The Jewish Vocational Service of Newark, New Jersey, 1950-1980

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The Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) of Newark, New Jersey, was established in 1939 to provide vocational training for native-born Jews having difficulty finding jobs during the Great Depression, a period of rampant employment discrimination, and for newly arrived Jewish refugees from Europe who had little knowledge of English and vocational skills unsuited to their new home. At that time Newark was the sixth largest Jewish community in the United States.[1] The JVS remained a small agency employing a couple of professionals until after World War II, when its responsibilities broadened and its staff expanded. The agency's history between 1950 and 1980 is a test case of the response of an ethnic social welfare organization to the often-competing pressures emanating from the parochial community that it was established to serve and from the general society.

In 1950, the Newark Jewish community faced a major financial crisis brought on by the settlement in the city of survivors of the Holocaust, many of whom had acute psychological, social, and vocational challenges. The Newark Jewish Federation was spending approximately twenty-five thousand dollars per month to aid these people, and it anticipated that it was going to cost an additional forty-two thousand dollars per month to assist the two hundred and twenty-five refugee families expected to settle in the city the following year. The financial pressures on the community would be lessened if the refugees could become economically self-supporting as soon as possible.

By the end of 1951, the Jewish community was spending only ten thousand dollars a month to support refugees. In part this was due to the success of the JVS in discovering jobs for immigrants. In 1950 alone, the agency had found employment for one hundred and thirty-nine refugees. Also by the end of 1951, the flow of refugees into Newark had been reduced to a trickle. The JVS, however, was left with approximately thirty refugees for whom its normal counseling

and placement services were ineffective. Their advanced age, physical disabilities, and psychological problems precluded employment in the private sector, and being new to the United States, they were as yet ineligible for social security.[2]

The JVS concluded that a sheltered workshop was the most desirable solution. This would vocationally rehabilitate those with the greatest potential for employment in private industry, furnish long-term employment for those unable to work outside a sheltered environment, and enable its clients to work the six quarters then required for social security benefits. Morris Grumer, the JVS's executive director, claimed the methods of the sheltered workshop were "all geared toward helping the individual achieve vocational adjustment by means of the satisfaction of emotional and personal needs through the job situation."[3]

A sheltered workshop restricted to refugees would eventually self-destruct, since its clientele would ultimately find private employment, secure social security benefits, or die. In view of the political temper in Washington, D.C., it was unlikely that immigration laws would be modified to increase immigration. Since the nature of the sheltered workshop's long-term clientele was unclear, the Jewish Community Council (JCC), the policy-making body of the Federation, approved establishing the workshop on a trial basis for one year, with the understanding that the JVS could present the project at a future date for consideration as a permanent service to non-refugee and non-relief clients. According to the JVS's Committee on Unemployables, "as the project continues and develops, other handicapped individuals could be employed at the shop."[4]

The Opportunity Workshop, the first sheltered workshop under Jewish auspices in the United States, opened in September 1952 at the Newark YM-YWHA on High Street. Initially there was space for only ten refugees. They ranged in age from forty-three to seventy, and had a variety of cardiac, neurological, orthopedic, and emotional problems that prevented them from working outside a sheltered environment. In September 1953, the workshop expanded its intake policy to include non-refugee Jews, resulting in an immediate doubling of workshop participants.[5]

Hearing of the workshop's new intake policy and its work with the emotionally disturbed, the Rehabilitation Commission of New Jersey, a state agency, approached the JVS in 1953 regarding the possibility of referring some of its emotionally handicapped clients on a fee basis to the workshop for rehabilitation. The JVS was interested in the proposal, since it would guarantee a future clientele, permit an expansion of its activities, and benefit community relations. Heretofore the JVS had only served Jews. The boards of both the JVS and the Jewish Community Council (JCC) debated whether the opportunity to enrich the workshop's services and to enlarge its staff through public money justified opening the agency's services to non-Jews. In April 1956, the workshop Committee, a subcommittee of the JVS's Board of Trustees, unanimously adopted a resolution favoring a non-sectarian admissions policy for the workshop, provided that the state fully compensated the JVS for all services provided to non-Jews. Both the JVS and the JCC approved this suggestion, and when the agreement went into effect in 1957, it became a model for other Jewish vocational agencies throughout the country.[6]

Both the JVS and the JCC feared that accepting government funds would inevitably dilute, if not eventually destroy, the Jewish character of the agency. To forestall this possibility, a compromise was worked out. Non-Jews would be admitted to the workshop, while the educational counseling, job placement, and career counseling performed by staff not involved in the workshop would continue to be restricted to Jews. In the 1960s, additional outside pressures were exerted on the JVS to modify its sectarian character. It then developed an imaginative "spin-off" technique by which functions were handed over to a non-sectarian body. This enabled the JVS to provide services to the general community while remaining a Jewish agency.

