

Service Coordination Program



JEWISH CARE

OVERVIEW

Jewish Care's Service Coordination program is an individual and family support service working with Jewish community members experiencing:

- mental health issues
- family violence
- homelessness
- financial stress
- parenting issues
- alcohol and other drugs misuse
- grief and loss
- complex combination of issues

It works with both internal programs and external service providers to meet the diverse needs Jewish community members (generally under 65 years old) experiencing social and/or structural disadvantage.

The program:

- consists of two full time and three part time Social Workers and one Family Support Worker.
- provides ethno-specific, culturally aware and trauma-informed support.
- ensures that intersectionalities are addressed to remove any barriers to accessing the service.

- undertakes a comprehensive assessment to determine the needs and goals of the individual/family for a collaboratively developed case plan.
- provides kosher food and material aid
- provides consultation to Jewish Community organisations and members, faith leaders and schools
- builds capacity of community to respond to and seek appropriate assistance for those at risk or in need.

The Service Coordination program is a member of the Bayside Peninsula Integrated Family Services Alliance, and receives referrals from the Bayside Peninsula Orange Door.



ABOUT - JEWISH CARE

- Largest service provider for the Victorian Jewish Community delivering need-based, culturally aware and value-driven service
- Stretches some of its programs to support other multicultural communities.
- Employs over 800 workers and engages over 400 volunteers.
- Offers Individual and Family Services, Disability Services, Residential Aged Care including three Homes and In home /Group services for elders in community known as their Active Living Services.

"I am just blown away by your thoughtfulness, support and care. Words cannot adequately describe how much Jewish Care's offer [of financial aid] means to me, I am so beyond grateful. Thank you so much. From the first time we spoke your sincerity and genuine concern for my and my children's wellbeing has been so heart-warming and I wanted to thank you again for just being there to listen on the other end of the line, simply taking the time to call, and for arranging the food deliveries."

Quote from a service user

THE CHALLENGE

Jewish Care has been working with the community as it experienced waves of migration throughout its 170+ years of operation - Holocaust survivors post World War II, migrants from the former Soviet Union, South Africa and South America and more recently Israel. Whilst complementing the work they do with Australian born Jews, these migrants have brought with them significant traumas that have had to be understood to be better addressed. Often their traumas have been in relation to their experiences of being Jewish; a religion and culture that has been persecuted for centuries.

The Service Coordination team has existed in one form or another for many years. More recently it was identified that within Individual and Family Services there needed to be a group of highly skilled generalist social workers who could not only meet the broad range of needs that families present with, but also individuals with complex needs.

OUTCOMES

The program and the organisation have been measuring success over the years using tools/methods such as SROI measures, Project logic frameworks, Outcome Stars and client feedback.

The program demonstrates flexibility by responding to changing community needs. It has allowed the team to focus efforts on contemporary issues by embedding longer periods for engagement, incorporating religious and cultural understandings in their assessments and service planning and remaining connected to service seekers longer than most government funding allows. Where government funding is provided, through their Integrated Family Services work for example, they have been able to create tailored pathways to suit the community and enhance engagement.

The Service Coordination team is consistently one of the most sought out service across all programs at Jewish Care:

- It has seen a continual increase in referrals, both from individuals and families in need and by community members and leaders.
- The organisation also shares a strong reputation in the community. Critical and positive feedback from the community, which is known to be very active and vocal, further improves the quality of the services.
- The high level of funding received for the I&FS programs through community donations is also a positive recognition of their work.



KEY LESSONS

What works?

Grounded in trauma-informed practice -

The model recognises that the community carries with it a history of trauma that is experienced inter-generationally as well as current experiences of being “othered” resulting from being part of a minority community and religion. Anti-Semitism has in many ways shaped the communal experience and understanding its impact is vital.

Person-centred - The services and supports are wrapped around the individual/family ensuring need is addressed across multiple platforms; with needs of each person being addressed.

Nuanced approach to religion and customs

- It is vital to consider people’s relationship with Judaism and create a safe space for traditional customs. People may have different levels of inclination to Judaism; or may belong to different sects which have their own set of practices and religious expressions (there are about 6-7 different Jewish sects).

The Service Coordination team take time to understand these different elements when working with the community. They are respectful of Jewish festivals and religious practices, avoiding contact on holy days as a mark of respect for the Jewish faith.

Food is an incredibly important part of Jewish culture and the provision of food is an important tool used for engagement. Ensuring food provision is kosher is essential when working with the community even if not all members keep kosher.

The team works with community leaders such as rabbis and their wives around prevention and early intervention of family violence by holding information sessions in a culturally sensitive way. Knowledge of the Jewish Calendar, customs and the communal spaces including the synagogues, the mikvot (ritual baths), the child-care centres and schools, the youth movements, Ajax and Maccabi (Jewish Sport Centres) and more provides the opportunity for positive behavioral change.

What does not work?

Not recognising diverse religious expression and using a generic approach

- Although Jewish Care, and more specifically Service Coordination, provides culturally-responsive support, there is a small ultra-orthodox sect/s (Adass and Satma communities) within the community which generally does not engage with the service. These sects follow very traditional customs and practices which for the most part is highly insular and self-reliant, rejecting of secular life, language, customs and interactions.

Despite Jewish Care being culturally embedded in the community, for some in the ultra-orthodox community, the organisation is seen as too mainstream, making engagement a greater challenge. However, efforts are being made through a project targeting these communities which include strengthening of relationships with key community leaders in future.