

The History of Jewish Family Services: 1854 - Present

- Jewish Family Services of Northeastern New York (JFS-NENY) began with the establishment of a committee devoted to the assistance of new immigrants and their families who came to Albany from Europe.
- 1869: the Hebrew Benevolent Society was established
- 1875: Society for Providing a Home for aged, infirm, and destitute Jews was created. In 1902, changed its name to the Albany Jewish Home Society -- purposes expanded to enable the Society to provide care for orphaned children.
- 1924: the Boards of the two organizations formed a federation of the charities and retain the services of a professional. The new group was known as the Joint Committee.
- The Albany Section of the National Council of Jewish Women was organized in 1894, primarily for educational and philanthropic purposes and financial assistance for families of those afflicted with tuberculosis. In 1925, the Council merged this aspect of its purview with the Joint Committee, and then merged the Farm and Rural Program... but the financial provision for the program was carried by the Council because its recipients were not residents of Albany.
- Early 1930's, at the start of Nazi oppression, the Council furthered the objectives of its national organization by offering a foster care program for German children; professionals from the Joint Committee served the children, with the Council providing funding.
- March 11, 1931, under a special act of the Legislature, the Joint Committee was incorporated as the Albany Jewish Social Service (AJSS).
- In November 1937, Albany Jewish Social Service met the emergency needs to support German refugees: children to be placed; physicians seeking help with their certification by the State Education Department; frantic searches for relatives scattered around the world, affidavit problems and alien registration. Then came family resettlement with jobs, houses, furniture, health, citizenship, social readjustment and the myriad of problems attendant upon the arrival of these newcomers.
- 1940's: Albany Jewish Social Service established the New American Program to assist the families and children who came from Europe and help in locating relatives and friends overseas. Simultaneously, people in Europe and Palestine were looking for help through national organizations. Many of them were connected with AJSS to assist them in finding people in America.
- 1946, Board's by-laws were changed to limit the tenure of Board members and officers. The agency's first psychiatric social worker was hired.
- 1948, AJSS's budget was \$23,988.97 The agency had a staff of five, including a physician. In addition to providing case work/counseling services, the agency gave financial assistance to those in need, settled new Americans, provided vacations and holiday cheer, assisted with employment problems, and even provided medical and dental services. As the decade came to a close, the agency's goals for the future included developing a program for the elderly and in an effort to better serve the community, working in a closer, more cooperative fashion with other Jewish organizations in the area.
- 1950, purchase office space at 291 State Street
- 1957, Jewish Social Service became involved in the effort to assist Jews emigrating from Hungary. It was also during this time that the board established a \$2,000 scholarship foundation for students.
- 1959, seventy-five percent of all the agency work being performed was counseling. Discussion was also given to expanding services to the elderly.
- 1962, the agency, known as a family counseling agency, was a member at that time of the Community Chest, Council of Community Services and Jewish Community Council.