Once the workshop had implemented the new intake policy, the JVS was presented with additional governmental grant possibilities. In 1959, it signed an agreement with the United States Veterans Administration's Lyons Hospital in western New Jersey to provide services at the workshop for emotionally handicapped veterans, few of whom were Jews. Ten years later the JVS signed another contract with the Veterans Administration to provide vocational and psychological

testing to Vietnam war veterans, as well as to their widows and children. In 1966, the agency received a grant of eight hundred and eighty-six thousand dollars from the United States Office of Economic Opportunity to provide vocational testing and counseling for inner-city residents in Newark. In 1970, an additional anti-poverty grant to the JVS funded a vocational rehabilitation program for Newark drug addicts.

Before these new ventures were approved, the JVS staff had to convince a skeptical Board of Trustees that, directly or indirectly, they would benefit the Jewish population. On the one hand, the JVS was a Jewish agency, its board and professionals were Jews, and it received funds from the Federation. Members of the board questioned why dollars raised from Jews during the annual Federation fund-raising campaign should be spent serving the needs of non-Jews, who did not contribute to the campaign; they should be aided by Christian, non-sectarian agencies, and government. Board members also feared that the unique vocational services of the JVS, such as serving Holocaust survivors and other refugees, would be de-emphasized if the agency broadened its client population.

Beginning in the 1950s, the bulk of the JVS's workshop funds came from governmental sources, both federal and local, and it was virtually inevitable that it would have to change its insular approach of the 1940s and early 1950s when it served only Jews. One reason for this redefinition of the JVS's role was the realization that the economic barriers Jews had faced during the 1930s were largely eliminated after World War II. Another was the decline in the number of Holocaust survivors settling in the Newark area who needed extensive vocational counseling and rehabilitation. The new mission of the JVS enabled it to continue contributing to the welfare of the general society, and the favorable publicity the agency received would be excellent public relations and help combat antisemitism. The JVS staff also convinced the JVS's lay leadership that state funds would enable the agency to improve its services to the Jewish community.

The concern within the JVS as to how best to reconcile conflicting demands of ethnic particularism and philanthropic universalism was not unique to Newark. It was part of a broader national debate

within Jewish vocational agencies and other Jewish social welfare organizations over their *raison d'etre.* As Martha K. Selig of the New York Federation of Jewish Philanthropies noted in 1959, governmental funds "hold a promise and a challenge" — the promise of more extensive and improved programming and the challenge of remaining Jewish. "We need not fear government participation for this is consonant with our democratic society." She concluded optimistically that "we can continue to remain Jewish agencies and retain our tradition even as we reach out to help others." Government funding had not prevented Jewish agencies from serving Jews. On the contrary, it "has freed the philanthropic dollar for responsibilities unique to the voluntary sectarian agency. It has permitted us to retain the Jewish character of our agencies and has not intruded on their operation or autonomy." The JVS's 1957 contract with the Rehabilitation Commission, signed two years before Selig's article appeared, was a model for the fruitful collaboration between government and sectarian agencies that she had praised.[7]

The contract also changed the client population of the workshop. This, along with the good relationship with the Rehabilitation Commission and the interest of Joseph L. Weinberg, who had succeeded Grumer as the JVS's executive director in 1957, in aiding the emotionally disturbed, resulted in the agency's most important research and development project. Between 1959 and 1963 the JVS, in cooperation with the Rehabilitation Commission and Overbrook Hospital, Essex County's mental hospital in Cedar Grove, conducted a study on the vocational rehabilitation of schizophrenics.

The possibility of releasing schizophrenics into the general population had increased during the 1950s with the introduction of tranquilizers. But the success of this would depend, in part, upon whether they could support themselves economically, an area that lacked substantial research. The U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation offered a one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollar grant, to be administered by the Rehabilitation Commission to determine whether a vocational agency could help rehabilitate schizophrenics. The Rehabilitation Commission, because of its past history with the JVS, asked the

agency to conduct the study. The director of the Rehabilitation Commission noted that the JVS had become "a vital partner in the state government's work on behalf of the emotionally disturbed."[8]

The JVS staff was eager to do the research. It would be a feather in the agency's cap, since it would be the first research project in New Jersey involving the vocational rehabilitation of the emotionally handicapped and, in addition, would further cement the close relationship between the agency and the Rehabilitation Commission. It would also not cost the JVS anything, as the state would provide all funding. Finally, the JVS would be furnishing a major public service. With approximately three hundred and fifty thousand schizophrenics hospitalized in the United States, treatment was very expensive. The nation was being deprived of the labor of a large number of people as well. Anything fostering the economic productivity of schizophrenics would be of great benefit.

