

COMMUNITY

SBH Gives Community Members the “Courage to Heal”

March 2023



Sephardic Bikur Holim (SBH) and its team of staff and volunteers have always risen to the call of duty, meeting the numerous and evolving needs of the community as it continues to grow.

One of the vitally important causes that SBH has, unfortunately, been called upon to address in recent years is the silent crisis of abuse – unwanted physical contact – an ill that affects both children and adults. The scourge of abuse has led SBH to expand **Courage to Heal (CTH)**, a comprehensive program focused on therapeutic intervention to support survivors, and on abuse prevention through education.

Survivors who reach out to SBH receive not only professional support, but also a comprehensive plan of care, utilizing the large number of programs and services offered by the organization, a holistic approach to ensure a successful recovery.

“We at SBH have done extensive research to build a team of best-in-class professionals with which to offer a full, 360-degree solution to deal with prevention, education, training, and awareness, as well

as offering therapeutic support from highly-trained clinicians along with highly-trained community volunteers,” said SBH President David J. Beyda, who has made the expansion of CTH one of the organization’s top priorities.

Survivors of abuse can receive the help they need from SBH’s CTH and the Counseling Center, which is staffed by a cohort of trained trauma-informed clinicians under the supervision of Certified Clinical Trauma Professional Dr. Gavriel Fagin, an expert in the treatment of this type of abuse. By seeking support from SBH CTH, survivors will receive a comprehensive plan that utilizes the many programs and services offered by SBH and other community organizations.

“I feel privileged and honored to be part of a team that is helping to train and prepare the next generation of therapists to address abuse in our community,” says Dr. Fagin, who serves as Clinical Consultant for Courage to Heal.

Education & Awareness

Additionally, CTH is committed to working toward eliminating abuse by offering extensive educational training to the community and its institutions. Through SBH’s partnership with *Magen Yeladim*, a program created by internationally-recognized trauma professional Debbie Fox, LCSW, CTH will educate teachers, school and camp administrators, parents, students, and rabbis on ways to prevent abuse and to empower survivors to ask for help.

“Developing comprehensive prevention services, trauma-focused intervention for children, teens and adults, and community awareness programs for camps, schools, shuls, and rabbinic leadership, are all facets of a comprehensive program that many have dreamed of for years,” said Dr. Fagin. “And now, SBH is actualizing this dream.”

SBH is working with the support of SIMHA and SAFE to offer education, guidance and resources to our community.

“It was truly encouraging to see how SBH took the lead on this sensitive subject, enlisting the best people in this field, looking for the best practices and building on the experience of other communities that have been successful in this area,” said Rabbi David Sutton, Director and Co-Founder of SIMHA.

Rabbi Sutton noted the robust support that this initiative has received from our community’s rabbinical leaders, many of whom have endorsed the program, demonstrating their understanding of the sensitivity and urgency of this silent crisis.

“Their ability to galvanize many community rabbis around this cause was very heartening, and I am sure that with this communal force, we will be able to alleviate some of the pain and prevent it from happening in the future,” said Rabbi Sutton.

Uniting the Stakeholders

Dr. Shloimie Zimmerman, clinical psychologist and Director of the Rabbinic Clinical Training Program for SIMHA, is consulting for the SBH CTH team to help implement the best preventative and clinical training for the community.

“Research and experience clearly demonstrate that the most efficient way to enhance a community’s safety and prevent abuse is to unite all the stakeholders in their mission to address these critical issues,” said Dr. Zimmerman. “It is incredibly heartening and inspiring to see the Syrian community

mobilizing and uniting in this effort; rabbinic, organizational, professional and lay leadership are working in tandem, with SBH at the helm, to bring the best prevention and intervention professionals and methods to aid the community.”

The leaders spearheading this initiative hope that these impressive collaborative efforts as a unified front will encourage survivors to reach out for help, echoed SAFE founder and CEO Ike Dweck.

“SAFE is proud to be a part of this groundbreaking initiative, working together to provide our community with much-needed support for survivors and preventative programs to protect our children,” he said. “Together we can destigmatize the painful subject of abuse and help affected community members to rebuild their lives.”

With the support of SBH’s team of professionals, including Shlomo Lieberman, LCSW, director of the Mental Health Division; Dr. Susan Schmool, director of the Mental Health Resource; Dr. Ayla Sitt, CTH chair; and Cara M. R. London, LMSW, trauma therapist and CTH coordinator, the organization is fully equipped to serve as a trusted resource to protect our community. As Mr. Beyda concludes, “Courage to Heal is not the type of program we ever want to believe is necessary, but in the event that it is, SBH is ready to help.”

To get help for yourself or someone you know, or to schedule a training program for your community institution, contact Courage to Heal at 718-787-0009 or cth@sbhonline.org. All calls and emails are kept strictly confidential.
