



NATIONAL
AFFINITY
GROUP
ON JEWISH POVERTY

JUNE 2020

Dear Reuben --

It's been a year since we launched this affinity group, but it feels like a lifetime ago! It is fortunate that we began organizing when we did, because the events of the past year, particularly the Covid-19 pandemic, have highlighted how essential and desperately needed our work is.

We've broken down our work into working groups and briefing series to focus on specific issue areas, such as older adults and mental health. So far, we've held three briefings (see below) and will host several more in the coming months. Please stay tuned for details! All of this is helping us move forward on a long-term national agenda, as well as a midterm one focused on Covid-related needs.

Learn more about the working groups and briefings below, and be inspired by the rapid expansion of Philadelphia's Call-A-Friend program, which demonstrates that sometimes even a simple, low-tech solution can improve the lives of hundreds of people. This month we also have details on a new relief fund for Jews of color impacted by the pandemic, along with some ideas for how we can more easily share information with one another and the larger Jewish community.

I hope you are staying healthy and safe. Please feel free to email me anytime with feedback and suggestions — and don't forget to share your "bright spots" and other news.

Warmly,



Deena K. Fuchs
Executive Vice President
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—Save the Date—

Affinity Group Briefings and JFN Webinars

The National Affinity Group's briefing series (see more about this below) will be continuing throughout the summer, so please mark your calendar for three Tuesdays from 12-1 p.m Eastern: July 7, July 21, and August 4. Stay tuned for more details on each briefing.

In the meantime, we encourage you to participate in these upcoming JFN webinars:

- [Funding with an Inclusion Mindset: A Strategic Conversation in the Wake of Covid-19](#) (Thursday, June 18, 1 p.m. Eastern) RSVP and more details [here](#).
- [The Jewish Communal Professional Workforce and Covid-19](#) (Thursday, June 25, 1 p.m. Eastern) RSVP and more details [here](#).

Learn about more JFN webinars [here](#).

—Our Work—

Update on Working Groups



Soon after our inaugural meeting last June, we established five working groups to focus on key issue areas in addressing Jewish poverty: Older Adults, Housing, Food Insecurity, Mental Health, Jobs, and Systems. Together we began working on developing a national agenda on Jewish poverty.

So much has changed in the past year, but a national agenda is more important than ever. Now, though, we need a near-to-midterm Covid-19 national agenda, and our working groups have been developing funder briefings with assessments of need, overviews of communal response with a

bright spot showcase, as well as a section focused on investment opportunities – to demonstrate where philanthropic investment can make a difference. We have asked the working groups to consider the following:

- What are the top 2-3 overall messages that funders should know about your field, given what you've experienced?
- What promising initiatives are you seeing underway? What initiatives do you think the field needs to see? Are any initiatives addressing both short-term needs as well as addressing longer-term structural issues?
- What do you see as the top 2-3 immediate needs? For the second half of 2020?
- What information can you share about Emergency Funds, Pivots, Innovation & Technology, and Partnerships and sustainability in your field?

Whether you are a member of a working group or not, we encourage you to share your ideas and information. And we look forward to sharing the information we've gathered. Now that Covid-19 has magnified the issues of Jewish poverty, putting it high on our community's agenda, we have the incredible opportunity to help shape the response and the investment.

Catch Up on Our Covid-19 Briefing Series



The National Affinity Group on Jewish Poverty has been hosting a series of webinars and virtual meetups to discuss the many difficulties the coronavirus pandemic has created for Jews facing poverty and the agencies that serve them. We have been hearing the needs from the service providers on the ground supporting our front lines, share best practices and information, and strategize on ways to respond collectively. Each webinar features key leaders and focuses on particular needs, aligned to our working groups.

Thank you to all of you who have participated in our first three webinars:

- [Food Insecurity and Housing](#) (May 14)

- [Older Adults and Mental Health](#) (May 26)
- [Systemic Change](#) (June 9)

Catch up on any you missed by watching them at the links above, on [JFN's Covid-19 Response site](#), and on the [National Affinity Group for Jewish Poverty section](#) of the JFN site; we will be adding future webinars as videos become available.

You can find more videos and other key resources on the [Resource Hub](#) and the [Human Services North America Needs & Responses](#) sections of the Covid-19 Response site. Please reach out to [Julie Wiener](#), JFN's communications director, with any updates or other feedback about the videos and other materials on the website.

Covid Relief Fund for Jews of Color



The [Jews of Color Field Building Initiative](#) has launched a [COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund](#) for people of color in the Jewish community who are experiencing financial hardships as a result of the Covid-19 crisis and economic fallout.

“Systemic racism is amplifying the impact of COVID-19 on Jews of color and all people of color in the U.S.,” said Ilana Kaufman, executive director of the Jews of Color Field Building Initiative, in an [article in eJewish Philanthropy](#). “We need to get funds into the hands of the most vulnerable, many of whom struggle daily to pay bills and put food on the table. And we are committed to both inviting applications and disbursing funds in ways that are transparent and reflect a welcoming environment for Jews of color.”

