

Jewish Infant/Toddler Family Day Care*

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We have considered that one of our most important services is to help parents think through the child care options available to them. Many parents have not realized the adjustment a child may encounter when placed in regular all-day substitute care.

Introduction

A local weekly Jewish suburban newspaper had an ad that said, "Wanted: person to care for child to be born in July to caring parents. Love of our English sheepdog an asset. Please call . . ." A telephone number was included. These ads are not unusual in Jewish local newspapers.

Today the world of mothers with young children is divided into two nearly equal parts. Just over half (52%) of the mothers with children under six are in the labor force. These women are the mothers of eight million children.¹ The trend will continue and by the end of the decade (just five years away), 11½ million children under six will have mothers in the labor force.² Considering mothers of infants under one year old, the same is true, with just under one-half (46%) working.

Economic necessity causes most women to work. Either they are the sole provider or two-thirds have husbands earning less than \$15,000 per year.³ Lastly, among working mothers with

children under three years of age, two out of the three are working full time in contrast to part time work.⁴

To meet all the day care needs of 22 million children under 13 years old with working parents in this country, there are 900,000 places in child care centers and 5.2 million places in family day care homes. This means there is less than one place for every three children.⁵ The shortage of licensed facilities, at a price affordable for low and medium income families, and of a quality conducive to sound child development has increasingly developed into a major national problem.

The Need for Developmental Child Care—Jewish

The Jewish family had not escaped being part of these statistics. In their survey of the Jewish divorced in Cuyahoga County, the Cleveland Section of the National Council of Jewish Women revealed that 86.2% worked to maintain the family or supplement income, and 38.3% of the single parents interviewed indicated a conflict between work and role as a parent. Two main problems encountered in child care arrangements were provisions in case of child illness and cost of care.⁶

Dr. Saul Hofstein in his article "Perspectives on the Jewish Single Parent Family" indicated that a continuing and

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¹ "What Price Day Care", *Newsweek*, September 10, 1984, p. 17.

² Suzanne Martinez, "Federal Child Care Legislation", *Washington Social Legislation Bulletin*. April 8, 1985, Vol. 29, Issue 7, p. 25.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ National Council of Jewish Women, *Survey of Jewish Divorced in Cuyahoga County*, Cleveland, Ohio, 1979, p. 20.

overriding need of the 50% of Jewish single parents who worked was assistance with child care. He cited need for expansion of day care, family day care, nursery schools, after school and summer programs to meet the needs. He indicated the imperative need for reinforcement of the Jewish component of family life to strengthen the identity of children.⁷

A 1983 study of child day care under Jewish auspices revealed that almost 6,000 children, ages newborn to kindergarten, were reported to be in all-day care programs (including New York City). The actual figure is expected to be higher, as many cities did not include day care in synagogues and day schools.⁸

Over the past ten years, the infant/toddler day care needs of Jewish working mothers have also become increasingly apparent at the Jewish Day Nursery of the Jewish Children's Bureau, in Cleveland, Ohio. The Jewish Day Nursery is a 64-year old day care center which serves children of parents who need to work or study. In the center, there are up to 66 children, three to six, in five preschool groups and one kindergarten. The day care center is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., five days per week, almost all year round, with the exception of Jewish holidays. The laws of Kashruth are observed, and the school serves approximately 90% Jewish families (the other 10% have some affiliation with the Jewish community) on a sliding scale basis. Funding is from the Jewish Community Federation and the United Way Service, parent fees, and the U.S. government nutrition program.

⁷ Saul Hofstein, "Perspectives of the Jewish Single Parent", *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Spring 1978, Vol. LIV, #3, p. 238.

⁸ Joan Fuld, "Child Day Care Under Jewish Auspices". New York: *Council of Jewish Federations*, November 1984, p. 8.

