

2014 AJFCA KOVOD Award Submission

Category #3

Sustained Success: Programs with Staying Power

Nominee

Jewish Family Service Association of Cleveland

Agency Size

A

Program Name

Ascentia Residential Services

Program Summary

Since 1978 JFSA Cleveland’s Ascentia Residential Services has been providing housing and supportive services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental illness. The program began as a result of national de-institutionalization, when many families were uncertain where their loved ones with mental disabilities would live. Working with the National Council of Jewish Women, Council House opened in 1978 and housed and supported six men with mental illness. In 1987 Lomond House became the first supported living site for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Today JFSA Cleveland operates over 60 supported living sites, including five homes and an eleven suite apartment building for adults with mental illness and over 55 sites for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program serves over 160 individuals annually, with an operating budget of nearly \$12 million dollars.

JFSA Cleveland is dedicated to empowering and supporting individuals so that they can move towards self-sufficiency, enjoy the most fulfilling life possible, and participate in the life of the community.

Staff Listing By Title

Ascentia Executive Director Debbie Chickering, MBA
Ascentia Associate Executive Director Stephan Schwartz, PhD
Director of Residential Services Susan Berneike, MPH
Residential Business Manager Lynn Wasserman
Community Integration and Wellness Manager Tammy Arnold
Clinical Manager Jane Harkey
Program Manager Veronica Bellay
Program Specialists Thomas Rappa, Tara Hunt, Dustin Poore
Training and Quality Improvement Manager Laurie Williams
Regional Team Leaders Crystal Sloan, Alynka-Shae Otey, Deborah Bailey
Adult Day Support Supervisor Allison Pickett
Day Support Activities Specialists Bridgette Curry, Latonya Jackson

Site Managers (20)
Direct Support Professionals (255)

Three Major Outcomes

(1) Program Growth & Expansion

Growth over the past 30 years can be attributed to the agency's leadership and expertise in the field of residential services and supportive housing as well as its rejection of a "one size fits all" model of service delivery. JFSA Cleveland has a long history and reputation for providing excellent services and is known for being an early adopter of best practices in supportive housing services. Much of this growth also stems from a willingness to access a wide variety of funding streams.

In 1992, JFSA Cleveland offered one of the first Individual Option Waiver (IOW) funded sites in the State of Ohio. These waivers allowed individuals to live in the community settings of their choice with supports, rather than in an intermediate care facility or other institution. In 1996, JFSA began raising endowment funds to secure the long-term future of the program and the individuals and families it serves. Today this fund generates approximately \$40,000 - 50,000 a year towards operations.

In response to the need for affordable housing, JFSA secured funding from HUD to acquire 8 residential homes and an 11 suite apartment building for adults with mental illness. This funding source enables residents to pay rent equal to one-third of their monthly income, pay a stipend to JFSA for maintaining infrastructure, and once the property is paid off, the property becomes an asset to the Jewish community (JFSA and the Jewish Community Housing).

Most recently, JFSA Cleveland's leadership within the state has led to expansion of services over the past five years into neighboring Geauga and Summit counties, both of whom sought out JFSA Cleveland's expertise.

(2) Holistic Approach

JFSA Cleveland's core philosophy is to provide services and supports that address both the individual and the family's needs. This holistic approach is clearly evident in the continuum of services available to every residential client. Each client works closely with staff to create a customized Individual Service Plan (ISP). ISPs are flexible in order to ensure that they are meeting the client's needs and desires.

A significant benefit to both clients and families is access to a wide array of comprehensive services:

- **Supportive Employment Services & Vocational Rehab** help people with all types of disabilities prepare for employment consistent with their interests and abilities.
- **Family Advocacy and Support** is designed to help families to navigate the mental health and developmental disabilities systems. The Family Advocate helps families understand these systems, identify available help and assist with the development of special needs trusts, lifetime planning, representative payee services and other supports.
- **Community Support Services** include help with daily activities, such as paying bills, doing chores, getting to the doctor, exercising or looking for a job.
- **Community Integration and Wellness** takes place throughout the community and includes a partnership with the Mandel Jewish Community Center. Participants play in team sports, lift weights and participate in aerobic exercises. Other activities include trips to museums and sporting events.
- **Clinical and Therapeutic Services:** Many residential clients also receive clinical and therapeutic services including psychiatry & pharmacological management, cognitive enhancement treatment (CET) and counseling.

(3) Responsive & Dynamic

JFSA's Ascentia Residential program longevity is due to its ability to remain responsive to changes in individual and family needs, as well as changes in the supportive housing field. Services continue to stay relevant, largely because JFSA consistently engages its stakeholders and responds to their needs.

As far back as 1979, JFSA Cleveland responded to the needs of the community with the opening of Council House, JFSA's first residential site for adults with mental illness. Volunteers of the National Council of Jewish Women Cleveland Section saw first-hand the shocking conditions under which patients in psychiatric hospitals were forced to live and the impact that de-institutionalization had on these individuals when released from the hospital. In response to their concerns, JFSA Cleveland worked with NCJW to create a safe home for these individuals, owned by NCJW and staffed with JFSA social workers. During the 1980's, JFSA Cleveland was the first agency to hire peer support staff for its homes for adults with mental illness.

A few years later, in response to observant Jewish family needs, JFSA Cleveland collaborated with Jewish Community Housing (a program of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland) to open its first Kosher residential site for observant Jews that provided support in daily and weekly observance of Jewish laws and customs.

To this day, the residential program is flexible to support a variety of residential possibilities and is designed to meet the client and family's specific needs and wishes. When the program was first established, the standard model of supportive housing was large group homes, serving 8-10 individuals with 24/7 care. Over time, this model of care has evolved into a range of options for families. Today, JFSA Cleveland operates in a variety of settings, including family owned consortiums, single family homes with two, three, and four roommates, apartment rental spaces, separate wings of apartment buildings with shared common space, and an 11 suite apartment building. The amount of staff support provided in these settings is based on the functioning level of clients.

The Transitions Program is the most recent example of how the agency has responded to an unmet need of a special population. Parents of young adults (22-28 years old) with Autism Spectrum Disorder identified a need for help in transitioning their young adult children from home to independent living. The program currently serves four clients and is located in an apartment building which allows for each person to have their own apartment in addition to common space for social activities. The program provides education and support to promote independence with activities of daily living as well as social and recreational skills. Some of the residents also receive assistance from JFSA Home Health Aides who assist with hygiene and help with daily chores. JFSA Case Managers help plan social activities, such as bowling or movie night, trips to museums or transportation to synagogue. Parents feel more comfortable with their children living independently due to the supportive services provided by JFSA staff.

JFSA Cleveland's willingness to embrace new technology is another reason for its sustained success. Currently, two JFSA homes offer the latest technology for individuals with hearing impairments. Homes are equipped with video relay systems which allow residents to communicate with friends and family (this has replaced the old TTY systems). Alarm systems have been adapted to ensure residents' safety and their beds have been equipped with vibrating pads, acting as alarm clocks, to further their ability to live independently. One of the more unique aspects of these homes is the fact that all staff are fluent in American Sign Language.

Another example is a home specially designed for two young adult brothers who have Fragile X Syndrome. Their home is fully equipped with innovative technology that includes a series of sensors that prompt the brothers to complete daily tasks, such as brushing their teeth or doing dishes. This technology allows them to learn important independent living skills on their own while also providing their parents the ability to monitor their safety.

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