

Could Three Become One?

JFS, JVS and Kadima in talks to enter a potential merger.



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Over the course of almost a year, Jewish Family Service of Metro Detroit (JFS), JVS Human Services and Kadima Mental Health Services have been in conversation about the possibility of a merger or collaboration.

The three organizations were brought together by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit (JFMD) to talk about the possibility of collaboration. Both JVS and JFS are partner organizations of JFMD.

JFMD President Beverly Liss said in a statement to the *Jewish News* that the talks are part of “the Collaboratory,” which is “a facilitated process in which Jewish Federation convened a number of social service agencies to discuss how they could improve social delivery.”

Leaders at JVS, JFS and Kadima said they felt that it was best to continue to convene after the initial meeting to pursue the possibility of a

merger.

To help further their discussions, the three organizations have begun searching



Leah Rosenbaum

for a consultant, Leah Rosenbaum, former JVS president and CEO, told the *Jewish News*. They have conducted interviews and hope

to make a decision on a hire within the next week or two.

The possibility of a merger was first reported Feb. 25 by *Crain’s Detroit Business*.

“We realized that we do have overlap in the people we serve, and we’re all reliant on government funding,” Rosenbaum said. “We decided to lean in a little further.”

The goal, Rosenbaum said, is for all three groups to “maximize our money to go to mission.” She added, “Our conversations are surrounding how we can best serve the people that we serve in the most cost-effective way.”

JVS, headquartered in

Southfield with four offices across Metro Detroit, was founded in 1941 and provides counseling, training and social services to area families with a focus on women, people with disabilities and seniors.

Rosenbaum has been with JVS for 40 years and retired at the end of February; COO Paul Blatt takes her place as the new CEO.



Eric Adelman

Eric Adelman, executive director at Kadima in Southfield, said the organizations are “very early on in our conversations,” and that no decision has been made about what shape the proposed collaboration would take.

“We could share our back-end systems such as payroll or IT, jointly run some programs or we could even merge the three agencies into one,” Adelman said. “We are looking at this with very open eyes and trying to find

the best solution for the people served.”

Although Kadima is not a formal partner of JFMD,



Perry Ohren

Adelman said the two consider themselves “brother and sister organizations.”

JFS, led by CEO

Perry Ohren,

serves groups including seniors, people struggling with mental health issues and Russian immigrants.

There are overlaps in the groups’ missions. Both Kadima and JFS provide outpatient psychiatric services, as well as outpatient individual and group therapy. Both JVS and JFS provide aid to seniors and people with disabilities.

While Kadima has experienced financial speedbumps in the past, Adelman said that its 2019 audit, once complete, will show that it is now “in the black.” Financial concerns are a priority for all three organizations, yet they are not a driving force in these conversations, Adelman added.

While it appears too soon to speak to what the outcome of these conversations will be, the organizations have already reached out to partners and donors.

“All that we are embarking upon is to answer the question of how our services can be combined, and should they even be combined, to serve this community better,” Ohren said. “The only reason, in my perspective, to merge or collaborate is if we can actually serve the community better.” ■