



MISSION

JCFS Chicago strengthens self-sufficiency, belonging and well-being among individuals and families in the Jewish and broader Chicago communities.



FROM OUR CEO AND BOARD CHAIR

Over the course of a single year, growth can take many forms—personal, organizational, and community-wide. At JCFS Chicago, each year brings opportunities to expand services, strengthen connections, and deepen our impact. Together, we now reach more than 20,000 people annually.

In this report we follow the journey of one participant in our Residential Supports program, alongside the staff who help guide and encourage those we serve. Their stories reflect the heart of JCFS—people growing stronger, programs evolving, and communities becoming more connected.

Among the 2,261 people engaged in our programs for people with a disability, was Matt, who built meaningful relationships and experienced greater inclusion and support.

We also adapted to change. Our refugee resettlement program responded to shifting federal policies, ensuring families continued to receive critical resources. Employment specialist Zubair was among those helping 1,411 individuals in our self-sufficiency programs improve financial, legal, and employment stability.

Under the leadership of principal Dr. Diona Lewis, the Knapp School & Yeshiva expanded opportunities for students, who joined more than 2,700 young people benefiting from informed sexual education through Response for Teens—building knowledge to support their health and well-being.

This year, the Council on Accreditation reaffirmed that JCFS meets the highest standards of quality, safety, and effectiveness. It strengthens trust, opens doors to new partnerships, and ensures our programs continue to deliver measurable, meaningful results.

We are deeply grateful to our board of directors, our partners at the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, our donors, volunteers, and staff. Your commitment fuels our work and strengthens our ability to create lasting change in the Jewish and broader Chicago communities. Together, we are making a difference in countless lives.

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JCFS Chicago, a non-profit social service agency, offers expert, individualized help to support people of all ages and abilities as they strive to live successfully in their community. Our services enhance emotional well-being for adults, children, teens and families — regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, ability, gender or sexual orientation.

Disability Services

- Speech-language and occupational therapy through Integrated Pediatric Therapies
- Support and assistance for community-based adult independent living
- Home-based waiver for children and adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities
- Customized employment support through the Duman Opportunity Center
- Training for janitorial and administrative services
- Respite services for families caring for children with disabilities

Behavioral Health and Emotional Support Services

- Counseling for children, adults, couples, and families
- Therapeutic services for children and families at the Virginia Frank Child Development Center
- · Psychological testing and evaluation
- · Assessment and interventions for disruptive behaviors in children
- Counseling and sexual education for youth at Response for Teens
- K-12+ therapeutic education at the Knapp School & Yeshiva
- Clinical support for children and families in the child welfare system
- Support for those exposed to trauma through the Kaufman Wolf Center for Trauma & Resilience

Community Assistance Services

- Addiction resources
- Loss, illness, and spiritual support
- Adoption and infertility support
- · Abuse prevention programs
- Suicide prevention and support
- Connections to counseling, education, and prevention services through community partnerships
- Refugee, immigration, and citizenship services through HIAS

Career Services and Professional Training

- Career assessment, training, and job support with JVS Career and Employment
- Internship program for social work and psychology
- Training for early childhood teachers to meet children's social and emotional needs

THE LIFE

This year's annual report stories grew from a yearlong effort to stay connected with six JCFS Chicago staff members—each either new to the agency or in a new role—and one resident of an integrated community living home supported by JCFS. Each story captures the significance of their experiences and the role they play in furthering our mission.

Throughout the year, we heard from people across JCFS. We learned how our Response for Teens team used new and innovative ways to reach young people. At the Knapp School & Yeshiva, we saw the dedication that goes into helping students succeed academically and socially. Through Kaufman Wolf Center for Trauma & Resilience we heard about the challenges of navigating everyday clinical care, while our counseling team provided essential mental health support. And we witnessed the impact of specialized support for children and families from a speech/language therapist in Integrated Pediatric Therapies (IPT).

The work in HIAS Immigration & Citizenship highlighted how we welcome and guide newcomers to our community. Finally, an individual living in a JCFS-managed residential home shared the importance of connection, independence, and community.

