

ATLANTA

**MENTAL HEALTH &
WELLBEING**

**RESEARCH PROJECT AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

June 2022

BeWELL



JEWISH TEEN

Education & Engagement
FUNDER COLLABORATIVE

Powered by The Jewish Federations of North America

INTRODUCTION

“People feel so alone right now.”

As we continue to navigate the immediate health, financial and political effects of the pandemic, our Jewish institutions remain committed to helping young people thrive through the Mental, Emotional, Social and Spiritual Health (MESSH) crisis. Years in the making and exacerbated by COVID-19, this crisis is hitting Atlanta’s youth population the hardest. The past two years have laid bare pervasive and increasing levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness, which all impact the people who care for them.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warned in March 2022 of an accelerating mental health crisis among adolescents, with more than 4 in 10 teens reporting that they feel “persistently sad or hopeless,” and 1 in 5 saying they have contemplated suicide. “These data echo a cry for help,” said Debra Houry, a deputy director at the CDC. Voices for Georgia’s Children reinforced these statistics: 41% of children ages 3-17 in the state struggle to or are not able to access needed mental health treatment and counseling. Confirming anecdotal evidence that the spread of the coronavirus has strained Americans’ mental health, Boston College researchers found reports of anxiety increased to 50 percent and depression to 44 percent by November 2020—rates six times higher than 2019—according to a new report in the journal [Translational Behavioral Medicine](#). Among U.S. adults aged 18-29, the impact on mental health was even more severe. Rates of anxiety and depression increased to 65 percent and 61 percent, respectively, of the respondents in that age group, according [to the report](#).

In a growing awareness of the complexity of mental health challenges impacting the Jewish community, the Atlanta Jewish Foundation commissioned a project to understand the landscape and develop a plan to equip the community to ensure proactive support for the MESSH needs and opportunities locally. This research was designed to better understand how mental health work already underway has been going, what gaps and opportunities still exist, and how the Atlanta Jewish Foundation’s participation and philanthropic tools will build existing efforts and institutions, specifically. This project is an important step in its ongoing work creating a *kehillah kedosha*, a sacred or holy community.

Dozens of interviews, focus groups and other research highlighted three overarching issues specific to the Atlanta Jewish community, and validated challenges true nationally: professionals attempting to address these issues work in siloes, stigma is a significant barrier to getting help, and access to support is extremely limited due to clinical staff shortages and a general lack of knowledge about existing resources. All current efforts could have greater impact if there were mechanisms in place to support integration of the work. As outlined in a mid-point reflection document:

- Jewish organizations are under-resourced to support both everyday wellbeing needs and mental health crisis situations; many do not have the financial capacity to meet needs.
- Georgia has a more acute clinical staffing shortage than any other state. There simply aren’t enough trained mental health practitioners to meet demand, and those that are in the field are overtaxed, stretched very thin and need support themselves.
- Strength is coming through existing partnerships; there is a desire to deepen them.
- There are local organizations with expertise and a positive reputation from which we can build a more coordinated response, specifically the Horwitz-Zusman Child & Family Center - Jewish Family & Career Services of Atlanta (JF&CS), part of the Frances Bunzl Clinical Services.

This document outlines a roadmap to move forward, both in the short and long-term. It draws on the strength of both local and national resources, potential secular partnerships, the growing body of trauma-informed care and frameworks, and prioritizes the following:

- Increasing **prevention and proactive resiliency-building** efforts.
- Supporting organizations by offering more **social-emotional resources and trainings**; these tactics are designed to build capacity to respond to local needs.
- **Counteracting stigma**, a major local barrier and one which sharpens isolation.
- Creating a clear path to help individuals and organizations **navigate the labyrinthian care system**, and expand ways to increase access to services.

ABOUT THE PROCESS

The Atlanta Jewish Funder Collaborative embarked on a consultancy project to interview local stakeholders, analyze the findings, and make recommendations. The project, conducted throughout November 2021 – March 2022 was a joint effort of:

- Margie Bogdanow, LICSW, Senior Advisor of Wellness Initiatives at Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA). Margie is an educator, coach and consultant in the Boston Area who has spent her career focused on finding ways to use Judaism to contribute to wellbeing in young people.
- Beth Lipschutz, MSW, Wellness Coordinator at JFNA. A social worker and seasoned engagement professional guided by Jewish values and strength-based practices, Beth has expertise in community-building, leadership development and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training.
- Sara Allen, Executive Director of the Jewish Teen Funder Collaborative and Associate Vice President, Community & Jewish Life, JFNA.
- Faye Dresner, MBA, MSW. Faye previously served as the Chief Impact Officer and Interim CEO of the Atlanta Jewish Family and Career Services, and her presence, input, understanding of need and resources, and recommendations lent a critical local perspective.

As a response to COVID-19, a group of passionate Atlanta philanthropists united determined to emerge from the Pandemic stronger together. In 2020, the Atlanta Jewish Foundation launched the Atlanta Jewish Funder Collaborative, which identified Mental Health as a key priority. Together the group funded this research project and developed a list of more than 50 individuals and organizations to interview, representing a broad array of both Jewish and secular perspectives. Both individual and group interviews were conducted by Margie Bogdanow and Beth Lipschutz, and were most often joined by Faye Dresner for the local perspective. Additional group interviews were held for members of the Atlanta Rabbinical Association, and teens and youth professionals connected to JumpSpark, Atlanta's Jewish Teen Initiative. Extensive research was conducted into secular local offerings, such as Resilient Georgia, to understand the full scope of potential partnerships and resources available.

