

Annual COMPASS/ QI Activities Report to the Board - 2021

This year was a challenge not just for the agency, but for the world. The Covid-19 Pandemic caused tremendous upheaval throughout the agency, with schools and programs shutting down; staff and service participants feeling the effects of the disease on themselves and those they care for; and the devastating loss of too many of our Makor family members, from our spiritual guide with the passing of the Novominkser Rebbe, ZTZ'L, to too many of our beloved Service Participants.

At the same time, the pandemic helped us see an inner strength of our staff and Service Participants that many did not know we had. Throughout the year, in times of triumph and times of tragedy, we bound together, continued to grow, and, for those of us who survived, emerged stronger.

From a COMPASS perspective, we had to rethink how to come together as an agency while remaining physically apart and develop new ways to do some of the things we have always done. We also had to continue our COMPASS initiatives and mandate of growing, educating, and innovating. In that vein, here is a review of many of the events and initiatives that occurred this year. Some are examples of adaptations that needed to be made because of the pandemic; some are examples of responses to the pandemic. And some are simply life moving forward.

1) Our planned fundraising Dinner, originally scheduled for September 2020, was cancelled. Instead, however, a virtual, 36-hour webcast telethon was held on 01/03 – 01/04/2021. Originating from a studio in Crown Heights and hosted by Jewish radio personality Nachum Segal, the event brought together the Makor community in ways that we have honestly never seen before. Residences, programs, board members, staff, families, and other supporters organized teams and set fundraising goals; a call center was organized at Jumpstart location; people took to social media to spread the word; entertainment was provided by Jewish music superstars Joey Newcomb and Benny Friedman (including an original song about Makor, the video for which is now on our website); and an energy and excitement permeated across the agency before, during, and after the event. All told, Makor raised \$1.3 million in 36 hours and was introduced to a whole new audience of people to avail themselves to and support our services.

2) Our annual fundraising walk/run was also held virtually this year in October 2020 raising \$50,000.

3) Our annual Chanukah and Purim parties were held remotely this year, with unique activities, raffles, and entertainment. Special Covid-19 innovations included sending each

program decorations and raffle tickets prior to the event and a photo contest with prizes for each home was a winner. Acclaimed Jewish singer, Michoel Pruzansky provided musical entertainment for this special Purim party.

4) In the beginning of the pandemic, our regular manager's meetings became basically Covid-19 meetings, with at times weekly updates on changing policies and protocols. These meetings were held virtually which, ironically, actually helped enhance the attendance as people were actually able to be in "two places at once". As the crises began to slow but social distancing protocols remained in place, these meetings continued to be held remotely with good results.

5) Makor donated a trove of documents (all edited for HIPAA) to the Yeshiva University Archives Covid-19 project. From the beginning of the pandemic, the Archives had been collecting materials documenting how Jewish organizations in North America have adapted their activities and functions, as a result of COVID. The University archivists asked if we could provide them with materials specifically related to working with people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities during this trying time, and Makor obliged. We are honored to have been the agency in our field approached by the University, and our involvement in this project will hopefully assist future researchers and historians understand and learn from these trying times.

6) Our QI department continued to work diligently to both enhance the quality of our services while, at the same time, making the task of compliance more efficient for our staff. In this vein, they developed improved methods for documenting monthly progress notes in those programs that require them, as well as changing the manner in which Consumer Council Meetings are conducted and followed-up upon. Trainings on the use of these forms were given at manager's meetings. QI also revamped our annual agency-wide staff training and created an online training program, to great reviews.

7) Our Makor College Experience Program this year experienced the highest of the highs and the lowest of the lows. The lowest was the untimely passing of our beloved student, Saadya Ehrenpries, A'H, from Covid-19. The impact Saadya had on others became strikingly evident when news of his passing, so close to what would have been his graduation from the program and as he was living his dream of living a college life, reached the Associated Press who then wrote a piece on Saadya and the Makor College Experience Program as part of their Covid-19 coverage. The piece was picked up by close to 300 news outlets all over the country, including the Washington Post, the US News and World Report, and the New York Times. The accompanying video has been viewed close to 40,000 times online, and a scholarship program in Saadya's name for the program has been established so that others can follow in his footsteps and live their dreams. Regarding the highs of the program, our move to virtual learning

as YU shut its campus, was more seamless than anticipated. In September, most of the campus remained closed but was open to Rabbinical students and following the YU policy of, "If anyone is welcome, Makor is welcome" we received permission to begin our program back on the mostly empty campus, in September. While there were definitely negatives to this experience, such as the lack of campus life and peer engagement with the YU students, we did take advantage of having the campus mostly to ourselves (hallway bowling, which we can no longer do now that the rest of the college is back on campus, was a particularly favorite activity). The highest of the highs, though, was an event that turned out to be more beautiful than anyone imagined it could be, under the circumstances. YU held its graduation ceremony over Zoom, and our first cohort of seven graduating students (including Saadya) were included in the event seamlessly. They were in the videos of campus life and called out by name along with all other graduating students. They were included in the yearbook with "Makor College Experience" listed as their major. And Saadya was remembered during a memorial tribute for everyone in the University family who succumbed to the virus. From simply watching the ceremony, you would not be able to tell who were Makor students and who were YU students; everyone was just celebrating and celebrated together.

8) Continuing on the Makor College Experience theme, our Community Education Initiative included the publication of "The Makor College Experience: Successes and Challenges in the First Years of a College Experience Program for Individuals with Intellectual Disability" concurrently in the December issue of the International Journal of Child Health and Human Development and as a chapter in the book, "Building Children and Youth for the Future", published by Nova Science Publishers. While the primary purpose of the Makor College Experience is to impact the lives of the individuals in the program, the fact that it is also having an impact on the broader field of intellectual disability services is something of which the agency is quite proud. Hopefully, others in the field will learn from our experiences and create their own programs to help more and more people live included and fulfilling lives.

9) A second Community Education Initiative project that took place this year was a very successful Pre-Tax Day seminar on such topics as; Estate & Tax Planning. This included such important topics for our families, such as; preparing for parental incapacitation, setting up a trust for children with disabilities and details such as how to set up an ABLE Trust Account. The seminar was held on March 3rd, 2021 and had 140 registrants. In the future, Makor hopes to conduct more educational and research programs under the umbrella of the in-formation Makor Institute for Intellectual Disability Research and Application.

10) At the June 24th, 2020 Board Meeting, and again in June 2021, the Board affirmed both their commitment to the ideals of COMPASS and Makor's participation as a COMPASS agency, as well as Makor's mission statement. Both affirmations were unanimously approved.