The JVS Board of Trustees was skeptical. It feared involvement with the psychotic, wondered whether the research project would be of any value to the Jewish community, and questioned whether a sectarian agency should become involved in what seemed to be a public responsibility. The board was also suspicious of the JVS becoming involved in research itself. It had always been a service agency, and some board members feared research would divert it from its major responsibility. The board established a special Research Project Committee to examine the proposal and to report back. This committee concluded that the project could result in significant findings without the JVS bearing any of its cost. This, along with the staff's eagerness, convinced the board and the board of the Jewish Community Council to approve the research project.

Begun in 1959, the research concluded that a workshop experience was far more effective in rehabilitating schizophrenics than ordinary rehabilitation services. Dr. Henry A. Davidson, the superintendent of Overbrook Hospital, said, "Patients long hospitalized, estranged from friends and relatives, have in some instances been able to start a new life … where they are accepted and made to feel part of the family." Beatrice Holderman, the director of the Rehabilitation Commission, was also encouraged by the study's findings. "Hospitalized mental

patients and their families," she said, "now have more hope for readjustment of the ill members of the community." As a result of the study, the Rehabilitation Commission, which previously had little interest in psychotic clients, increased its services to the more seriously emotionally disturbed.[9]

During the research phase of the schizophrenic study of the late 1950s and early 1960s, the JVS received requests to become involved in vocational counseling and training of young blacks and Puerto Ricans in Newark. The requests came from the Americans for Democratic Action, the Urban League, Rutgers University, the Welfare Federation of Essex and West Hudson, and the Rehabilitation Commission. These organizations looked to the JVS because of its quarter-of-a-century experience in operating vocational service programs and its recent history with non-sectarian publicly funded projects. These requests came during the golden age of the civil rights movement, prior to the urban riots of the mid-1960s and the emergence of black power. At this time many American Jews were very supportive of the civil rights movement and wished to lend a helping hand. The board of the JVS established an Anti-Poverty Committee to study these requests. This committee and the JVS board unanimously approved JVS involvement, although with several barriers. Of these, funding was the most important.[10]

It was unlikely that either the Federation or the JVS board would allow money raised by the local campaign of the United Jewish Appeal to fund a program which did not directly benefit Jews. Newark's city government had neither the funds nor the interest to fund such a project, and there were no local philanthropic foundations willing to underwrite it. The money would have to come from Washington, probably from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), the federal agency established in 1964 as part of the Johnson administration's war on poverty. Washington, the JCC, and the JVS, however, were initially reluctant to become involved in this project because of the morass of corruption characteristic of Newark politics in general and the city's anti-poverty program in particular. Board members of the JVS also feared the project could divert the agency from its primary mission of serving persons with physical and

emotional disabilities. They were also sensitive to the possibility of being charged with paternalism by black leaders such as Le Roi Jones (Imanu Amiri Baraka) demanding that institutions serving the black community be controlled by blacks.[11]

The JCC and the JVS ultimately decided that any involvement by the agency in the inner city must be of limited duration (approximately one year), and that the program be "spun-off" as soon as possible into the hands of minority representatives. They also insisted that the agency's other activities not be adversely affected. Finally, the JVS's involvement depended upon complete freedom from any and all political interference. After being reassured on these points by Newark's anti-poverty officials, the JCC overcame its initial reluctance and approved the project in July 1965.[12]

In its grant proposal to the Office of Economic Opportunity, the JVS said it planned to mobilize "the large network of social agencies in the community in a cooperative effort to open up new pathways to occupational and professional opportunities" for children from "disorganized families" in Newark. The OEO responded with a grant of eight hundred and eighty-two thousand dollars, and Career Oriented Preparation for Employment (COPE) began in March 1966. It was the largest and most intensive youth-training program in the Newark area. Besides the JVS, the Newark Board of Education, the United Community Corporation (Newark's anti-poverty agency), and the Newark Welfare Federation also took part. For its first fourteen months, COPE was administered out of the office of the JVS's director of professional services. During this period a staff of ten counselors specifically recruited by the JVS for the project tested and advised approximately fifteen hundred persons between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one. The counselors encouraged their clients to develop positive work habits, acquire job skills, and remain in school or return to school if they had dropped out.[13]

