

Jewish Family Service Agency

JFSA History



OUR ROOTS

The seeds of Jewish Family Service Agency were sown in 1910, when the Hebrew Aid and Immigrant Society was formed by a handful of dedicated volunteers, who were guided by the belief that the family was the living force necessary for the continuation of Judaism. Needy immigrants were assisted with food and shelter, clothing and money. Services were provided to orphans, prison inmates, hospital patients and unwed mothers.

By 1932, over 200 people were helped each month and the first social worker was hired. In 1936, six members of the Jewish community signed the charter creating the first Jewish Welfare Bureau.

Lilian Shapiro served as the first president from 1934 to 1949. At that time the war and the needs of the survivors of the Holocaust utilized the resources of the Agency to the fullest. The Jewish Family Welfare Bureau along with the Canadian Jewish Congress and the National Council of Jewish Women helped the new immigrants deal with cultural shock, and in many ways helped them to self-sufficiency. Subsequent waves of immigrants have brought Hungarians, Czechoslovakians and most recently those from the Soviet Union.

In 1958 as the Agency's orientation shifted more toward enabling individuals and families to help themselves, the Jewish Family Welfare Bureau became the Jewish Family Service Agency. Its new name reflected the new scope of its services. No longer was financial assistance the focal point. Services expanded to include individual, marriage, family and group counseling as well as crisis intervention.

Today Jewish Family Service Agency is a multipurpose social service agency that serves the Greater Vancouver area. As the only Jewish social service agency in British Columbia, it also functions as a resource and referral agency for the entire province. The purposes of the agency are as diverse as the community in which we live and as dynamic as the changes that occur continually in our society. The Agency's primary goals are to develop and implement programs that will promote the emotional, physical and moral well being of the Jewish communities of BC. Services are of a therapeutic and practical nature and are provided within a Jewish context. Funding for JFSA is now obtained from the United Way, the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver, and from fees, private sector donations, including endowment funds, and fundraising events.

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