



## **Case Study: The Jewish Federation of Des Moines**

When the Iowa Jewish Senior Life Center was unable to admit a Holocaust survivor due to his advanced medical needs, it generated community criticism from both the religious and secular communities. The elderly man was a well-known member of the community, described as “colorful and hard-nosed.” An outspoken survivor of the concentration camps, he once filed a lawsuit to seek compensation for his enslavement – plus 50 years accrued interest – from the companies descended from the place of his forced labor. The Life Center, which is funded extensively by the Jewish Federation of Greater Des Moines, provides post-acute rehabilitation services, as well as skilled nursing care.

Realizing their inability to care for such an individual was a difficult decision for the Life Center and the Federation. Both the family and local clergy threatened to publicly embarrass them for their decision. The Life Center’s staff did extensive work to place the individual in a more appropriate setting. Reasons of medical privacy did not allow any of these efforts to come to light. This left both institutions in a difficult public position, one that generated considerable controversy they could not address head-on. In addition, the incident occurred right before the Federation’s annual fund drive, a major source of funding for the organization’s annual operating budget.

### ***Tactics included:***

- o Strategic direction
- o Letters to stakeholders of both institutions explaining the difficulty of meeting the patient’s needs and their efforts to find more appropriate care
- o Reactive press statements
- o Key message development and delivery coaching for the key staff and volunteers
- o Coaching on message delivery for meetings with community leaders.

### ***Summary of results:***

- o The patient’s placement in a hospice setting was able to be done discretely and without public reaction
- o The patient’s family stopped its efforts to publicly embarrass the Life Center and the Federation
- o Clergy cancelled their threatened public actions against the Life Center and the Federation
- o The Federation’s annual fund drive was only minimally affected.
- o No mention of the controversy showed up in the extensive obituary written upon his death only six months after the controversy came to light.

