

Volunteer Handbook



707 Alexander Road, Suite 102
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Welcome

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of Jewish Family & Children's Service, we welcome you as a new volunteer.

As a JFCS volunteer, you are an integral part of the agency's community outreach efforts and an active participant in the life our community. Whether you contribute your talents, energies, or time through committee work, program planning, or direct client service, know that you are a valued asset of this agency and our community. We welcome your input and ideas to improve our current projects and create new programs. We hope that you will find your work stimulating and rewarding. We have developed this handbook to help you understand the mission and work of our agency and your relationship with it. We hope that if you have questions at any time, you will not hesitate to call on our volunteer coordinator.

Sincerely,

Linda Meisel
Executive Director

Lara Wellerstein
Volunteer Coordinator

JFCS Mission Statement

Jewish Family & Children's Service of Greater Mercer County is dedicated to strengthening families and individuals by providing a wide range of social services and programs including therapy, information and referral, support, education and advocacy.

Agency Programs

Jewish Family & Children's Service of Greater Mercer County is a community service agency that strengthens individuals and families by empowering people to care for themselves and each other.

Counseling and Case Management Services

There is no shortage of circumstances that may trigger personal problems among individuals, couples, families and groups.

JFCS staff includes outstanding therapists, counselors and support resources to ease the burden of many of life's most difficult challenges, and empower people to care for themselves and each other.

- Mental health & counseling services
- Case management
- Financial assistance
- Vouchers for kosher food and groceries
- Resettlement services

The Kosher Food Pantry provides groceries and dry goods for needy families throughout the area. Stocked primarily by donations from Jewish families and organizations in the community, the pantry is maintained by volunteers.

Elder Care Services

As we age, new challenges arise that call for special kinds of compassion and expertise –for seniors, their families and caregivers. JFCS's experts on aging have programs and services that address these challenges for the individual and collective needs of our community's older adults.

- Counseling, referral & resources for older adults, their families and caregivers
- Services to Holocaust survivors
- Aging in place programs
- Kosher Café
- Golden Agers (in association with the JCC)
- Kosher Meals on Wheels

Prevention Services & Support Services

If knowledge is one of the most powerful tools one can have, and a friend in need is a friend indeed, then the prevention and support services of JFCS provide ample evidence of the difference between today and tomorrow.

JFCS programs and professionals empower people with tools and resources to become stronger, wiser, better individuals, under whatever situation they may find themselves or those close to them.

- Family learning & mitzvah education

Lights (Hanukkah gifts for the needy)
Gesher LeKeshet (Peer education for teens)
Project Re-Employment
Abrams Hebrew Academy consultation
Jewish Community Youth Foundation in collaboration with the Ricky and Andrew J. Shechtel Foundation and UJFPMB
Hebrew Free Loan Society
Summer camp scholarships
Project SARAH (Stop Abusive Relationships At Home)
Carousel special needs program (in association with the JCC)

The Benefits of Volunteering

An Opportunity for Personal Growth

As a JFCS volunteer you will work with people whose lifestyles, needs and goals may be very different than your own. Volunteering offers an opportunity to learn more about other people and, in turn, to learn more about yourself.

New Skills

Through orientation, training and work on the job, you will have the opportunity to learn new skills, which may be useful in future work or educational endeavors.

Meeting People

Volunteering at JFCS provides the opportunity to meet people and form friendships. Volunteers often form strong bonds with other JFCS volunteers, and the clients they serve.

Documentation of Your Volunteer Experience

JFCS maintains a record of your volunteer service and can document your volunteer work for a future employer, a graduate school application, etc. We will be happy to write a letter regarding your volunteer contributions.

Make a Difference

Above all, as a JFCS volunteer, you have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of families and individuals who need your friendship, caring, support, and assistance.

JFCS Volunteer Opportunities

Kosher Café

Seniors meet for a nutritious kosher lunch at The Woodbrook Apartment Building in Ewing, New Jersey from 11:30 am - 1 pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursday and Fridays. Kosher Café East meets in East Windsor at Beth El Synagogue once a month and Kosher Café West meets in West Windsor at Congregation Beth Chaim once a month. Volunteers serve meals, offer companionship and help run social and educational programs. Adults & teens on school holiday.

Shabbat on Wheels

Bring a little Shabbat into the lives of older residents living at Bear Creek Assisted Living in West Windsor. Volunteers conduct a brief Shabbat service with Jewish residents and then stay to enjoy a few minutes of chatting. The program takes place at 4PM on Fridays. Adult & teens.

Kosher Food Pantry

JFCS maintains a Kosher food pantry to supplement the needs of many of our clients. Volunteers are needed to shop, sort and organize food for families to pick up. Adults & teens.

Chore Corps

Teens and adults are needed to perform small in-home chores for seniors. Chores may include changing light bulbs, retrieving boxes from attics or basements and sorting old magazines and journals. Adults/teens.