Evidence: Jewish Requests for Care

Besides receiving seven calls per week for group care for children ages three to six, Jewish Day Nursery was receiving an average of seven requests per week for family day care. These requests included 1) ongoing care for three to four-week old babies, 2) care for convalescing children (early childhood illnesses often require a recuperation time which jeopardizes a parent's earnings and job security), 3) care for toddlers not eligible or developmentally ready for group care, 4) care for the three to five-year old child who needed a more intimate environment than group care could offer, 5) after-school care for the child who needed a more intimate environment than the group can offer, 6) care for the child whose parents needed it during flexible hours when parents worked late.

Social Service Response

As in other communities, several agencies in our community (Children's Services—a private United Way agency—and the Cuyahoga County Welfare Department) were trying to meet infant/toddler needs by offering a family day care homes service for the community at large. Funds were limited and child care needs were continually increasing.

Initially, the Heights Community Child Care Association organized a child family day care home referral service. This was only as effective as the willingness of the individual provider to be professionalized. Quality standards were erratic in such referrals, so the service emphasized that the parent needed to do his own evaluation. More recently, the Center for Human Services undertook the reorganization of this service and is working to increase its effectiveness.

For many years the Jewish Children's Bureau had responded to the need for family day care homes in the Cleveland Jewish community by drawing upon its very limited foster home funds to serve a few families experiencing the most acute need for family day care. The model for this family day care homes activity was the large successful family day care homes program being supervised by the Jewish Family and Children's Agency of Philadelphia.

The Problem

While doing intake for the day care center, it was learned that many children who entered our care at three years-old had already experienced several inadequate caretakers. Teachers reported that these children often seemed disinterested in learning the teacher's name. They acted as if the teacher would soon disappear, so they did not make any effort to relate to her. These children had short attention spans and little self-awareness or self-esteem. It was known that when they were infants and toddlers, many of these bewildered children had been placed in crowded day care centers, staffed by several changing caregivers, or they had been placed in unsatisfactory unsupervised day care homes. In essence, no consistent substitute child care *had ever been* provided.

Many of these families expressed great relief when their child was finally admitted for group care at age three years, and they expressed their frustration over having to make inconsistent, poor quality arrangements for their children prior to this admittance age.

The Program

At our agency we wanted to offer a program that provided quality infant/toddler child care. In 1982, in re-

sponse to the critical need in our community, the Jewish Children's Bureau applied to the Jewish Community Federation Endowment Fund, and received a demonstration grant to develop a supervised family day care homes system to be satellited to the Jewish Day Nursery. The purpose of the satellite program was to provide quality, consistent care for infants, ages four months to three years. The supervised family home system was chosen because after extensive professional and lay committee study in our community, the home environment was thought to be flexible, intimate, individualized, and closest in nature to a young child's own familiar home. The opportunities for incidental learnings and communication with one caregiver in a natural home setting contributed to our decision.

As almost all infant care centers try to establish a homelike environment,^{9,10} it seemed appropriate for the Jewish Day Nursery to place emphasis on providing home based infant/toddler care if it was financially feasible.

In the article, "What Parents Seek in Day Care",¹¹ the authors found that parents feel comfortable when they believe that their child rearing values are shared by the caretaker. A quality home setting, within the family's neighborhood, could provide a familiar surrounding in which parent and child would feel comfortable. In addition, it was our hope that through the provision of a family day care service, we could encourage parents who might have chosen to leave their children for work to

⁹ Anne Willis, *A Good Beginning for Babies*, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington, D.C., 1975, p. 1.

¹⁰ Marshall Haith, *Day Care and Intervention Programs for Infants*, Harvard University, Avatar Press, 1972, p. 7.

¹¹ L. D. Steinberg, C. Green. "What Parents Seek in Day Care", *Human Ecology Forum*, Vol. 10, #2, Fall 1979, p. 39.

remain home and care for their own children as well as others who will be placed with them. These parents would thus be able to work as well as care for their own children.

