



Jewish Federation  
OF ST. LOUIS

For our community - now and in the future



# Community Needs Assessment and Planning: YOUNG ADULT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

## THE NEED: YOUNG ADULT MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19 AND BEYOND

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, people around the world have struggled with their mental health. Isolation, fear, and rapid change have all impacted individuals' abilities to cope with both existing and newly emerging stressors. Jewish Federation's COVID-19 community needs assessments have shown that one group that has particularly struggled are young adults (ages 22-40). Brandeis University researchers found that youngish adults in the St. Louis Jewish community had more trouble coping with the psychological effects of the pandemic. Mental health issues among young adults in the St. Louis Jewish community were already a concern before COVID hit, and the pandemic exacerbated them.

## OUR RESPONSE: STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE + DESIGN THINKING PROCESS

**Young Adult Mental Health Roundtable:** 26 stakeholders participated in a design thinking process, centering the experiences and stories of young adults to generate and refine ideas that could positively impact the long-term mental health and well-being of young adults in our region. These stakeholders included a mix of young adults, people who work with young adults, and people with professional mental healthcare expertise from across the St. Louis Jewish community.

**Interview & Feedback participants:** 10 Jewish young adults who had experienced challenges with mental health and well-being provided detailed input throughout the process. They represented a range of Jewish practices, locations within our region, and personal identities.

## WHAT IS DESIGN THINKING?

- > A structured approach to finding innovative solutions to complex problems
- > Focuses on the stories of the people most impacted by a situation
- > Nuanced, specific, and contextual
- > Draws wisdom and ideas from diverse groups
- > Focuses on patterns of experience to generate unexpected strategies
- > Allows for flexibility and iteration

Federation partnered with [Public Design Bureau](#) to facilitate this design thinking process.

You can find full details about this work in our [Planning Report and Executive Summary on Jewish Federation's website](#).

# RESULTS SO FAR: NINE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT RESILIENCE DURING & BEYOND THE PANDEMIC

## Strategies

## Desired Outcomes

Make professional **mental healthcare** more accessible

Young adults know that mental health resources are available through the Jewish community, and they are able to consistently and easily connect with professionals who are the best fit for their needs.

Host **facilitated affinity groups** for processing and reflection

Young adults have spaces that are designed for them to process their experiences and connect with others.

Create options and systems for **collective volunteering**

Young adults can easily find opportunities to volunteer in the St. Louis region that support a feeling of fulfillment, satisfaction, and a sense of purpose.

Train and incentivize new **leaders and hosts**

Young adults have the confidence and tools to develop and host events that connect youngish adults across the Jewish community with each other.

Create events to **welcome and facilitate connection with Jewish networks**

Young adults understand the community resources and groups available to them, and build connections and relationships with those groups.

Provide experiences to **create, make, and learn** about Jewish culture together

Young adults connect with each other through creative projects rooted in Jewish culture.

Create venues for **sharing and adapting traditions** to build connection

Young adults feel empowered to access and rely on Jewish traditions, and build connections with others in learning about and expanding their practice.

Share messages that educate about and **normalize mental healthcare**

Communication to the Jewish community consistently normalizes mental healthcare and provides messages and skills that support mental and emotional health.

Foster **meaningful connection** in community spaces and events

Young adults leave community events having made meaningful connections with each other.

Direct, specific opportunities to impact the mental health and well-being of young adults

Secondary strategies, critical to the execution of the above strategies

## NEXT STEPS: IMPLEMENTATION & SHARING WHAT WE LEARNED

>> Gathering the leadership of young adult organizations to determine which strategies to iterate, pilot, and/or implement

>> Sharing insights from this process about the mental health and well-being of young adults with broader Jewish community leadership

Overseen by Federation's Assessment & Planning Subcommittee

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