

The Jewish Emergency Network (JEN): FAQs About Who We Are and What We Do

What is JEN?

JEN is an entity that links members of our Howard County Jewish community who are in need of emergency financial assistance with those who may wish to help.

How did it come about?

JEN was created in February 2008 by the Jewish Federation of Howard County.

How does JEN work?

Requests for emergency assistance are submitted to the JEN Committee by JCS (Jewish Community Services) social workers and by clergy who are members of the Howard County Board of Rabbis. Via an email message, the JEN Committee broadcasts requests to members of the JEN network. (The average frequency is one request per month.) Upon receiving a request, each member of the network decides whether or not he/she would like to contribute and the amount to be contributed. There is no obligation for any member of the network to contribute at any time. Giving and receiving take place anonymously.

Howard County is one of the most affluent counties in the nation. Are there really members of our community in need? If so, what kinds of needs are we talking about?

As of September 2014, contributions made by members of JEN have provided emergency assistance to members of our community on 144 occasions. The number of households in need in Howard County is relatively small. However, the problems faced by such households are dire. JEN assistance is most often used to pay overdue rent and avoid eviction, prevent utility cutoffs, pay medical and dental costs, fund needed car repairs, and purchase food.

Who administers JEN?

A group of volunteers comprising the JEN Committee administers the program. All contributions made to JEN are used to meet emergency needs. No funds are used to pay for staff or other overhead costs.

How does the JEN Committee ensure that funds are used by recipients to meet the emergency needs indicated?

The Federation treasurer sends payments directly to businesses providing the goods and services required to meet the emergency needs (i.e. landlords, BGE, pharmacies, etc.).

Does the Federation provide funding to JEN so that it can do its work?

The Federation absorbs the cost of administrative support to JEN, in large part through its sponsorship of JCS. However, it does not provide any financial assistance that could be used to meet emergency needs. JEN is the only entity in Howard County that specifically helps members of our community who are facing financial crises.

To become a member of JEN, send an email saying "Sign me up" to:

JewishEmergencyNetwork@gmail.com