for synagogue-based programs. Among the eight central agencies conducting programs, the number of classes ranges between 1 and 12, enrolling between 5 and 80 students per community. These are all self-contained classes. In the 11 communities where synagogues conduct programs, there are between 3 and 36 programs underway, enrolling between 55 and 400 students. Respondents enumerate 251 students learning in programs conducted by central agencies and over 1,100 students learning in programs (including self-contained, mainstreaming and resource room pull-out and pull-in programs) in synagogues and schools with central agency support and

consultation. However, a few indicated that there are no classes specifically for students with disabilities in any of their schools. One such respondent wrote: "Currently, Jewish education for special needs children [sic] has not been a community priority, nor to my knowledge have families come forward to request it."

In most communities, non-day school programs are located within supplementary schools, although in at least two communities they take place at the local JCC. Most supplementary programs meet once a week and focus on basic Judaism through hands-on activities. Hebrew enrichment programs which have an additional meeting per week exist in at least two communities. Curriculum content is almost always determined by the sponsoring institution -- usually by the classroom teacher and / or the principal, with varying degrees of consultation from the central agency.

In most communities, central agency involvement in day school special education seems limited, based on responses to this survey. Three communities reported special day school programs with connections to the central agency. Most respondents indicated that day schools in their communities have special staff to provide remediation and support. Few respondents indicated ongoing consultation to day schools.

D. What is the composition of central agency special education staff?

Fourteen of the central agencies responding have special education staff. In nine communities, special education services are provided by a department head or director, sometimes assisted by additional consultants. In the remaining five communities there is only part-time consultation provided.

There is only one full-time special education position reported by any of the respondents. The remaining directors hold positions ranging from 25% - 80% FTE. Consultants all hold part-time positions (10 - 50% FTE). Three central agencies hire teaching staff, speech therapists, aides and interpreters directly for their programs, all on an hourly basis.

All special education staff in central agencies have academic training in the field. Five of the nine directors hold Masters Degrees (one is ABD), and two hold doctorates in special education and related fields. Two hold BA's in education with special education certification, with one working toward completion of an MA. Three also have degrees in Jewish education. Six of these consultants hold Masters Degrees in areas of special education, and one has a doctorate. The remainder hold BA's in education and certification in aspects of special education.

Full-time equivalent salaries for all directors range from \$30,000 to \$48,500 (average = \$37,567). There was not sufficient data available to provide salary information for other staff. Few staff members (whether department heads or consultants) receive benefits in addition to salary. In agencies that reported, all central agency special education staff but one are women.

E. What are the sources of financial support for special education through central agencies?

Most central agencies fund their special education programs through a combination of sources. Only two agencies are funded totally through budgeted allocations, and one totally through grant funds. Others rely on a combination of funds from the central agency budget, grants and tuition payments. In two communities, programs receive institutional support, either through direct allocations from the JCC, synagogue or day school budget or through a combination of tuition and matching funds from the students' congregations. Two communities raise money through benefits or concert fundraisers. The implication is that finding financial support for special education is not simple or straight forward.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results of this preliminary descriptive survey present an overview of the current role of central agencies in providing Jewish education for students with special needs in North America, and services for their families. The results also begin to lay out an agenda for future growth and development in the field of Jewish special needs education. Findings point to conclusions and recommendations in the following areas:

Types of programs / responsiveness to clientele needs

1. Because few communities have developed strategic plans with regard to Jewish special education their approach has been, for the most part, responsive and contingent on parental demands and available funding. For that reason, special needs programs and departments in central agencies sometimes appear to be catch-alls, coordinating Jewish education, vocational preparation, substance abuse prevention, AIDS education, etc. While these are all worthy projects, questions emerge: What does it mean for field? Are these communal priorities? Is the special education department the appropriate venue for them? Are human and other resources being diffused?
2. Few respondents to the survey reported having undertaken a communal needs assessment or strategic planning process addressing special needs. Such initiatives should begin with a needs assessment and proceed to determine communal resources / existing programs and structures, and to identify service gaps.

The initial assessment should:

- identify and enumerate populations (and individuals) with special needs in the community (e.g., individuals' learning, physical and emotional differences which require special Jewish education programs, including programs for gifted and talented students; students of different ages needing different types of programs; the parents and siblings of these students)
- determine the types of programs and services needed / desired (e.g., schooling and non-schooling; educational and socialization; part-time, full-time, summer, day-care and other settings; family and sibling support; Jewish family education; early diagnosis and intervention, especially in early childhood)
- inventory Jewish education programs available under any auspices (e.g., synagogues and schools, JCCs, Jewish family and children's services, camps, group residential programs)

With this information about "what is" and "what should be" in hand, the planning body can identify any duplications and / or service gaps and can begin to evaluate needs and plan systematically.

3. Based on responses to this survey, a number of programmatic areas warrant special attention:
 - There are very few programs for individuals with emotional disabilities, or for gifted and talented learners.
 - Given the well-known benefits of early diagnosis and intervention, efforts in this area should be increased in early childhood and other programs.
 - While several communities have organized support groups for families, few mentioned Jewish family education opportunities (whether independent or in the context of other family education programs) for families with special needs.

- Very few Jewish group homes or residential programs exist, and few respondents mentioned working with such programs where they do exist. Establishing more Jewish group homes and providing appropriate Jewish educational programs where they do exist should be seriously considered by community planners.
- Only one respondent described a program to facilitate interaction between children with special needs and others. The program described a tutorial / socialization program between youth group members and youngsters and teens in a special program. The potential benefits of similar programs are multifaceted: to the special students, to the youth volunteers and, possibly to the field, as the experience might engender interest in the profession to some volunteers.

