


 community
agency highlight

Jewish Family and Children's Services of Minneapolis

www.jfcsmpls.org

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"Inspired by the wisdom and values of our tradition, Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis supports people of all backgrounds to reach their full potential."

Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis' mission statement is broad to properly encompass all that we do. From the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program, to vocational training, to AlterCare Adult Day Services, Jewish Family and Children's Service (JFCS) works hard to provide resources to people in need. Within the wide range of work done at JFCS, we would like to focus your attention on the Jewish Domestic Abuse Collaborative (JDAC).

The Jewish Domestic Abuse Collaborative (JDAC) is an initiative of Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis and Jewish Family Service St. Paul (JFS) that began in 2004 with the vision that "the Jewish community will advance towards the goal of eliminating domestic abuse by acknowledging the existence of and responding to Jewish domestic abuse." The need for a specifically Jewish domestic abuse program is highlighted by the fact that Jewish women stay in abusive relationships an average of 5-7 years longer than women in the general population. Psychiatrist Rabbi Abraham Twerski says, "Nowhere is denial (about abuse) as intense as in the Jewish community."

Abuse, especially between married partners, is often overlooked in the Jewish community and JDAC is working hard to educate the community to alleviate the stigma of abuse, as well as provide resources. JDAC works to provide education and referral information through presentations to Jewish community members, congregations, communal

organizations, rabbis, and interfaith communities. Additionally, JDAC collaborates with JFCS' Healthy Youth-Healthy Communities (HYHC) program to provide education on healthy relationships, relationship violence, and sexual assault to Jewish and secular youth in grades 5 through college. An example of an upcoming educational collaboration will be occurring at the University this fall. JDAC and HYHC are working with The Aurora Center and Hillel to bring in Nancy Schwartzman's documentary, "The Line" to Coffman Student Union on October 28, 2008. This film was created in response to the sexual violence Ms. Schwartzman experienced in Jerusalem and explores the boundaries of consent. Following a clip of the film, we will host a discussion with the filmmaker looking at where and how the line of sexual consent is drawn, as well as cultural ideas about sexuality and setting limits.

In addition to educational programming, JDAC provides a support group as well as advocates and legal referrals for victim/survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault. Liora (I Have Light): Survivors Determined to Make a Difference is an open and ongoing support group that meets monthly to support one another, provide outreach to other Jewish women, and organize efforts to advance towards the goal of eliminating domestic abuse. The JDAC advocacy program trains Jewish community members to act as emotional and moral support for Jewish victims of domestic violence, as well as helping victim/survivors to locate the proper resources for their situations. Additionally, the JFCS and JFS mental health staff is available on a sliding fee scale offering

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therapy and legal services for JDAC victim/survivors. JDAC is also working with the Aurora Center to recruit Jewish Crisis Line Advocates, Legal Advocates, and Violence Prevention Educators to ensure that the specific needs of Jewish victim/survivors on campus are met.

JDAC is a program of Jewish Family & Children's Service of Minneapolis and Jewish Family Service of St. Paul.

For more information about the JDAC program or to volunteer as an advocate, contact Betsy Sitkoff at Bsitkoff@jfcsmpls.org or 952-542-4833.

Additional volunteer opportunities at Jewish Family and Children's Services of Minneapolis and Jewish Family Services of Saint Paul include:

- Jewish Family and Children's Service offers a variety of volunteering opportunities, including:
 - ACT (Aquila Cedar Manor Together)- volunteer as a mentor, lunch buddy, or homework tutor for K-6 students in the St. Louis Park school system
 - AlterCare Adult Day Program- work with older adults to provide comfort and care in various capacities
 - Big Brothers/Big Sisters- become a friend and mentor to a child in need as a big brother/big sister for 3 hours a week.
 - Caring Connections- reach out to Jewish adults with developmental disabilities in group homes.
 - Drivers- transport JFCS clients for appointments or errands on a regular or on-call basis. Mileage reimbursement available.
 - Hag Sameach (Happy Holidays)- collect or donate gifts, assemble and wrap packages, and deliver holiday items to families in need during the holiday seasons.
 - Outreach visitor- English or Russian-speaking volunteers are needed for friendly visits to isolated older adults.
 - Mental Health Support Services- provide socialization and support at group activities and outings throughout the year.
 - Twin Cities Jewish Healing Program- reach out to Jewish individuals with acute or chronic illnesses in nursing homes, hospitals, or hospices.

For additional JFCS volunteer opportunities and information, contact our volunteer coordinator, Deb Savitt, at DSavitt@jfcsmpls.org or by phone at 952-542-4859.