

Leave a Jewish Legacy
**Case Statement for the
Jewish Association for Community Living**

Case Statement

The Jewish Association for Community Living (JCL) is a unique organization. In fact, within the State of Connecticut, we are one of a kind. What gives us this distinction?

JCL is the only **Jewish** organization in Connecticut whose sole mission is to serve individuals with developmental disabilities, in particular, persons with mental retardation, autism, mental illness and physical disabilities.

JCL's mission is to *“respond to the needs of persons with developmental disabilities and their families in our community by providing quality supports and services, enhanced by Jewish tradition”*. Jewish tradition - just what does that mean? Our group homes observe Kashrut and our Judaic Programming department provides a year round calendar of Jewish holiday activities and observance opportunities such as Shabbat dinners and specially designed synagogue services, collaborations with Jewish day schools, synagogues, etc. This is what separates us from the other nearly 200 agencies in Connecticut that provide similar services to persons with developmental disabilities. For JCL, it means that we can't do what we do without the support of the Jewish community.

The majority of JCL's funding comes from the Connecticut Department of Mental Retardation. Their funds are determined each year by the state legislature. In short, JCL is unable to provide the quality of care we are committed to providing without the supplemental resources we raise through fundraising.

JCL is dedicated to ensuring that persons with disabilities are fully integrated into their communities and are treated with the respect and dignity all citizens are entitled to. Furthermore, JCL believes that those we serve should be afforded opportunities to achieve maximum independence and appropriate interdependence and to make choices in how they live their lives.

JCL's clients are not charity cases! Most work and get a paycheck. They enjoy the same leisure time activities that all people do. They see the same doctors you do. They go to the theatre, concerts in the park and take vacations. They ride the bus and sit next to you in a restaurant. They walk the sidewalks of West Hartford and participate in activities and practices that nurture their Jewish heritage. They love, cry, feel disappointment and shout for joy. They have parents, siblings and many others who love them.

However, those that we support do need a **lifetime of assistance**. Some need more than others, but all need some. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, JCL employees care for and guide our clients through life's daily challenges. Like a navigation device in a car, they do the driving, we provide the directions.

The truth is that most people won't ever need JCL's services. However, if you take a moment to reflect upon the people that you know, the likelihood is that you do know a family that has been touched by a disability. Maybe it's the daughter of a neighbor who has a mental illness, or the father of a family member who has muscular dystrophy, or maybe the son of a co-worker who has cerebral palsy, or as in JCL's case, someone you know with mental retardation. Whoever it is, who among us is not compassionate enough to see our neighbors, acquaintances and fellow citizens deserve the lifetime of support they will likely need. Each and every one of them should have access to all of the same opportunities that we take for granted.