Need for collaboration and coalition building both within the field and within the communal system

Within the field:

4. Recent networking initiatives must be increased and expanded. Funding must be sought and found to facilitate communication and dissemination of ideas and materials whether through electronic bulletin boards, publications, or other vehicles.
5. More opportunities must be found for those concerned with Jewish special education on all levels (teachers, principals, central agency directors and consultants, academics, lay leaders, etc.) to meet and share knowledge and experience. Such meetings should be convened on a local level, regionally and continentally. They should occur both within and across lines of denomination and educational mode.

Within the communal system:

6. Providing the array of Jewish educational services needed by the variety of students and families with special needs must be a communal responsibility and priority. No single institution can provide all the necessary services, nor should communal resources be expended to duplicate efforts. Therefore, establishment of a collaborative community-wide coalition is optimal.
7. Such a coalition must include representatives of all the stakeholders: beneficiaries, formal and informal educators, rabbis and cantors, social service professionals, educational planners, communal planners, and lay leaders. Each constituency has a role to play and a contribution to make.
8. Effective provision of educational services on a community-wide basis depends on a clear understanding of the culture and needs of the community, development of a coherent plan to meet those needs, provision of adequate human and financial resources to implement the plan, and a mechanism for insuring accountability. As a result of their unique position and expertise, central agencies for Jewish education are key to development of such service delivery systems. Their role is pivotal central in identifying needs and determining the best ways to meet them, and in building coalitions to realize the communal vision of universal Jewish education.

Advocacy

9. When North American communities plan for continuity, they must also consider the needs of physically, mentally and emotionally challenged individuals, those with learning differences, and their families.

10. In most communities, special programs exist only when families lobby for their members' needs (*i.e.*, "... Jewish education for special needs children [sic] has not been a community priority, nor to my knowledge have families come forward to request it.") Many families of individuals with special needs are necessarily so consumed with day-to-day issues that they do not have the additional time or energy needed to advocate vigorously in this area. In any case, it should be the responsibility of the community to reach out to *them*. Advocates who will speak for those with special needs must be identified and activated.

Human resource development - Professional development

11. The number of experts in Jewish special education is very limited, and there are very few training programs for Jewish special educators -- not to mention for teachers in the classes into which students with special needs are mainstreamed. This is one of the critical needs for the field.
12. Schools are becoming aware of increasing numbers of students with learning differences. Since over 60 - 70% of North American students enrolled in Jewish schools are in supplementary education, this form of part-time education is challenged by increasing numbers of students with special needs. To complicate matters, this form of education has the greatest shortage of trained teachers and often meets at times which are the least conducive to learning.
13. As the thrust in general curriculum moves from "*what* students know" to "*how* they learn," the approaches and methods of special education emerge at the forefront of the field. It becomes apparent that in the interests of good teaching and good learning for *all* students, teachers must be trained to address the special needs of students.

Human resource development - Lay leadership development

14. As in all areas of Jewish communal life, involvement of knowledgeable lay leadership is critical. Jewish special education programs are most extensive in communities where there are active community-wide task forces and / or commissions. Such lay bodies should not only work to develop an overview of communal needs and a plan to meet them, but also have the expertise and influence to make sure that providing a Jewish education for all community members remains a priority on the communal agenda.

Financial resources

15. Funding for Jewish special education is very limited, and in most communities represents a "band-aid approach" pieced together from a fluid combination of budget allocations, tuition, school / synagogue contributions, grants and fundraising.
16. As communities devise new approaches for allocating communal funds to Jewish education under the rubric of Jewish continuity planning, funding for special education should be included in the formula.

Research and evaluation

17. Research (even mere data collection) in the area of special education is very limited. There is very little precise demographic information about how many students are involved, the types of programs provided, or the educators involved. Such basic information is needed by communities for adequate planning, but not much is available. A more extensive and updated inventory of programs and census of students is required.

18. There is not enough known about what and how to teach to whom. There is very little research about specific needs or methodologies applied to Jewish special education conducted at institutions of higher learning for Jewish education or at teacher training seminaries. More applied research such as that of Sharon Schanzer about the distinctive features of the Hebrew alphabet is needed to inform practice⁴.
19. As in other areas of Jewish education, increased attention must be paid to evaluation. As new programs are piloted, descriptions of methods and assessments of progress must be included so that knowledge can be increased, experiences can be replicated and educational accountability can be assured.

Materials and curriculum development

20. Some central agencies have produced materials and developed curricula which vary in scope and quality. However, for the most part, curriculum and materials development is an isolated enterprise. Support for more collaborative efforts and more extensive information diffusion is needed, so that teachers in each educational setting do not have to "re-invent the wheel."

Dissemination and communication

21. There have recently been advances in dissemination and communication, important cornerstones in the building of any field. The Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education has made important contributions toward developing a network of special educators on the communal level. Through their annual colloquium, newsletters and individual contacts they have facilitated dissemination of information and communication in the field. The Associations of Jewish Special Educators in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago provide resource center services, workshops and publications on a membership basis. Sharing of information will be expedited in the future through the establishment of electronic bulletin boards such as JESNA's JESNET and JETNET, sponsored by the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York, which will allow educators, community leaders and families to access information on programs, developments in the field and to share experiences and expertise.

Rabbi Elazar taught in the name of Rabbi Hanina: Disciples of the Sages increase peace in the world. As it was said by the prophet Isaiah: "When *all* of your children are taught of the Lord, great will be the peace of your children [Isaiah 54:13]."

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May we all continue to work together to achieve Shalom.

⁴Dr. Sharon Schanzer may be reached at the Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education, Mandell Education Campus, 7607 Old York Road, Melrose Park, Pennsylvania 19027.

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