

“The JACS concept evolved out of a sense of isolation. While the singular aloneness of the active alcoholic, addict and their families had found relief in the 12 Step Programs, many recovering Jews felt something was missing. Some had the need to share with other recovering Jews. Others felt forever ostracized from the Jewish community. More than anything else was the desire for spiritual growth in a Jewish context, a need to come to terms with ones roots.”

ABOUT JACS

Founded in 1979, JACS (Jewish Alcoholics, Chemically Dependent Persons and Significant Others) is an outgrowth of the pioneering work of UJA/Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York and its Commission on Synagogue Relations. In 1992, JACS became a program of the Rita J Kaplan Jewish Connections Programs of JBFCS (Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services).

JACS is a grass roots, volunteer driven, membership organization, committed to self help and mutual support. JACS members, representing the entire spectrum of Jewish experience, background, affiliation and observance, are able to connect with one another, explore their Jewish roots, and discover resources within Judaism to enhance their recovery.

JACS has adopted a three-fold mission:

- 1) to provide retreats, support programs and other opportunities for recovering Jews and family members
- 2) to promote knowledge and understanding of alcoholism and chemical dependency in the Jewish community; and
- 3) to act as a resource center and information clearinghouse on the effects of the disease on Jewish family life.

For more than three decades, JACS has directly assisted thousands of alcoholic and chemically addicted Jews and families and reached tens of thousands more through publications, community presentations and the media. JACS has also provided leadership to the Jewish recovery movement and fostered the development of dozens of independent JACS groups nationally and internationally.

JACS has been the primary driving force in bringing addiction in the Jewish community out of the shadows and onto the agenda of Jewish institutional life. It has sensitized and involved the rabbinate in meeting the spiritual needs of addicted Jews and families in recovery. And, it has advocated and intervened to help remove barriers to treatment for Jewish patients.

HIGHLIGHTS

For over thirty years JACS points with pride to a record of outstanding accomplishments and groundbreaking initiatives.

- With UJA Federation, we developed the concept of the “JACS Jewish Spiritual Retreat Weekend” – a “spiritual homecoming” - for Jews in recovery and their family members, blending Jewish tradition and 12 step recovery philosophy. Over the past 30 years, we have held 64 retreats attended by nearly 10,000 participants, from 45 states, Canada, Israel and South America.
- We created Spiritual Days and Spiritual Dialogues with rabbis and addiction professionals to provide opportunities to explore spirituality, Jewish belief and tradition in a 12-step idiom. And, we have presented multi session Seminars and Courses to provide additional avenues for exploring Jewish texts, holiday observances and recovery concepts.
- We conducted a Mission to Israel for JACS members, accompanied by two “JACS Rabbis” combining a heritage tour of the country, with a “recovery itinerary” including visits to a rehab, recovery program in a kibbutz, AA meetings, and participation in a seminar on “Spirituality and Substance Abuse” at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.
- We partnered with Israel Free Spirit, Taglit – Birthright to run sober tours to Israel. Our sober tours of Israel allow 30 Jewish young people from across the USA and Canada to travel to historical and religious sites as well as a “sobriety itinerary” including group discussions, attendance at AA meetings and visits to Israeli treatment centers.

“The JACS Rabbinical Training Course...profoundly changed the direction of my rabbinate...Not only did my congregants benefit from my training and concerns, I discovered for my own life the power and message of Jewish spirituality”

- We initiated Clergy Training programs to emphasize the key role of rabbis in the spiritual healing and reconciliation process of Jews in recovery. We developed the *first* formal Certificate Program in Chemical Dependency and Spiritual Counseling, co-sponsored by the major theological seminaries. More than 200 rabbis have attended over the years. In addition, we have also “experientially trained” hundreds of rabbis at JACS retreats.
- We produced the *first* Video on addiction in the Jewish community, through the eyes of those who lived it and lived through it, along with commentary and insights by rabbis and treatment personnel – which was distributed to several hundred congregations across the country.

