

THE NEW SEASON: RERUNS AND NEW EPISODES

ARNOLD R. SALTZMAN

Executive Director, Jewish Family Service, Los Angeles

As stricter regulations (diagnostic related groups) are enforced, shortening the patient's stay in a hospital, we, will continue to observe collaborative relationships being formed between hospitals and community based agencies . . . providing an effective home health service response . . .

Very recently, in anticipation of this presentation, I accepted an invitation to attend a meeting at the University of Southern California for the purpose of establishing an archive for social work.

Approximately 25 individuals were in attendance. I was among the youngest in the group, by 15 to 25 years. We were called upon to describe how we had decided to enter the field. In almost every instance the word "stumble" was used. Most of the individuals in attendance were women who started out as teachers or as secretaries, and who more or less wandered into social work. They, like me, knowingly chose a low paying profession declaring that they did so because they cared about and wanted to work with troubled people.

Clearly, my decision and those made by the generation of professionals who preceded my entry into the profession, represented a re-run. As the "new kids on the block" I wonder whether present newcomers are also cut from a similar pattern. Are they prepared to accept participation in a low paying profession—or are they ready for the challenge of writing a new episode?

CRISIS

I'm told there is an old Talmudic saying that in Jewish life one must learn to take the "bitter with the sour." Today, as I look at where we are as a profession, I feel we are in the midst of a serious crisis. As the director of the second largest Jewish

Family Service in the country, with a 10 million dollar budget, I find it difficult to recruit and retain qualified staff.

At a recent Annual Conference of the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies, I participated in a session that included executives of JFS agencies throughout the United States and Canada. I found it necessary to introduce a resolution that was unanimously adopted by the board of the AJFCA, wherein the Association recognized as its highest priority the need to improve salaries.

I suggest that this issue must be given highest priority on the agenda of the Conference of Jewish Communal Service and within each of the affiliated professional associations. An all-out consciousness-raising effort is essential if we are going to influence our leadership and the decision-making process.

It may be necessary for us to make some difficult decisions. For example, we will need to become much more selective and insist on maintaining high standards at graduate school level. We need to avoid diluting our professional ranks by hiring non-professionals wherever the degree is essential. On the other hand, administration may have to let staff go or not replace departing staff in order to give those remaining additional dollars.

Members of my staff have indicated they can no longer *afford* to work at Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles. This is especially true if they want to live *Jewishly!* Many workers have reduced their hours with the agency in order to establish

a private practice. This trend and that of hiring contract workers will, in my opinion, dilute their commitment and dedication to the agency. As well, an increase in the number of part-time workers can become an administrative nightmare! I realize that this is an emotionally charged issue and would anticipate that these views will receive a mixed reaction.

In the following, I shall set forth some trends that will bear on future directions. Perhaps some of these ideas are unique to the Jewish family service field. However, in preparing for this presentation, I solicited information from representatives of affiliated professional associations. In most instances I found that we have much in common.

1. *Governance.* The composition of the Boards of Directors of our agencies, this ultimate decision-making body, has changed or is in the process of changing. Sol Brownstein, Executive Director of the Jewish Family Service of Houston, wrote in *Sh'ma* that a "silent revolution" is occurring in most Jewish communal service agencies, that is, the advent of the corporate manager on our boards in ever-increasing numbers. Brownstein reported that he was criticized for being too suspicious of a "corporate type" for successfully lobbying his board to drop a home delivered Kosher meals program because it was no longer "cost-effective." I would suggest that we must actively recruit to our boards the "corporate-types," but at the same, maintain some balance in the composition of our boards. It is essential for them to achieve a blending of corporate managers and non-corporate lay leaders so that board responses will represent both ends of the spectrum—from "what's the bottom cost line?" to concern for the individual client's well-being if service is withdrawn.

2. *Funding Source.* Today many of our agencies are big businesses, having million-dollar-plus budgets. Services are becoming diversified as are our funding sources, which include Federations, United

Way, private foundations and city, state and federal government grants. Contacts with monitors and auditors are very frequent, and not incidentally this trend further reinforces our need to include "corporate types" on our boards. Their expertise is invaluable to us as we deal with the constant stream government auditors.

3. *Diversity.* JFS in Los Angeles has come full circle and, I would suggest, its experience is a prototype of family service generally. We continue to provide excellent clinical services along with some meaningful tangible services. In no way can family service agencies be accused of delivering services from an "ivory tower." Alongside the traditional family counseling programs, which include therapy for the emotionally troubled individuals and families, we have developed a number of specialized programs for particular social problems whose existence serves to explode the myth that Jews are immune to certain social deviances. These programs target the most at-risk and vulnerable segments of our populations. Some examples include victims of cults, family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness, chronic mental illness, and divorce. Prominent also has been outreach to special populations like the Orthodox and the list goes on. It is our experience that programs bearing such specific labels do attract a more favorable response from funding sources than do generically stated programs, like "help to the dysfunctional family."

I will go out on a limb and predict that family service will continue to struggle with a variety of value-laden issues. For one, there is the issue of avowal of a universalism on one hand, and the importance of the Jewish component on the other. I can suggest a few scenarios that challenge any clinicians' tendency to maintain a so called value-free, neutral stance. For example, an inter-married couple just had their first child. He is Jewish and wants a Brit for their son. She agrees, but also wants a baptismal ceremony. Or a Jew-

ish couple is considering divorce . . . do you use "Jewish sources" to help them deal with the marital conflict?