OVERVIEW

These recommendations are intended to be used as a community-wide plan to address challenges, build from existing resources and fill gaps. They are prioritized and designed so that Atlanta's leadership can respond to current and growing needs with a roadmap of steps and services to lay critical foundations, and acknowledges that plans may evolve over time as infrastructure is developed.

1 ADAPT AND PILOT PROVEN MODELS: SHORT-TERM

Recommendations the Atlanta community can act on over the next six-to-eighteen months. These create critical infrastructure to meet pressing needs and lay the groundwork for collaborations and partnerships. It is important to note that the recommendations strengthen and support each other; the elements of these interventions are equally critical and need each other to be effective.

2 EXPERIMENT TO FILL GAPS: MEDIUM-TERM

Once the foundations that are outlined above are established in the local community, these recommendations can be enacted. The goals of these innovative solutions are to shift community-wide culture especially in important areas around stigma, introduce new frameworks of psycho-educational and trauma-informed care, and fill gaps currently missing and key inflection points with new programmatic responses to increase the resiliency of families and family systems.

3 SIGNIFICANT CAPACITY-BUILDING: LONG-RANGE

The most critical issue facing Atlanta is systemic and not specific to the Jewish community: the widespread shortage of clinicians. Attracting and retaining care professionals eager to work in Atlanta and/or Jewish communal settings requires both national coordination and a significant, multi-year commitment of resources and investment. This may be further refined in partnership with new talent strategies that may emerge to combat the widespread burn-out of staff so that they are better able to care for others. These both call for a visionary, long-range and aspirational plan.

ADAPT AND PILOT PROVEN MODELS: SHORT TERM SOLUTIONS

RESILIENCY ROUNDTABLE OF ATLANTA

UNITE THE COMMUNITY, FOSTER PARTNERSHIPS AND BENEFIT FROM NATIONAL RESOURCES

All Jewish organizations and individuals interviewed clearly stated that mental health and wellbeing is a priority—and a challenge—for those they serve. They also pointed to the way Jewish values, culture, and wisdom could provide youth and their families positive role models, protective layers and a core sense of belonging. There was an expressed desire to come together to collaborate, share and develop cross-community strategies to help young people, and those who care about them, foster balance and build resilience.

When asked the question *'if you could wave a magic wand, what would a successful local investment in mental health look like?'* answers (verbatim below) were near-universal:

- Do not create a new initiative or organization.
- Use the resources that currently exist but no one knows about.
- Compile information in a way that makes things clear.
- Create forums so people can get together and learn.
- Ensure organizations understand the interconnected issues so they can focus on impactful strategies, instead of just 'doing one-off events.'
- Make outreach, connections and partnerships easy.

A local Resiliency Roundtable would be the venue to achieve just that. It is a vehicle to bridge the gap that often exists between the clinical and engagement/education worlds to address the challenges of the youth mental health crisis. It would promote networking, partnerships, sharing best practices and expertise. It is a necessary first step towards a collective, holistic approach.

The Atlanta Resiliency Roundtable would join ones in New York, Los Angeles and San Diego and likely others, modeled after the national roundtable convened by Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), in partnership with the Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies (NJHSA). This expanding network of local Resiliency Roundtables will have its own Community of Practice led by JFNA.

'The most effective partnerships are where there are not duplication of services, but rather they are complementary.'

Having Jewish Family & Career Services (JF&CS) Horwitz-Zusman Child and Family Center convene the Roundtable ensures a clinical expertise is integrated, and models a collaborative approach. This would be a cross-denominational effort encompassing youth-serving organizations, day schools, religious schools and congregations, camps, Hillels of Georgia and other community organizations. A focus on equity will bring marginalized or underrepresented communities to the table such as people with disabilities, Jews of Color and the LGBTQIA community. Engagement professionals will receive knowledge and skills to identify, understand and respond to young peoples' concerns in role-appropriate ways; many do not have, nor have the bandwidth to find or develop, expertise to meet current needs of their audiences. By creating a structure and space for this group of professionals to come together regularly and develop relationships with clinicians from JF&CS, members can address challenges together.

A Resiliency Roundtable is a valuable distribution platform for marketing, trainings and resource-sharing.

- An **interactive asset map** provides Roundtable members with an easy way to identify resources, areas of expertise, and key regions across the network — and to connect with each other.
- Once mapped, develop, curate and digitally distribute the **resulting comprehensive resources** so that people can be aware of local and national offerings at-a-glance. People and organizations do not know where to turn for comprehensive resources; creating a downloadable guide and wrap-around website to make services clear would be a critical resource.
- Build the **trust and connective tissue** necessary to coordinate partnerships through deep relationship-building.
- Field a validated survey, already used by several communities, to its members at its creation to collect **baseline data across providers**, so that community-wide progress in achieving collective impact can be measured over time.

