## THE JEWISH VOCATIONAL SERVICE; A CHANGING AGENCY IN A CHANGING WORLD \*

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#### Introduction

EXCITING things are happening in Jewish Vocational Service activities across our nation. Many major economic changes taking place today will have a profound effect upon all of us. Other changes which are only trends now may have a major impact upon our welfare activities of tomorrow.

Let us consider, for example, the new relationship of vocational service to the current changes in Jewish life and total community needs—the significance of the contribution it is making to retraining for a changing employment market, the impact of automation on employment, the problems of the unskilled, vocationally handicapped people and the significance of the extension of services beyond the Jewish community to the general community, and the implications of such extension.

Two important recent articles have met these questions head on: one by Morris Grumer of Los Angeles <sup>1</sup> and the second by Charles Miller of Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup> In addition to citations from these articles, I shall also make reference to a background paper prepared by Mr. Bernard Stern, Executive Director of the Jewish Occupational Council.

Mr. Grumer maintains that the sectarian character of his agency is based upon a clear and positive philosophy of Jewish community service. The set of principles which is followed can keep the Jewish vocational agency within the orbit of the Jewish community in the face of the massive pressures of public funds and compelling non-sectarianism. Mr. Miller holds that agencies facing problems resulting from the integration crisis can maintain their relationship to the Jewish community if they are viewed as sectarian agencies which "are institutions of the Jewish community. servicing basic purposes of identification and survival." He holds that sectarianism is valid in a pluralistic democracv.

Mr. Stern presents a clear picture of program developments resulting from changing "vocational trends which influence greatly the character of the Jewish vocational services." He points out that the Jewish vocational services are rooted in deeply-held Jewish values and that the programs can be viewed on a

<sup>\*</sup>Presented at the 33rd General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, St. Louis, Missouri, November 13, 1964.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Morris Grumer, "Jewish Vocational Services in the American Jewish Community," this journal, Vol. XL, No. 2 (1963), pp. 207-11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Charles Miller, "The Impact of the Integration Struggle Upon Jewish Communal Serv-

ices," this journal, Vol. XLI, No. 1 (1964), pp. 67-74.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

continuum ranging from a totally sectarian approach designed to supplement the work of the public agencies to a totally non-sectarian approach. He raises questions which are useful aids in determining how far along the continuum a JVS should go and concludes with two principles: "The Jewish vocational services should be the arm of the organized Jewish community in the area of vocational adjustment" and that "communal agencies such as the JVS's can be effective forces for the creative survival of the Jews in an open society."

The consensus of the three papers is that the JVS has been, is, and will be an effective and vital tool of the Jewish community. Their conclusion is substantiated by three recent studies of JVS's. The first, a joint federation-agency study of the work of the Cleveland JVS, points to the need for a JVS and gives some of the following factors in a rationale for support of a vocational agency by the Jewish community.

- The Jewish community has a tradition of serving its own, of wanting a dimension of service for Jews which cannot be secured in the Cleveland general community.
- There are serious quantitative and qualitative gaps in the services available in the general community.
- 3. The need for vocational planning, particularly for young Jewish people, will require increasing attention because of:
  - a. Increasing competitiveness in the labor market, due to automation and the increase in available manpower which will be more evident as the "war babies" come of age.
  - b. The disappearance of many small businesses which in the past offered job opportunities to Jewish high school and college graduates.
  - c. The policies of major industrial and commercial establishments which discriminate against Jews trained for positions at the managerial and executive level.

The second study, conducted by the Chicago JVS, analyzed carefully the relationship between the core services of

the agency and its research and demonstration programs supported by public funds. It concluded that the use of public funds made it possible to deal with vocational problems of Jewish clients with new techniques which had not been possible heretofore.

The third study, just recently completed jointly by the Jewish Welfare Federation of Detroit and the Jewish Vocational Services states that consideration of the use of government funds in programs of Jewish service agencies should be based on the principle that the prime purpose of a Jewish agency is to serve the needs of the Jewish community.

If we accept the conclusions of these various papers and studies, we might perhaps more profitably turn to the context in which program changes are occurring and consider why JVS's as a group have been awarded more public funds for research and demonstration programs than most social agencies in the Jewish community.