4. *Concrete or Tangible Services.* A very practical array of services, particularly those directed to the elderly and homeless will receive even greater emphasis in future years. Jewish family service workers realized the need to provide the economically disadvantaged with financial assistance and to help them find affordable housing. Obviously, case management, a comprehensive approach to the emotional, social and physical needs of the client, must recognize and include the provision of food, shelter and clothing as well as engaging the client in a meaningful counseling relationship.

The elderly are served kosher meals in congregate settings and in home delivery; we install security and safety devices in peoples' apartments; a well trained corp of volunteers telephone the elderly on a daily basis to check on their well-being and also assist them in filling out the many forms that clutter their lives. This network of concrete services is complemented by counseling and is geared toward keeping the elderly person in his or her own apartment thereby avoiding, if at all possible, the need for institutional care.

5. *Volunteers* are already and will become an even greater source of people power to be utilized in the delivery of direct services. Today, my agency is very dependent upon a highly trained, skilled corps of volunteers. The agency supervises approximately 600 volunteers, many of whom have been with the agency for over five years and who offer one full day of service a week. Recruitment is becoming more difficult as many women are looking for paid positions. The creative utilization of an increasing number of retirees needs to be viewed as an incompletely tapped resource for meaningful contributions.

Parenthetically, the use of volunteers and the provision of various concrete services have helped us erase the image of JFS as the community's best kept secret.

Our storefront senior service centers and shelters for the homeless are favorite stops for the United Jewish Campaign's local missions.

6. *Government Funding.* In recent years and for the predictable future, we can anticipate that the traditional funding sources (Federation and United Way) will be struggling just to maintain their current allocation base. Since 1975, the JFS/LA budget has grown from approximately \$2 million to \$10 million. This dramatic growth can be directly attributed to government support-principally for senior service programs, in part for the homeless and chronically mentally ill. Our acceptance of this funding has resulted in some significant trade-offs. We no longer refer to ourselves as a sectarian agency. Today, the agency's mission statement should read: a Jewish agency with an open-door policy.

The three senior service centers we operate by virtue of their location, still serve a 98% clientele that is Jewish. However, the outreach program providing shelter to the economically disadvantaged serves a much greater population mix.

Government agency personnel codes differ from Federation's union contract and this often created conflicts. As already mentioned, the stream of monitors and auditors and their bureaucratic approach are extremely burdensome. As our program becomes substantially dependent upon government grants that must be renegotiated on an annual basis, the tensions for line-staff and agency administration can be emotionally quite draining.

Community planning and the traditional boundary lines that have been drawn between the agencies become blurred. Turf issues will become even more intense as the government entities in no way concern themselves with the historic safeguards that have served to minimize inter-agency conflicts. For example, Jewish Family Service was recently awarded a grant from the city to operate a senior center that emphasizes socialization in its

programming thrust . . . more typically a Jewish community center responsibility. The city insisted on dealing only with JFS since we were already the recipient of its funding in that particular councilmanic district.

I could go on and continue to describe how external funding complicates agency routines, but the bottom line is that we are serving hundreds of needy Jewish individuals in ways we could never have imagined if we limited our means of support to the philanthropic sources. In fact, I predict agencies will become even more aggressive in their pursuit of government funding. Federations and United Way will encourage this action by offering incentives (leveraging) to those agencies seeking this source of support.

7. *Social Health Services.* Today my own agency combines health and social services. The health component is most vividly represented by an outpatient health center that is located at one of our storefronts. Here, doctors from the UCLA Medical Center are being trained to work with the elderly in our community-based long-term-care facility. This arrangement flowed from the recognition that too many young doctors have experienced working with the very sick elderly only in hospital settings. As stricter regulations (diagnostic related groups) are enforced, shortening the patient's stay in a hospital, we will continue to observe collaborative relationships being formed between hospitals and community based agencies. This cooperation will provide an effective home health service response combining the hospitals health and agencies social service components.

8. *Federation-Agency Relationship.* It is difficult to forecast what impact decreased financial dependency on the Federation will have impact on the relationship. In my opinion, the closeness of the connection will be largely influenced by the executive director's choices and the composition of the board. It will require a stronger expression of commitment on the

part of both as this traditional source of support is diluted. Perhaps the current restrictions on extramural fundraising may be eased. In Los Angeles the United Way has been discussing an approach that would facilitate agency fundraising, although guidelines, such as the ones that call for a closed campaign period, would still be imposed. No doubt, these guidelines will continue to protect the basic concept of federated giving.

9. *Entrepreneurial Endeavors.* Finally, I forecast the increased launching of self-supporting programs directed toward the middle-class. We will have an opportunity to test our entrepreneurial skills in an effort to create programs that will generate substantial fees for service, and perhaps achieve a "favorable variance." If successful, and a favorable variance is realized, the plus dollars can be used to offset those programs geared to the less affluent, where a sliding fee scale will always result in a program deficit.

Success in this arena will require that we improve our marketing techniques. No doubt, we will find ourselves competing with the for-profit sector. I suggest that the Conference of Jewish Communal Service be designated as the stage for the ongoing review and evaluation of these issues. After all, it is this entity that embodies the diversity of the Jewish communal service field and it is here that we can create opportunities to critique the aforementioned issues and trends.

In closing, I'd like to share a statement I recently read about the meaning of life. In my opinion, it clearly exemplifies colleagues' professional endeavors and fully explains why each deserves an "Oscar." "Life means basically fulfilling ourselves. This is filling full our days with deeds and our lives with meaning. For it is not how many things we do, but rather what things we do and how well we do them!" I look forward to participating with others in the field in many new seasons . . . the reruns and new episodes.