

INTOUCH

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301-2255 Carling Avenue, Ottawa, ON K2B 7Z5
P. 613-722-2225 | F. 613-722-7570 | info@jfsottawa.com



FIGHTING FOR FAIRNESS

BY SARAH CASPI, MSW, RSW ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On Monday, January 16, 2017, *The Globe and Mail* published an article by Michelle Zilio entitled: *Two richest Canadians own more than bottom 30% of population, report finds*. In the article Zilio quotes from the Director of Policy and Campaigns for Oxfam Canada saying, "The inequality crisis is bigger than we feared..." Those of us working in social services are not surprised that the income discrepancy is growing and our clients are getting poorer. Every day we see Jewish clients struggling with poverty and the issues directly related to living with low incomes. These include lack

of access to adequate housing, dental services, mental health services, and the list goes on. For those on social assistance, the rates are nowhere near to the standard of living amounts. It is time to push for living wages.

This article is important as it discusses new data from an annual report that is put out by OXFAM. This study on wealth poverty was released to coincide with the World Economic Forum. The most shocking detail is that the two wealthiest Canadians have more assets than the bottom 30% of Canadians. The international gap indicated that the lowest 10% income rose by \$65 from 1988 to 2011. The Oxfam report indicates how the "superrich are fueling the inequality by driving down wages and using their power to influence politics and dodging taxes." This is a major societal issue that will have consequences on our society. If you read our newsletter, you are familiar with the social issues that JFS and all social service agencies try to address. Our challenges are a consequence of this

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tremendous inequality. It impacts on the health of individuals and their children. It is time to look at social policy and inequality.

The report calls for a more “human economy” that works for all people, and not just the fortunate few. It is our collective responsibility to fight, not only to protect our current social policies, but to create policies that protect people from poverty and tighten our taxation system to ensure that people with the most money pay their taxes. We need to see a budget that prioritizes progressive taxation, and increases government spending on social services and encourages living wages. ✨

Source: Zilio, M (2017, January 16) Two richest Canadians own more than bottom 30% of population, report finds *The Globe and Mail* Retrieved from www.theglobeandmail.com

SYRIAN REFUGEES AND MENTAL HEALTH: TRAINING, CASE CONFERRING AND COUNSELLING

BY ANDREA GARDNER, MSW, RSW
ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Settlement workers and private sponsors have been the front-line support for Syrian refugees since the beginning of their arrival just over a year ago. These supporters have been instrumental in offering and providing the Syrians with with the most basic of needs, and ensuring that their integration and adaptation to Ottawa has been supported and welcoming. However, the migration journey has taken a toll on these refugees. Syrians have experienced,

witnessed, and survived terrible atrocities that have left an imprint on their emotional well-being. One of the biggest challenges facing our front-line support network is navigating the emerging mental health related issues, and offering and accessing mental health support.

Why is this a challenge?

Within the Arab culture there is a tremendous stigma attached to mental health issues. We know that Syrians view professional help as being reserved for “crazy people” and are offended at the suggestion that they are struggling with their mental well-being.

With funding from IRCC (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada), JFS has developed a Mental Wellness Training Program for those who are interacting with the Syrian refugees to help them understand Syrian culture and their emotional experiences. The training covers topics such as: understanding Syrian culture and cross cultural sensitivity; impact of war and trauma; emotional experiences related to the migration journey; and how to recognize these emotional struggles.

For the Syrians themselves, we have culturally sensitive Arabic speaking counsellors who understand the complexities of their issues and their resistance to accessing help.

The training also supports the actual settlement worker as well through a comprehensive self-care section that addresses the issue of burn-out and dealing with stress and vicarious trauma when working with refugees. Included in the training, the program also offers on-going support through monthly case conference meetings and follow-up for support workers to share and learn from each other. As well, there is on-demand clinical consultation support as needed.

For more information on our training, please contact Lamia Al Ansari at llalansari@jfsottawa.com or call at **613-277-2225 ext 302**. ✨

COUNSELLING WAITING LIST CONTINUES TO GROW

BY REBECCA FROMOWITZ, MSW, RSW
ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Public awareness and anti-stigma campaigns, designed to help people better understand mental health, have had their intended impact. However, while the volume of people seeking mental health supports has increased dramatically in recent years, accessible affordable services in this city have not.

"According to the results from the 2012 CCHS-MH, more than one in six Canadians aged 15

or older experienced a need for mental health care in the previous 12 months ... the most common unmet mental health service need was for counselling."
~ Statistics Canada

An increase in demand for counselling has created long waits for services in the city. The waiting list at JFS is at an all-time high: Our waitlist has grown from 3 to 11 months over the last year and a half. Meanwhile, funding for counselling services for low-income Ottawa residents (without the means to cover the cost of private sector services) has been cut by various sources.

"Those who can afford it pay for it privately. Those who cannot

DO YOU KNOW A JEWISH SENIOR living with dementia, Alzheimer's, or other memory-related issues?



✨ OUR ADULT DAY PROGRAMS CAN HELP!

The Adult Day Programs offered at Jewish Family Services provide the critical stimulation necessary for those dealing with dementia-related illnesses to thrive.

