NETWORK of Jewish Human Service Agencies

2021 Canadian Community Pandemic Response and Recovery Policy Agenda

NJHSA member agencies serve as a critical safety net for communities across Canada, providing assistance to hungry families and the recently unemployed and newcomers, care and support for isolated seniors and individuals with disabilities, and mental health services for those in distress. NJHSA has identified the public policy priorities below to address the most pressing needs of our member agencies and clients they serve during this during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

As we pursue these priorities, we also reaffirm our commitment to eradicating the systemic racism that continues to impact communities of colour 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 ensuring that all individuals and families who are hungry have access to nutritious food by:

- Advocating for increased funding and program flexibilities for federal and provincial programs that support kosher and non-kosher food banks, home-delivered meal programs, and congregate nutrition sites; and

Capacity Building & Sustained Funding: NJHSA is committed to ensuring the vital and necessary work of NJHSA agencies continues during, and after, the COVID-19 pandemic by:

- Supporting capacity building measures for agencies to allow for additional employee and volunteer training, the hiring and training of new employees, support to allow for remote work and system upgrades and other measures necessary to avoid and address staff burnout, and;
- Advocating for sustained funding for agencies from governments at all levels and developing a roadmap for continued financial support after emergency funding measures are scaled down or ended, and;
- Developing long-term strategies that enable agencies to financially plan for the next one to- two years and look beyond the short-term timeframes often required by current government funding sources.

Mental Health, Seniors, & Employees: 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:

- Supporting programs to address the rising mental health challenges experienced by an increasing number of clients, and ensuring agencies have the capacity to deliver vital mental health services and handle high caseloads, and;
- Developing and implementing programs to support the unique needs of Seniors and Holocaust Survivors and vulnerable newcomers, including meal delivery services and virtual programming, while ensuring their health and wellbeing are protected, and;
- Pursuing policies to protect employee health and safety such as PPE, as well as advocating for flexibilities to ensure appropriate paid leave, overtime wages, and continued 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, youth, individuals with disabilities, older adults, new Canadians, refugees and veterans by:

- Advocating for increased funding for adult education and workforce training for all individuals to successfully enter the job market, or re-enter after their employment was impacted by COVID-19, including integrated, competitive employment for individuals with disabilities while allowing for choice.

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. Within Canada, these agencies provide comprehensive services, including healthcare, employment and mental health services, as well as services for at risk youth, families and seniors, Holocaust survivors, New Canadians, persons with disabilities, caregivers, and domestic violence survivors. This document does not preclude NJHSA from responding to or pursuing other timely policies related to core services or client-base as necessary.