Together, these voices and perspectives reflect the meaningful contributions that make JCFS a trusted resource throughout the year.

















Zubair Omari brings extensive personal and professional experience to his role as a HIAS Immigration & Citizenship (HIAS) employment specialist. An Afghan refugee himself who found his first job in the U.S. with the help of a JCFS employment specialist, Zubair is passionate about helping others—especially refugees—find meaningful employment to help rebuild their lives. Since joining the HIAS staff last summer, he has made an impressive impact, helping over 17 individuals secure employment within his first year.

Zubair takes pride in tailoring job search strategies to individual needs and overcoming challenges such as language barriers and lack of local experience. Within the agency, he has expanded employer partnerships significantly, starting from a single connection with Mariano's.

"Over time, I have built strong relationships with more than 20 employers across various industries," he said. "These partnerships have opened more diverse job opportunities and strengthened JCFS's reputation in the community."

One rewarding moment involved helping a man prepare his resume, secure an interview and then acquire a job at a downtown hotel—in just ten days. He collaborates closely with human resources departments to advocate for people and ensure good job matches, even reopening rejected applications when needed.

"Each job seeker's situation is unique and finding the right resources and solutions to help them overcome these challenges can require creativity, patience and persistence," Zubair said.

Looking ahead, Zubair aims to continue expanding employer relationships, introducing new job-readiness strategies, and deepening his impact on job seekers' lives.

HIAS provides culturally tailored case management, covering everything from housing and transportation to U.S. benefit applications and utility assistance, which helps recent arrivals stabilize their lives so they can focus on work goals. Employment specialists help refugees write their resumes, fill out job applications, complete job searches and connect them with trusted organizations offering targeted employment support.



ALYSSA ROBBINS SALVANIA

Alyssa Robbins reflects on her first year as the director of Response for Teens (Response) with a continued passion for her work and a strong commitment to empowering youth through education.

"I have an unwavering belief that this work is life-changing for the young people we serve, so we must continue to provide education and support," she said.

"Young people deserve to know information about their lives, their bodies and their mental health, and we have the absolute pleasure of engaging in these conversations with them."

Alyssa continues to learn from the youth she works with, as they often guide conversations in meaningful, unexpected directions.

She's proud of helping grow the Response team, expanding services through grant work, and building partnerships with schools. Response has served over 2,400 individuals from its nearly two dozen community partners, which grew over the last year. In addition to the talented Community Education Team that uses new and innovative ways to reach young people, Response has three full-time clinicians. This last year Response not only has continued to grow

partnerships, but also individuals served. It has hosted mental health professional events in its Resiliency Roundtable work, sent staff to professional development opportunities in Philadelphia and Denver and hosted two successful Sex Ed Trivia Nights.

While systemic challenges remain a hurdle, Alyssa stays motivated by the life-changing

impact of her work. Just recently, a 6th grader who attended an educational session immediately applied what they learned from Response about puberty. In fact, 86% of students felt better prepared to make informed decisions after receiving education from Response.

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"When I talk to young people, they talk to me about their need to be seen, to be heard and to be loved,"

Alyssa said. "They need ample room to grow but also a soft place to land when that growth is difficult or rocky."

Response supports young people aged 9-25, their families, and systems of support (or caregivers) by providing leadership development, counseling and inclusive comprehensive sexual health and healthy relationship education.





DR. DIONA LEWIS

Dr. Diona Lewis began her first year as principal at the Knapp School & Yeshiva (Knapp) with the goal of making it a better place for students, staff, the community and JCFS. She was both excited and a bit anxious at the start of the school year—excited to start working with students and to collaborate with the dedicated staff to expand the program, but anxious because she didn't know what to expect. With a strong background in special education, Diona was drawn to Knapp by its commitment to community and individualized support.

