



## 2021 U.S. Community Pandemic Response and Recovery Policy Agenda

NJHSA member agencies serve as a critical safety net for communities across the country, providing assistance to hungry families and the recently unemployed, care and support for isolated older adults and persons with disabilities, mental health services for those in distress, and resources for resettled immigrants, refugees, and asylees.

*NJHSA has identified the public policy priorities below to address the most pressing needs of member agencies and the clients they serve during the COVID-19 pandemic and as they recover from its health and economic impact. As we pursue these priorities, we reaffirm our commitment to eradicating the systemic racism that continues to impact communities of color by promoting racially just and equitable policies, as well as to combating discrimination based on gender, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and national origin.*

**Food Insecurity:** NJHSA is committed to reducing food insecurity and related struggles with financial insecurity and poverty and ensuring that all individuals and families who are hungry have access to nutritious food by:

- Advocating for increased funding and program flexibilities for federal programs that support kosher and non-kosher food banks and pantries, home-delivered meal programs, and congregate nutrition sites; and
- Protecting and strengthening Supplemental Nutrition Assistance and Child Nutrition programs.

**Mental Health, Healthcare, and Long-Term Care:** NJHSA is committed to protecting access to care for all who are in need, as well as the health and safety of employees during the public health emergency and its aftermath by:

- Advocating for continued Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurance coverage and parity in payment for tele-mental health services that allow clients to access services from wherever they are located;
- Supporting programs to address rising mental health caseloads by increased funding for mental health and substance abuse programs, implementation of a National Suicide Prevention Hotline, and licensing reciprocity for health care professionals treating mental health and substance use conditions in all states for both in-person and telehealth services;
- Protecting and strengthening Medicaid to ensure high quality community-based health and support services, behavioral health, and long-term care options for seniors and persons with disabilities, and increasing the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage to meet increased need during the public health emergency; and
- Pursuing policies to protect employee health and safety such as PPE and COVID-19 test availability, as well as advocating for flexibilities to ensure appropriate paid leave, overtime and hazard pay, and unemployment benefits.

**Workforce & Employment:** NJHSA is committed to expanding employment opportunities and job readiness skills for all who are seeking employment including those recently out of work, first-time job seekers, individuals with disabilities, older adults, immigrants, refugees, asylees, and veterans by:

- Advocating for increased funding to help address adult education, skills training, and technology disparities for all individuals to successfully enter and succeed in the job market including integrated, competitive employment for persons with disabilities while allowing for choice; and
- Advocating for the expansion of tax policies that reward and encourage work and support working families such as the Earned Income and Child Tax Credit programs, and prioritizing funds for Child Care Development Block Grants and other federal childcare funding streams.

*The Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies (NJHSA) is the membership association for 140 non-profit organizations that provide a full range of human services for over 980,000 clients each year, including healthcare, employment, residential, and mental health services, as well as programs for youth, families, older adults, Holocaust survivors, immigrants, refugees, asylees, persons with disabilities, caregivers, and domestic violence survivors. This document was approved by the NJHSA Board on November 16, 2020 and does not preclude NJHSA from responding to or pursuing other timely policies related to core services or client-base as necessary.*