Friendly Visiting

Bring comfort and friendship by occasionally visiting older adults who live alone or are in long-term care facilities. Adults & teens with an adult family member.

Kosher Meals on Wheels

Deliver nutritious meals to homebound clients who are unable to cook for themselves. Volunteers are scheduled for deliveries once or twice per month on Mondays and Wednesdays at noon. Adults & teen with an adult family member.

Tech Buddy

Assist seniors with basic computer functionality, internet browsing, skype, games etc. Must be at least 12 years of age. Program is at Bear Creek Assisted Living in West Windsor. Adults & teens.

Holiday Outreach

JFCS provides Shalach Manot baskets (Purim) & Passover baskets to agency contacts in the community. We also deliver baskets to our Kosher Meals on Wheels recipients and Kosher Care participants. Volunteers are needed to shop for and package. Adults & teens.

Student Tutoring

Teens provide homework help and tutoring in a variety of subjects at an after school program in Hightstown. Students are needed to work with children of all ages. Adult/teen ages 13+. Student volunteers must provide 1-2 teacher recommendations.

Office Assistant

JFCS is a busy and thriving agency. Our capable, efficient and friendly office staff cannot always handle all of the work themselves. Volunteers are needed to work in our JFCS office to assist with filing, mailing or answering the phones. Office volunteers are also needed occasionally to help with special projects. Adults & teens.

Special Events Assistant

Our annual benefit is our primary fundraising effort. Adult volunteers are needed in several areas:

- Phone calls/follow ups with potential advertisers of the Ad Journal
- Help procure donations for auction
- Assist with mailings
- Assist with prep details

Tzedakah Baskets

Tzedakah Baskets are centerpieces specially created and 'rented' for events, such as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, anniversary, or birthday party. Adult volunteers meet on Monday mornings to create and adorn the baskets with colorful ribbons which coordinate with each party for which the baskets are ordered. Proceeds from this program go directly towards providing food and financial assistance to local families.

Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Because you represent the agency in working with our clients, it is important that you are aware of and follow these policies and procedures:

Confidentiality

It is essential that volunteers observe, maintain and protect the confidentiality of JFCS clients. Please avoid sharing with anyone information that identifies the client. Each volunteer will be required to sign a statement of confidentiality prior to working with the agency. Information about the needs and problems of clients should be shared with your volunteer coordinator as part of evaluating and planning services for the client. JFCS staff will share information with you that prepares you for your work with the clients, and will always respond to your questions and concerns.

Client Problems and Complaints

Clients sometimes discuss problems and bring complaints to a volunteer. Though complaints can be motivated by various circumstances, and may or may not have merit, a complaint may be an indirect call for help. It is important that you discuss any client complaints with your volunteer coordinator in case intervention is required.

Conflict of Interest

Volunteers should avoid activities that could be construed as a conflict of interest. It is important to not accept loans or gifts of money or property from clients. It is important to not give loans or gifts of money or property to clients, unless it is through an organized agency program. In addition, please refrain from offering medical, legal or financial advice to clients. All issues of this nature should be referred to your volunteer coordinator.

Personal Problem

If at any time you may have a pressing personal problem, in your role as a JFCS volunteer, we ask that you not use a client as a sounding board for your concerns.

Required Documentation

Volunteers are required to complete and submit a Volunteer Information Package containing contact information and references. The agency will contact your references. If your contact information changes, please let us know as soon as possible.

Supervision

To help you learn how to be most effective in your job, and to ensure proper coordination of services, you should keep in close contact with your volunteer coordinator. Your volunteer coordinator is always available to answer questions and address concerns.

Volunteer Performance Review

At least once per year, you will receive an evaluation of your performance. This evaluation will be completed by an appropriate agency service professional and/or the volunteer coordinator. At this time, as well as at any other time that such concerns arise, please feel free to discuss any issues or other concerns with your volunteer coordinator.

Training

Each agency program provides the training necessary to adequately prepare you for your volunteer work. Training at JFCS is individualized and your volunteer coordinator will discuss the specifics of your preparation with you.

Safety

JFCS makes every effort to ensure that you will have a safe volunteer experience. However, if at any time you should feel uncomfortable or unsafe, it would be appropriate for you to remove yourself from the situation. In the unlikely event that you encounter such a situation, please report the experience to your volunteer coordinator as soon as possible.

Absences

If you are unable to volunteer on an assigned day, please notify your client and/or volunteer coordinator as far in advance as possible. You are not expected to work on national holidays and certain Jewish holidays when the agency is closed.

Changes

At JFCS, endings are as important as beginnings. If you cannot fulfill your volunteer obligation, we expect that you will talk with your volunteer coordinator as soon as possible. If the match with your client or your job is not a good fit for you, we will explore other options at JFCS. We reserve the right to terminate any volunteer when there are questions about the safety or well-being of clients.

Contact Information

Lara Wellerstein is the JFCS Volunteer Coordinator. She can be reached by telephone at 609.987.8100, x 104 or via email at laraw@jfcsonline.org