All programs take place at 2255 Carling Ave. (at Woodroffe). Hot Kosher lunch and snack are provided. Transportation is available for an added cost.

Mondays: 11:00 am – 3:00 pm
Suitable for those with early-to-mild stages of impairment.

Wednesdays: 11:00 am – 3:00 pm
Suitable for those with moderate stages of impairment.

For more information, contact Lisa Rossman, Manager, Thelma Steinman Seniors Support Services at 613-722-2225 ext. 392, or visit our website.

are stuck on long wait lists, or have to fall back on prescription medications. Or get no help at all.” ~ *Globe and Mail*

Additionally we are seeing clients who have more complex needs, suicidal ideation, pervasive trauma histories, and less community and family supports.

The make-up of our client population has also changed. We are seeing more transitional-aged youth – an age group most at risk for mental illness – and their families requesting services.

Our efforts to reduce structural barriers, and better address the unmet mental health needs of

ethnic and racial minority groups, especially new immigrants and refugees, has also led to an increase in requests for culturally and linguistically-appropriate services. Indeed, our agency’s recent settlement work with the Syrian refugee community has led to a large number of referrals to our counselling program for psychosocial supports.

We have been seeing many Syrian refugees experiencing post-traumatic stress and mental health concerns, prompted by pre-migration conditions (i.e. violence/war crimes, prolonged displacement, losses, etc.), struggles with migration-associated losses, as well as post-migration stressors. Counselling offered through JFS has been instrumental form for many of these families, supporting both adults and children/families towards more successful integration.

Due to very limited resources, many clients are not able to receive services in a timely way; many are waiting too long to receive the evidence-based care they require, most often exacerbating their symptoms and concerns.

Our staff of professional social workers and psychotherapists are currently working to capacity. Many are volunteering additional hours to ensure those in crisis have basic supports.



KOSHER MEALS ON WHEELS

Fresh, nutritious, delicious Kosher meals delivered right to your home or office!

Midweek Meals – Wednesdays

Four-week rotating menu of fish and dairy options.

(Each meal includes a choice of entrée with two sides, two pieces of bread, and fruit.)

Adults: \$10 | Seniors: \$8.50

Fresh Fridays

Four-week rotating menu of beef and poultry options.

(Each meal includes chicken soup, challah roll, choice of entrée with two sides, piece of cake, and fruit.)

Adults: \$12 Seniors: \$10.

Frozen Meals

Choice of 15 meat, dairy and pareve menu items.

(Each is accompanied by two pieces of bread and a piece of fruit.)

\$8/each

*Prices include delivery and taxes. Meals are delivered between 10:15 am and 11:30 am throughout the city.



The KMOW program is the proud supplier of kosher meals to the Queensway-Carleton and Montfort hospitals, as well as to the Ottawa Hospital’s Going Home Program.

For more information or to place an order, please contact Kosher Meals on Wheels at 613-722-2225, ext. 315 or kmow@jfsottawa.com.

We require additional funding in order to ensure that clients receive the services they require, especially those services that are available at JFS for those that have few if no resources and cannot access services elsewhere due cultural/linguistic barriers. ✨

CARING FOR OUR SENIORS

BY LISA ROSSMAN, MSW, RSW,
MANAGER, THELMA STEINMAN
JEWISH SENIOR SERVICES UNIT

As a social worker in the Thelma Steinman Jewish Senior Services Unit, I work with many Jewish seniors who live independently, with the intention to remain in their home for as long as possible. They may have difficulties dressing themselves, preparing their own meals or even going up the stairs, but when we discuss accessing some help I often hear “I’m ok” or “I can manage.” Many of our senior clients are resistant to getting the additional help they need to live independently, successfully. And they also resist moving to a retirement home or to a long-term care facility for a multitude of reasons: cost, loss of independence, personality and many more.

Caring for a senior can be complicated, stressful and frustrating for anyone, especially for their caregivers. To best

support seniors part of my work includes supporting their adult children, caregivers and spouses. These caregivers help their parents or spouse with some of their most basic activities of daily living, as well as assisting with grocery shopping, drives to medical appointments, and even the simplest of tasks, like taking out the garbage. For caregivers, it’s a juggling act – supporting the needs of the senior in their life; ensuring their safety; and self-care. Managing this takes effort and practice.

I see many caregivers struggle between what they believe their parent or spouse should do and what they *actually* do, so they can stay at home safely. Caregivers may feel helpless when their loved one resists any form of help outside of what they give them. Here are some suggestions we provide at JFS so that our caregivers feel prepared should a crisis occur:

1. Educate yourself: Understand the aging process, what illness

your parent or spouse has, what their needs will be, and everything in between – where to buy proper shoes, assistive devices for the home, and where and how to ask for subsidies.

2. Start the conversation: This is probably the most difficult task for many families because family dynamics affect how the conversations will go. This conversation should address sensitive issues related to living arrangements, finances, end-of-life care and funeral wishes. If possible, have the conversation when your parent or spouse is healthy, and can be an active participant. When a crisis occurs, making big decisions can be very overwhelming.

