

ance rapidly, and the father seems to age in front of your eyes. Each family member has separate needs and strengths. However, the worker must also address the family's needs together.

The impact of a resettlement program and population on the rest of the family service agency is a systems issue as well. The intensity of the initial service needs for newly arrived families may appear to drain all the resources, thinking, and caring from the rest of the client population and the rest of the staff as well. Systems knowledge is crucial, too, in understanding and working with the family of Federation agencies (Taft & Hirsch, 1981).

Certainly, the twists and turns inherent in resettlement work will continue into the future. We need to remain available to welcome emigres from the four corners of the earth when they need help. We need also to find creative ways of facilitating their return to our agencies when they experience other family crises after they are settled. Resettlement work in the JFS agency requires us to respond to constant changes in arrival flow, funding, overseas politics, government legislation, and community priorities. Often, we feel very little sense of control. Therefore, we must include in the work a systems approach, a long-range perspective, a sense of humor, and a lot of opportunity for "ventilation." The same social work principle of helping clients verbalize their fears and woes needs to be applied to our staff at all levels. We need to talk about the anxieties and frustrations of this work and to listen to each other when we talk. This is very hard work. We do it very well.

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A NEW LIFE Reflections on Emigrating from the Former Soviet Union

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This is the story of our family's exodus from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and our adaptation to a new life in Canada. I hope that it will help Jewish communal professionals understand better the problems that emigres from the FSU experience during their first few years in a new country.

There has always been a strong prejudice against the Jewish people in Russia. This old tradition carried over into the Soviet state and resulted in special problems for Jews, maintaining discrimination against them yet keeping them alive as a people, always there as potential scapegoats.

Growing up in Kishinev, my husband and I, along with our parents and grandparents, dreamed that one day our children would be able to learn the language of our ancestors, to pray, and to practice the Jewish religion openly, and because of G-d, that dream came true when we emigrated to Canada sixteen years ago. In Kishinev, which had approximately 100,000 Jews, there was only one synagogue. It was in a tiny, broken-down hut in a dangerous, dirty neighborhood, and only a few old men gathered there twice a day for prayers. Yet, we struggled to keep the traditions and light of *Yiddishkeit* alive.

My husband Isaac did have a *Bar Mitzvah*. One day his father secretly brought him a Russian transliteration of the prayers, *Sh'ma* and *brachot*, and asked him to learn them by heart. He also begged Isaac not to tell anybody in school or the neighborhood about this activity. If the Soviet authorities had found out about this "Zionist propaganda," Isaac's father would have faced imprisonment or, at the very least, lost his livelihood.

Isaac learned those prayers, and on his *Bar Mitzvah* morning, his father took him to *schul*. Only a few close relatives joined them in the

synagogue. For the first time, Isaac was taught how to put on *tefillin*, and he was called to the Torah for an *aliyah*. After he returned to his seat, there were tears of joy and also of sorrow in his parents' eyes. They had brought along some vodka and sponge cake, and everyone participated in a celebration. From this experience, Isaac gained an indescribable feeling of belonging to the Jewish people, a feeling that has never left him.

Similarly, I vividly remember our wedding. We secretly gathered in Isaac's sister's home, and again only our close relatives came. And when our son was born, we faced the tremendous problem of finding a *mohel* to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Brit Milah*, which again had to be performed in secrecy. Yet, we always managed to find some *matzoh* for *Pesach*; we fasted on *Yom Kippur* and tried to be as close to the synagogue as possible for the High Holidays, in a place where we couldn't be spotted by the KGB agents.

Practicing our Judaism was a never-ending struggle. Even as we finally left the FSU, one of the KGB border guards told us, "Don't think, you traitors, that we won't get you. Pretty soon we will be all over the globe and we will show you what freedom is all about."

By leaving the FSU, we had put our well-being, our careers, and even our lives on the line. Yet finally, on the evening of October 27, 1980, we arrived in Ottawa.

It is difficult enough to adjust to life in a new country when the place you came from has a similar political tradition; then you only have to struggle with matters of language, local habits and customs, and so forth. But when you also have to come to grips with great differences in political habits and culture, as was our case in coming from the tradition of oppression of the FSU, then the adjustments

are even more shocking. We knew that we were heading toward freedom when we left the FSU for Canada, but learning what that meant in practical terms was a shock.

When we arrived, we did not know anybody in Ottawa, nor could we speak any English. Immediately, however, we visited Jewish Family Services, itself only ten months old, met with the resettlement worker, and were introduced to the then-director, Elaine Raban. Elaine Raban and her husband Eli subsequently played a very special role in our lives. We also came to meet many JFS volunteers who gave us moral support and encouragement in the very difficult period of adaptation to a new life. Some of them treated us as members of the family, and still today they invite us for family *simchas* or celebrations of Jewish holidays. We are very thankful to them and will never forget all that they did for us.