The federal government judged COPE's counseling, psychological testing, and job training to be highly effective. John C. Bullitt, director of the New Jersey branch of the Office of Economic Opportunity, described COPE as "a new breakthrough by private fundraising organizations in the war on poverty. The COPE neighborhood youth

corps has demonstrated in a very short time the value of government, sectarian, and private group cooperation in the cause of social action." "Where there's COPE," people involved in the program liked to say, "there's hope."[14]

From COPE's inception, the JVS began recruiting a board of directors and staff to run the program when it came time for the JVS to step aside. In November 1966, the JVS board decided that COPE was on such firm footing that the agency should spin it off and retain only a consultative role. In June 1967, Alvin D. Moore, Jr., an African American, became executive director of COPE. In 1967, the JVS won the William J. Shroder Award for COPE, given annually by the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds for superior "initiative and achievements in the advancement of social welfare by voluntary health and welfare agencies under Jewish auspices in the United States and Canada." The judges were particularly impressed with the spin-off mechanism, terming it "a unique pioneering program in the field of vocational service" and "a technique for Jewish involvement in general community problems while enriching the secular commitments of the agency. The entire COPE project offers other Jewish communities a visible instrument for participation in the war against poverty." The award came just months after the disastrous Newark riot of July 1967.[15]

Some of the riot's victims were Jewish shopkeepers. They had neither the resources nor the desire to resume operations in Newark's Central Ward, and the JVS was eager to help them relocate or find alternative employment. About ten persons were assisted by the agency. While this was a minor part of the JVS's work in 1967 and early 1968, the memories of destroyed Jewish stores and uprooted Jewish businessmen influenced the JVS's response when it was asked to become involved in another program of primary benefit to residents of inner-city Newark.

In 1970, Newark's Model Cities office and the Rehabilitation Commission asked the JVS to work with Newark drug addicts. Several members of the agency's Board of Trustees initially opposed this proposal. Not only were they bitter because of the 1967 riot, they were also skeptical that these addicts could be vocationally rehabilitated.

More fundamentally they questioned whether working with inner-city drug addicts would promote the interests of Essex County Jews. Other members of the board responded that the drug problem had become an important national concern, that the JVS would acquire techniques and expertise which might prove valuable in counseling Jewish suburban youth involved with drugs, and that the agency had a religious and civic responsibility to help alleviate the problems of Newark so long as this did not interfere with the agency's other tasks. The anxieties of doubters on the boards of the JVS and Jewish Community Council were relieved when it became apparent that the agency's participation would be temporary and that the spin-off technique would be utilized again.[16]

The JVS participated in the drug program between November 1971 and June 1974. With a grant of three hundred and fifty thousand dollars from the Rehabilitation Services Administration of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and Newark's Model Cities office, the JVS established a vocational rehabilitation program at Integrity House, a halfway home in Newark for addicts. Named Work Oriented Rehabilitation Community (WORC), the JVS administered the program until June 15, 1974, when it was transferred to Integrity House entirely. During these two and a half years, one hundred and thirteen former addicts were trained and/or placed in jobs. The results of WORC gratified both the JVS and Integrity House. The JVS's president described WORC as a "fabulous success," and David Gareley, the director of WORC, noted that it had "turned out better than anyone ever dreamed."[17]

Although the JVS had branched out into the general community beginning in the 1950s, it remained a Jewish agency and continued to respond to Jews in need of its services. Lest it forget, the JCC constantly reminded the JVS that its major responsibility was still working with Jewish clients. In 1956-57, as a result of the Hungarian revolt against the Soviet Union and communism, five thousand Hungarian Jews relocated to the United States. Twenty of these families settled in Essex County and received vocational counseling and job placement assistance from the JVS. Also, a few Jewish refugee families from Cuba received similar aid from the JVS after Fidel

Castro came to power in 1959. But these emigrants from Hungary and Cuba were few in number. The JVS Jewish refugee clientele would not significantly increase until the 1970s, when large numbers of Russian Jews began settling in Essex County, and even then refugee work would not remain the major Jewish component of the JVS's activities.[18]

After World War II, American Jewry experienced a fundamental social transformation. The immigrant generation of urban workers and shopkeepers was replaced by second and third generation of suburbanites, government and corporate employees, and professionals. The move to suburbia was particularly rapid in Newark as a result of the 1967 riot, and by 1970, the city's Jewish population was probably not more than a thousand. If the JVS's primary mission of aiding Jews was to be fulfilled, then it would have to offer Jews something more than placement and guidance services for the poor, the disabled, and immigrants.

