



Agency and Community Leader Focus Groups Topline Summary for The Jewish Federation

April 26, 2016



Research Objectives and Methodology

- Share high level results of the community, agency and teen survey.
- Gather feedback from Agency and Synagogue leadership on their perceptions and opinions about the findings.

Methodology:

Three 2-hour focus groups – 2 community focused with a mix of Agency personnel and Rabbis; 1 teen focused with a mix of Agency personnel and Rabbis.

Location & Timing:

Morpace Corporate Offices
Farmington Hills, MI
April 12th, 14th and 19th 2016

Sample:

n= 23 participants in total
Representing 18 unique agencies, three Synagogues and two funding agencies

Quantitative Findings with depth

Learning #1: The Jewish community is not aware of all the available services.

This lack of awareness extends beyond members of the community to the individual agencies themselves. Most staff and leadership representatives do not know, beyond bare basics, what is offered by the other agencies who serve the Jewish population in the Metro Detroit area.

There is keen interest in learning what is offered by each agency and, when needed, forming partnerships among Jewish agencies to provide the community with the best service options.

It was suggested that the Federation step in and facilitate this collaboration among agencies given the depth of knowledge the Federation has of all the services currently offered in the community.

Synagogues want to be included in this partnership as they are often “first responders”.

Additionally, there is recognition among some that Jewish service agencies cannot be all things to all people. It was suggested that those in agency leadership roles take a hard look at what is offered through a “Jewish lens” understanding what “our religion tells us to do.” Several are open to working with “vetted” agencies outside the community to deliver the needed services – especially as it relates to mental health and other like areas where skilled experts are required.

Quantitative Findings with depth

Learning #2: Barriers to service include perceived cost, stigma and lack of transportation.

Many of the needs identified by the community are related to an aging population. This need will only increase as baby boomers enter their senior years. While some age related services should be provided by a Jewish organization (examples include bereavement, food, home health care for some, etc.) there are others – like transportation – that do not have to be provided by a Jewish association. Inter-community connections are important to develop across a range of services that do not require an intimate understanding of Jewish culture and behavior.

A Jewish agency could function as a referral agent for these services.

It was not surprising to Agency staff that the need for mental health service was cited less often among the community as there is a definite stigma associated with these services. This stigma is two fold – getting the needed counseling and affording the counseling.

There is anxiety attached to *inquiring about a* service and there is even greater uneasiness about going to a Jewish service agency for care because of who might see you in the lobby.

There is also apprehension among people who know they need help but don't know how to pay for it.

Quantitative Findings with depth

***Learning #3:* Those within the Orthodox community report greater needs than those of other denominations.**

The Orthodox community is increasing in Metro Detroit and a service delivery issue is growing within the community. Agencies that do not serve the Orthodox community do not always see the need for some of the specific service requests while those on the front lines (in many cases Rabbis) see an increasing need for services that *require* offerings from within the Jewish community.

***Learning #4:* Households with an adult or child with a disability or care for an elderly or disabled relative have the greatest need.**

This is the area where service needs can often be met using an outside agency. Services for a disabled person do not have to come from a Jewish agency. Elder care is often on a case by case basis. In all instances, families simply need to know who to call for direction and/or assistance and the Jewish agencies need to know who to refer to or recommend within the community *and* outside of it with partner agencies.

Quantitative Findings with depth

Learning #5: Anxiety, bullying, academic pressure, low self esteem and depression are the greatest teen struggles.

Agencies that have the most interaction with teenagers have seen an explosion of service needs among the 13-19 year old demographic. Youth are struggling with pressures at younger and younger ages. Functioning in an over-achievement culture has left some describing today's teen as less resilient.

The pressure to perform at the highest levels in school coupled with the perceived importance of social activities and extracurricular events leaves teens (and their parents) anxious. Many have difficulty prioritizing their time and worry about committing to only one thing. Parents, too, are stressed worrying about their teenagers. Parents want to do what is right but, more importantly, they want to empower their teen to know what to do.

Several staff believe it is the parents that need training before their child hits the teen years to protect them from technology, to help teach their children basic life skills and to help kids with relationships in an increasingly complex world.

Synagogues are getting more requests for help from parents. Rabbis try to counsel teens on their spiritual and emotional well-being but do not like to tackle behavioral issues because they believe that needs to be addressed by a trained professional.

Agency staff asked for a list of resources by agency targeting teens and were surprised to learn one already exists.

Summary of Overall Qualitative Findings

- Synagogues and Agencies want to work together to strengthen the Jewish community as a whole. They are willing to meet to streamline services and cut out duplication where possible.
 - Rabbis and agency staff are seeing increased requests for service as more families struggle with troubled/dysfunctional relationships and anxiety. The very basics of the nuclear family has changed. It is much more complex and several agency people often feel they don't have the proper referral resources.
- Many asked for a centrally located information source – a Federation “411” – that could act as a community safety net. This one point of referral call-in line would be staffed by case workers who could get requestors to the right place *based on need*.
- As the Jewish population becomes more willing to accept services outside of the Jewish community, the Federation and the agencies need to work to form a cohesive structure that matches the needs of the community with the best possible service outcome. Partnerships with outside agencies should be encouraged when the level of *caring* is the same as or greater than what is provided through a Jewish organization.
- Agency leadership and the funders acknowledged a dilemma in that the criteria for funding services can no longer be “because they’ve always been funded.” Some funders are seen as having tunnel vision because they only see what comes before them for review - they don't see the full swath of community needs. Other funders are seen as only wanting to be associated with “new and shiny” services while others continue to fund a service that no longer meets the needs it was designed to serve because no one has taken the time to explain where the need is greater. A dialogue needs to occur between funds and agencies to be sure those with the greatest needs are being served.
- The vision of the Federation and the agencies it represents should be revisited to ensure it aligns with the needs of the community, the agencies that serve it and the funding sources both today and going forward.