

PRESS RELEASE

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

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**JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE OF WESTERN MASS RECEIVES \$250,000 GRANT TO EXPAND
CITIZENSHIP SERVICES**

Springfield – Jewish Family Service of Western Mass has been awarded a competitive two-year \$250,000 Citizenship and Assimilation Grant from the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This grant will allow JFS to expand its' current citizenship program to better serve prospective citizen's assimilation into American civic life in Hampden County of Western MA.

The fiscal year 2019 grants, which run through September 2021, promote prospective citizens' assimilation into American civic life by funding educational programs designed to increase their knowledge of English, U.S. history and civics.

"Our country welcomes legal immigrants from all over the world who come to the United States, positively contribute to our society and engage in American civic life," said USCIS Acting Director Ken Cuccinelli. "Immigrants who assimilate, embrace our Constitution, understand our history, and abide by our laws add to the vitality and strength of this great nation. Through this grant program, USCIS continues to support efforts to prepare immigrants to become fully vested U.S. citizens."

JFS is one of 41 organizations in 24 states to receive nearly \$10 million in funding to support citizenship preparation services. Now in its 11th year, the USCIS Citizenship and Assimilation Grant Program has helped more than 245,000 lawful permanent residents prepare for citizenship. A "permanent resident" is a person authorized by the US Gov't to live and work in the country on a permanent basis.

Jewish Family Service is a nonprofit social service agency that has developed both substantive legal and programmatic expertise during its eight years of experience in Citizenship and Naturalization services. "The program began as a response to a glaring unmet need in our community. Today, JFS is a well-respected and trusted partner in engaging the immigrant community in Hampden County," said Maxine Stein, JFS CEO. "JFS is excited and pleased to have received this grant opportunity. It will allow us to strengthen our current work in citizenship and positions us to be a leader in helping those on the path to becoming U.S. citizens. As a Jewish organization, we are proud to provide this important service to our local residents. Like all of us, we value freedom, safety and opportunity. Citizenship helps to provide that and we can help make that happen."

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Jewish Family Service of Western Massachusetts is a beneficiary agency of the Jewish Federation of Western MA.

JFS was a sub-awardee of a USCIS Office of Citizenship National Capacity Building Grant awarded to HIAS for FY 2010. JFS' citizenship curriculum was highlighted by USCIS on their website for best practices in 2011 for its effective classroom constitution activity that may be adapted to meet the needs of each class of students. In 2013, JFS received a similar two-year citizenship grant, and again in 2017 for 2 years.

In addition to processing naturalization applications and providing citizenship instruction, JFS prepares a cadre of volunteers who are trained to provide ESOL tutoring and citizenship prep mentoring which includes the citizenship test and interview. "Our staff is accredited by the Department of Justice. This additional support is a tremendous resource for our clients and our program as well."

Since 1915, Jewish Family Service has been providing exceptional social services, grounded in Jewish values, to support and empower individuals and families from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds.

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