

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH VOCATIONAL SERVICES PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN ECONOMIC CRISIS

The IAJVS network of 28 health and human service organizations has been providing a wide spectrum of career services to the North American Jewish community for decades. Faced with an unprecedented unemployment crisis, existing programs and services have been expanded and enhanced to meet the critical and demanding needs of the new unemployed.

Below are some highlights of services now being offered around the United States and Canada. For more detailed information, visit the IAJVS website at www.iajvs.org, or call the IAJVS office at 215-854-0235.

Partnering with Synagogues. The JVS network has been partnering with synagogues for years, and many IAJVS affiliates have been expanding their networking and outreach initiatives to respond to the increasing demand for employment and supportive services. As an example, *Jewish Employment Network* has been a program of **JVS Chicago** since 1991. This long-standing and successful partnership between JVS Chicago and many congregations and synagogues in the Chicago metropolitan area has expanded from 16 to 36 in the last 4 months. Many congregants are affected by economic downturns. The JEN program appeals to the congregations for not only referrals of those in need but also provides opportunities for others to network, mentor or provide leads to available positions. Congregations have employers as well as the unemployed. The JEN program provides opportunities to volunteer in meaningful ways. Overall **the program has appeal for many because it strengthens the very fabric of the Jewish community.** Programs held at synagogues feature networking opportunities and former clients who have found jobs come back to help others. The JEN Program has been serving 300 -400 individuals per year and claims around 150 job placements. In the last three months, the program has experienced a steady increase. Programs similar to Chicago's are also taking throughout the IAJVS network.

For more information on the JEN Program, contact Richard Rotberg, Assistant Executive Director, at Richard.rotberg@jvschicago.org

JVS Boston has initiated a Train-the-Trainer model in training community leaders/congregants to lead structured job networking groups and setting up networking evening events where community professionals meet with individuals and provide informational interviews and job leads. For more information on programs, contact Erin Flynn, Associate Director at EFlynn@jvs-boston.org

JVS Los Angeles, in partnership with eight synagogues and several others in development, trains lay leaders in facilitation skills to lead business networking groups. For more information on how to develop a training program for lay leaders in your community, contact Claudia Finkel, COO, at Cfinkel@jvsla.org

At JVS MetroWest New Jersey, a recent Jobathon (phoneathon for Jobs) engaged 78 volunteers from area synagogues and other Jewish community partners. Volunteers were trained to call hiring managers in the metropolitan area and identify job openings. For more information on how to hold a Jobathon in your community, contact Len Schneider, Executive Director, at drlen@jvsnj.org

F.E.G.S Health and Human Services System, New York established **ParnossahWorks**, an initiative that has now been adopted by six other JVSs around the country. ParnossahWorks connects job seekers with jobs through an online website which also provides employment/career resources. Job seekers are supported with face-to-face career counselors and are well screened before referral is actually made to the job opening. This initiative has been extremely successful with synagogue partnerships and outreach programs. For more information how your community can benefit from instituting **ParnossahWorks**, contact Meryl Kordower, Assoc. VP Career/Employment Services at mkordower@fegs.org. F.E.G.S also conducts *Back to Business workshops* for jobseekers and The Thypin Oltchick Institute for Women's Entrepreneurship which networks women interested in establishing or enhancing their business with a range of small business resources.

Workshops. In addition to existing and traditional workshops offered throughout the JVS network such as resume writing, presentation skills, etc, agencies are developing and delivering additional workshops to address some of the more critical needs facing clients. Topics such as: *Managing and Surviving a Layoff*, *Managing the Emotional Aspects of Workplace Change*, *Maximizing Your Value in the Workplace*, *How to Use LinkedIn as a Networking Tool for Your Job Search and Labor Market Trends*. Workshops in Computer Skills Upgrading are also vitally important as many of the new unemployed have not had the necessity to conduct virtual job searches. This is especially true for older job seekers. JVSs are expanding into conducting community- wide workshops and partnering with other Jewish communal organizations such as the JCCs. The goals of these workshops include reaching out to community members who need help and highlight the community concern, helping community members who have lost their jobs or are concerned about losing their jobs to gain some assurance, support, skills and connections, and educate attendees about available services respective agencies have.

One-to-One Counseling Services. Career counseling and job placement services are provided to job seekers on a group and individual basis. In addition to identifying transferrable skills and a career direction, career counselors meet with clients on a one to one basis to offer guidance on additional education or skills training required to reach identified career goals. Instruction is provided in job seeking skills, which includes resume preparation, interview strategies, and approaches to successful networking, and clients are provided with career coaching to address their specific concerns and needs.

Specialized Assistance to Mature Adults. Job seekers age of 55-80+ are emerging as a particular subgroup among the unemployed. With their pensions and 401 k plans severely impacted, many older workers are being forced to return to the workplace from retirement in order to survive financially. IAJVS affiliated agencies have seen as much as a tripling in their caseload of older workers compared to a year ago. JVS MetroWest has developed a specialized program called "Maturity Works," which addresses the specific concerns and issues of this population. For more information contact Dr. Len Schneider at drlen@jvsnj.org

Peer Support Groups. They share in common the model of facilitated emotional support, personal accountability, sharing of resources/networking contacts, etc. and the building of a community of peers who share similar situations and/or similar emotions and anxieties. Building upon agencies' expertise in this service, new peer support groups, a sampling include: Lawyers Support Group, Mature Workers Support Group, and New Grads Support group.

Emergency Financial Assistance. Losing a job abruptly changes one's life and the family's significantly, putting emotional and financial stress on all aspects of daily life. Throughout the IAJVS network, agencies are being inundated with calls for help with food, utility bills, and mortgage payments to hold off foreclosure.