#### The Changing Scene

Four major factors have influenced the programming of JVS's and have led to the development of current programs:

1. Improvements in Vocational Services Improvements in vocational services arise in part from increasing experience with persons in vocational difficulties and in part from improved techniques in the social sciences—psychology, sociology, and social work. With these changes have come an increased ability to work with persons in vocational difficulties and to help them plan for the future. The development of vocational workshops and counseling techniques has given the counselors greater competency. This, with knowledge of the labor market, has provided JVS's with the capability to work with persons who would not have been acceptable as clients ten or fifteen years ago.

## 2. Socio-economic Changes

Most JVS's are located in urban centers. The post-World War II factors influencing the program development of such JVS's appear to be:

- —Technological and business changes which are causing a decrease in the number of unskilled jobs.
- —Decreasing employment opportunities for the elderly and less welleducated.
- —Increased recognition of the importance of work in enhancing the dignity of man and in its contribution to mental health.
- —Advances in medical and psychiatric techniques in the treatment of physically and emotionally damaged persons, increasing their capacity to function.
- -Increased concern of the Jewish community with the handicapped, aged, and hard core unemployed refugee.
- —Availability of public funds to encourage agencies to experiment in the development of new techniques to help the handicapped become employable.

At the same time, the Jewish community has advanced socially and economically, becoming in a large measure part of the middle class suburban or semi-suburban world exposed to the problems affecting that community. Middle management, middle-level white-collar, positions have higher educational requirements. Concurrently, many medium and small businesses are being affected by mergers; automation is eroding many of the jobs available in this sector. The children of all groups face increasingly stiffer competition in entering colleges of their choice. Educational counseling is becoming a necessity as is indicated in the Cleveland study and confirmed by our Chicago study.

The overall improvement in the economic health of the Jewish community is accompanied by an increase in the number of persons who are vocationally marginal or vulnerable. We should consider the fact that since few people are added to the Jewish community as prospective new citizens-even with changes in immigration policies—the makeup of the Jewish community is beginning to approximate that of the total community. The gains made in the movement to the suburbs are counter-balanced by the needs to meet mortgage payments and other time payments and the inability to withstand severe economic crises, whether occasioned by illness or unemployment. More and more of the older members of the Jewish community. who comprise a larger segment than in the general community, are finding that they are less well-educated and less able to find new employment if they lose their jobs. With the trend in industry toward early retirement, the number of people in this group that can be called "marginal" because of age will increase.

The problems of the older worker, the vulnerable middle level business man, displaced youth, and the disabled, are evident and require concentrated help. Despite public programs, the need is present and will remain for some time to come.

## 3. Legislative and Policy Changes on the Federal Level

People with economic and vocational problems have become the direct state, federal and local concern under the poverty programs. Such acts as the Full Employment Act, the Manpower Development Training Program, the Area Development Programs, the Economic Opportunity Act and the Office of Manpower and Training Programs, plus a

myriad of community acts under these laws testify to the urgency of the problems and the awareness of public officials. In addition, changes in the Vocational Rehabilitation Act have provided greater impetus to work with the vocationally disabled in our society.

This increasing concern of the government with the socially disadvantaged, the poverty-stricken, and the disabled results in a greater tendency for the government to provide funds to work with private or voluntary agencies in developing projects for research or demonstration programs. In effect, the government is asking that the private agencies contribute their skills and experience to help them in solutions for urgent national problems. As yet, the skills and experience of private agencies have only been skimmed, but there is no question that as the poverty programs continue and broaden, our local private agencies will become more deeply involved.

### 4. Trends in the Social Welfare Field

Within the social welfare field there has been a qualitative growth in programs. More difficult problems are being tackled on a more intensive basis. At the same time, public agencies and programs have been improving their standards. On an overall basis, public funds have been flowing into medical care, old age homes, and child-care. The JVS's represent part of a growing movement towards the co-mingling of public and private funds in the solution of social problems on an individual and group basis.

The use of public funds for research and demonstration programs reflects the inability or unwillingness of the federations to support experimental or pilot programs with private funds, even though these are geared to the solution of problems of immediate concern to the Jewish and entire community. This is readily understandable, for the cost of research and demonstration projects on a community-wide basis are prohibitive and beyond the financial limits of federation support considering the dollars expended against the number of people served.