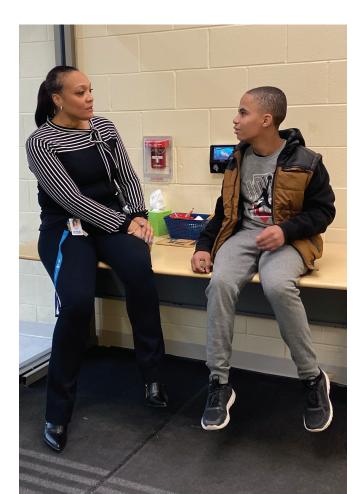
Knapp serves students in grades K-12+ in a safe, supportive learning environment geared toward individuals who have not succeeded in other educational environments.

Diona quickly found joy at Knapp—in working with a team driven by passion and purpose and by forming meaningful connections with students. In her leadership role, she emphasizes respect, grace and patience—qualities she encourages staff and students to embody.

Throughout the year, Diona has prioritized building relationships, strengthening school systems, and planning the launch of a student information system to enhance communication and data tracking. She takes pride in witnessing positive behavioral changes in students and growth among staff as they embrace new approaches.

"The most meaningful interactions with students are when you see the changes in them because of the small steps you take each day, like when a student who regularly refuses to get on their transportation does it with ease," she said, adding that she is equally pleased when she hears staff ask questions that work to get to the root of a situation.

Knapp School & Yeshiva was named one of the best special education schools in the Chicago area by Chicago Parent. Factors such as academics, teacher effectiveness and school diversity put Knapp on the list, which was compiled by Niche, a trusted school rankings platform.



JACKSON SANTY

Jackson Santy brings creativity and a strong sense of purpose to his work at the Kaufman Wolf Center for Trauma & Resilience (KWCTR). Joining the staff during its formative phase has provided him the opportunity to help shape its services from the ground up—an experience he finds both challenging and deeply rewarding.

"On my first day, I felt truly supported and knew I was about to be part of a care team that would really impact the people we serve," he said. "I was welcomed with open arms and encouraged to bring my own voice and style to the therapeutic work, which was empowering."

Jackson is especially passionate about launching group therapy programs such as CPT (Cognitive Processing Therapy) and SPARCS (Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress), and he hopes to create a group for individuals with disabilities—an initiative informed by

his own lived experience with Dwarfism. He is committed to helping young people, particularly boys and male-identifying individuals, challenge rigid ideas of masculinity and rebuild their sense of self in the wake of trauma.

Jackson said each day presents opportunities to establish new systems and routines while also navigating the everyday realities of clinical care. Collaboration has been key, he added, with regular and impromptu meetings to discuss cases, share expertise, support one another and promote self-care.

"In this field, where the work is deeply taxing, self-care isn't just an individual act; it's woven into the ways we show up for one another," he said. "It's incredibly rewarding to know that through these challenges we're shaping a service that will make a tangible difference to the communities we serve."

KWCTR provides a range of services to meet the needs of individuals, families and communities who have been exposed to trauma. The goal is to help people and communities respond to trauma-related stress and assist in resilience building opportunities.







RACHELCOHAN

Rachel Cohan is a dedicated clinician who brings warmth, curiosity and personal resilience to her role. Rachel joined JCFS Chicago after working part-time in private practice. Drawn to the organization by her own positive experiences with its clinical services, she saw it as a place to grow professionally and make a

Rachel's first year has brought surprising growth, especially in working with children, a demographic she once found intimidating. She finds both the greatest joy and challenge in therapy sessions. One of her most meaningful moments involved a young person who initially resisted engagement; by inviting her to color together, Rachel gently built trust and connection and

meaningful impact.

eventually opened her up to a conversation. Such moments fuel Rachel's motivation, especially knowing she may be one of the few consistent presences in someone's life.

Rachel has taken on departmental support tasks, while gaining hands-on experience and insights by helping children manage their behaviors and emotions. Throughout her work, Rachel has built strong relationships with colleagues and those she supports, learning and growing alongside her team every day.

66

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"I was not expecting to learn so much so quickly in my clinician role, and from all my colleagues," she said. "I have amazing coworkers that have so much knowledge and experience, I feel very lucky."

Rachel's professional goals include building confidence in her diagnosing skills, increasing her caseload, and eventually becoming a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW).