An Atlanta Resiliency Roundtable will be tied to a national network so that local professionals are networked to learn about and share best practices, and develop a supportive national cohort. They would be positioned to receive information about how to connect into national opportunities, services and national trainings (i.e. BaMidbar Wilderness Therapy, Institute for Jewish Spirituality or new, planned partnerships with secular organizations). Uniting local Jewish organizations in a consistent, structured and ongoing manner provides a critical platform to roll out proven interventions in partnership with local organizations so that they are geographically accessible, culturally sensitive and speak to an Atlanta audience.

The Roundtable would be staffed by a Senior Program Director, a seasoned professional with 10+ years of work experience (ideally both a clinical degree and experience working in the Jewish engagement world so they can ‘speak both languages’ and gain the trust of critical stakeholders). The strength and success of the Atlanta Resiliency Roundtable will come from a deep understanding of the needs of the local community, its ability to bring people together for collective impact and an ability to raise funds to support the work that might come out of the Resiliency Roundtable.

As one local professional lamented, “It’s no one’s job to go into the community. The clinical and engagement folks are not connected.”

PEER-TO-PEER TRAININGS AND PROVEN EDUCATIONAL MODELS

EXPAND AND PILOT NEW OFFERINGS TO MEET VARIED NEEDS IN A VARIETY OF SETTINGS

Expand mental health and resiliency trainings to formal and informal educational staff, youth-serving professionals, volunteers, parents, grandparents and caregivers, and youth themselves via innovative peer-to-peer offerings. With the complex and intersecting issues that affect youth wellbeing, layering trainings is crucial and it is recommended to introduce a mix, all grounded in evidence and experience.

Workshops and Peer-Driven Trainings

Bring the teen (peer-to-peer) version of Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA) to help create the safe spaces that young people crave to hold brave conversations, normalize challenges and equip teens to support each other, a model [successfully piloted in other communities](#). tMHFA is a training program for teens brought to the US by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing in partnership with Born This Way Foundation. Under close supervision of trained professionals, it teaches teens aged 15-18 how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges in their friends and peers. Offer shorter versions for year-round and seasonal camp professionals to expand the reach of trainings,

and introduce new models for different age groups piloting models such as [Active Minds](#), a college student-driven program or [Seize the Awkward](#), which teaches young people how to have uncomfortable conversations with their friends. As organizations continue to respond to the mental health crisis, new models emerge from trusted resources; with a Resiliency Roundtable in place, the foundations are laid to introduce these innovations continuously over time (e.g. [QPR's Pathfinders](#), volunteers who are trained to provide emotional support, understanding, compassion and interventions known to reduce suicide risk). All peer education models are supervised closely by professionals with skillsets specific to this population.

'We see the power of training for community professionals. We could maximize what we're all doing if only we could co-train and co-develop strategies.'

In addition to ensuring the necessary foundations are in place to bring in a variety of new trainings, Teen (peer-to-peer)/Youth Mental Health First Aid was selected as a cornerstone for the following reasons:

- **Actionable:** taught virtually or in-person, participants walk away with a 5-step action plan: assess, listen, reassure, encourage professional support, and encourage self-help.
- The steps of Mental Health First Aid align with **Jewish values** and our tradition's belief we can be active stewards of our own wellbeing.
- The focus on **prevention** (not crisis intervention) makes it valuable for Jewish programs, youth groups, camps and schools focused on resiliency-building.
- **Local instructors** are trained, becoming valuable human resources who informally fill an important, knowledgeable role.
- Proven: The global movement has trained 4 million people since 2001 (Israel just became the 29th country to offer it) and evaluated extensively. A 2021 report cites ***"significant improvements in knowledge, recognition, destigmatizing attitudes, confidence, helping intentions, and helping behavior in both adult and youth participants."***

INCREASE ACCESS TO CARE:

A MENTAL HEALTH CONCIERGE TO SERVE AS FIRST POINT OF ENTRY

Similar to other communities, mental health services in Atlanta are hard to access. Offerings are difficult to navigate; while some reach out to JF&CS as a first step for advice or guidance, most individuals and professionals admit they do not know where to start. Even if families are able to get referrals for clinical help, they often have to wait months for appointments. Due to the complexity – and lack of availability of services – many are discouraged. Some give up altogether.

Piloting a new Mental Health Concierge would be of tremendous value to the community and support a new, systemic approach to accessing care. Ongoing support for a new professional based at JF&CS, already a trusted resource in the Atlanta community, would be well positioned to collaborate amongst youth groups, synagogues, religious schools, day schools, camps, Hillels, other Jewish community organizations as well as public schools and clinicians.

Modeled after AgeWell Atlanta, this new service would be a single point of entry overseen by a full-time clinical professional who would assist local families and professionals navigate the complicated web of mental health services and programs. Many of those interviewed during this process referred to AgeWell Atlanta as a trusted and accessible resource. 'Concierge' models which offer a single point of entry for individuals seeking mental health services have been rolled out in Boston, Cincinnati, Houston and Seattle. Experimenting with this model in Atlanta would have tremendous benefits.

‘[As a community] we decided mental health is a priority but haven’t built out the infrastructure to do something about it.’