We must recognize that the flow of federal funds to the JVS's results from the following:

- Increasing awareness of the importance of vocational and economic forces.
- 2. The needs of the disadvantaged groups and the willingness of the JVS's to work with those groups.
- 3. The experimental and developmental nature of the JVS's exemplifying the tradition that the private agency is concerned with improvement of techniques to better help the community.
- 4. The need for the JVS's to experiment with individual vocational problems which require both a qualitative and quantitative approach.
- The JVS body of knowledge and experience gained over many years in working with the disabled and disadvantaged groups.

## The Changes in the Scope of JVS Services

The JVS's, by-and-large, began with placement service, moved on to guidance and educational counseling, and then to rehabilitation of the disabled. Although our placement function in Chicago is of prime importance, it is also evident we are spending more time in the counseling area and—excepting our summer placement program—we are handling as many people for counseling as we are for placement. Millions of Americans in their mid-thirties and early forties, who appear to be secure in their careers, may have to reappraise their qualifica-

tions for employment if they wish to remain secure in the labor market during the next twenty years.

For the foreseeable future, the JVS's will add intensive vocational counseling for individuals who are displaced because of automation or other technological changes; work with the marginal poor and individuals above the public assistance level who require training or retraining. A large part of their efforts will be devoted to helping individuals in vocational need make use of training and educational resources required to develop new skills or to master the needs of new occupations. Greater use will be made of group techniques for persons facing vocational problems-women reentering the labor market after extended periods at home, the older person forced to change his job and young people who are entering the labor market. These program changes suggest that the JVS's will direct services towards the vulnerable members of the Jewish community.

The JVS's spend considerable time with older people in an attempt to teach them new skills to re-enter the labor market on a part-time basis. For the short range, we can expect an increase in the sheltered workshop programs designed to help older persons maintain personal dignity through productive and paid work. For the longer range, we should re-examine this practice. With the trend to early, and sometimes compulsory retirement, perhaps the JVS should work with other social agencies in developing counseling techniques to enable persons at the end of their work career to make the transition to where they use their time in pursuit of nonwork activities that are social, recreational or religious. Perhaps some instrument other than the shelter workshops now being operated for our old age population will be developed to replace work for the maintenance of personal dignity. In any event, the need for new

programs to keep the retired active will be an increasing pressure on our social agencies.

The JVS's will play an important role in cooperation with public agencies in developing models for approaches to significant social problems in the vocational area. As there is increased recognition that vocational problems exist in combination with other problems, actionresearch projects will become more prominent. The JVS's will work with other agencies, attempt to combine research and service, and undertake pilot and experimental programs to extend agency services to members of the Jewish community who have severe problems in the vocational area for the first time: In states where fair employment practice laws are in effect, JVS placement activities will serve all who apply for help in compliance with state laws.

## Suggested Principles Governing the Use of Public Funds by JVS's

The articles previously cited and our own analysis of the JVS field suggest the following as principles governing the use of public funds by JVS's:

- 1. New program developments should arise out of a demonstrated need and should have as its focus improving service to the Jewish community.
- 2. Agency's involvement in experimental programs should not dilute the core services provided the Jewish community or impede the development of extended services to the Jewish community. These should properly be supported by the Jewish federation.
- 3. Evaluation of a publicly supported research program should be an ongoing process with provision for continued community support of the program if its worth is demonstrated.
- 4. The decision to continue a demonstration program which has proved its worth under JVS auspices depends upon the extent to which the new service con-

tributes to the maintenance of the economic health of the Jewish community.

- 5. The JVS has always recognized its obligation to contribute to the welfare of the general community. Traditionally, it has made this contribution by providing leadership and consultative services to the general community. Because of their recognized professional competence, JVS's are increasingly requested to take a more active role in establishing new services, particularly for disadvantaged groups in our society. The urgency of the need has led to modification of policy to include involvement in new programs for the poverty-stricken under conditions which protect the agency's basic commitment and responsibility to the Jewish community. Careful consideration should be given to the establishment of guide-lines by asking the questions:
- (a) What should the ratio of government funds be to community funds?
- (b) What should be the ratio of staff working on research and demonstration projects to federation-supported programs?
- (c) What should be the ratio of clients served by government programs to clients in other agency activities?
- (d) What proportion of JVS efforts should be devoted to working with the most difficult vocational groups?

