



## ACCESS FOR ALL ABILITIES

### Access is ‘universal’

All children of all abilities must have access to Jewish education programs. Shayna Sigman is piloting a program to ensure just that: that **all Jewish spaces are welcoming and accessible**.

Shayna, CSWA, JFCS’ Disability Support Services Manager, is working this fall with two synagogues and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland to provide **trainings for educators about disability accessibility and universal design in classrooms**.

Universal design is a philosophy and concept that means everything -- from a ramp to a classroom to homework options -- is conceived with all abilities in mind. Consider the ramp: While it may have been built for someone dependent on crutches

JFCS’ mission is to improve the quality of life and self-sufficiency of the Jewish and broader communities throughout the Portland metro area in accordance with Jewish values.



JFCS  
Jewish Family & Child Service

# Letter from our President

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this newsletter that is focused on JFCS' Disability Support Services (DSS) program. In the coming months, our other vital programs -- Emergency Aid, Counseling and Holocaust Support Services -- receive the spotlight.

These pages about our robust DSS program answer questions such as:

- What do terms like “access” and “universal” actually mean?
- Can Jewish children with a disability also attend religious school?
- When a client calls, how does DSS provide for them?

Last year, DSS pivoted -- as did all of our programs -- to creative, online programming solutions to meet and anticipate client needs. Such as a first-time virtual support group for parents whose children have a physical or developmental disability. One participant shared:

“As a parent of a child with a disability, it can be incredibly difficult to find other parents who get my feelings and experiences. The Coming Together parent support group provides me with the experience of being on a playground and making connections with other parents, something I don't get elsewhere.”

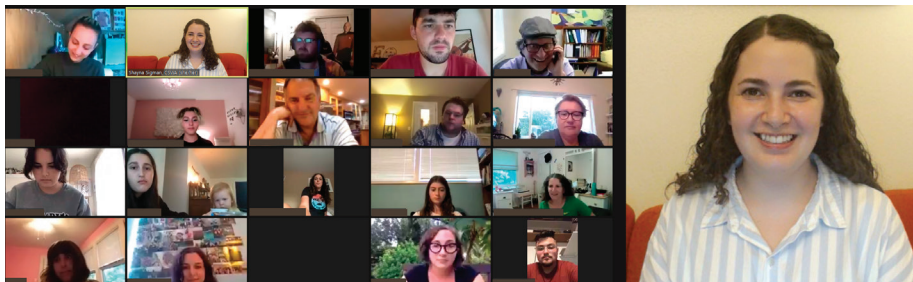
I am moved by DSS' work, the clients we serve and outcomes that resonate, like they did for this parent. I hope they also resonate with each of you; please drop us a note if there's something we've done great, as well as something you think we should be doing -- or doing differently.

Warmly,



Larry Holzman  
*Board President*





At Congregation Beth Israel, Shayna works with Jewish educators for children ages pre-K through 7th grade/children ages 3 through 13.

or a mobility device, it's great for all. (Would you rather schlep groceries up steep steps or a ramp?)

In educational settings, universal design can mean purposefully designed quiet spaces, emotionally supportive classroom agreements, or dyslexia-friendly fonts. All children -- not solely those, say, with developmental disabilities or on the autism spectrum -- benefit.

**“Access for all abilities in the context of educating children in our synagogues means building a space with accessibility in mind, instead of having to create new accommodations for each individual person.”**

- Shayna Sigman, CSWA

Throughout the fall, Shayna will lead educators at Congregation Beth Israel and for Congregation Shir Tikvah in best practices for children with disabilities.

In addition to Shayna's work with the synagogues, she is helping organize a three-part series through Federation's Portland Area Jewish Educators (PAJE) group. These will be conducted for educators via Zoom, during October and November, and Shayna herself will be one of the presenters. Stay tuned for details (from JFCS and the Federation) on forthcoming dates, topics and experts.

Said Shayna: *“I'm so happy to work with Jewish educators to provide them with best-practices tools on how to create lesson plans and classroom norms that support all students and help them shine.”*

# An inspirational day with DSS

People with disabilities don't have challenges only from 9 to 5. The important and inspirational work we do for our clients with disabilities reflects the hours they keep.

Our clients are individuals, families and the greater community. To all of them we offer social-connections programs, support-network creation and maintenance and the provision of resources, referrals and education that soon will include leadership training.

## **For individuals with physical or developmental disabilities, both visible and invisible, we:**

- assist them in the difficult process of applying to receive and renew government support like supplemental security income (SSI) and social security disability insurance (SSDI);
- ensure vital services like financial aid;
- find resources for and referrals to housing, legal and medical assistance, including finding those who accept our clients' insurance; and
- for TIKVAH, our social group for adults 18 years old and up, we plan, organize and create online and in-person programming.

## **For our families, we:**

- provide them crucial guidance navigating programs like Individualized Educational (IEP) and 504 plans in the public schools that offer academic and social support for their children;
- help parents and guardians plan for the future; and
- through our support group for families, we provide a space to connect.

## **And for the greater Portland community, we:**

- educate providers about accessibility in their institutions, thus growing our partnerships; and
- collaborate for special occasions like holiday celebrations.

There indeed is so much to celebrate!

