

# 39<sup>TH</sup> AJFCA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

MAY 15-17, 2011

The Westin Hotel, Calgary, Alberta

## THE GOODMAN AWARD SUBMISSION FORM

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### I. General Information

- a. **Program Title:** Ametz Adoptive Family Group
- b. **Agency Name:** Jewish Child Care Association of New York
- c. **Date Program Began:** 2010

### II. Summary

#### a. Initial Problem(s) to be addressed by the Program:

When Jewish families adopt children, it is common for them to seek to reengage with or deepen their connection to the Jewish community. However, there is a great deal of variation in how the Jewish community welcomes and incorporates adopted children, particularly with trans-racial adoptions. Moreover, as adoptive parents seek a comfortable environment within the Jewish community, they often find themselves playing an important role as adoption educators in the community at large. JCCA developed an adoption support group that works both with parents and with children in adoptive families to help them to navigate the challenges and become leaders to help educate their communities.

#### b. Brief Overall Program Description

JCCA's Ametz Adoption Program has served New York's metropolitan area adoptive community for over 25 years. Many adoptive families contact Ametz because they do not feel comfortable engaging with the traditional Jewish community, based on how their family was formed. JCCA initially began a group in response to this need, focusing on parents-only. However, as we have come to understand better the needs of both the parents and children, in the past year the group has developed into simultaneous parents and children's groups that meet monthly for 1½-2 hours. Parent discussions center on adoption lifecycle issues in the context of Jewish community, such as talking about adoption, forming a family through adoption and multi-cultural family with new traditions and rituals. Children's groups are age appropriate and include activities related to adoption issues, adoption story time, songs, holiday celebrations and more. The groups offer resources and materials that families can use both in the group and at home. The parent group is run by an Ametz social worker; the kids group is run by a 2<sup>nd</sup> year graduate social work interns. The program is supervised by the Ametz Adoption Program Director, in consultation with JCCA's Vice President of Services to the Jewish Community. Additional educational and childcare staff is hired, when needed. Ametz has recreated this group in several communities, and continues to provide information and support, as well as to link individuals, couples and families with appropriate local resources and services.

### III. Components

#### a. Jewish Component:

Overall program goals are to 1) engage adoptive families in Jewish family life; 2) educate parents and families on Jewish values; 3) establish a community for Jewish adoptive families, many who are unaffiliated; 4) Assist families in finding acceptance in the Jewish community, including appropriate religious, spiritual and educational facilities.

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## **b. Outreach Component:**

Ads, Internet publicity, word-of-mouth and direct outreach both to clients of the Ametz Adoption Program, and Ametz's networking professionals and parent groups are utilized. Monthly e-news announcements, web postings and ongoing word-of-mouth with clients, professionals and the Jewish community have helped the group expand. Such activities have led to other communities requesting the development of such a group. Ametz is currently seeking funding to replicate the program in Westchester County, New York.

## **c. Community-Building Component:**

The families who have come to the group gain strength and support from one another, and relationships developed in the group frequently continue outside of the group. Similarly, children find support in their peers, and can develop friends who are facing similar issues. Participants often bring new parents to the group. The families, as well as the staff of the Ametz Adoption Program have engaged with community lay and religious leaders to offer services, guidance and resources, as well as spread the word of the group's existence.

## **IV. Outcomes**

### **a. Outcomes of the Program to Date:**

The group has grown from 8 original families to over 40 families who attend on a regular basis. The children range in age from 6 weeks to 10 years. Families report that they feel supported and "understood" in the group. They are also thrilled their children have an adoption peer group with which to interact.

### **b. Evaluation Method:**

Both focus groups and surveys are used to elicit feedback from the participants.

## **V. Sustainability**

### **a. Total Program Cost:**

Because of the labor intensive start-up period, including location identification, outreach and one-on-one client contact, the initial year budget can run as high as \$20,000. The cost for subsequent years, when the group has developed momentum, are closer to \$5,000.

### **b. Major Income Sources:**

After initial funding from the Jewish community to establish individuals groups, JCCA and families cover all fees.

### **c. Agency's Plans for the Continuation of the Program:**

Ametz Adoption Program and JCCA are committed to providing this invaluable resource to the adoptive families in our community. Client fees and fundraising are the revenue sources for the program.

## **VI. Contact Information**

**a. Contact Person's Name:** Kathy Brodsky

**b. Contact Person's Title:** Director, JCCA Ametz Adoption Program

**c. Contact Person's Telephone Number:** 212-558-9921

**d. Contact Person's Email Address:** brodskyk@jccany.org