



Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

Network Project Retrospective

Addictions Symposium

Program Overview

This Network's Addictions Symposium aimed to address the widespread impact and effect of addiction in the lives of millions and entire communities, including Jewish communities. The Symposium aimed to elevate this critical area of work in the Jewish community and beyond by highlighting innovative examples and service models.

The event was held in collaboration with Jewish Addiction Awareness Network (JAAN) and featured thirteen subject matter experts representing member agencies and communities throughout the USA and Canada.

Over eighty Human Services staff, lay leaders, and other community professionals joined this two-day event and left with strategies and tools necessary to impact the challenges of the addiction crisis in their own communities and organizations. Participants were also eligible to apply for up to five Continuing Education Unit Hours (CEUs) accredited by NASW.

Program Components

Designed as a virtual mini conference, the Addictions Symposium was held on January 24th and 31st, 2023 and featured plenaries, breakout room sessions, panel discussions and times for reflections and questions. The full event included nine sessions, including Narcan training for all participants.

Participants registered for and attended both days of the Symposium and followed a similarly structured schedule on each day. Each day began with all participant attendance of an opening plenary about "Expanding and Reframing Our Understanding of Addiction" on the first day, and a panel discussion about "Making an Impact: Addressing Addiction & Recovery in the Jewish Community" on the second day. Day one of the Symposium also included a Narcan training for all participants during the "Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof: Jewish Principles of Harm Reduction" session.

Following the plenary/panel discussion, the Symposium continued with multiple sessions occurring simultaneously. Each session allowed for an hour, and fifteen minutes; participants were able to choose one of two



Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

sessions, each on a different topic or aspect of addiction work in the community and featuring subject matter experts from member agencies throughout the USA and Canada. Each day ended with an all-participation Q&A and reflections. Breakout session topics included:

- Multiple Pathways to Recovery
- Engaging Families and Facilitating Change: The CRAFT Program through a Jewish Lens
- Developing a Program for Substance-Exposed Newborns and Their Families: Lessons from Project NESST (Newborns Exposed to Substances: Support and Therapy)
- Yad b'Yad/Hand in Hand: Judaism and Recovery
- Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and Employment Services- Lessons Learned on the Relationship Between Recovery and Obtaining & Succeeding in Employment
- The Link Between Attachment and Substance Use

At the end of the Symposium, participants received a follow-up email that included all speaker presentations, additional resources from JAAN, and resources shared by speakers and participants throughout the event.

Participating Agencies

Staff from The Network and JAAN worked together to identify and reach out to subject matter experts throughout both Networks to represent a wider range of communities, services and needs in addiction work. Speakers worked with specific populations facing addiction, were experts in addiction work, or held a personal experience with addiction. Thirteen speakers planned and presented the nine sessions of the Symposium:

- Marla Kaufman, Executive Director, Jewish Addiction Awareness Network
- Sally Anderson, JF&CS Atlanta
- Al Benarroch, Executive Director, Jewish Child, and Family Service Winnipeg
- Sharon Burns-Carter, C.A.C, Substance Use Outreach Coordinator, Ruth & Norman Rales Jewish Family Services
- Samuel Cole, JEVS Human Services
- Maria Delgado, JEVS Human Services
- Joel Dworkin, HAMSA Program Manager, JF&CS Atlanta



Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

- Beth Fishman, PhD, Addictions Services Program Manager, JCFS Chicago
- Ivy Kopstein, MSW, Former Addictions Services Coordinator, Jewish Child, and Family Service Winnipeg
- Steve Levin, Community member, Chicago
- Sarah Link Ferguson, MA, Development Officer, First Call
- Sarah Schneider-Hong, LMSW, Chief Program Officer, JFS of Washtenaw County
- Amy Sommer, LICSW, Clinical Director, JF&CS Boston

The Addiction Symposium was open to agency members and non-members alike and included a fee for participation; The program brought together eighty participants (61 members and 19 non-members) from throughout North America from community members, Rabbis, lay leaders, direct service providers, to Executive Directors.

Program Evaluation and Learnings

After the Addictions Symposium ended, participants received a follow-up email and reminders to complete a program evaluation. Participants were asked about the clarity and achievement of the Symposium's objectives, the clarity of communications and promotion of the event, the speakers' knowledge and preparedness, the mix of activities in the event, the applicability of the sessions to their work and communities, along with their general satisfaction of the event.

About 28% of participants responded to the program evaluation and provided their input and feedback, leading to conclusions that were later implemented in future offerings of the Network, along with next steps for addressing the addiction crisis within the sector. Among the findings of the evaluation:

- The Addictions Symposium was the first Network program that 63% of respondents attended.
- 95% of respondents felt that the objectives were clear and achieved by the program.
- About 94% of respondents agreed that the speakers were knowledgeable, prepared and engaging.
- Respondents were mixed in their opinions about the program providing a well-balanced mix of presentation, activities, and interaction, with



Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

about 27% strongly agreeing that it did, 50% agreeing, 14% were neutral and 9% disagreed.

- 86% of respondents agreed that the time that was devoted to the program was about right.
- 96% of respondents agreed that the learnings from the program will help advance their work.
- 86% of respondents were satisfied with the program.
- Many of the respondents mentioned that they wished they had more time to discuss the topic and were hoping to be able to interact more with their peers and find solutions to challenges they were facing in their work.

"... the program reinforces the work I do with my organization. To hear so many and see so many take addiction serious inside the Jewish world is important as we face the biggest drug epidemic with opioids..."

"...I really enjoyed the different perspectives from program presenters, particularly from individuals who spoke about the challenges of being in recovery and also feel like outsiders by the general Jewish community..."

"...The topic and the presenters were engaging, welcoming, informative and passionate about what they were sharing..."

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Addictions Symposium was the first of its kind for The Network in terms of collaboration, focus on a topic, and the structure of the offering. The program evaluation, along with verbal feedback received by participants during and following the program, provided The Network with information to make conclusions and decide on next steps to address the continuing addiction crisis, but also for future offerings and the structure of those offerings for different topics.

Following the Addictions Symposium, The Network continued assessing and finding Network member agencies engaged in addiction work in their communities and learned more about their best practices, along with their challenges. In October 2023, the Network started an Addictions Professionals NETGroup, led by Tricia Stern, LCSW, Senior Vice President of Clinical Practice, and co-chaired by Sharon Darack, Assistant Director, Communities Confronting Substance Use & Addiction and Beth Fishman, PhD, Addictions Services Program Manager, JCFS Chicago. This NETGroup meets on a regular basis and has had 54 participants up to date.