The Basic Concepts

Over the years much has been written to support the critical importance of the early years of life.¹² Perhaps Moses' mother was ahead of her time when she applied to the Pharaoh's daughter for the job of Nanny for her own child. She surely must have known the critical importance of those first few years of intimacy—the years when trust and basic knowledge of the world and family values begin to form.

Underlying the choice of a supervised family day care homes system were five basic beliefs.

- 1) Jewish children are the future of Judaism and represent our immortality.¹³
- 2) All children are very vulnerable in the first years of life as it is a critical period for growth.
- 3) All children grow successfully in an intimate, responsive, challenging, nurturing environment under the guidance of an invested, loving, consistent caregiver who can individualize the child's needs.
- 4) Jews *must* be concerned about the people who spend nine hours per day, five days per week, with their

children.¹⁴ If Jewish parents could not care for their children during much of their waking hours, then there had to be a way to help them responsibly select those who could be with their children to invest in the children's emotional, physical and intellectual needs as they would do if they could be with them.

- 5) The Jewish community could not remain indifferent to caregivers (i.e. pay minimum wage and allow youngest children to be raised by many different caregivers on part time shifts in institutional settings *or* concentrate on the *numbers* served and not the true quality of the service), for that would jeopardize Jewish children *and* Jewish heritage. If given institutional care by many caregivers, the children's early experiences would be very unlike that of their parents, and they would surely have very different models and values than their parents.

Some critics may still say, "So what! Change can be refreshing. Perhaps they will be better for it all." But, if Jewish children were to become loving, caring, creative, inspiring and contributing adults, none of us could take the chance that this would automatically happen.

Agency Responsibilities

Why did we need to become so involved? Why not just refer people and let them do as they choose to do?

In Ohio, we have no day care home licensing law yet, although one has just passed through our State House of Representatives and is now being considered by the State Senate. This means a

¹² Dr. T. Berry Brazelton. *Toddlers and Parents*. Dell Publishing, 1974; Selma Fraiberg. *Every Child's Birthright—In Defense of Mothering*. New York: Basic Books, 1977; Shirley Moore. "Mother-Child Interactions and Competence in Infants and Toddlers", *Young Children*, Vol. 32, No. 3, March 1977, pp. 64-69; Dr. Burton L. White. *The First Three Years of Life*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1975.

¹³ Bernard Reisman, "The Jewish Family and Jewish Communal Service: A Crisis of Values", *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Sept. 1979, Vol. LVI, No. 1, pp. 35-39.

¹⁴ Howard I. Bogot, "Family Change—Nursery School Response", *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Summer 1977, Vol. LIII, No. 4, pp. 366-369.

provider need not be inspected for health or safety standards nor for numbers of children, nor does she need to be trained. Parents have come to us complaining of unsafe homes, with transient adults visiting, and unchallenging caregivers. Often these complaints have precipitated several prior placements for a child.

Jewish agencies are trusted for their high child care standards. When we make a referral, families feel great confidence in our suggestions. As a matter of fact, when we searched for our caregivers, we found only one out of nine met the standards we believed appropriate for infant/toddler care. We knew we needed to be involved with our caregivers to assure and support the high standards of care we want for Jewish children.

Program Structure

The Family Day Care Homes Program was structured so that once the parent/caregiver relationship had formed, Project involvement could drop to a supportive role. Staff visit homes monthly but parent-caregiver daily communication is primary. Staff support caregivers to share observations about children and to negotiate changes in children's routines and expectations. Annual formal conferences are held between parent and homes supervisor to review a child's progress in care. An important contribution is that staff are always available to parents for help with concerns about the placement.

To develop the Family Day Care Homes service, staff consisted of:

- one full-time Director;
- one 20-hour half-time Child Development Specialist;
- one 20-hour half-time Social Worker for intake; and
- one half-time Secretary.