Individuals in need can apply for help ranging from \$250-\$2,500 – to be spent on basic necessities such as rent or mortgage payments, food, medical bills — at jewsofcolorinitiative.org/resources. The relief fund requires minimal documentation concerning finances, and awards are being made on a rolling basis rather than first-come, first-serve.

Eligible applicants are people of color in the Jewish community living in the U.S., including those who self-identify as Jewish, those who work or have worked for a Jewish communal organization, and those affiliated with organizations in the Jewish community.

—Bright Spot—

Reaching Out to Isolated Seniors



While many people have come to rely on technology, especially Zoom, to cope with the isolation of social distancing, that's not an option for the clients of [Northeast NORC](#), a Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia program serving 1,700 seniors across six ZIP codes of the city. Northeast NORC's mostly Jewish clients, whose incomes are below 250 percent of the federal poverty line, tend to live alone in aging homes and "are not tablet- or Zoom-savvy to say the least," says Brian Gralnick, the Federation's director of social responsibility.

That's why when social distancing measures went into place and in-person activities became impossible, Northeast NORC quickly ramped up a decidedly low-tech program: Phone-a-Friend. The program mobilizes and trains (training video available [here](#)) volunteers to have phone conversations with Northeast NORC clients one to three times a week. Before the quarantine, the program had about a dozen volunteers and 15 clients. As of June 1, it had grown tenfold, and volunteers, who generally make 20-30-minute calls twice a week, have collectively logged more than 300 hours on the phone. After each phone call, volunteers record their interaction and share emergency needs or other concerns that came up in the conversation, so that Northeast NORC staff can identify and provide other social services to clients as needed.

According to Gralnick, many of the volunteers and older adults are eager to meet in person once the pandemic is over, and the older adults say they are grateful not to be forgotten amid the pandemic. "Unfortunately, for some of our members this is the only interaction they're going to have with another person that day," Gralnick says.

- Read about [one volunteer's experience](#) with Phone-A-Friend.
- To learn more about Phone-a-Friend, including its training and recruitment strategies, contact Brian Gralnick at bgralnick@jewishphilly.org.

—Special Request—

Help Us Get the Word Out



Public relations and communications can seem like a luxury for human service groups at times like these. However, to ensure that we secure much-needed resources, it is vitally important that all of us keep getting the word out about our work. To that end, we are hoping to create a more active social media presence, and you can help us amplify each other's work by sharing your organization's Twitter and Facebook handles with the Affinity Group. We are also building a [Twitter list](#) to help follow each other's news. You can also help by making sure that you, or whoever manages social media for your organization, follow Jewish Funders Network (@jfunders) and the Harry and Jeannette Weinberg Foundation (@hjweinbergfdn) on Twitter and Facebook. And don't forget to [email us your news](#), especially "bright spots" so we can feature them in this newsletter and elsewhere.

—From the Field—

Life on Welfare Isn't What Most People Think It Is ([The Conversation](#), June 11)

A Gates-Led Donor Collaborative Awards \$2.8 Million to Change Attitudes on Poverty ([Chronicle of Philanthropy](#), June 10)

Some Realistic Solutions for Income Inequality ([The Hill](#), June 10)

Met Council Unveils New App to Report Domestic Abuse ([New York Jewish Week](#), June 9)

Food Banks and Other Key Programs Have Received a Fraction of Allotted Coronavirus Money, Angering Some Lawmakers ([The Washington Post](#), June 8)

In Los Angeles, Big Donors and Public Schools Team up on Food Insecurity ([Inside Philanthropy](#), June 5)

As COVID-19 Escalates the Housing Crisis, Funds Flow to Help Low-Income Renters ([Inside Philanthropy](#), June 2)

Hunger Program's Slow Start Leaves Millions of Children Waiting ([New York Times](#), May 26)

Food Banks Get the Love, But SNAP Does More to Fight Hunger ([NPR](#), May 22)

Dancing between Light and Shadow - Increasing Awareness of the Impact of Covid 19 Disparities on Jews of Color ([eJewish Philanthropy](#), May 21)

In Boston, a Jewish Agency Tackles 'Shocking' Poverty and Homelessness ([The Forward](#), May 15)

Podcast: How the Covid-19 Pandemic May Affect Poverty Reduction Efforts ([Chronicle of Philanthropy](#), May 12)

Cutbacks at Social-Service Groups on the Rise, Poll Finds ([Chronicle of Philanthropy](#), May 11)

[Be sure to check out the collection of articles we published last year in partnership with eJewish Philanthropy.](#)

Founded in 2019, the National Affinity Group on Jewish Poverty is a collaborative of funders, Jewish Federations, direct service providers, researchers, media outlets, and advocates dedicated to fighting poverty in the American Jewish community. [Learn more here.](#)



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