3. Living arrangements: Learn about the difference between a retirement home and long-term care facility. I suggest to clients that they take a tour and visit a couple places that fit their budget. When a crisis



happens and a client is not allowed to return home, you don't want to be in a position that requires you to take the first available option. You and your parent or spouse want a place they will be comfortable in.

4. Paperwork: Get a copy of the Power of Attorney (POA) for personal care and property. Get a copy of your parent or spouse's life insurance, will, list of investments, safety deposit boxes, and list of medications. Being organized will make things much smoother when your parent or spouse is in a crisis and you become responsible for decision making.

5. Speak with a social worker: Taking care of your parent or spouse can be exhausting and can lead to burnout, especially if you are doing it alone. When the list of needs and responsibilities becomes overwhelming, hire a social worker to be involved so that if any balls drop there is someone to catch them.

This is not an exhaustive list for the caregiver, but it is a beginning. These are suggestions to encourage you to be proactive in your senior's life, so when decisions need to be made, you and your family will feel more prepared to make the best

decisions that respect your parent or spouse, and will allow them to live with dignity.

If you or someone you know could benefit from social work services, please contact Lisa Rossman, Manager of Thelma Steinman Seniors Support Services, at **613-722-2225 ext. 392**, or at **lrossman@jfsottawa.com**. ✨

NEW CENTRE FOR COUPLES

BY STEPHANIE DUGDALE, MA, CCC,
MANAGER, THE CENTRE FOR COUPLES
AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Counselling Group of Jewish Family Services is pleased to announce the new **Centre for Couples and Relationships**.

The new Centre is directing more staffing resources towards couples and relationships, to meet the rise in demand for these services.

At JFS, we have a long history of working with couples from diverse backgrounds, experiencing a wide variety of issues and challenges. Our couples counsellors have training and expertise working with such issues as: disconnection and distance, mental health concerns, sexuality, trust, infidelity, conflict and escalation, trauma, life transitions, marital preparation, separation and divorce,

parenting, inter-cultural and inter-faith challenges, and more.

As with all of our counselling programs, our couples counsellors work with an ethnically, culturally, and socio-economically diverse client population. We are LGBTQQI positive and have extensive experience working with same-sex and trans clients.

If you or anyone you might know could benefit from couples or relationship counselling, contact our Intake Worker at **613-722-2225 x352**. ✨

FINDING A BETTER WAY: A BASIC INCOME PILOT PROJECT FOR ONTARIO

BY SHELLEY RIVIER, MSW
SHELLEY RIVIER IS THE MANAGER OF THE
TIKVAH JEWISH SUPPORT UNIT.

Ontario is considering a pilot program to test the benefits of a "basic annual income." The intent of a basic annual income would be to decrease poverty by giving Ontarians a basic untaxed income, higher than Ontario Works (about 75% of the low-income measure), with a recommendation of an additional \$500 a month for disabled people.

The report recommends testing in three sites to compare outcomes

with other sites that are using the conventional system of Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). The pilot would run for three years and will measure health outcomes, life choices, education outcomes, work behaviours, community-level impact, food security reliance, administrative costs, social inclusion, mobility and housing. It is hoped that a basic annual income would reduce the reliance on other heavily used community and government resources.

A study of a basic income in the 70's in Manitoba showed how it could be done. Poverty was basically eliminated; emergency room visits decreased; as did chronic illness, crime, unemployment, and there was an increase in the level of education.

Anyone who must work within the current social safety nets knows how confusing, and often how humiliating it can be. With its complicated rules and nearly impossible to explain policies, a person is left feeling even more vulnerable than when they came in. A basic income would eliminate the need to interact with such a draconian system.

Work as we know is changing dramatically with the advent of technology that decreases the need for an unskilled labour market. We need to examine what it means to work. We need

to look at the value of work, not in hours of work but in its quality and value to the person. Society will not need the abundant pool of workers we have and will continue to churn out every year. A basic income would guarantee a standard of living for all persons in precarious and inadequate work and recognising that the opportunities for full-time, secure work is dwindling.

There is still not enough information in this report to know if this will be a reasonable

solution to poverty, but it is a step in the right direction. By removing such barriers as assets, earnings, and the burden of securing other financial resources, an individual would be assured of an acceptable level of income with the option of increasing it through other alternatives like employment. ✨



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For Children Ages 9-11

A small, specialized group program designed to help your child grow in a number of key areas:

- Breaking down barriers in making friends and socializing
- Conflict management strategies
- Anxiety and stress-reduction techniques
- Engaged listening and problem-solving skills
- Recognizing and managing emotions
- Enhancing self-esteem, assertiveness and confidence
- Self-care and coping

The program is a play- and CBT-based (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) and is facilitated by a child and family counsellor with expertise in social-emotional development.



Our next group begins Wednesday April 19th, 2017 and ends June 14th, 2017 from 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm.

Cost: \$260 (covered under many extended health plans).

For more information about this program, contact:
Jessica Ferguson-King, 613-722-2225, ext 481.

www.thecounsellinggroup.com • 613-722-2225 • fax: 613-722-7570 • tcgadmin@jfsottawa.com

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