Over the past 3½ years, the Project has opened and supervised 30 family day care homes and served 76 youngsters:

- 23 infants (0-12 months);
- 19 toddlers (13-23 months);
- 24 two's (24-36 months); and
- 10 over-three's (siblings of younger children).

Seventy percent of these children were Jewish. The additional 30% were affiliated with the Jewish community or referred by someone in the Jewish community.

Caregiver Recruitment

Only 10 of the 30 caregivers we were able to recruit were Jewish, although we used every available resource to recruit Jewish women. To compensate for this, we supported caregivers in training by educating them about Jewish holidays, providing information about Jewish values, giving traditional Jewish symbols, books and music for the home, and teaching respect for *kashruth* if the family needed this.

We had hoped to find caregivers whose children had grown but instead found caregivers who wanted to stay home with their own children and needed a supplemental income to do so. This had advantages for the children of those providers, but also added a dimension of stress for all, as the needs of caregivers' children also had to be considered.

The critical ingredient in establishing a homes service has been finding the appropriate caregiver. Daily care of small children is strenuous work. Few Jewish caregivers are willing to do this for the pay we could provide. Caregivers in our program are expected to form an attachment to a child, fulfill his or her physical needs, provide continuous protection and teach independence, language and personal competence.

Caregivers are expected to offer nurturance and consistency. In our Project, they work as independent contractors, reporting wages earned and paying taxes (something most often avoided in independent caregiving).

We learned that good caregivers are like good teachers:

- 1) Good caregivers need support through orientation. They profit from 21 hours of training and from encouragement to use their intuition, observation skills, and experience to meet a child's needs.
- 2) They need encouragement to establish routines, define expectations, and set limits with the child and the parent.
- 3) They need appreciation and encouragement from the parent for making an investment in the child's care.
- 4) They need to be treated as colleagues in recognition of their professionalism. Monthly follow-up caregiver meetings provide this fellowship and the opportunity for professional exchange.

To succeed:

- 1) Caregivers must have a wish to be of help to others.
- 2) They need to have to supplement their income but not be totally dependent upon child care income.
- 3) They must enjoy young children and their continuing development.
- 4) They must find satisfaction in being at home.
- 5) They must be competent in child rearing, having successfully worked with children (to avoid competition, their own should be at least 18 months old).
- 6) The caregiver must agree to work with the parent on behalf of the child for a commitment of time (one to two-and-a-half years) to bring a child to age appropriate readiness for group care.

- 7) They should have support in child care from a second adult who at times is available to assist them.
- 8) Caregivers also need a *fair wage*. Initially, the Project offered \$6.75 per child per day. In July 1982, the rate was raised to \$1.00 per hour per child. Caregivers serving one child earn \$2340 a year, two children earn \$4680, three children \$7020, four children \$9360. They receive a \$340 bonus for the second year, an hourly increase per child to \$1.15 in their third year, and a bonus of \$340 plus an hourly increase to \$1.25 per hour per child in their fourth year. In addition, they are paid on an enrollment basis, and they receive 18 paid holidays, and the agency liability insurance is extended to them.

Parent Intake

Parents who call the Project are seeking supervised care. They want trustworthy, safe caregivers with whom they feel rapport. Often they are hoping they will find someone just like themselves.

Some mothers call when pregnant, some call when their independent care situation proves disappointing. Because many centers provide group care for two-year olds, many parents wishing their child to excel in social and educational opportunities call to find out if they should disturb their child's nurturing relationship with a caregiver to enter them into group center-based care. As this often means a child will be in a ratio of one adult to six children or more (in our state, it can be 10), we discourage disruption of a good relationship and encourage the parent to withstand pressure and stay until the child can develop age-appropriate skills for success in the group experience.

Many parents are concerned about their ability to select and monitor their child's care. A number of parents have been in conflict about going back to work and have used our service to sort out their children's and their own needs. Many parents have decided they can manage to work part time and so the Project has a part time care option. As might be predicted, fewer hours in care seem less stressful for all—child, parent and caregiver.