The pilot program could start with a single hire – a mid-level professional with a clinical degree and 5+ years in the field who would report to the Senior Program Director overseeing the Resiliency Roundtable – and may grow over time, similar to how AgeWell Atlanta evolved. The Mental Health Concierge will be an integral participant of the Atlanta Resiliency Roundtable, lending expertise and knowledge to the group and building relationships with members. Primary responsibilities of this new position would be:

Increase Clinical Capacity to Address Staff Shortages

- Strategies will be developed in close partnership with JF&CS to best address wait lists and increase capacity, such as expanding therapeutic models, resiliency-building programs and payment options / subsidies.

Guidance & Consultations

- Help individuals assess and then access the appropriate level of care for their circumstances
- Support families as they attempt to navigate the secular mental health system and insurance / payment processes, such as helping individuals apply for scholarships for local addiction and substance use treatment.
- Support the curation of, and publicize, comprehensive resources so that people can be aware of local and national offerings at-a-glance.
- Ensure youth-facing professionals, often overwhelmed by the needs of those they serve, feel supported and know where to turn for clinical help.

Offer Digital Resources for Older Teens

- Teens need a digital-first solution to help them feel supported by their friends and peers.
- Teen Talk is a free app, started by Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters Los Angeles and now national, helps teens get social and emotional support from a group of people they trust most: their peers.
- Bringing Teen Talk to Atlanta would provide both a valuable engagement opportunity (teens are trained in a cohort-based experience to serve as peer advisors with Jewish framing) and a scalable way to support teens where they are – on their mobile devices. There are associated costs for creating a local cohort of teen advisors, although the app usage is free.

Connect with Secular Resources

- Stay connected to the growing secular services across Atlanta through Resilient GA to develop a plan for helping the Jewish community leverage these resources.
- Build close relationships with secular health centers and other providers of mental health services in the broader Atlanta community to partner, where possible, for training and sharing of expertise that could benefit the local Jewish community.

Why at JF&CS?

The organization has a strong reputation across the community and a growing focus on children and family services. Under JF&CS, the Concierge will have the opportunity to build comradery among the Atlanta Resiliency Roundtable member agencies so they can learn, share, and grow together. Some families are reluctant to visit JF&CS, and some are unaware of all the services they can provide. A dedicated professional will help build trust and awareness by participating fully in the Atlanta Resiliency Roundtable, increasing JF&CS expertise and cultural awareness of the Jewish community. This collaboration will also ensure organizations can make informed referrals to those in need.

EXPERIMENT TO FILL GAPS: MEDIUM TERM INTERVENTIONS

ADDRESS STIGMA

NORMALIZE MENTAL HEALTH TO SUPPORT PEOPLE SEEKING HELP

‘The gaping hole that I experience is that parents of teens don’t want to talk to each other about things like their kids cutting, so each of them feels isolated in their experience. I feel like I’m running an underground network of parents who need support. I have not figured out how to get them connected to each other in a meaningful way.’

This research project highlighted stigma as a significant barrier to seeking or receiving help in the Atlanta Jewish community. Pervasive levels of anxiety and depression stem from stress and a noted rise in increased academic pressures, a constant theme which came up in interview after interview.

Stigma surfaced in interviews with older demographics as a substantial barrier to seeking help for the young people they care about. Parents and caregivers expressed feeling perplexed by the complexity of raising young people; without a natural community of peers, they do not have a network or venue for honest or supportive conversations such as around addiction, which surfaced as a key concern. Atlanta benefits from several substance use disorder programs who could be effective partners in efforts to decrease stigma.

‘We need to find ways to help minimize stigma. It starts at the top... when we speak about [addiction] from the pulpit it normalizes the conversation.’

Although teens themselves often drive the movement to reduce stigma, and Generation Z has an increased comfort level in speaking openly about their challenges, stigma remains. The vast majority of young people surveyed nationally wish they had a ‘safe, inclusive space where students could come together to talk about mental health.’ Teens interviewed credit community initiatives such as Jumpspark as creating supportive environments where they can be themselves and have open conversations; yet it is exceptionally clear that while teens may feel comfortable talking about mental health concerns, they do not have the resources, language, training or confidence to support their peers.

The most significant consequence of stigma is that people don’t get the help they need when they need it. This can lead to increased isolation, self-harm, self-medication and suicidal ideation. By changing attitudes, we can reduce stigma so more people are willing to seek the help they need. Research shows that early intervention leads to more positive outcomes - decreasing stigma and increasing venues for community-building and brave spaces that normalize these conversations helps build resilience in an ongoing way.

‘Being vulnerable in the Jewish community can be scary because everyone knows everyone. But people think it’s always about suicidal thoughts, not something as simple as anxiety over what to wear each day.’

Creating venues for this type of community-building and brave spaces could be achieved via a number of complementary programmatic interventions for parents, caregivers and grandparents:

Awareness-Building Campaigns

The Atlanta Resiliency Roundtable can help launch a community-wide stigma-busting marketing campaign. This coordinated public awareness-building campaign would help to normalize conversations around mental health and demonstrate that it is a priority of the Atlanta Jewish community. To be successful, it is important that there are different marketing and outreach strategies to target different audiences – and translated into both Hebrew and Russian, a cultural sensitivity that surfaced in project interviews.