- 1966-67, Albany Jewish Social Service changed its name to Albany Jewish Family Services (AJFS). The name change was intended to help break down the perception by potential clients that coming to the agency was only for those seeking charitable assistance although the agency's efforts to assist new Americans continued
- As the decade came to a close, the agency recognized the need to broaden services and expand its geographical reach.
- Between 1974 and 1976, new programs were instituted with the Daughters of Sarah Home for the Aged, local high schools, and SUNY, thus extending counseling to new age groups with critical needs. For the first time, AJFS joined the New York State Association for Family Agencies (NYAFA) in an effort to keep abreast of developments in the social welfare field. This led directly to a successful public relations campaign, including radio public service announcements and a printed brochure, which was responsible for a marked increase in referrals and requests for service. An expansion of clinical staff and substantial increase in the budget contributed to the agency's professionalism.
- 1976, after 25 years at 291 State Street, AJFS moved to 930 Madison Avenue.
- 1982, AJFS attracted a number of prospective leaders to the board who were new to Jewish community leadership. These new board members greatly enhanced AJFS' ability to respond to the changing Jewish community.
- 1985-87, JFS initiated several important steps toward improving its programmatic and fiscal future. AJFS started its long-range planning activities, replaced lay administration of the endowment fund with professional financial management, improved its internal operations by reorganizing the board's committee structure to allow more efficient functional and participatory leadership. It began computerization of the office, started the practice of case management, and expanded its involvement with sister community organizations. It also began to foster greater involvement with the Federation to promote wider recognition of the agency's contributions and services.
- 1987 the Finders Service became fully operational and the Enriched Housing program at the Ohav Shalom Apartments, which provided support services to the frail elderly, was initiated. The Enriched Housing program filled an important gap in services to the elderly in Albany and was the first program of its kind in New York State.
- Late 1980's - opening of a permanent satellite office in Schenectady and an intensified effort to reach out to and work cooperatively with the Schenectady Jewish community.
- 1989-1991, we developed an extensive refugee resettlement service in response to the major influx of Jewish refugees from the Former Soviet Union. Also produced an agency long range plan.
- 1990s closed the Enriched Housing Project due to program difficulties and we expanded services to the Jewish community -- Jewish Community Outreach Program, Family Education Program, Teen Leadership Project, Community Chaplaincy, bereavement services, and expanded family education, all of which functioned through the support of the United Jewish Federation.
- 1996: a) the establishment of the SHALVA Day Center Program for older adults, b) an expansion of our ECOS activities, and c) the conducting of a comprehensive needs assessment of the New American Jewish Community; move to a larger facility at 877 Madison Avenue.
- Counseling services continued to represent a major segment of agency activity: applied for provider listing with managed care corporations, explored the possibilities of new collaborations, and developed specialized programs that could become a referral source for our counseling services.
- United Way support dropped to approximately 10% as compared to approximately 28% in the early nineties, while our budget grew from approximately \$400,000 to \$600,000. JFS changed the focus of our services for the refugee population to Absorption and Citizenship
- 1998 national accreditation by the Council on Accreditation

- 1999 Establishment and growth of the Supervised Visitation program, the increased development of in-home counseling services for the elderly, increased acceptance of the Inclusion Project and a successful school social work contract with the Hebrew Academy of the Capital District. In relation to community collaboration, the agency has played an important role in the development of educational and community services for the aging community. We have also become an active participant with the Council of Community Services and the Senior Forum.
- 2004 - agency is pursuing the development of a Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NNORC) and adoption services
- 2006 - NNORC Contract with NYSOFA
- 2010s- developed a partnership with the Home Care Division of the Eddy that will enable us to increase our services to senior adults in the community; and (b) have helped to create and sustain the Senior Link Network -- a collaboration of four major Jewish agencies serving the elderly in the Capital District (Daughters of Sarah, Albany Jewish Community Center, Schenectady Jewish Community Center and Jewish Family Services).
- 2014?? Project 5 established??
- 2015-2018 Jewish Family Services continued to receive significant support from the Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York, allowing it to maintain its programs in the community. Supervised Visitation Program received funding we received from Member Items and foundation grants to expand the program into Rensselaer County.
- 2018 NNORC expansion
- 2019 - Sold 877 Madison Avenue but recommitted to investing in JFS to maintain its role as community safety net. Federation funding increased to support this vision.
- 2020 - 21 - **Covid 19 Pandemic** catalyst establishment of kosher home delivered meals, Senior Resource Network, OT for Life Enrichment, reinvigorated commitment to rebuild counseling program. Closed Supervised Visitation Program. Moved into Golub Center / Federation Building. NNORC rents space at Temple Israel to establish residency in heart of NNORC
- 2022 - Secure Albany InPlace grant to expand Aging InPlace supportive services throughout the city of Albany to more vulnerable members. Hire first Volunteer Coordinator -- joint effort w/ Federation and the Schenectady and Albany JCCs.
- 2023 - _____ !!
- 2024 - 170th anniversary!