- We developed a new JACS Newsletter, featuring information on JACS activities, members' poetry, stories and "musings," and a Rabbi's Forum. Printed copies are distributed to 3,000 individuals and over 1,000 Jewish schools, synagogues, and community agencies. An on-line version reaches the broader Jewish recovery community, treatment facilities and the community at large.
- We published the JACS Journal, a "*historical saga of the Jewish recovery movement*" – where "*many of the earliest definitive articles on the subject, written by renowned authors were first published.*" We estimate that more than 75 books and major articles owe their genesis and inspiration to the Rabbis connected with JACS.

"The panelists each told their incredible, moving stories. It was certainly an emotion filled evening. Our sisterhood felt this was an important message and thought if one person attending the meeting was helped it was definitely worthwhile. Three members of the congregation approached the speakers after the meeting for more information. In our opinion, this made the evening a resounding success."

- We established an active Speakers Bureau, - a cornerstone of JACS' outreach activities - which has fulfilled over 800 engagements - at schools, synagogues, youth groups, community centers and social service agencies And, made presentations at national and international conferences and conventions - of Federations, rabbinical bodies, addiction treatment professionals, mental health groups and self-help associations.
- We consulted and assisted Government Agencies and Organizations in NY and Israel. We worked with the NYS OASAS (Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services) to include "culturally sensitive items" for "special populations" in treatment protocols for state treatment facilities. We conferred with the Director the Alcoholism Program in Israel, gave presentations at an Annual Congress on Alcoholism, and more recently, participated in a Program Exchange where Israeli social workers met with JACS members and staff in New York and JACS representatives met with social service personnel in Israel.
- We created an online social network allowing our members to connect with each other through Facebook and the JACS e-mail ListServ.
- We provided monthly phone meetings with a guest speaker for our members on specific spiritual topics relating to recovery.

- We established the *first* Teen and Young Adult Network and the *first* Teen and Young People’s Retreat for Jewish youth in recovery, those at risk of addiction, and those concerned about friends and family members. Approximately 250 youth have participated in programs providing positive socialization in a safe, sober, supportive environment. Activities include discussion meetings, holiday parties, special events and participation in a Teen Speakers Bureau which provides outreach to schools, youth groups and summer camps.
- We collaborated with the Board of Jewish Education on the *first* Teacher Training curriculum for Jewish day schools on prevention of substance abuse, and we presented “Yom Iyuns” (days of learning) to nearly 4,000 students at Jewish high schools to talk about addiction, education and prevention.
- We partnered with Beit T’Shuvah, a residential recovery center, to present “Partners in Prevention” in schools – a program emphasizing Jewish spiritual values as a path to self worth and self acceptance as a way to avoid addictive and self destructive behaviors .
- We undertook the JACS 1 Study, the first major research study of a Jewish addicted population in more than twenty years, which surveyed our membership to identify the characteristics of chemically dependent Jews and families . The Study was presented at the prestigious APA (American Psychiatric Association) Annual Conference and is a valuable tool for researchers.
- We published Jewish Sisters in Sobriety: Untold Stories of Alcoholism, Drug Addiction, Co-Dependency and Recovery in Jewish Women, the *first* book ever written about Jewish women and addiction, featuring first person memoirs which ‘speak to’ Jewish women who are struggling in isolation, shame, anger or despair with their own or a loved one’s addiction . The book features a resource guide on 12 step programs, a bibliography, glossary, and Rabbinic discussions of Jewish Tradition and the 12 Steps.

“We come to JACS for many things. To pray openly as addicts, to enjoy 12 step fellowship as Jews, to find spirituality based on our heritage, to find a “basheert.” Nowhere else am I so aware of belonging. This place fits me like no other. I look around at the rainbow of Judaism that we make. Whatever our purposes, the acceptance and respect of each other exactly as we are is what makes JACS a miracle. Each of us as sober Jews is a JACS miracle. When we keep coming back, together we keep the miracle happening.”