In 1963, the JCC granted permission to the JVS to engage in educational counseling for what were termed "normal" teenagers, defined as those planning to attend college and become professionals. At a time when most non-Jewish American high school students did not go to college, the Jewish teenager not planning to continue his or her education after high school was considered unusual. Over 80% of Jewish high school graduates in Essex County went to college, and the question of which college to attend was not restricted to the affluent. The JVS believed the county's public high schools guidance counseling was inadequate and that it had a role to play in advising high school students. The JVS realized that not all Jews should go to college. But, in view of the importance of a college degree for employment, those lacking a university degree could become vocationally handicapped. The agency's program of educational counseling was a departure from its longstanding *raison d'etre.* But the problem of selecting the right college for suburban youth was too important to be ignored.[19]

College counseling took two forms. There was individual counseling, financed partly though a fee schedule based on the financial ability of client families. For the first time in its history, the JVS charged for counseling, reflecting its new policy of serving Jews without financial need. The JVS also engaged in group counseling.

In cooperation with the local YM-YWHA, it held college and career conferences and workshops for Jewish youth. The JVS also prepared a mini-directory of Jewish facilities at some of the nation's colleges. This contained information on the availability of kosher food, Hillel houses, and Jewish studies programs.

The JVS's counseling services expanded further in 1970 to meet the needs of women in their middle years entering the job market for the first time or reentering it after an extended absence. For the first time, women in large numbers were coming to the JVS for career counseling. This was due to several factors. The ideology of the feminist movement, which deprecated domesticity and encouraged women to seek work outside the home, was of some influence. But for most women, work was less a quest for personal fulfillment than an economic necessity. Often their husbands' income could not sustain the highly valued and expensive suburban life style. The expense of sending children to college, especially if they attended residential and/or private schools, was a further spur for women to seek employment. Finally, the rapid increase in the divorce rate left some women in fragile economic straits.[20]

Project Eve, begun in October 1970 with fifteen women, was a six-session seminar devoted to education, career counseling, and employment opportunities. Quite successful, within four years it boasted sixty-nine participants and a waiting list. Its schedule increased to twice a year to meet demand. Along with the group counseling of Project Eve, many women came to the JVS for individual counseling, placement assistance, and vocational testing. Throughout the 1970s the agency's case load for women continually rose.[21]

Working with the elderly became a more important aspect of the agency's activities during the 1960s. This was not merely a local phenomenon. Jewish communities throughout the United States became more involved with the elderly due to the growing percentage of American Jews who were over fifty years of age, the national interest in the elderly, and the increased political activity of the aged and the emergence of "gray power." Jewish vocational agencies realized that many of the aged, despite physical and emotional infirmities, would benefit economically and psychologically from working. These agencies developed new techniques and programs directed at the elderly.

In 1963, the JVS received the first of two one-thousand-dollar grants for its Employer Field Visiting Program from the Jewish Occupational Council, the predecessor of the National Association of Jewish Vocational Services.[22] These grants from funds provided by the Baron de Hirsch Fund and administered by the JOC enabled the JVS to hire a retired salesman to solicit positions of employment from business and industry for Jewish clients who were over fifty. Forty-six were placed in jobs during the program's first year, and the program was judged a success. When the Baron de Hirsch grants ran out in 1965, the Jewish Community Council allowed the JVS to absorb the expenses of the program within its regular budget.[23]

In May 1965, the JVS opened a workshop for the residents of the Daughters of Israel Home for the Aged (now the Daughters of Israel Geriatric Center) in West Orange. Established in 1906, the Daughters of Israel, the first Jewish home for the elderly in New Jersey, housed both men and women. A workshop had been proposed in 1957, but a few influential members of the home's board feared that the residents would be economically exploited. This opposition was not surmounted until the dissidents left the board a few years later. The workshop was an immediate success, with one member of the JVS board describing it as "the answer to a tremendous need, a challenge and a bold step forward." So great was the demand of the home's residents for work that the number of chairs at the worktables and the hours that the workshop was open had to be increased. The home's president believed the workshop had "significant therapeutic benefits for our residents; less medication, fewer doctor's visits, and less preoccupation with self have resulted for those who work in the shop. Attendance is high, absenteeism is minimal, and many would work longer hours if we could provide it." The home's executive director agreed. The workshop's effects had been "far greater than our expectations."[24]

