

Dealing with the Trauma

Help is available to those who need it.

KAREN SCHWARTZ CONTRIBUTING WRITER

In the wake of the attack on Temple Israel, therapists, social workers and other trained specialists have been offering their services to help the community cope with the events and their implications for Metro Detroit's tight-knit Jewish community. They're tasked with helping start the healing process and looking meaningfully to the days, weeks and months ahead.

JFS' crisis response team jumped into action last Thursday, deploying some 25 staff members in rotation, first to The J and Shenandoah Country Club, and then to the FBI's family assistance center over the weekend and Monday, to help those impacted most closely.

They've been providing resources and direct support, as well as connecting survivors to ongoing support, says Dini Peterson, chief program officer, mental health and safety net services at Jewish Family Service, adding that they coordinated with the FBI and Oakland County



Dini Peterson

Emergency Management, nonprofit Common Ground and Oakland County Health Network (OCHN).

"Helping them, it looks different for every person. Some people want a more in-depth conversation with a mental health professional, others need help to regulate their body or their nervous system after the incident," she says, adding that having trouble sleeping or having flashbacks are normal, and that there are small techniques that can help reduce the symptoms of what people are experiencing. "We provide education and resources to help them in the days and weeks to come."

JFS will continue to offer free, one-time appointments in person or virtually with someone trained from their crisis response team or a licensed mental health professional, she says, to help community members regulate, learn tools and see if ongoing support is needed.

"Everyone in the Detroit community is still feeling the effects of this, even if they weren't on scene," she says. "And while there are those who were directly

impacted, any event like this has ripples — we don't want anyone to feel guilty or like their needs are too small to reach out for help, like they don't deserve it or need it as much as their fellow person. There are enough resources to go around."

Meanwhile, the Jewish community has demonstrated that it's prepared to keep children and families safe when in crisis, says Dr. Erika Bocknek, a family therapist with a practice in Bloomfield Hills and a professor at American Jewish University.

"We truly could not be more confident in our Temple community and in the broader community in terms of being able to keep our kids and all of us safe when in those spaces," says Bocknek, whose husband Andy is past president of Temple Israel. It's



Dr. Erika Bocknek

important to recognize the preparation of the teachers and the professional staff, says Bocknek, who considers Temple Israel her family's second home.

Going forward,

staying connected can only help people heal, she says. Jewish practices connect people with each other, and rituals create predictable patterns for children and families, she says, explaining that research shows one of the core features of healthy coping and good mental health involves a deep, close connection to one's sense of cultural identity.

"In a crisis like this, for some people there may be this instinct to say, 'maybe we should stay home, hide,'" she says, "but actually, the best way for us to heal and cope is really to do the opposite, to invest in our sense of Jewish cultural identity and engage with our communities."

Good mental health is a group project, she says, built in creating a supportive and loving community along with others. Parents can transmit a sense of confidence to their kids, she says, and encourage them to notice the helpers. Families can drop off a meal for a teacher or reach out to other families to see how they can support each other.

"I think what people will see over

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Healing Takes Time

Molly Cohen, a social worker with a private practice in Bingham Farms, was at The J Monday morning for anybody who wanted to talk. Part of the JFS crisis response team and parent to a 4.5-year-old and a 9-month-old, she says it's important for parents, teachers and community members to know it's OK if they don't have the perfect words right now.

"The reality is when something so frightening and senseless happens in a place that's supposed to feel safe, our kids and even adults aren't looking for a

perfect explanation because there aren't any," she says. "I think that we have to remind ourselves that we're not alone. Our community shows up, and they show up with compassion and courage."

Healing happens in the small, quiet moments where people are present for each other, she says. "You're there and you're present and you're honest and you give them the love that you have for each other, because that's what we as the Jewish community do time and time again."

People can look to JFS, area practices

and support groups in the days, weeks and even months ahead, she says, as they move forward into firsts — the first day going back to school or work, of walking back into the building. "There's going to be fear, anger, sadness, and definitely glimmers of hope and maybe even joy, maybe not," she says.

"I think the takeaway is really that all the emotions are valued, they all make sense and they're all going to come up. We can't fix this; this problem is so much bigger than us, but, or, and also, we already are standing back up and facing it as best as we can." **JN**

COVER STORY

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Gov. Gretchen Whitmer



Sen. Elissa Slotkin

“Whether antisemitism is coming from the left or the right, you have a responsibility to call it out. Because when you don’t, it gives permission for people to climb that ladder of escalation that goes from saying hateful things online to saying them in person to graffiti and, ultimately, to violence,” Slotkin said.

Slotkin called antisemitism an epidemic, citing statistics

showing that Jews suffer 10 times the number of hate crimes than any other group. Jewish institutions across the country spend more than \$1 billion each year to protect our houses of worship, schools and organizations.

“Antisemitism is the oldest ‘ism’ in the world. It’s become normalized, and we’ve never been less secure,” she added.

Warshay, a Temple Israel member, commended all the first responders and partner agencies for their courage and professionalism.

“No community should ever feel unsafe gathering in a house of worship or sending their children to school. I want to thank everyone at the Shenandoah Country Club and all the officials, colleagues and members of the public who have reached out in solidarity,” said Warshay, who received calls from supervisors of Oxford and Grand Blanc Townships, where mass shootings occurred in 2021 and 2025.

Michigan U.S. Sen. Gary Peters said in addition to acts of violence, he is concerned about an increase in



Sen. Gary Peters

cyberattacks since more than a third of federal cybersecurity professionals were fired by the current administration.

“We all believe when we’re in a place of worship, we’re safe, but that’s not the world we live

in anymore, and there’s no [federal]



State Sen. Rosemary Bayer

plan in place,” he said.

Michigan State Sen. Rosemary Bayer says she cannot stop thinking about the kids and their parents.

“We talk about whether anyone was hurt, but we’re all hurt,” she said.



State Rep. Samantha Steckloff

Michigan State Rep. Samantha Steckloff, whose family belongs to Temple Israel, was “heartbroken” when she learned about the attack.



State Sen. Jeremy Moss

“I hope every one of us finds this untenable,” said State Sen. Jeremy Moss. “No one should have to live like this, and we all have to stand together.”

SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING

Anyone with information about the attack should use the FBI digital media tip line at www.FBI.gov/westbloomfieldattack or call 1-800-CALLFBI.

“We ask that you continue to provide any helpful information, no matter how small you think it is,” said Runyan “Additionally, if you know someone — whether a family member, friend or co-worker — who is exhibiting concerning behavior or making threats toward themselves or others, please contact your local police department or the FBI. We need the community’s help to keep everyone safe.”

For those who need help processing this traumatic event, the FBI has established a Family Assistance Center at the J – Detroit, with on-site victim specialists to provide support for individuals affected by the tragedy. **JN**

See next week’s issue for continued coverage of the attack on Temple Israel.



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