



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: William Wortzman, Chairman of the Board, 216-464-0001

Jewish Family Service Association Pursuing Strategic Alliances

The Board of Directors of the Jewish Family Service Association of Cleveland (JFSA) has accepted the resignation of CEO Milt Schachter, effective immediately. Susan Bichsel, Ph.D., was named interim CEO of JFSA.

The mutual decision for a leadership change was reached as the board determined that a new strategic direction is needed to address funding challenges at JFSA. In particular, JFSA will explore the potential for possible strategic alliances with other Jewish agencies that complement its strengths and support the mission of the agency.

“We are facing a tough financial situation as funding has declined while costs of providing services to our clients have increased,” said Board Chair William Wortzman. “In order to sustain the viability of the agency’s mission and vision, we concluded that we need to look at a new strategic direction that will include some sort of partnership or alliance with another agency or agencies. We believe this is the best way to make sure we can continue to provide the critical services we offer to the individuals and families of this community.”

JFSA is in the process of communicating these changes with its employees, clients and donors. The Board of Directors met on Monday, July 16, and approved this change. A task force comprised of board members will be formed to explore options for an alliance and to help with the transition.

“We have great confidence in Susie Bichsel and her team,” Wortzman said. “JFSA is very good at providing vital services to this community and that will continue. But we are struggling financially and need to find a sustainable model that will assure that these vital services are available well into the future for the individuals and families who rely on us.”

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For the past five years, Bichsel has served as executive director of the Ascentia program at JFSA. This program provides comprehensive integrated services for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and serious mental illness. Bichsel joined the staff of JFSA in 1991 as a social worker, and in 1994 was promoted to director of psychiatric and support services. In addition to her work at JFSA, Bichsel is an adjunct faculty member at Cleveland State University, where she has taught child development, clinical case studies and community agency counseling. She holds a Ph.D. in counseling from Cleveland State University and a master of arts in psychology from the University of Sussex in Brighton, England.

Jewish Family Service Association of Cleveland (JFSA), a private non-profit organization, has served the Jewish and Greater Cleveland community for more than 130 years. JFSA provides health and behavioral health services, including support for individuals with intellectual and/or development disabilities and mental illness; employment services; skilled nursing and home health care; home-delivered meals; domestic violence and crisis intervention services; and comprehensive services to Holocaust survivors.

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