

Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City

## Chesed Fund

Amount Requested - Any

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As a result of the current economic situation, the Jewish community is experiencing a significant rise in requests for financial assistance for both short term and long term chronic cases. Thousands of jobs are being lost in the Kansas City area and the result is an increased demand for financial assistance for a longer period of time. A one time emergency has turned into multi-months of continued financial challenges. Finding new employment is becoming harder and harder, and individuals and families are needing short term to longer term assistance because their situation will not be ameliorated until they find employment or their personal situation improves. Other client situations – elderly émigrés on fixed income or those who cannot hold a job because of mental issues – may always require some safety net funding. This request is in line with the Jewish Community Foundation's desire to give priority status to safety net needs and assist those who are most vulnerable in our community.

Economic stability is fundamental to the well being of a person. Without economic stability, mental health issues may arise and the strength of the individual or family may be dramatically compromised. It is a dramatic fact that there are members of our Jewish community who are vulnerable and face difficulty affording such necessities as utilities, housing and health care.

While the Jewish Federation had the Geshet Fund to address one time emergencies, it was realized that there were members of our community that, through no fault of their own, will experience chronic financial challenges. Examples of individuals in this category include: senior émigrés, individuals who have lost their jobs and cannot quickly find another position, and those with mental health challenges who will never be able to hold a permanent job. As a result, the Jewish Federation created the Chesed Fund in 2007 through a generous grant from the Menorah Legacy Foundation to provide support for those who find themselves in challenging financial circumstances that will never change or those who have challenges that will not be ameliorated with a one time emergency assistance.

To ensure that no client who meets the Chesed Fund criteria and whose need is validated is turned away, the Jewish Federation advances dollars (which are paid back when the fund receives resources) to cover the approved disbursements from the Fund. The Chesed Fund, which addresses the most vulnerable members and is the primary Jewish community assistance mechanism outside of one's synagogue and family, really needs your financial support.

The Jewish Family Services conducts the intake process and makes disbursements from the Chesed Fund. The numbers of Jewish community members who need ongoing financial assistance and the amount of disbursements since the Chesed Fund's creation really tell the story. Since 2007, the numbers served are six times as great and the disbursements have quadrupled as demonstrated by the following statistics:

Calendar year 2007 – 11 individuals/families were assisted with disbursements totaling \$7,196

Calendar year 2008 – 29 individuals/families were assisted with disbursements totaling \$19,339

Calendar year 2009 – 81 individuals/families were assisted with disbursements totaling \$81,929