



# JCPA REPORT ON STRENGTHENING THE JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL (JCRC) NETWORK (2016-2020)

## **Report on Strengthening the JCRC Field**

In 2016, under new leadership, JCPA set out as its major goal to strengthen the JCRC Network by developing resources, providing skill training, supporting professionals and lay leadership, and raising the Network's national profile. With an eye toward supporting and advancing the field, JCPA's work is organized into three major areas: network support, leadership and public policy advocacy. We are proud to share with you our accomplishments, knowing that there is more to be done.

### **ONGOING JCRC NETWORK SUPPORT**

JCPA provides support to JCRCs throughout the year and ensures ongoing communication and engagement. This includes:

- Provide hands-on support to JCRC professionals
- Ensure that the JCPA national conference is relevant and highlights the JCRC network
- Convene JCRC professionals to grapple with current affairs and share best practices
- Administer the JCRC Professionals listserv
- Conduct JCPA Leadership Missions to Israel
- Organize the Frank Fellowship for emerging leaders
- Provide opportunities for local engagement in national initiatives

New initiatives introduced over the past four years include the following:

- **JCRC Professional Playbook**
  - Compilation of the fundamentals of JCRC work and director responsibilities, recommended structure (based on surveying the field), best practices, etc.
- **Onboarding New JCRC Directors**
  - All new JCRC professionals receive a welcome email from JCPA and meet by Zoom with the Senior VP and VP. We have on-boarded and provided support to more than 80 new JCRC directors and professionals.
  - Each new director receives the Playbook and other onboarding materials by email and is asked to join the JCRC Professionals listserv.
- **Professional Development Institute**
  - Annual virtual professional development institute for JCRC directors has included 10-12 workshops attended by between 30-50 professionals annually.
  - In-person on-boarding Shabbat for new JCRC directors was attended by 20 directors, creating a close cohort of colleagues.
  - Smaller group met for a half day prior to the JCPA National Conference.

- **JCPA/JCRC Chairs Initiative**
  - Provides opportunities for chairs to meet remotely several times a year to grapple with issues, share best practices, and brainstorm about common challenges.
  - In-person meeting is organized at the JCPA National Conference.
- **Education: Bringing Experts and Content to Local Areas Using Virtual Platforms**
  - **CRCast** – Bimonthly video webcasts where key thinkers and leaders are interviewed on issues that impact our field.
  - **JCPA/JCRC Educational Series** – Educational and skill-building programming featuring strategic partners from diverse communities.
  - **JCPA National Conference Workshops and Plenaries** – Videos of all plenaries and workshops are made available online.
  - **Education and Advocacy Webinars** – Webinars on priority issues before the community relations field throughout the year, including 15 during the pandemic.
  - **Field meetings** – Senior staff visit JCRCs around the country to speak in community forums and to hold discussions with JCRC leadership.
  - **Remote consultations** – Staff attend JCRC meetings to help with organizational strategy and planning and to provide issue briefings or updates.

## **JCPA PROVIDES LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR JCRC PROFESSIONALS AND LEADERS**

JCPA provides leadership opportunities for JCRC professionals and lay leaders at the national level. It also advocates and represents the field nationally.

- **Fact-finding Missions:**
  - JCPA's Civil Rights Mission took 50 participants including JCRC professionals and lay leaders representing 14 communities to Georgia and Alabama to commemorate the first anniversary of the National Memorial for Peace and Justice.
  - JCPA/JCRC Immigration fact-finding mission to the Arizona/Mexican border, with 25 JCRC representatives.
  - Missions inspired increased advocacy on these issues in local communities.
- **National Jewish network on criminal justice reform** in which 16 JCRCs nominated local leaders and actively participate.
- **Creation of the Delegates Assembly**, the highest deliberative body of the community relations field, created to set policy with professional and community representative positions for every dues paying JCRC and national member agency.

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM AND STRENGTHENING TIES TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY**

JCPA Launched the Criminal Justice Reform Initiative in 2016 to re-engage the mainstream Jewish community in civil rights and strengthen Black-Jewish relations.

- More than 18 JCRCs have made criminal justice reform a policy priority.
- Helped organize two major state-level conferences in New York and Atlanta
- Launched the New York Jewish Coalition on Criminal Justice Reform and the Ending Mass Incarceration (EMI) national movement in Atlanta.
- Created a JCRC cohort and organized three webinars, a town hall, a resolution on the emergency on prison and jails followed by a Jewish mobilization effort during the coronavirus pandemic.

## **PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY**

JCPA advocates for the community's priorities. The experience with growing delegitimization of Israel underscored the need for the Jewish community to engage more vigorously in American civic life and make common cause with diverse communities.

- **JCRC Engagement in Policy Monitoring and Advocacy** - JCRC leadership represented on the JCPA Policy Advisory Committee that oversees JCPA's national advocacy agenda and legislative matters.
- **Polling and Surveying JCRCs** - Regular polling on issues and policy priorities ensures that we represent the field's interests in an ever-shifting strategic environment.
- **Building Relationships and Advocating in Coalition with Intergroup Partners**
  - Participates in key national coalitions.
  - Takes an active role on issues that matter to intergroup partners.
  - Supports JCRCs with efforts to build relationships locally.

## **MOBILIZES THE FIELD ON MAJOR ISSUES**

- **Organizes JCRC response on emerging issues** - including expressing solidarity with the Chinese community during the pandemic, opposing Antisemitism in all of its forms, supporting immigration and immigrant rights, and advancing criminal justice reform and voting rights.
- **JCPA engages the field in educating and opposing antisemitism**
  - Working with JCRCs and national organizations developed a roadmap for fighting antisemitism
  - Putting together a task force with lay leaders and JCRC staff from around the country examining effective initiatives for fighting antisemitism.



- **National Fly-in Days**

- Organized five fly-in days to provide an opportunity for leadership to advocate DC, showcasing the power of the community relations field to legislators.
- Major issues: criminal justice reform, immigration, safety net appropriations, religious liberties, and the Israel-Palestinian Peace Fund.

## **JCPA ADVOCATES FOR JCRC NETWORK**

- **Blue Ribbon Task Force on Community Relations**

- Launched by JCPA, JFNA and IAN to envision the future of community relations and set the agenda to meet today's current challenges.
- Consisted mostly of Federation and JCRC lay leaders and professionals.
- Recommended that the Federation system invest in the community relations field and that JCRCs and Federations strengthen relations with other minorities

- **Advocating for JCRCs**

- JCPA asserts the importance of the community relations network within the larger Jewish world and wrote numerous op-eds in Jewish publications.
- JCPA held major public forums on the importance of Jewish community relations and advocacy.

JCPA's efforts to strengthen the JCRC Network has yielded important results. More than 100 JCRCs have received direct support from JCPA on an ongoing basis. There is a shared methodology of community relations fundamentals, best practices, and response to current events and new challenges. Materials and resources have been created and regularly used by professionals and lay leaders. We have moved the needle on policy on immigration and civil rights and increased our participation in diverse coalitions and rebuilt relationships with intergroup partners as we share our values of fairness and justice. We have made the case that community relations is the most important work we can do in the United States to combat antisemitism, as recently stated in at the JFNA Fedlab.