JCFS social workers, counselors and psychologists help children, adolescents, adults, couples and families find solutions to life's challenges, such as coping

with anxiety, depression, life transitions, facing the loss of a loved one, raising a family, or dealing with an unexpected crisis or trauma.

VALERIE SEIFFE

Valerie Seiffe is a speech-language pathologist (SLP) with Integrated Pediatric Therapies (IPT) who rejoined JCFS Chicago after working out of state for several years. Valerie brings energy, creativity and empathy to her work, driven by a passion for communication, connection and growth.

Valerie primarily serves children from 2 to 13 years old, but her role expanded to include adults from JCFS's Residential Supports program—an opportunity she's embraced with enthusiasm.

"It's been fun branching out and thinking about ways to approach speech therapy for a different population," she said.

Valerie finds deep fulfillment in witnessing the progress of the people she helps, especially children developing speech or overcoming feeding challenges. One standout moment included a 2-year-old who went from being non-verbal and withdrawn to engaging and speaking in full sentences during speech therapy sessions at his daycare.

"He is beginning to use language to play with peers and communicate with teachers," Valerie said. "It's exciting to see how much he's grown!"

Over the past year, Valerie has taken on a wide range of responsibilities, including building her caseload, supervising a graduate student, presenting to parents in the community, and helping families navigate challenges across multiple disciplines. What Valerie values most is the chance to work

closely with families and see meaningful change over time. She values her return to JCFS and continues to be motivated by the connections she fosters and the progress she helps children and their families accomplish.

IPT provides personalized speech-language, feeding and occupational therapy for children (birth through teens) with a variety of developmental and medical needs. Therapists work collaboratively with parents and other support providers to help children reach their potential and achieve independence.







MATTMANN

Matt Mann, a friendly and active resident of one of the independent living homes managed by JCFS Chicago, is very sociable, maintains many friendships, and is always open to meeting new people. He enjoys working part-time at Mariano's, where he bags groceries and collects carts. Matt is especially proud of his abilities to navigate transportation to and from work, taking buses and sometimes using Uber. This year he made the transition from his original Mariano's job in Northfield, which closed recently, to the Northbrook location, where he continues to work with some of his favorite coworkers and enjoy his interactions with customers as well.

Matt values his connections with JCFS Residential Supports staff and appreciates his therapy sessions at the Abe and Ida Cooper Center, describing the sessions as helpful "in a good way." In his spare time, Matt likes to watch James Bond movies, play video games and basketball, visit his mom in Atlanta and grab bagels at Hometown Coffee in Glencoe, where he is a regular. Matt likes to attend social gatherings, such as the JCFS Elevate fundraiser in June, and the more recent NSSRA (Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association) Shining Stars banquet.

He and other residents achieve their autonomy because the Residential Supports program focuses on each person's independence while facilitating daily supports around social experiences, health and safety, budgeting, shopping, cooking and transportation, and ensuring connections to

counseling and employment opportunities. Matt also participates in a weekly book club at the Skokie Public Library with several of his housemates, where he not only gets to read and discuss books, but he can also socialize with friends. With the addition of one more individual to a home in Skokie this past spring, there are now 30 residents living in JCFS independent living homes.

JCFS is licensed to provide CILA (Community Integrated Living Arrangement) services through the Illinois Department of Human Services, providing supports to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) seeking residential options outside of their family home. The CILA model emphasizes the importance of building and sustaining a safe, supportive and stable home environment with organic community inclusion, choice making and self-determination.

