

JCSA—A CENTURY OF SERVICE

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The Jewish Communal Service Association (JCSA) is the professional “address” for more than 2500 practitioners serving the North American Jewish community. These highly educated, skilled, and Jewishly committed men and women are linked together for professional growth and nurturing through JCSA.

The organization was founded as a meeting place for Jewish volunteer leaders involved in raising and distributing charitable funds, not as a professional association. The evolution of JCSA reflects the changing nature of the Jewish community and of the profession that serves its needs.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF JEWISH CHARITIES (NCJC)—1899–1918

Thousands of Eastern European Jewish immigrants were arriving on America’s shores in the late 1880s. Many were in financial distress, and all required an introduction to American culture and society. The need for massive assistance put an enormous strain on the small Jewish community in America. Nonetheless, Jewish leaders and philanthropists from communities throughout the United States began to respond.

JCSA was founded in 1899 as the National Conference of Jewish Charities. It grew out of our rich tradition of *tzedakah*, and the desire to find coordinated and planned approaches to raising and distributing charitable funds to the newly arrived immigrants.

NCJC’s major function was the convening of an annual nationwide conference, which brought together these communal leaders. The inaugural meeting was held in Chicago in 1900, chaired by NCJC’s first president, Max Senior, a volunteer leader from Cincinnati.

CONFERENCE OF JEWISH SOCIAL SERVICE (CJSS)—1919–1936

NCJC was reorganized in 1919 to better respond to growing Jewish social service needs. The body was renamed the Conference of Jewish Social Service and underwent a major transformation—the inclusion of professional social workers in the organization and their active participation in the Annual Conference.

As charitable requirements increased in scope and complexity, volunteers began to turn to trained social workers for guidance and assistance in raising funds and in planning for their orderly, effective distribution. These early Jewish communal service practitioners became an integral part of the Conference. Their growing role and importance were reflected in the first-time election of a practitioner as Conference President and the inauguration of a journal written by and for professionals.

Maurice B. Hexter, then executive director of the Federated Jewish Charities of Boston, was elected CJSS President in 1923. He authored the first article to appear in the newly created *Journal of Jewish Social Service* in 1924.

The quarterly was renamed the *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* in 1956, and has been in continuous publication for seventy-five years. It is distributed to all JCSA members and to 350 subscribers (scholars, libraries, universities, and organizations worldwide). Gail Naron Chalew has effectively edited the *Journal* for the past decade. It is now the “publication of record” for the profession, its articles often cited and used in university courses.

In the early 1900s, the Jewish Center movement was growing rapidly, attracting many social workers to carry out the Centers’

programs. In 1918, Center workers formed the first organization composed of practitioners only, known today as the Association of Jewish Center Professionals.

The growth of the profession and the development of community-based federations in the early 1930s led to a dramatic change in the organization. Recognizing the need for both a volunteer-led national entity to coordinate policies and a professional association responsive to the increased specialization and training required to administer these programs, the Conference evolved into two separate, yet closely related organizations.

Volunteer leaders left the Conference and formed the National Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds (NCJFWF) in 1932. The organization later evolved into the Council of Jewish Federations (CJF), and recently became the United Jewish Communities (UJC).

In turn, practitioners established the Conference of Jewish Social Welfare (CJSW) in 1937, composed entirely of Jewish communal service professionals. CJSW evolved into what is now known as JCSA.

CONFERENCE OF JEWISH SOCIAL WELFARE (CJSW)—1937–1950

The Conference moved from service—primarily to the immigrant, the sick, and the poor—to a concern and involvement with all matters affecting the Jewish community. It now had to respond to the effects of a devastating economic depression and virulent anti-Semitism in the United States; the rise of fascism in Europe; the dislocations, death and destruction caused by World War II; the horrors of the Holocaust; and the need to resettle thousands of displaced European Jews. Our joy in realizing the age-old dream of a rebirth of the State of Israel was tempered by the military threat to the very survival of that infant nation.

The small professional cadre in place in 1937 was greatly augmented as the Jewish agenda expanded. Several areas of specialization developed, requiring increased train-

ing and the acquisition of new skills. The profession now provided a wide variety of communal services, soon to be reflected in its new name and role.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE (NCJCS)—1951–1977

The organization was renamed the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, in 1951. NCJCS continued to conduct an Annual Conference and to publish the *Journal*. But now a new and important role was added.