The intake placement process has many variables as compared to group/center placements. The five factors that require consideration are:

- 1) The long hours of care (5 to 10 hours) require scheduling.
- 2) The ages of children to be placed must be evaluated in relation to children already placed.
- 3) The home's location must be convenient for parent.
- 4) The dates of care needed must match vacancies.
- 5) The compatibility of personality and similar values of caregiver and parent need to be considered to ensure continuity of service. This is not a simple job, but it was decided that something that is worthwhile is never simple. In fact, staff concluded that it was dangerous to seek simplified solutions to anything as important as replacing parents for 9 to 10 hours per day.

Additional Program Services— Consultation to Parents

Of course, we are only beginning to meet the overwhelming need. During the past three years, we have had over 800 inquiries about infant/toddler care. We have considered that one of our most important services is to help parents think through the child care options available to them. Many parents

have not realized the adjustment a child may encounter when placed in regular all day substitute care. Crying at separation, sleeplessness, disruptions in eating, lapses in toileting, irritability and demandingness when reunited with parents are some of the reactions we have seen. Over time with a slow orientation and support from parents and caregivers, most children have settled in as a special day-time part of the caregiver's family. As friendship and mutual helpfulness grow between caregiver and parent, the child's attachment and comfort increases.

Important Findings

We have learned much about infant/toddler child care in this Project. To support the emotional needs of young children and to support the caregiver's ability to be in tune with each child, we know that:

- 1) It is important to place young infants where the numbers of children are as small as possible (our laws permit five under twelve, no more than two under two).
- 2) That the age and needs levels of children placed in care need to be staggered at least nine months apart to permit individualized care.
- 3) That three under three is possible, but stressful and *not* desirable.
- 4) That the youngest child is best placed first so that the caregiver can invest in the baby and develop routines before further disruption.

We have also learned:

- 5) That our role in sustaining a home for a child involves subtle support to the caregiver and parent, and parents may be unaware of the delicate balance needed for their child's continued placement.
- 6) That despite our involvement,

continuity of care may not always be possible because of the changing personal factors in the child's home and in the caregiver's home (transfers, illnesses, pregnancy).

The Future of the Program

As of December 1984, 15 homes were under contract with a 35 infant/toddler placement capacity (equal to a small day care center). Most importantly, in this program demonstration we achieved some long-term continuity of quality care that we were seeking.

The demonstration project has been completed, and as of July 1985, we moved to a new phase when the Family Day Care Homes Project became part of the regular agency budget. Recently, the Rating Committee of the Jewish Community Federation placed our Family Day Care Homes Project number one out of 156 services to be funded in the Cleveland Jewish community.

The 1985-86 permanent agency program provides for approximately 7-10 day care homes to serve up to 24 children. The staff consists of a part-time, 20-hour Director, a 10-hour Intake Worker, and a part-time Secretary.

The budget expenditures of \$78,396 are balanced by \$54,305 of income from parent fees and federal food program

money. The Jewish Community Federation provides \$20,000 subsidy and the agency will absorb \$4,000 additional deficit, if necessary.

With this funding, the Jewish Day Nursery recruits and trains caregivers, offers supervision, loans extra equipment and educational materials, provides intake, helps parents make choices, sets and collects fees, supports a gradual orientation to placement, and supports the parents and the caregivers in their relationships on behalf of the child.

To support program costs, we found that we needed to collect \$14.00 minimum per day full time (nine hours) and \$2.25 per hour part time, up to five hours. The \$14.00 per day fee could best be afforded by middle income families. This restricted those most in need from utilizing the service. Now that the program is ongoing, the plan is to seek scholarship funding and slowly expand the service. In this way, our program will continue to respond to a critical need for child care in the Jewish community, while upholding high standards, and protecting the developmental health of vulnerable infants and toddlers.

We hope that in this manner protections will be provided for our children to support the Jewish heritage, and better ensure Jewish continuity.