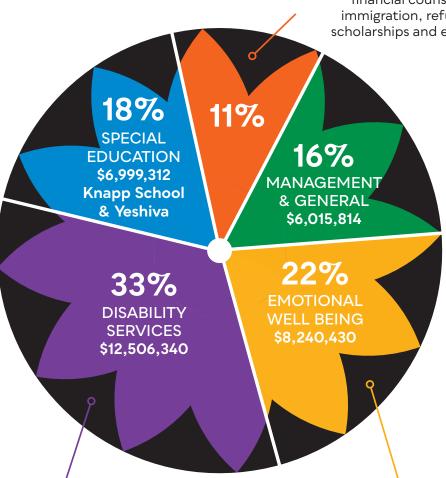


FY25 OPERATING EXPENDITURES

For Fiscal Year 2025, July 1, 2024- June 30, 2025

SELF-SUFFICIENCY SERVICES \$4,150,556

Assisting individuals with career support, financial counseling, citizenship, immigration, refugee resettlement, scholarships and employment services

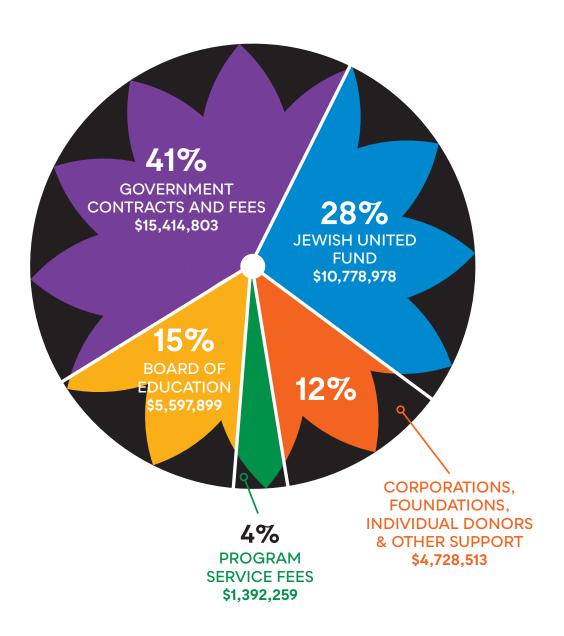


Pediatric therapies for children, respite, daily living and residential support, and counseling Counseling for children, teens, individuals and families, psychological testing and assessment, support for youth in care, and Jewish community education and consultation

TOTAL: \$37,912,452

FY25 OPERATING REVENUE

For Fiscal Year 2025, July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025



TOTAL: \$37,912,452



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JCFS Chicago is grateful to the many donors who made it possible to provide much needed services throughout our community.

These lists include all our donors who made a gift between 7/1/24- 6/30/25, all gifts are needed and appreciated. Our apologies for any errors or omissions and our thanks to those whose support we received after going to print.

A special thank you to the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago/Jewish United Fund for their continued support.

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After 18 months of preparation from application to site visit, JCFS Chicago achieved reaccreditation through the Council on Accreditation (COA). Additionally, JCFS was expedited through the Pre-Commission Review Report (PCR) process due to its exemplary performance, receiving no required improvement plans in any of the fundamental standards. which totaled just over 875 components in all.

In May, the COA review team toured several JCFS locations, and conducted interviews with staff and people we serve. Some of the reviewers commented on our level of preparation and the documentation we supplied, the way we met people's needs, our safe and secure buildings, our staff, and the phenomenal work that is done day in and day out.

In fiscal year 2025, JCFS impacted 20,596 people.

Integrated Pediatric Therapies touched the lives of **956 children and parents.**

3,269 people contacted JCFS to inquire about our services and were either served directly or referred to community resources.

Response for Teens Community Education team presented on adolescent focused topics to **2,709 participants**.

JCFS directly helped 1,406 people and their families improve their financial, legal and employment status through self-sufficiency programs.

2,261 people with disabilities, their families, caregivers and professionals benefited from JCFS services last year.

Meeting clients where they are in life, our clinical child welfare team supported the well-being of 284 people, including children and families.

Through our wide range of counseling services, we helped 2,260 people find support.

JVS Career & Employment helped 293 people gain employment.

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The JCFS Chicago Endowment Foundation was created in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago's Agency Endowment Program, which was established to ensure that JCFS and our sister agencies have the necessary resources to meet the community needs. All commitments to Agency Endowment Foundations are recognized as gifts to the Jewish Federation's Centennial Campaign. We are grateful for all donations. Endowment gifts received this year and legacy gifts of \$10,000 or more are listed.

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