## Current Issues of Central Import to JVS

# 1. The Significance of the Contribution JVS's Are Making to Retraining for a Changing Employment Market

The JVS's are, and have been, a significant factor in developing techniques in this area. Their work with the industrially inept, with persons unacquainted with the industrial technology and knowhow, has led to the concept of "vocational acculturation," providing background training in work habits and

facilitating the development of a work personality. Many government programs are based upon using work and counseling as an integrated whole to help the socially disadvantaged acquire a work personality. The JVS's have been pioneers in this field and will contribute to its further development.

## 2. The Impact of Automation on Employment

Automation will intensify technological and business changes causing a decrease in the number of unskilled jobs and tending to displace white collar and middle-management personnel. The Corplan study conducted by an affiliate of the Illinois Institute of Technology forecasts major changes in employment and technology in the Chicagoland area. Changes will occur in the occupational structure, necessitating the education and training of new workers in new skills, and requiring re-education and retraining of displaced experienced workers. Increasingly, technological displacement will affect white collar and middle-management personnel, as well as youth seeking entry employment, and the marginal, unskilled worker. Retraining and continued educational and vocational planning will become a necessity for growing numbers of persons of all ages.

While placing greater demands upon skill and knowledge, automation will open a host of new jobs. In the vocational area this will lead to continued education, training, and counseling. Recent JVS experiments with intensive vocational counseling for middle-aged adults re-entering the labor market or changing their vocations point the way towards techniques which will become increasingly useful on a broader scale. However, the full significance of automation cannot be determined at this time other than to say that the concepts

of continuing education and training will become more significant.

## 3. The Problems of Unskilled, Handicapped Persons

These are similar to the problems posed by automation and the approach will be similar. In addition, greater use will be made of work experience programs including workshops to provide the basis for learning needed skills. In part, it may be necessary for the Jewish community to undertake long-term sheltered workshops, with the assistance of public agencies, which would permit such individuals to become and remain productive citizens.

4. The significance of the Extension of Services Beyond the Jewish Community to the General Community and the Implications of Such Extension

Our prior discussion has pointed out that the extension of JVS services into the non-sectarian community are the result of a mandate to meet new national needs. The movement is significant in the recognition of the importance of the vocational area and of the contribution that the Jewish community can make to solve those problems. We feel that this will continue without losing the central identification with the Jewish community and that the principles enunciated in the preceding section will enable the JVS's to serve the Jewish community and to continue assisting the general community.

The trend, as I see it, will be towards experimental or pilot projects which can serve as models for community action on a wide scale. The necessity of combining research and service is inevitable if the JVS's are to meet the needs of increasingly vulnerable and marginal members of the Jewish community.

If these changes continue, the Jewish federations may have to consider using

"risk capital" to permit JVS's to experiment with new techniques and to accept the possibilities of failure as well as success. The use of "risk capital" would enable the JVS's to pin-point the areas in which they can specifically serve the Jewish community.

#### Summary

The JVS programs evolved in response to major changes in the Jewish community and in the social and economic aspects of our society. Problems arose affecting segments of the Jewish community which had not hitherto felt the impact of the newer technological and economic changes. Concurrently, new techniques were developed for dealing with the vocationally disadvantaged and the disabled.

The greater use of federal funds now by the JVS movement stems from the emphasis upon "action research" to establish needed service programs. The stress upon experimental projects will continue as an important element in JVS programming.

Governmental financing for specialized research and demonstration does not affect the relationship of the JVS to the Jewish community. JVS programs are directed towards the vocationally vulnerable and disadvantaged. Specialized projects in rehabilitation and counseling areas are concerned with meeting immediate and long-range needs. Cooperation with other public and private agencies provides better tools for filling the needs of the Jewish community and the non-Jewish community.

As the vocational readjustments in the immediate future become increasingly important to the Jewish community, JVS programming will include more intensive vocational counseling and the use of public resources for continuing education and training. Recent studies of JVS's stress the importance of the JVS

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to the social well being and economic health of the Jewish community. Current trends highlight the significance of a broad range of service for the Jewish community and the need to continue developing and improving techniques and methods for this purpose.

In short, I believe the facts reviewed here underscore the very basic new underpinning in our field; that our programming is vitally interwoven with the social objectives of the entire community, with changes created by scientific and technological advances, and with the Federal Government and its tangible aid.

Despite the fact that JVS is a sectarian vocational agency, its present opportunity and challenge to better the lives of Jews and their neighbors across this country demand that it seize every available source of assistance. Only then can we do the kind of new job to match the new broader scope of the new needs that face us.