The last of the JVS's undertakings for the elderly was establishing a workshop for the several hundred elderly Jews remaining in Newark. It was at first hoped that this workshop could be located in the Weequahic neighborhood, the one-time center of Newark Jewry. The JVS expected to receive funding from the state's Rehabilitation Commission for what was anticipated to be a pioneering vocational

service program for the elderly. The workshop's intake policy would, of course, have to be non-sectarian to receive public support. It soon became clear, however, that locating the workshop in Weequahic — by the 1960s a predominately black neighborhood — would be problematic. "A primary concern of the Jewish Community Council," the JVS board was told, was the possibility that the workshop "would be used by black militants to promote a confrontation with the Jewish community with disastrous results." To counter this possibility, it was proposed to use the spin-off technique, which had proven so successful in the COPE project. One person suggested that the spin-off mechanism would "demonstrate that a good mix of both black and white staff and black and white clientele was still possible in this day and age." A neighborhood workshop could thus benefit the Jewish elderly remaining in Newark and, at the same time, demonstrate a Jewish commitment to the welfare of Newark. In any case, the JVS was unable to find a suitable location in Weequahic.[25] An alternative was to locate the workshop near the building in East Orange that housed the JVS and Opportunity Workshop, and to bus in the elderly. East Orange was safer than Newark and more accessible to the elderly who did not reside in Weequahic. An East Orange workshop would also save money, since the counseling, testing, and other services of the two workshops could be combined. By coincidence a building next to the JVS was available for rent. The Jewish Community Council sanctioned the rental of the structure on North Clinton Street, and the Work Center on Aging opened its doors on November 12, 1973.[26]

The JCC approved the Work Center on Aging after it received assurances from the JVS that all its funding would come from Washington and Trenton. The increase in Federation monies going to Israel after the Six-Day War of 1967 made the Federation skeptical of new activities. In addition, the JVS's success in securing funds for previous programs from governmental sources resulted in an expectation among Federation leaders that other JVS proposals would also be funded by the government. The federal and state governments were interested in the JVS's plans for the workshop, and the Rehabilitation Services Administration of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare provided a seventy-thousand dollar grant to

renovate the North Clinton Street structure. The JVS intended to offer more than unskilled workshop employment for the elderly. It also proposed to provide recreational, medical, nutritional, social service, and educational programs, as well as vocational testing, job placement, and vocational counseling. The JVS had in mind a comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center and believed such a center would not only increase the income of the elderly, but would also improve their morale. Joseph Weinberg claimed that the workshop could "provide its clients … with a sense of purpose and promote feelings of self-worth with resulting benefits in both mental and physical health." The Work Center on Aging began with eleven clients, and by 1978 it had five times that number, along with a waiting list. It was the only place in New Jersey under private auspices that provided a comprehensive program of vocational rehabilitation services for the elderly.[27]

A large migration of Russian Jews into Essex County was taking place at the same time that the Work Center on Aging was getting off the ground. The most pressing of all the challenges facing the Russians was becoming economically self-sufficient, and the JVS was to be a crucial tool in achieving this. To the JVS and the Jewish Community Council, rapid employment would hasten the adjustment of Russians to American life, bolster their self-image as productive individuals, and lessen the financial pressures felt by the Jewish community in caring for them. The work of the JVS with the Russians was complicated by language differences, difficulties in translating Russian job skills and professions into American categories, licensing barriers for foreign professionals, the newcomers' unfamiliarity with a flexible, free-enterprise economy, and their suspicion of all authority, whether public or private.

Initially the JVS services to Russians was part of its ongoing case load. They received vocational evaluations, job placements, job seeking skills, and temporary or extended employment in the Opportunity Workshop. The agency, however, soon concluded that the Russians had problems that demanded unique treatment. It took longer to place a Russian in employment because of the need for distinct job skills evaluation and for instruction in English. Russians also had high employment expectations, and many had chosen to settle in the

United States rather than in Western Europe or Israel because of these expectations. The JVS leadership feared that the growing number of Russians settling in the Newark area could swamp its staff, making it difficult to counsel and place non-Russians. As early as November 1974, the JVS's board was told that "should the number of Russian and other immigrants continue to grow … JVS would need additional staff time for this program, or have to consider cutting back on some other job placement services."[28]

The ideal solution was to establish an absorption center in which the JVS, the Jewish Family Service Association, the YM-YWHA, and the local Jewish day schools could serve the Russians. Absorption centers were common in Israel, but they did not exist in the United States. Nor was the early 1970s a propitious time to establish them. Because of the difficult financial straits of Israel, exacerbated by the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the bulk of funds raised by local campaigns of the United Jewish Appeal was forwarded to the Jewish state. Other sources of money would have to be found. In the meantime, the JVS continued working with an ever-increasing number of Russians. By the end of the decade the agency had served eight hundred Soviet emigres and had placed over five hundred of them in jobs.

