

# THE JEWISH ADVOCATE®

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## CORONAVIRUS IN OUR COMMUNITY

# Agencies assist those in need

By Brett M. Rhyne  
*Advocate editor*

BOSTON – As the coronavirus pandemic sweeps through the region, area Jewish agencies ramp up their programming to provide support to one of the populations most severely affected, the financially insecure.

Spearheading the effort is Combined Jewish Philanthropies, notably through its “Warmline” initiative. While the Warmline has been a longstanding resource for community members in need, CJP

is now providing the communal agencies with which it collaborates more resources to help those especially hard hit by Covid-19.

“We continue to support the CJP Warmline and our five partner agencies through the Anti-Poverty Initiative,” noted CJP spokeswoman Karen Kuwayti.

The five agencies are Jewish Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Jewish Family & Children’s Services, Jewish Family Services MetroWest, Jewish Vocational Services and Yad Chessed.

“All of the agencies have received additional funding through the CJP

Coronavirus Emergency Fund to meet the financial needs, especially food needs, of current and new clients who are suffering due to this extraordinary situation,” Kuwayti noted. “This is in addition to regular and robust annual funding that supports these programs.”

Anecdotal evidence suggests the Coronavirus Emergency Fund is working.

“Both the CJP Warmline and our partner agencies have reported a significant uptick in calls from both



Karen Kuwayti

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## Agencies

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new individuals and families, and in new requests for assistance from their current clients,” Kuwayti noted, adding, “We expect to have quantitative data next month.”

She also described an effort by CJP to provide direct food assistance to those in need.

“CJP is also supporting low income people in the Orthodox community through distribution of Butcherie cards – through the assistance of synagogues and rabbis – to offset the high cost of Passover food,” she said, “and through financial support of the new Brighton kosher food pantry, Tifereth Raphael.”

Kuwayti noted that while all CJP staffers are working from home, “We do not anticipate this impacting our ability to support our anti-poverty partners.”

### Yad Chessed

According to Nancy J. Kriegel, executive director of Yad Chessed, one of the three “home agencies”



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– Nancy J. Kriegel  
Yad Chessed

that receives referrals from the CJP Warmline, response to its efforts to provide coronavirus relief has been striking.

"Clients have been incredibly grateful for our ability to respond quickly and give them something tangible that helps," Kriegel said. "In the words of one recent client, 'I cannot emphasize enough how grateful I am for the food cards. My deepest thank you. Stay well and take care of yourself and your family.'

"This genuine expression of relief and appreciation as well as expressing caring for our wellbeing is incredibly touching," Kriegel added.

Depending on client needs, Yad Chessed offers up to three resources: funds for emergency financial assistance for essentials, where Yad Chessed pays vendors and other payees directly on behalf of clients); grocery store gift cards, sent monthly and on Jewish holidays to people experiencing food insecurity; and phones consultation for budget, benefits and resource advice and referrals.

"Given the current increased volume of needs and the additional local, state and federal resources and protections that are being put into place for people who are struggling," Kriegel said, "in the short term, Yad Chessed is prioritizing use of funds for essentials like food and medicine and other necessities for which there are no other supports being offered."

She noted current social distancing recommendations were not affecting Yad Chessed's effectiveness.

"Now in our 31st year," she said, "Yad Chessed's unique model offers clients assistance entirely over the telephone and through email and mail correspondence. This approach has enabled us to continue

helping people in the same way we have always done."

"We have heard from many clients who are just calling to say they are worried about the future, and while they do not have any immediate needs, they are just happy to know that we are here," Kriegel said. "Knowing that our existence in and of itself can offer some comfort to people who are anxious about the future is incredibly powerful and motivating."

CJP lists all Coronavirus Emergency Fund grants on Jewishboston.com. As of March 31, grants awarded totaled \$452,000.

**OLDER ADULTS**

\$75,000 to 2Life Communities  
 \$35,000 to Chelsea Jewish Lifecare  
 \$35,000 to Hebrew SeniorLife

**FOOD INSECURITY & DIRECT CLIENT NEEDS**

\$80,000 for Seder in a Box  
 \$35,000 to JF&CS  
 \$35,000 to provide critical support for availability and distribution of food for Passover  
 \$15,000 to JFS of MetroWest  
 \$15,000 to Yad Chessed  
 \$10,000 to ensure that seniors unable to cook receive prepared kosher meals  
 \$5,000 to Jewish Vocational Services to provide technology to clients to support ongoing career development work virtually

**SOCIAL ISOLATION**

\$7,000 to Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters for disability needs  
 \$5,000 to New England Yachad to provide technology to clients to enable social connection

**COMMUNITY NEEDS**

\$100,000 to Dnipro, Ukraine, for medical supplies and equipment