Educational Opportunities with Partner Organizations

Fund Atlanta-specific educational opportunities and programs via Blue Dove Foundation, including the creation of a local resource packet/landing page that is accessible (and advertised) to individuals and organizations. Another programmatic possibility is to support the local expansion of No Shame on U, a Chicago-based initiative designed to decrease stigma in the Jewish community, so they can bring their effective programs and outreach to Atlanta. Partnerships can also be explored with the Jewish Grandparents Network to further support family systems.

FILL NECESSARY GAPS

FAMILY RESILIENCY-BUILDING PROGRAMS AT KEY INFLECTION POINTS AND NEW POSITIONS

Build Resilience with a Focus on Family Systems and Families with Young Children

Parents are a critically underserved population; interviews made it clear local families felt they lacked community and important tools to parent effectively from a Jewish lens. Developing resilience starts early; Atlanta can develop or adapt a Parent Toolkit in partnership with Jewish organizations: a one-stop resource designed to help parents and caregivers navigate their child’s growth and development in the classroom, informal Jewish educational settings, and beyond. Topics would cover everything from academics to health and wellness, along with social and emotional development.

‘We don’t have a forum for parents to get together and learn... and lean on each other.’

Additionally, camps play a significant role in the Atlanta community and psyche, and can be a powerful tool for engaging and supporting families with young children. Retreats and family camps are an unparalleled way to make connections among families and support those relationships as the children grow. Forging a partnership between local camps, who would all participate in the Resiliency Roundtable, and the Mental Health Concierge, we can introduce new family camp programming to local families. By layering in mental health and wellness education, we can bring the benefits of family programming to an expanded audience (see attachment for a detailed research study on the value of family camps).

B'nai Mitzvah Wellbeing Curriculum

This transformational moment is a time where families unite, often one of the last connection points to institutional Jewish life. Clergy and other professionals meet regularly with parents and students during this time, making it an excellent opportunity to unify the community with a standardized resiliency-building curriculum. While many students are connected to a congregation, there is also a large network of independent b'nai mitzvah tutors. This provides a profound opportunity to reach out to less affiliated Atlanta families who have similar needs and may be looking for connection and community. A community-wide wellbeing curriculum for b'nai mitzvah students and families ensures a shared language, common understanding of issues and resiliency-building approaches and language. This could be created and taught in partnership with Moving Traditions, a national educational organization which works locally, including in Atlanta. They could adapt or integrate wellbeing into their existing preteen family education and train local clergy and staff in its usage.

'Somewhere between toddler and high school years, the group support of parents goes away... if we can bring together parents to talk about their anxiety and fears, we could give them space to feel a sense of relief and community, then they will be more available for their kids. Then parents wouldn't be so overwhelmed.'

New and Shared Positions

Over time, as the infrastructure needed for a community-based response is built and more resources are marshalled, new professional roles will fill important gaps. Creating several new shared or communal positions can be explored, such as hiring mental health professionals who will split their time between religious schools and summer camps, based on a successful URJ model. Supervised by JF&CS, this would alleviate the difficulty of finding summer-only clinical staff.

EMPLOYEE BURNOUT

CHANGE THE CULTURE SO PROFESSIONALS CAN BETTER CARE FOR THEMSELVES AND OTHERS

Employee burnout in all sectors is at historic levels, including in the Jewish community, especially for people who work with youth and families, and mental health professionals. More than 70% of employees [reported](#) being burnt out and feeling that their employers aren't doing enough to address their concerns. Addressing this calls for more than implementing a wellbeing program, such as subsidizing gym memberships. Burnout can result from various factors such as an unmanageable workload, lack of supervisory support, an inflexible schedule, unclear expectations and role clarity, unrealistic deadlines, micromanaging and unfair treatment – all of which have been identified in the Jewish community and referred to in interviews for this project.

Collaboration is an effective and proven strategy to combat burnout. Venues such as the Atlanta Resiliency Roundtable, where professionals come together to problem-solve and support each other, is a piece foundational to this approach.

Additionally, compiling resources as outlined above will help address these issues: a key area of overwhelm for professionals is not knowing where to turn for help. Even the simple act of cataloguing resources can offer hope to these exhausted professionals, which is why these are recommended as the first short-term solutions.

However, there needs to be a more comprehensive plan to address talent: ensuring employees feel supported means having the right programs, compensation packages and resources available.

In the longer term, tackling the issues underpinning employee dissatisfaction will involve an interconnected web of systemic approaches, such as:

- Identifying root causes across organizations.
- Changing workplace habits and culture at the supervisory level.
- Leadership setting a new tone moving forward.
- Structural shifts such as flexible schedules, job sharing and remote work.

This would require a separate planning process and resource allocation.

INCREASE CLINICAL RESOURCES

A VISION TO ATTRACT NEW PROFESSIONALS AND GROW ACCESS TO SERVICES

The most systemic issue facing Atlanta and the metro area is the staggering lack of care providers. While there is a crisis nationally, Atlanta has a particularly acute shortage of clinicians.