The Conference became the coordinating mechanism for all the specialized fields of Jewish communal service, known as Affiliated Professional Associations (APAs). The APAs and the dates they were established are as follows:

- Association of Jewish Center Professionals (AJCP)—1918
- Council for Jewish Education (CJE)—1926
- Association of Jewish Community Relations Workers (AJCRW)—1950
- Association of Jewish Aging Services (AJAS)—1960
- Jewish Social Service Professionals Association (JSSPA)—1965
- Association of Jewish Community Organization Personnel (AJCOP)—1969
- Association of Jewish Vocational Service Professionals (AJVSP)—1979

WCJCS

With the development of the State of Israel and the rejuvenation of Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, the communal service profession began to take on an international dimension. In 1965, JCSA leaders in the United States, along with professionals in Israel, took the lead in forming the World Conference of Jewish Communal Service.

WCJCS's original function was to plan and convene a conference every four years in

Jerusalem designed to bring together Jewish practitioners from throughout the world. The first *Quadrennial* was held in June 1967, attracting a small number of professionals, primarily from the United States and Israel.

By contrast, 750 professionals from twenty-two countries participated in the highly successful Ninth *Quadrennial* in 1998, under the dynamic leadership of then WCJCS President Stephen D. Solender. The governing body voted overwhelmingly to increase the role and function of WCJCS, making it a year-round operation. The name was changed to the World *Council* of Jewish Communal Service, reflecting the new direction of the organization.

Two Important JCSA Leadership Decisions

JCSA leadership made two critically important decisions in 1970. These strategic initiatives greatly enhanced the administrative and programmatic operation of the *Association*, and significantly increased its scope and value to its membership.

JCSA engaged its first full-time executive director, Matthew Penn. He served with distinction and dedication until his retirement in 1982. Joel Ollander succeeded Penn in 1982 and continues to serve as executive director.

The Association of Jewish Center Professionals pioneered the concept of offering group insurance policies to its membership. In 1970, AJCP graciously relinquished that role to JCSA. This enabled the *Association* to offer to all JCSA/APA members a variety of low-cost, high-quality life and accident insurance policies, as well as individual and agency retirement plans. Currently, more than 1200 members participate in one or more of these valuable programs.

Irving Silberberg, an expert in insurance and retirement programs and a former Jewish Center practitioner, was engaged as JCSA Group Plans Administrator. He is now concluding three decades of dedicated service.

CONFERENCE OF JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE (CJCS)— 1978–1992

The Jewish community in Canada had been increasing in size and importance for some time. Many of its communal service professionals became active in JCSA in the mid-1970s. Responding to the Canadian involvement and vitality, JCSA deleted the term “National” from its name, and scheduled an Annual Conference in Canada. A record 900 professionals attended the Toronto conference in June 1979.

The event was a major programmatic and financial success. It was impossible to predict that within fifteen years this JCSA hallmark program would be suspended for lack of adequate attendance.

Annual Conference

The Annual Conference was the most important and visible activity of the *Association* for more than ninety years. The event represented a unique opportunity for professionals from diverse fields of service to come together in a neutral, non-institutional based venue. Individual fields of service and their respective APAs used the four-day conclave for much-needed continuing education and skill development.

Average annual meeting attendance was 750 persons in the years from 1970 to 1985, and the proceeds generated from registration fees represented a major source of JCSA revenue.

Several fields began instituting their own in-service training and skills-enhancing programs in the early 1980s. For the first time, practitioners had choices to make between the more inclusive JCSA meetings, and those offered specifically by and for their individual fields of service. Many opted for the latter.

The economic uncertainties in North America in the mid-1980s and early 1990s severely undermined fund-raising efforts throughout the Jewish community, and forced

many agencies to reduce monies available for staff training. Fewer professionals were attending conferences, especially those that did not focus on their specific field.

With conferences attracting less than 400 persons, the meetings lost much of their appeal and ability to produce needed income. In 1994, the Annual Conference was indefinitely suspended.

JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA (JCSA)—1992—PRESENT

A Strategic Planning Task Force was appointed in 1992, charged with the responsibility of setting a new, more relevant agenda for the organization. Its recommendations led to vastly increased use of modern communications technology, new directions for the *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, and a change in the *Association's* name.

The organization was renamed the Jewish Communal Service Association of North America (JCSA) in 1992, in recognition of the decreasing importance of the Annual Conference and in order to reposition the organization for fundamental changes that were to be instituted.

Journal

The vast majority of articles published in the *Journal* are based on manuscripts selected from among many unsolicited submissions. Each regular quarterly edition contains a potpourri of articles. In 1991, the concept of occasional "theme" editions was instituted.

Many such editions have been published during the past eight years, each concentrating on a specific issue of concern, field of service, or aspect of the profession. Articles for these special issues are solicited by JCSA from among leading professionals versed in the respective subjects under consideration.

One such theme journal commemorated the hundredth Anniversary of the federation movement and was distributed to all attendees at the CJF General Assembly in Boston in 1995. Subjects of later editions included an

assessment of the field of Jewish Family Service, a review of the history of Jewish immigration and acculturation in America, and a survey of professional matters throughout the world, in cooperation with the World Council.

A number of individuals, agencies, organizations, and foundations interested in the topics explored in these editions assisted in underwriting the cost of the publications. The funding generated significantly reduced the cost to JCSA of distributing the *Journal* to all members as a benefit of affiliation.

JCSA Teleconference

A key factor inhibiting participation at the four-day Annual Conference was its cost in time and money. Through the use of modern communications technology, a conference can be brought to the participant at little or no cost.

JCSA therefore developed a series of seminars on issues of concern to the profession, in-depth discussions that were telecast to communities throughout North America via the interactive United Jewish Communities Satellite Network. Twelve hundred professionals in thirty-three communities in the United States and Canada participated in each of the first two broadcasts—known as the *JCSA Teleconference*.

Each two-hour televised seminar was followed by a discussion based on the issues as they related to the local community. Background material developed by JCSA in advance of the broadcast was utilized in the local community.

JCSA'S HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY

The milestone JCSA 100th Anniversary in 1999 presented it with a unique opportunity to further reposition itself for the new millennium, and to create new sources of extra-budgetary funding.

Four exciting and interrelated programs were designed, planned, and successfully completed during the first ten months of the centennial year. The first was an in-depth *JCSA Membership Survey—1999*, conducted

in cooperation with the Wurzweiler School of Social Work of Yeshiva University.

A seminar/teleconference on *Professional Leadership in the 21st Century*, seen in thirty communities by an estimated 1500 professionals, featured a keynote address by Jerry W. Levin, President and CEO of Sunbeam Corporation, and former Chairman and CEO of Revlon Corporation and the Coleman Company.

Finally, to mark a century of JCSA service, this special commemorative edition of the *Journal* was produced, and a gala reception/dinner held to pay tribute to the organization and its past leadership.

THE SECOND HUNDRED YEARS

The excitement, energy, and financial support engendered by these centennial programs augur well for JCSA in the coming years. Perhaps even more significant for future success is the extraordinary level of general education, Jewish commitment, and

dedication to the field exemplified by the men and women who comprise our *Association*.

A preliminary analysis of *JCSA Membership Survey—1999* reveals this of JCSA members:

- 68% hold master's degrees; 12% hold doctorates.
- 89% belong to a synagogue or temple.
- 93% have visited Israel at least once (mean number of visits is nine).
- 26% speak fluent Hebrew; 37% have taken college-level Jewish studies courses.
- 83% express great work satisfaction.
- 72% believe it unlikely that they would leave the field.

JCSA is well positioned for its second century of service to the Jewish community. Together with the extraordinary volunteer leadership in the Jewish community, we shall go from strength to strength, from generation to generation.

Congratulations
to the
Jewish Communal Service Association
on the occasion of its
100th Anniversary
completing a
Century of Service to the Jewish Community

**The Conference of Presidents of
Major American Jewish Organizations**

Ronald S. Lauder
Chairman

Malcolm Hoenlein
Executive Vice Chairman

JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE ASSOCIATION

JCSA MEMBERSHIP SURVEY — 1999

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