Until 1978 the Jewish Community Federation, the successor to the Jewish Community Council, had paid all expenses incurred in helping the Russians. The JVS then learned that the Jewish communities of Miami and Philadelphia had received grants under the Comprehensive Education and Employment Act (CETA) for the resettlement of Russian immigrants. The JVS, in conjunction with the local Jewish Family Service agency, successfully applied for a CETA grant for language and vocational training for the Russians. This paid the salaries of two employment specialists and provided stipends for the immigrants while they were enrolled in job-training programs. CETA also paid the tuition for ten immigrant women to attend the Katherine Gibbs Secretarial School in New York City. The JVS used part of the CETA grant to work with the Russians in developing job-seeking skills. This included instruction in the American job process interview, personal hygiene, and preparation of a resume. The CETA grant enabled the JVS to expand its services, and the time required to

find employment for the Russians was cut in half. CETA officials were pleased with the results of the grant, since it seemed to demonstrate that a comprehensive employment program could be effective and cost efficient.[29]

The state of New Jersey also aided in the vocational rehabilitation of the Russians. In October 1976, the State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, formerly the Rehabilitation Commission, provided the JVS with a three-year grant of one hundred and thirty thousand dollars for an expanded placement, counseling, and job-seeking skills program for the handicapped. Since Russians were classified as vocationally handicapped, they were included in this program. In September 1978, the agency's assistant executive director noted that "our new job-skills seeking training program has been underway a few months, and the group of Jewish Russian emigrants trained … have done very well on job interviews."[30]

The JVS pioneered in providing a comprehensive vocational program for Russian immigrants. Other Jewish vocational agencies in the United States and Canada were interested in the success of the JVS, particularly its ability to tap government sources for funds. These agencies, the JVS's Joseph Weinberg said, sought "information from us in order to replicate the comprehensive program of services that we have designed with the help of CETA in our community." Because of these requests, the JVS sponsored a training institute for Jewish communal workers to acquaint them with its experience with the Russians.[31]

In 1979, the Jewish Federation purchased a four-story building in East Orange close to the JVS to house all of the Russian settlement work of the YM-YWHA, the Jewish Family Service agency, and the JVS, including that of the Opportunity Workshop and the Work Center on Aging. At last the Jewish community had a multipurpose absorption center for Russian immigrants, who now numbered over one thousand, with more scheduled to arrive shortly. With this, the Jewish Vocational Service had gone full circle from focusing on survivors of the Holocaust, to dealing with drug addicts, the aged, and women, and then to serving the needs of Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union. At the same time, the JVS continued to have a large

number of Gentile clients, particularly in its workshops. The JVS's attempts to satisfy the needs of Jews while simultaneously meeting those of non-Jews reflected the post-World War II movement of Jews into the American mainstream. The new responsibilities that Jewish leaders in Newark and elsewhere took upon themselves exhibited a confidence in their identity as both Jews and Americans, a confidence fueled by wartime experience and displayed at the 1954 tercentenary celebration of Jewish settlement in America. The decision of the JVS to provide services to non-Jews stemmed not only from the lure of governmental dollars, but also from the sense that the Jewish community of Newark had arrived. It was now incumbent on it to act the part. The needs of Jews had to be met because they were Jews, but the needs of non-Jews also had to be met because they were fellow Americans. The history of the JVS is thus a microcosm of modern American Jewish history.[32]

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Notes

[1] For the history of the JVS prior to 1950, see Edward S. Shapiro, "Ethnicity and Employment: The Early Years of the Jewish Vocational Service of Newark, 1939-1952," *New Jersey History,* 106 (Spring/Summer 1988): 19-39. For the history of Jewish vocational work, see Shapiro, "National Association of Jewish Vocational Services," in *Jewish American Voluntary Organizations,* Michael N. Dobkowski, ed. (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood, 1986), 325-33, and Ronald Baxt, "Jewish Vocational Service," *American Jewish Year Book,* Morris Fine and Jacob Sloan, eds., vol. 55 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1954), 103–9. In 1973 the official name of the agency was changed from the Jewish Vocational Service of Essex County to the Jewish Vocational Service of Metropolitan New Jersey. This corresponded to a name change of the Jewish Federation, and it reflected the movement of Jews out of Newark and Essex County into the suburban hinterland.

[2] *Jewish News,* June 30, 1950; Morrison J. Feldman, "President's Report," December 8, 1952, Jewish Vocational Service Papers, Jewish Vocational Service, East Orange, New Jersey.