## Meet our DSS team!



**Shayna Sigman,  
MSW, CSWA**

Disability Support  
Services Manager



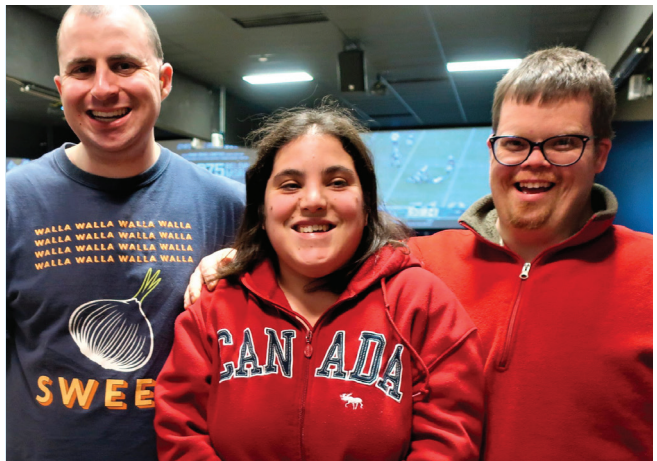
**Janet Menashe**

Senior Disability  
Case Manager



**Sarit Cahana**

Disability Support  
Administrator



The Disability Support Services' tagline says it all: **ACCESS FOR ALL ABILITIES.**

*But what does that actually mean?*

**Access means that all spaces in which one dwells are available to the person using, engaging with and existing in them.**

So, physical, technology and social spaces all must be accessible to everyone. And that includes our clients, who are adults with physical or developmental disabilities and parents and guardians who care for a child or children with disabilities.

Further, “access” means more than removing barriers to entry (like a ramp to a front door). Access means making everything we do actively welcoming and approachable, usable, **accessible**.

Shayna says, “And we use the word ‘abilities’ because we take a strength-based approach to our work and we focus on all that our clients **can** do.”

Importantly, our DSS program advocates, via partnerships and referrals, for access for all abilities in other Jewish institutions, too. Accessibility for **all** means exactly that.

# JFCS' ONGOING EVENTS

## Weekly Community Zoom

Open to the entire community and moderated by our clinical director, this group meets on zoom **every Friday at 10am** and allows participants to share their struggles and anxieties around living through a pandemic and its impact on our daily lives. Not a psychotherapy group, this is a space to chat, to laugh, to listen, to vent and to learn from those around you in a Zoom setting. Visit [www.jfcs-portland.org](http://www.jfcs-portland.org) for the Zoom link.

## TIKVAH Social Group

This is a virtual meet-up group for TIKVAH, a social group for people with disabilities ages 18 and up. If interested in joining, please email Janet Menashe at [janetmenashe@jfcs-portland.org](mailto:janetmenashe@jfcs-portland.org).

## Coming Together:

### Parenting Children and Adults with Disabilities

During times of uncertainty, parents whose children (of any age) have physical or developmental disabilities feel more isolated and alone than ever. We provide a supportive environment in which to share your thoughts and feelings; join us. Email Shayna Sigman at [ssigman@jfcs-portland.org](mailto:ssigman@jfcs-portland.org) for more information, or to register.

## Volunteer for JFCS

Volunteering is an integral part of supporting JFCS. Our volunteers reach every corner of the community, and, thus, the hearts of our clients. We are so grateful to those who give JFCS their time and energy, especially during the ongoing pandemic. This is all part of JFCS' commitment to the values of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, and *tzedakah*, selfless giving. To learn more about how you can help, contact Sammy Monk, our volunteer coordinator, at [volunteer@jfcs-portland.org](mailto:volunteer@jfcs-portland.org).

*Jewish Family & Child Service prioritizes its clients, volunteers and staff members' health and care. Due to the highly transmissible Delta variant of COVID-19, JFCS recently determined being vaccinated is a condition of employment and of volunteering for the social-services non-profit.*



# JFCS' UPCOMING EVENTS

## Grief Processing Group

**October 7, 14, 21, 28, Nov 4, 11**

**3 pm-4 pm via Zoom**

We invite you to a 6-week grief-processing group for adults. In our virtual sessions, we will have the opportunity to share our own experiences with grief, connect with others and learn strategies for moving through loss. For more information or to register for the group, contact Missy Fry at [missyfry@jfcs-portland.org](mailto:missyfry@jfcs-portland.org).

## Thanksgiving Food Boxes

**Sunday, November 21**

Each year, JFCS provides Thanksgiving meals for families in need. Partner organizations sponsor items for the food boxes -- that brim with potatoes, a kosher turkey, pumpkin pie and more -- that volunteers pack and deliver to community members. If you'd like to volunteer your time and energy for this event to make your and so many others' holiday season special and fulfilling, contact Sammy Monk at [volunteer@jfcs-portland.org](mailto:volunteer@jfcs-portland.org).

## Family-to-Family

As we look to the 2021 holiday season, we know that joy can be hard to come by. JFCS has an antidote: We are continuing our 20-year tradition of brightening the holiday season for families and individuals of all ages experiencing hard times and for greater Portland's Holocaust Survivors. Through Family-to-Family, JFCS adds a lot of joy to Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa and other celebrations by providing gift cards to our clients so they can meet their own needs, most often by purchasing household items, clothing, and toys for children. If you would like to increase others' joy, please contact Sammy Monk at [volunteer@jfcs-portland.org](mailto:volunteer@jfcs-portland.org) for more information.

## Follow JFCS on social media



<https://www.facebook.com/JFCSPortland>



<https://www.instagram.com/jfcs.portland/>

# ***With your help, JFCS provides stability and hope in these uncertain times***

## **DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES**

*Access for all abilities*



# 384

interactions with our Disability  
Support Services clients

## **EMERGENCY AID**

*Stability and hope in tough times*



# \$180,000

distributed from  
Emergency Aid

## **HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR SERVICES**

*Surrounding our community with care*



# 11,000

hot meals served to the door of  
our Holocaust Survivors

## **COUNSELING SERVICES**

*Meeting you where you are*



# 4,200

Counseling  
visits



## **JFCS**

*Jewish Family & Child Service*

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