



Strategic Plan 2023-2028



***Mobilize for
Broader Impact***

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Background and Process

In the fall of 2022, Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Mercer (JFCS) retained Creative Capacity, LLC to facilitate a strategic planning process. JFCS used the planning process as an opportunity to gather information and feedback from its community, including:

- One-on-one interviews with nine staff members and six board members.
- An online survey completed by 20 board members and 22 staff members.
- Interviews with nine community stakeholders, including program partners, individual and foundation donors, leaders in local government, and leaders in the Jewish community.
- A market scan of other service providers in hunger prevention, mental health, and senior services.

Trends Impacting our Strategic Plan

The research identified several factors that informed the planning process:

- Racial, ethnic, and economic demographics in the greater Mercer area are changing in many ways, and the Jewish community is smaller than it used to be.
- The initial surge in demand for food support was driven by the pandemic, but ongoing economic stressors have prevented demand from dropping back to pre-pandemic levels.
- The Consumer Price Index reported a 10.1% increase in the price of food and an 8.7% increase in the price of energy between January 2022 and 2023. Persistent inflation has resulted in a “new normal” of higher demand for food support at organizations all over the county.
- Mental health services are in high demand, and young people and adolescents are particularly in need of counseling and support.
- Demand for counseling in languages other than English is on the rise; Spanish speakers are the primary group right now, but the need for trauma counseling related to immigration and refugeeism will likely create demand for counseling in other languages as well.
- The isolation of the pandemic has had a negative impact on older adults. Many are reporting new mental health challenges, and struggled to cope during pandemic lockdowns and social distancing. Additionally, many seniors are now staying in their homes longer and need more services and support as they age in place.
- The Consumer Price Index showed an 8.6% increase in the cost of rent from January 2022 to 2023. This increase comes on top of the already higher-than-average cost of rent in Mercer County; the 2020 Census reported that Mercer County rents are 15%

higher than the national average. The lack of affordable housing in our area contributes to many of our community's challenges, straining financial resources and creating significant stress for people with lower and middle incomes.

- The lack of qualified counselors and licensed clinical social workers is a challenge for the entire field, and is likely to make staffing priority work in mental health, senior care management, and case management challenging.

Following this community research, JFCS held a board retreat to explore its options.

Creative Capacity also attended staff meetings with each JFCS department to talk about priorities and potential strategies. JFCS' strategic planning team of staff and board members worked with consultants to create an adaptive strategic plan, designed to help the organization adapt to changing conditions over the next five years.

The plan's vision and objectives will guide decision making. Broad strategies are included to illustrate the kind of work that is likely to take place; each strategy is followed by examples of potential projects that could fulfill JFCS' objectives.

The plan focuses JFCS' attention on three key areas:

- Making services more readily accessible throughout the community.
- Increasing community visibility and support.
- Strengthening JFCS infrastructure to support new strategic priorities.

Annual assessments and plan reviews will determine the best options for pursuing JFCS' strategic objectives.

Our Mission

JFCS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community service agency that strengthens individuals and families by empowering people to care for themselves and others. This is accomplished through a wide range of high quality social services and programs including therapy, information and referral, support, education, and advocacy. By combining contemporary clinical skills with values of charity, righteousness and compassion, Jewish Family & Children's Service seeks to assist families with many of life's toughest challenges. Since 1937, our agency has served those in need in Greater Mercer County.

Our Commitment

In a world of stress, health challenges, and disconnected families, Jewish Family & Children's Service (JFCS) of Greater Mercer County offers community-based social services in central New Jersey for people of all ages and backgrounds. The agency provides help, hope, and healing with high-quality programs and clinical services.

Our Vision

JFCS is committed to being the community's most accessible, inclusive, and reliable social service resource for people of all backgrounds who need help, hope, and healing.

Current Strategic Imperatives

Building upon the success of the Mobile Food Pantry, JFCS will deliver more services in accessible community settings so that support is readily available to people in need.

As part of this effort, JFCS will address two long-term consequences of the pandemic:

- Responding to increased mental health challenges among children and adolescents with accessible counseling, group support, and community mental health awareness programs.
- Addressing increased isolation among older adults with opportunities to connect with others and receive support as they navigate the challenges of aging.

Our Statement to the Community

We at Jewish Family & Children's Service of Greater Mercer County are resolved to stand with the most vulnerable people in our community.

Our agency is founded in the mission of empowering individuals and families to care for themselves and others through the combination of professional social services with charity, righteousness and compassion.

These principles are deeply rooted in Jewish values which guide us in our service of the broader community; we proudly deliver our services to individuals of all races, faiths, ages, gender identities and expressions, sexual orientations, and backgrounds.

- We reaffirm our commitment to helping the vulnerable, to restoring hope for the lost, and healing the world where we can.
- We are committed to providing services that honor the dignity of all human beings who turn to us.
- We will continue our work with people facing food insecurity and financial crises to achieve lives of greater well-being, health, and stability.
- We are steadfast in our service to people of any sexual orientation and any gender identity.
- We are committed to supporting people of all abilities to live as fully and independently as possible.
- We affirm that people affected by mental illness and/or addiction deserve support in achieving and maintaining a positive quality of life.
- We will be here for people affected by domestic violence and abuse.

We believe the path to a just society begins when each of us values and honors the dignity of the other as highly as our own. Our Jewish values demand this.

So we are resolved — to serve, to ally and to participate in building a just society.

"Let justice run down as water and righteousness as a mighty stream."—Amos 5:24

Summary of Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Make JFCS services more readily accessible throughout the community.

- Respond to the mental health crisis among young people by increasing access to mental health services and support, so that young people represent 35% of our total clinical clientele.
- Increase community resources that support youth mental health by annually providing three multi-week support groups for youth and quarterly outreach seminars for parents and community members.
- Increase the number of seniors who benefit annually from case management by 30%.
- Ensure that all on-site Food Pantry clients are offered an annual one-on-one case management appointment.
- Integrate case management services into three Mobile Food Pantry distributions each month.
- Continue to invest in both the on-site and Mobile Food Pantry's ability to provide food and other support for at least 1,100 families each month.

Goal #2: Increase community participation and support.

- Increase annual giving to \$2,500,000.00
- Increase the overall number of individual, corporate, and foundation donors by 20%.
- Increase participation in volunteerism, donations, and events from members of the Jewish community, both those affiliated and unaffiliated with local synagogues.
- Maintain strong participation in Jewish youth development programs.

Goal #3: Strengthen agency infrastructure to support strategic goals.

- Build the staff capacity to offer effective case management support across agency programs, from one-time information and referral calls to ongoing, individual case management.
- Effectively integrate services across departments to ensure that clients receive all of the support they need.
- Maximize the capacity of existing facilities to support programs and staff.