Over the coming decade, and in partnership with national advocacy efforts, the following interventions can be considered to increase the number of clinical professionals working in the Atlanta metro area:

- Engage in national advocacy efforts to remove restrictive state licensing to increase telehealth options, thereby relieving capacity issues.
- Increase pay to attract new professionals to Atlanta.
- Pilot paths to create a pipeline of new graduates in mental health services who are eager to enter Jewish communal agencies and highlight how solving this national issue could benefit Atlanta locally. This could involve:
 - Establishing partnerships with graduate programs (social work, clinical psychology, etc.) to subsidize tuition for graduate interns who commit to working in Atlanta agencies
 - Incentivize new graduates to work in Jewish agencies via stipends or loan forgiveness.
 - Tuition scholarships to graduate students who will work in the community post-graduation.

CLOSING

Through these efforts, each designed to have the highest points of leverage and building on existing strengths, the Atlanta Jewish community will become a place of hope and action. More than 20 organizations will be able to respond to emerging and growing needs, and thousands of individuals will be able to access the mental health resources they need. By increasing awareness and access to resources, social supports will increase dramatically. Nearly 1,000 professionals will be equipped to identify those who are struggling, respond to their concerns and make clinical referrals. Professionals, families and youth themselves will gain the emotional literacy, tools, supports, skills and wisdom to develop their own resiliency, support their friends and access affordable help as needed.

Through partnerships, a common agenda, mutually reinforcing activities and continuous communication, these interventions will help Atlanta's young people – and those who care about them – thrive.

*'I want people to know it's OK and you're not alone.
We all have challenges. And we're in it together.'*

APPENDIX 1: Atlanta Assessment

Strengths of the Community

- Many organizations work well together
- Committed local funders
- Strong Federation / involved leadership
- JF&CS focus on children and adolescents
- Mental health issues being discussed more openly and pervasively
- People are eager for deeper partnerships
- Consensus that supporting wellness is important

Weakness Observed

- Lack of community knowledge of existing resources
- Much of the community is not currently connected or networked
- Stigma is a significant barrier to accessing help
- Access to services is restricted (financial, geographic, and not enough services)
- Difficulty finding services and don't know where to begin to get (or refer people) to help

Opportunities

- Chance to build on existing partnerships to expand education opportunities/access to services/new models for service delivery
- Openness and desire for resilience-building, education and community-building
- People of all ages are eager for more partners and programs – and simple resources
- National structure at Jewish Federations of North America in partnership with the Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies to leverage / tie into

Challenges/Threats

- Acute shortage of clinical services
- Dispersed geography and traffic complicates the ability to make an impact
- Creating systemic change requires diverse organizational buy-in
- Improving mental health outcomes is a long-term process; concern prioritization may falter

Anticipated Outcomes of Interventions

- Increased knowledge, skills, resiliency and greater wellbeing among young people to cope with mental health concerns and issues, among parents and caregivers to address issues of concerns, and among teachers and Jewish professionals to support the youth they serve
 - Stronger partnerships among Jewish communal organizations and clinical service ensures expertise, resources and capacity for engagement/education organizations can address youth mental health in role-appropriate ways
 - Enhanced and innovative methods of service delivery will help address the clinical shortage and wait times for therapy
 - Growing community awareness and acceptance, demonstrating that individuals are not alone and providing comfort and easier access for those seeking help
-

APPENDIX 2: List of Local Resources Raised During Interviews

Below is a hyperlinked list of Jewish and secular organizations and resources which were raised during the interview process (generally, organizations who were interviewed do not appear on this list).

Strikingly, most of the people interviewed were not aware of the vast majority of these resources. This speaks to the need to create and curate a comprehensive, easily accessible resource list, translated into both Hebrew and Russian languages. Appropriate organizations with a local presence would be invited to participate in the Atlanta Resiliency Roundtable.

18 Doors	Jewish Learning Institute
ARCHI	Jewish Moms of Atlanta
Association for Reform Jewish Educators	Jewish Women's Fund of Atlanta
At the Well	Jewish&
Atlanta AA	Jonesy's Place
Atlanta Area Association of Independent Schools	Kate's Club
Atlanta Jewish Times	Keshet
Atlanta NA	La'Mar Walker
b.mitzvah	Leaders for Tomorrow
Babies Can't Wait	Matan
Bakan Atlanta	Maven Tree Consulting
BaMidBar	Metro Atlanta Community Mikvah
BBYO - Greater Atlanta Region	Momentum
Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Commission	Moving Traditions
Betty Ford Prevention Solutions	Nourishing the Soul
Blue Dove One Table Shabbat Guide	Overdose Response Network
Camp Be'chol Lashon	Parity Act
Cherokee Creek in South Carolina	PhD in Parenting from The Parent's Place
Children's Healthcare of Atlanta	PJ Library
CHRIS 180	Prizmah
Covenant House Georgia	RELIEF
Creating Connected Communities	Repair the World
Foundation for Jewish Camp	Resilient GA Regional Coalitions
Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities	Resilient GA State Scan
Georgia Department of Education	Resilient GA Training Roadmap
Hidden Sparks	RespectAbility Study
Hillel International	Sojourn
i9 Sports Atlanta	Ta'amod
Institute for Jewish Spirituality	Teen Talk LA
Inverting the Burden	The Berman Center
JBaby	The Confess Project Barber Coalition
JCRC of Atlanta	The Link
Jeff's Place	The Mothers Creative
Jewish Communal Leadership Program - University of MI School of Social Work	The Peaceful Family Fund
Jewish Fertility Foundation	The Social Institute
Jewish HomeLife	Trybal Gatherings
	United Way of Greater Atlanta