[3] Morris Grumer, "The Program and Rationale of a Sheltered Workshop in a Jewish Vocational Service," *Jewish Social Service Quarterly,* 30 (Summer 1954): 399–406.

[4] "Final Report of the Committee on Unemployables," nd., JVS Papers.

[5] Minutes of Board of Trustees of the Opportunity Workshop, October 28, 1952, JVS Papers.

[6] "Recommendation for Change in Intake Policy of the Opportunity Workshop," April 1956, JVS Papers; Minutes of Board of Trustees of JVS, January 7, 1957, JVS Papers.

[7] Harry L. Lurie, *A Heritage Affirmed: The Jewish Federation Movement in America* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961), 204; Martha K. Selig, "Implications of the Use of Public Funds in Jewish Communal Services," *Journal of Jewish Communal Services,* 36 (Fall 1959): 48–58.

[8] *Jewish News,* May 8, 1959.

[9] *A Study of the Contribution of Workshop Experience in the Vocational Rehabilitation of Post-Hospitalized Schizophrenic Patients* (mimeographed, 1963), pp. ix-x, JVS Papers.

[10] *Jewish News,* December 6, 1963; Minutes of Board of Trustees of JVS, December 2, 1963, and June 8, 1964.

[11] *Newark Evening News,* February 3, 1965; *New York Times,* January 24, 1966; Minutes of the Board of Trustees of JVS, April 5, 1965, and December 5, 1965.

[12] Minutes of the Board of Trustees of JVS, May 3, 1965.

[13] *"COPE": Career Oriented Preparation for Employment* (mimeographed, 1965), 1–5, JVS Papers; *Newark Sunday News,* March 26, 1967; Joseph L. Weinberg and Albert I. Ascher, "COPE: First Comprehensive Report," 1967, JVS Papers.

[14] Minutes of the Board of Trustees of JVS, December 12, 1966.

[15] *Jewish News,* June 16, 1967; *William J. Shroder Memorial Awards, 1967 Winners* (New York: Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, 1967), 5–6.

[16] Minutes of the Board of Trustees of JVS, September 14, 1970, January 11, 1971, and December 6, 1971.

[17] Minutes of the Board of Trustees of JVS, March 5, 1973, and June 17, 1974; *Community News Reporter,* July 26, 1974.

[18] Minutes of the Board of Trustees of JVS, January 7, 1957, and November 6, 1961; *Jewish News,* February 13, 1959.

[19] *Jewish News,* March 20, 1964.

[20] *Jewish News,* December 11, 1970; Minutes of Board of Trustees of JVS, March 1, 1971.

[21] Minutes of the Board of Trustees of JVS, May 6, 1974, and December 5, 1977.

[22] The name of the Jewish Occupational Council was changed to the National Association of Jewish Vocational Services in 1975 to correspond to a change in the agency's role. See Shapiro, "National Association of Jewish Vocational Services," 331.

[23] *Jewish News,* January 17, 1964; "Report of the Year's Activities of the Baron de Hirsch Project for Older Workers," April 1, 1964, JVS Papers.

[24] Minutes of the Board of Trustees of JVS, November 4, 1957, November 4, 1963, and February 1, 1965; *Jewish News,* November 5, 1965; Esther M. Balowe to Joseph L. Weinberg, September 7, 1965, JVS Papers.

[25] Ronald L. Coun, "Establishing a Community Rehabilitation Center on Aging," *Selected Papers and Materials: Practitioners' Conference,* 1973 (New York: Jewish Occupational Council, 1973), 46-51; Minutes of Board of Trustees of JVS, April 1, 1968, January 6, 1969, and February 3, 1969.

[26] Minutes of the Board of Trustees of JVS, May 3, 1971, and June 5, 1972; *Jewish News,* January 10, 1974.

[27] *Congressional Record* (Senate), CXXI, #132, September 10, 1975; Minutes of the Board of Trustees of JVS, September 10, 1973, and June 17, 1974.

[28] Minutes of the Board of Trustees of JVS, November 4, 1974; Ronald I. Coun, "The Metropolitan New Jersey Experience," in *The Job Scene: Russian Jews in the U.S. and Canada,* Workshop #3 (New York: Jewish Occupational Council, 1975), 1–5.

[29] Minutes of the Board of Trustees of JVS, March 6, 1978, May 1, 1978, June 5, 1978, and March 5, 1979.

[30] Minutes of the Board of Trustees of JVS, September 11, 1978, and June 11, 1979.

[31] Minutes of the Board of Trustees of JVS, May 2, 1977, and May 1, 1978.

[32] For the post-World War II mode of American Jewry, see Edward S. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry Since World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).