

## **2024 U.S. Jewish Human Service Sector Public Policy Agenda**

The Network's public priorities for 2024 address the most pressing needs of our member agencies and their clients. As we pursue these priorities, we affirm our commitment to promoting systemic change, person-centered care, and self-determination for our clients. In addition, we affirm our commitment to eradicating antisemitism and all forms of hate and intolerance that continue to impact marginalized people, all of which affect each of our policy priorities. We aim to pursue our values by supporting racially just and equitable policies and access; helping older adults and persons with disabilities achieve maximum independence, community, and inclusion; expanding access to mental and behavioral health supports to all who need support; as well as combating all forms of hate, bias, violence, and discrimination based on gender, ability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, and national origin. We recognize that our policy priorities cannot be solved by non-profits like ours alone and must be addressed in partnership with various institutional supports, including federal legislation and access to grants, and that encouraging charitable giving and strengthening access to federal grants are critical pieces of this work.

### **Antisemitism and All Forms of Hate:**

The Network is committed to addressing the rising incidence of antisemitism and hate in our communities by:

- Supporting efforts to counter antisemitism and all forms of hate and intolerance, including by bolstering mental health services to address resulting trauma.
- Increasing funding for the Holocaust Survivor Assistance Program, which provides Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed care to Survivors and other older adults who have been impacted by trauma.
- Increasing funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, which offers grants to institutions at risk of being targeted in a terrorist attack or hate crime.

### **Mental Health, Health Care, and Long-Term Services and Supports:**

The Network is committed to protecting and strengthening the social service and health safety net, as well as promoting affordable, accessible, and high-quality care by:

- Addressing the urgent, nationwide increased need for mental health care and rising caseloads, particularly among children and youth, while reducing barriers to care and promoting coverage and access to high quality services, including through telehealth.
- Protecting and strengthening the mental health, health, and long-term care safety net of Medicaid, Medicare, CHIP, and private insurance coverage, including by advocating for higher reimbursement for mental and behavioral health care and Home- and Community-Based Services, Medicaid expansion and long-term care financing reform to safeguard services for older Americans for generations to come, as well as supporting those impacted by natural disasters resulting from climate change.
- Empowering older adults and people with disabilities to achieve maximum independence and inclusion in the community.
- Promoting person-centered, trauma-informed care to ensure that Holocaust survivors and others can live with dignity and an enhanced quality of life.
- Supporting programs and policies that address the social determinants of health, such as access to healthy food and appropriate housing.

*The Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies (The Network) is the membership association for over 170 non-profit organizations that provide a full range of human services for close to 2 million clients each year. The Network acknowledges that Canadian member agencies are situated on treaty lands, the traditional lands of the many indigenous nations and peoples within and across Canada. This document was approved by The Network's Board on January 8, 2024, and does not preclude The Network from responding to or pursuing other timely policies related to core services or client-base as necessary.*

**Food Insecurity, Poverty, and Economic Vulnerability:**

The Network is committed to alleviating food insecurity and poverty while promoting economic mobility for our clients, ensuring all individuals and families have access to food, shelter, and other vital benefits and supports that help them achieve a decent quality of life by:

- Advocating to end hunger and food insecurity, ensure food access and affordability (including kosher and non-kosher options in food banks and pantries), and strengthen access to SNAP, WIC, child nutrition, senior meals, and other federal food security programs.
- Promoting the expansion of affordable, accessible, and safe housing.
- Advocating to alleviate poverty and increase economic mobility, such as by expanding the Earned Income and Child Tax Credits, modernizing the SSI and SSDI programs, and supporting resources for basic necessities, such as diapers and personal hygiene items.
- Ensuring that the Emergency Food and Shelter Program is sufficiently funded to meet community needs.
- Supporting increased federal and state government support for immigrants, refugees, parolees, and asylees, including funding for resettlement agencies.

**Workforce and Employment Opportunities:**

The Network is committed to addressing widespread workforce shortages affecting the delivery of human services, including but not limited to the mental health and direct care sectors. We also are committed to expanding employment opportunities and job readiness skills for individuals seeking employment, including those recently out of work, first-time job seekers, individuals with disabilities, older adults, immigrants, refugees, parolees, asylees, veterans, and those who are justice-involved by:

- Advocating to reduce widespread direct care and mental health workforce shortages by increasing the federal reimbursement rates for Medicaid, address recruitment and retention challenges including by promoting opportunities for nonprofit employees and ensure the availability of national mental health professional state licensure reciprocity.
- Advocating for increased investments in safety net mental health, health, and long-term care programs, including to expand services, improve reimbursement for mental healthcare professionals and direct care workers, and provide additional training and professional advancement opportunities.

Supporting increased funding for adult education, skills training, and technology disparities to ensure success for individuals entering and working in the job market, including integrated, competitive employment for persons with disabilities while allowing for choice.

**Gun Violence and Gender-Based Violence:**

The Network is committed to addressing violence in our communities, including gun violence and gender-based violence, by:

- Addressing the trauma of gun violence by advocating for additional resources to increase access to mental health services and peer support for survivors, their families, first responders, and impacted communities.
- Advocating for increased funding to train mental health professionals, law enforcement, and communities on the traumatic impact of gun violence, particularly for children and the underserved, to ensure safer communities.
- Promoting increased funding and other measures to reduce gender-based violence and provide education about its prevalence and traumatic impact, including both the mental and physical effects.

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