APPENDIX 3: Interviews and Focus Groups

Organization	Key Contact	Title
Atlanta Jewish Academy (AJA)	Syliva Miller	Lower School and Middle School Counselor
Atlanta Jews of Color Council	Victoria Raggs	Founding Executive Director
Be'chol Lashon	Jada Garrett	Director of Strategic Development
Blue Dove Foundation	Gabby Spatt	Executive Director
Camp Barney	Emily Shapiro	Director of Special Needs Program
Camp Coleman	Amy Smyler	Director
Camp Judaea	Lori Zeligman	Director
Camp Ramah	Anna Serviansky	Camp Director and Head of Education
Chabad North Fulton	Rabbi Hirshy Minkowicz	Rabbi and Director
Congregation B'nai Torah	Rabbi Joshua Heller	Senior Rabbi
Congregation Or Hadash	Amy Robertson	Director of Lifelong Learning
Congregation Or Hadash	Rabbi Lauren Henderson	Rabbi
Davis	Andra Lefkovits	Middle School Counselor
Davis	Jenai Hackett	Middle School Counselor
Emory Hillel	Rabbi Ilan Schwartz	Executive Director
Epstein	Ginger Judge	Middle School Counselor
Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta	Rich Walter	Vice President of Programs and Grantmaking
Friendship Circle	Chanky Friedman	Director of Operations
Georgia State University	Ann DiGirolamo	Research Associate Professor and Director
Georgia State University	Renee Johnson	Director, System of Care for Children's Behavioral Health
Gesher L'Torah	Rebecca Gordon	Education Director
HAMSA	Joel Dworkin	Program Manager
Hillels of GA	Elliot Karp	Chief Executive Officer
Honeymoon Israel	Elana Pollack	Atlanta Director of Community Engagement
In The City Camp	Eileen Price	Chief Executive Officer and Founder
Intown Chabad	Rabbi Eliyahu Schusterman	Rabbi
Israeli American Council	Shaked Angel	Regional Director
JAA (Jewish Abilities Alliance)	Annie Garrett	JAA Manager
JCC	Janel Margaretta	Chief Development/Marketing Officer
JCC Day Camps	Jodi Sonenshine	Director, MJCCA
JCC Day Camps	Mackenzie Sherman	Director, Camp Isidore Alterman
Jewish Interest Free Loans of Atlanta	Nancy Weissman	Executive Director
Jewish Kids Group (JKG)	Maya Selber	Director of Operations
Jewish Kids Group (JKG)	Sydney Popsuj	Director, B Mitzvah Program and Teen Leadership Academy
JF&CS	Dan Arnold	Director of Clinical Services
JF&CS	Terri Bonoff	Chief Executive Officer
JumpSpark	Amy Fox	Parent Connector at JumpSpark
JumpSpark	Nathan Brodsky	Director
JumpSpark	Teens	Teen Participants
Ma'alot	Rabbi Ariel Wolpe	Founder and Director
Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta - Making Jewish Places	Carla Birnbaum	Relational Engagement Manager
Moishe House	Megan Bernard	Associate Director of House Programs

OneTable	Nir Levy	Field Manager
Resilient GA	Emily Anne Vall	Executive Director
Temple Beth Tikvah	Bobbee Griff	Youth Director
Temple Sinai	Rabbi Ron Segal	Senior Rabbi
Temple Sinai	Marisa Kaiser	Senior Director of Learning and Engagement
The Temple	Rabbi Loren Filson Lapidus	Senior Associate Rabbi
The Temple	Elizabeth Foster	Family and Teen Educator
Torah Day	Mrs. Bracha Schulgasser	Counselor
URJ	Rabbi Ellen Nemhauser	Rabbi (also serves small congregation in GA)

APPENDIX 4: A Model for a Local Resiliency Roundtable (Los Angeles)

The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles seeks to create a local Resiliency Roundtable - a central base for our community to help coordinate and navigate the complex terrain of mental health and wellness, leading with collaborative sharing of priorities, outcomes, and strategy. Federation's history and proven record as an effective convener and network weaver make it a natural and fitting organization to spearhead this effort. Based on Jewish values, the LA Federation convenes and leads the community and leverages its resources to assure, identify, and addresses the greatest challenges and opportunities facing the Jewish community here in Los Angeles, Israel, and around the world. We reach across generations and geographic boundaries using a collaborative model that connects and empowers community partners and organizations that share our vision for change. When mutual priorities and goals are addressed and achieved, the community is both stronger and better positioned to be proactive. Today, more than ever, building an ecosystem that is educated, trained, supported, and nurtured around teen and young adult mental health and wellness is crucial. The moment is now to strengthen our connections and resources to create a future generation of healthy and resilient families.