When we arrived, JFS helped us find an apartment, and start our 8-year-old son in Jewish school and our 2-year-old daughter in a nursery program. The Canadian government sponsored our English as a Second Language (ESL) courses.

Later on, JFS volunteers helped us understand that we ourselves are in charge of our lives. We had to learn from scratch how to live our lives in a free society without passports, permits for residence, fear of the KGB, and government control. For example, soon after our arrival in Ottawa, our good friend who had left the FSU a year earlier than us and had settled in Toronto came to visit. Out of the blue he said, "If you want, you can move right now to Toronto and we'll be together." We were shocked. We couldn't believe that we could move freely to another city. But we were also very fortunate to stay in Ottawa where, after approximately four months, we found jobs in fields that related to our past education and experience.

For the last eight years, I have been working for Ottawa JFS as an accountant. I also try my best to help my colleagues involved in the settlement and integration of the fourth wave of immigrants. I am proud to report that our job placement service helped fifty new Cana-

dians find employment in 1996.

Our agency settles about 100 newcomer families annually. With the help of our volunteers, Ottawa JFS provides ESL classes in the homes of new arrivals, senior club activities, workshops and mentoring programs for job-ready immigrants, and hosting new Canadians for holidays, communal seders, and cultural events. The agency believes that successful integration into the Jewish community includes both finding an adequate job to attain self-sufficiency and developing the ability to feel comfortable with the Jewish community. The social context is important. Often, it is initially much easier for the newcomer to relate to other non-Jewish immigrants from the FSU than to the alien Jewish culture of Canada. Building a Jewish identity after decades of oppression and alienation in the FSU requires real effort on part of the local Jewish community.

As a family, we have been trying our best to repay the Jewish community for its help by participating in volunteer activities, inviting new immigrants to our house, helping organize a club for senior immigrants, giving to charities, delivering Passover baskets to new arrivals from Eastern Europe, and providing musical entertainment in old age homes. We feel it is tremendously important to involve our children in helping others who are less fortunate.

There is a saying, "If somebody loses money, he lost nothing. If somebody loses health, G-d forbid, he lost half. But if somebody loses spirit and hope, he lost everything." We hope that our children will pick up the torch of *Yiddishkeit* from us and carry it to the next generation with determination, perseverance, and strong convictions. We hope that always, they will be proud to proclaim "*Ich bin a Yid*" (I am a Jew).

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JEWISH FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

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Jewish Family Life Education is an innovative outreach mode of service offered by Jewish Family Service agencies. It is the natural link to the unaffiliated and to synagogues and other Jewish communal agencies. As well, in many agencies it becomes the staff development piece that propels them toward a more authentically Jewish delivery of service.

THEORETICAL BASES OF JFLE

The heart of the JFLE group is the process that develops among members that leads to growth, change, and support. The four major theoretical bases of JFLE are developmental theory, crisis theory, systems and communication theory, and the public health model.

- Developmental theory emphasizes that life is progressive and that each new life stage requires the acquisition of concepts and skills that can be learned. This emphasis ties into the problem-solving focus and the educational orientation of the groups. One can learn new parenting skills, coping methods related to a divorce, or resources available for an aging parent without being in crisis or dysfunction.
- Crisis theory posits that there are certain expected crisis points at different stages in the life cycle, but during these periods there can be the potential for growth for those involved. It also stresses family normalcy versus dysfunction and reframes some issues as normal transitional crises. An example of this reframing involves divorce. People undergoing divorce generally experience many of the same issues, such as loss, anger, and loneliness, which can have the positive effect of leading to renewed growth and change.
- Systems theory views the individual in the context of his or her family and environment. Increasing the competence of an individual strengthens the family and community as well. Communication processes as explicated in communication theory are

Jewish Family Life Education (JFLE) developed as a defined service in the 1970s, and the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies (AJFCA) was instrumental in facilitating JFLE training and collaboration among agencies throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The development of JFLE paralleled that of Family Life Education (FLE), which in 1976 was formalized by Family Service America as one of the three major functions of a family agency, along with counseling and advocacy.

What is Jewish Family Life Education? As with any Jewish question, there is more than one answer. Traditionally, family life education was seen as a preventive mental health service, stressing education, group learning and support, and normal developmental or life-cycle issues. Under Jewish auspices, JFLE was further seen as a means of helping participants strengthen their Jewish identity by using Jewish culture, faith, and values to explore their life concerns. Formats ranged from single-session workshops to time-limited, multi-session groups.

As JFLE programming evolved, some variations developed. Some groups became less preventive in nature, comprising participants who were already in crisis. Other groups, using a short-term model, focused on clinical issues, such as anxiety, abuse, or eating disorders. Some developed into ongoing support groups and were labeled JFLE as well. All of these expanded models can be considered as forms of JFLE, and all have created a breadth and depth to the service that can only benefit the client.