

Resolution on Principles for Responding to National or Global Health Crisis

Adopted by the Delegates Assembly, 2020

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on communities across the globe. JCPA believes it is critical that the community relations field set policy recommendations for handling public health crises, in order to guide the work of JCPA and of the field as it responds.

We recognize the global pandemic disproportionately affects those who are most vulnerable and we commit, as we always do, to advocate with them, including the segments of our society with less access to medical care, nutritious food, internet connection, and safe social distancing. The work we do is more important and more challenging than ever before. The mission of the JCPA must remain steadfast in this time of global health crisis.

It is our belief, rooted in Jewish values, that the infinite value of human life obligates us to activism, most especially when life is endangered. The Jewish community relations field is well-positioned to advocate for and provide support to those in need during these times, both in the Jewish community and across society.

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs:

- Reaffirms that the Jewish community should continue to play a strong role in supporting and protecting vulnerable and at-risk communities, especially during a public health crisis or other national emergency.
- Recognizes that COVID-19 and other public health crises further expose and exacerbate existing inequities across society, and reaffirms our mission and mandate to work toward addressing and ending those inequities.
- Reaffirms our commitment to combat antisemitism, xenophobia, bigotry, and racism—which have clearly risen during the COVID-19 crisis. In addition to engaging with government and media to combat the increase in hate speech and crimes, JCPA and the field commit to supporting and expressing solidarity with all communities facing increased discrimination during such times, including, at this moment, Asian communities in America.
- Urges the federal government to adopt preemptive measures building upon lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic so that the United States and the world are well-prepared to respond swiftly to the next stages of this pandemic and future global health crises. Recommended measures include the following:

- Fully fund and support the Centers for Disease Control and other federal entities that focus on infectious disease monitoring, preparedness, and response, including well-maintained U.S. stockpiles and production capacity for testing and essential care equipment.
- Institute a science-driven, federal-state task force that includes experts and government official liaisons to monitor and respond to pandemics.
- Establish nationwide ethical principles or guidelines for the allocation of limited medical resources.
- Adopt, fund, and support a global and national approach to monitoring and responding to public health crises as pandemics do not respect borders.
- Recognizes that every public health crisis is unique, requiring flexibility and creativity in government policies and practices that promote public health, safety, and equity for all those living in the U.S.
- Urges that any legislative response to a global or national public health crisis include, but not be limited to, the following principles:
 - Ensure accessible and free testing, treatment for, and ultimately vaccination against the disease for all, regardless of income, location, disability, insurance status, or immigration status.
 - Ensure that everyone can take sick leave and leave to care for family members without risking their jobs or their paychecks.
 - Ensure that low-income workers and individuals who are economically at-risk have the assistance they need to provide for their families, including, but not limited to, hazard or bonus pay for frontline, low-income workers as well as government subsidies. This also includes extending unemployment benefits for as long as the economy has not recovered and ensuring that employees who are legitimately uncomfortable returning to work do not lose their unemployment benefits.
 - Prioritize and protect the health and safety of frontline and essential workers.
 - Prioritize protecting those confined to living in an institutional setting with little or no ability to leave, quarantine or isolate, or obtain adequate medical care. This

includes long-term care facilities (such as nursing homes and shelters) and detention facilities (such as jails, prisons, and immigration detention centers).

- Ensure sufficient availability of mental health and substance use disorder resources and professionals for those affected.
- Focus economic relief measures first on those in greatest need: low-income and economically-vulnerable individuals, frontline and essential workers, service providers, vulnerable communities, small businesses, and nonprofits.
- Provide emergency assistance for Internet services and electronic devices at low or no cost to all those who cannot otherwise afford or access it, ensuring equity in access to essential education resources and telehealth services.
- Believes that restrictions on government entitlements and funding of critical social safety net programs should be flexible during public health emergencies so that at-risk individuals can access life-sustaining food and health care remotely, and can use their benefits to pay for critical items. Additionally, state-level SNAP restrictions should be waived to ensure that those impacted economically can maintain continued access to nutrition. This includes providing meals to children eligible for free- and reduced-price breakfast and lunch programs.

The Jewish community relations field should:

- Utilize existing relationships with local and national partners across diverse racial, ethnic, faith and civic communities to address the needs of our communities, both the larger society and disadvantaged populations.
- Be a central address for advocacy and government relations for the Jewish community in addressing the pandemic and advocating for those at-risk and most vulnerable.
- Closely monitor and actively and visibly oppose antisemitism, xenophobia, racism, gender-based and gender identity discrimination, bigotry, and hate.
- Support and advocate for the needs of partner organizations, including local Jewish agencies, and their employees, and help them access government grant programs.
- Engage with public health and government officials to share best practices and government mandates with the community.

- Advocate, along with partner organizations, for the needs of at-risk individuals and those suffering economic vulnerability as a result of the public health crisis.