Since the launch of the Los Angeles Jewish Teen Initiative (LAJTI) in 2015, in partnership with the Jim Joseph Foundation and seed funding from the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles, Federation has highlighted the importance of mental health and wellness. Our effort deepened during the COVID-19 pandemic as we began to expand our work to address the increasingly pronounced challenges in our community. As we navigate the ongoing impact of the crisis, we recognize that so many in our community are suffering from anxiety, hopelessness, and feelings of isolation. Many of these challenges were present before the pandemic, and they have increased exponentially. The implications of these stressors will be felt for many years to come and will affect every age cohort and demographic. As a result, we have dramatically expanded our offerings in support of families with young children, teens and young adults, and the clients we serve through our network of social service programs. Our multi-pronged Mental Health & Wellness Approach responds to these challenges in developmentally appropriate ways, relying on Jewish content and wisdom to strengthen the resilience and wellbeing of all community members.

In addition to individual strategic efforts (see Appendix A) to support our teens and young adults, this local LA Resiliency Roundtable will promote and nurture networking, partnerships, best practices, expertise, and capacity building among organizations serving Jewish youth and young adults and providers of expert mental health social services. The Roundtable will bridge the gap that often exists between the clinical world and the engagement/education world to address the challenges of the youth mental health crisis and to better support parents and/or educators who want to help.

The LA Resiliency Roundtable will address the following key areas around mental health and wellness:

1. Map organizations and services to highlight strengths and gaps
2. Convene organizations to identify alignment and priorities
3. Promote strategies to reduce stigmatizing of mental health and wellness across youth, young adults,

- parents, and educators
4. Explore potential shared data collection to understand needs and priorities over time
 5. Train educators/clinicians to be able to identify needs and be most responsive to certain sectors of the population that might be unique or overlooked
 6. Provide opportunity for organizations to implement impactful strategies through grantmaking

Proposed Timeline

2nd quarter, 2022:

- Hire Director of LA Resilience Roundtable
- Articulate and refine purpose, outcomes, and timeframe
- Identify community stakeholder organizations/members
- Plan and strategize for 2023 grantmaking cycle
- Identify lay leaders to serve on committee and/or as advisors

3rd and 4th quarters, 2022:

- Convene first LA Roundtable
- Develop criteria for grant cycle and publicize opportunity
- Make decisions on selected grants
- Identify process for evaluation
- Determine strategies for trainings

1st quarter, 2023

- Grant cycle begins
- Convenings of LA Roundtable continue at least quarterly
- Convene and leverage learnings from grant recipients
- Implement trainings

APPENDIX A

Selection of Federation's programs focused on mental health and wellness for children, teens, and young adults in LA.

Families with Young Children

Understanding that building healthy and resilient families must start at the beginning, we create opportunities for families with young children to parent through a Jewish lens, building the muscle of Jewish wisdom as it applies to daily parenting. Through these offerings, parents will be better able to guide, model, and nurture their children. If we can provide parents with a safe place to cultivate their own emotional wellbeing, they will in turn enhance the mental health and wellness of their children and their entire family.

- ✓ *Example: Peaceful Parent Project: In partnership with Orot: Center for New Jewish Learning, we offered the Peaceful Parent Project for families with children between the ages of 3 and 5. This 6-week online course focused on nourishing the parent's own soul through techniques rooted in Jewish mindfulness in order for the parent to reshape and deepen relationships with their children.*

Teens

Our Federation's LAJTI established 2015, has had a dramatic impact on Jewish teens, educators, and

parents through dynamic Jewish programs that support teens and those who care for them in leading healthy lives within the Jewish community. Our strategic approach addresses both the lack of Jewish involvement in post-b'nai mitzvah teens and the complex issues today's teen are grappling with including the ever-present mental health issues, which have only grown during the pandemic. Our pioneering efforts help teens, parents, and educators respond with resilience to the pervasive stress, anxiety, loneliness, and social media pressure in their lives.

- ✓ *Example: LAJTI Teen Talk Cohort* - In partnership with Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters, this program trains a cohort of teens in peer-to-peer counseling using the Teen Talk App, which is a free mobile app that helps teens take control of their social and emotional health by providing an easy way for them to get help from their peers. The training incorporates Jewish wisdom and values as it creates a community of LA teens through the cohort experience.
- ✓ *Example: Meditation* - A monthly meditation workshop is offered for parents of teens grounded in Jewish wisdom and soulful meditation with an opportunity for personal reflection and group sharing.
- ✓ *Example: Teens Wellness Partnerships* - LAJTI is investing in its partners to expand their impact in the community through 2022-2023 grants for local organizations.

Young Adults

NuRoots, our Federation's young adult engagement initiative, mobilizes and empowers young adults to create meaningful Jewish community and has impacted over 10,000 people.

Throughout the pandemic we shifted and expanded our programs to address increasing levels of mental health issues in young adults in their 20s and 30s. Multiple strategies are employed to address this complex and evolving crisis.

- ✓ *Example: Campus investments* - As part of Federation's commitment to young adult engagement, the Jewish Campus Life Initiative partners with organizations serving undergraduate and graduate students throughout Greater Los Angeles. These partnerships support programs geared toward addressing mental health and wellness in Jewish students across college campuses in LA.
- ✓ *Example: Ongoing "circles" and programs* - Innovative offerings featuring meditation, spiritual counseling, and more are offered to connect our diverse community to healing modalities to support mental health and wellness.
- ✓ *Example: Clinical support* - To support the growing number of college students and young adults experiencing mental health challenges, we provide one-on-one counseling with a social worker specifically geared to this demographic.