Best Practices of Social Services in the State of Israel
The Ministry of Social Affairs and Services

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Greetings from the Minister of Social Welfare and Services

The mission of the Israeli Ministry of Social Welfare and Services is to enhance and protect the well-being of all Israeli citizens and to contribute to the building of a just and inclusive society. We fulfill that mission by providing effective social services through a large range of programs. We do that mostly in partnership with local authorities, NGOs and for-profit providers.

To move our mission forward, we, practitioners, managers and policy-makers are working tirelessly in order to be prepared for the social challenges we will face in the future and we strive to push the outer bounds of social innovation. We do our utmost to help the next generation of Israelis grow up in safe families as well as to support the elderly, people with disabilities and other groups at-risk. We are committed to work smarter and to continuously improve the effectiveness of the social services. We therefore try hard to systematically evaluate our programs and interventions and to find ways to provide services less expensively, more efficiently and with greater transparency.

It was with these goals in mind that we select the programs in this booklet. It reflects the innovativeness of the Ministry' departments and their capacity to reflect upon their deeds and to continuously improve their activities. It also displays the very large array of services offered to vulnerable people by the Israeli Government.

We do hope that this publication will promote the creation and the transmission of practical knowledge and innovation between stakeholders and will advance efficiency, transparency, and accountability throughout the social services system.

With best regards
Haim Katz
MK, Minister of Social Affairs & Social Services
During the 27 years of my work at the Ministry, I have been moved and taken aback on endless occasions by the abundance of innovative programs that have emerged owing to the desires of professionals to aid and benefit the target population of the Ministry, from toddlers to the elderly, persons with special needs, the disabled and youth at high risk.

All of these programs, which have been leaders in their fields, have gained great acclaim from professionals from that field, but have not been disclosed to the general public, and sometimes even to employees of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services themselves who work in other fields.

Therefore, I am proud that the Director of the Department of International Relations & International Social Service, Ms. Renee Techelet, has initiated the idea of announcing to the public in Israel and elsewhere in the world the abundance of best practice programs that the Ministry has developed for the benefit of various populations, after having produced, along with its permanent staff, students and volunteers, this important, professional booklet.

I am positive that this booklet will be a milestone in the professional history of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services and I am proud of the employees of the department who initiated the production of this booklet in coordination with the employees of the various services at the Ministry.

It is our role in the Division to create a civil society with resilience and strength; knowledge is power and the aim of this booklet is to provide professionals in particular and the citizens of the state in general a tool and power to distribute this teaching from Jerusalem to the entire world.

Enjoy reading this booklet, and gaining benefit from it can be surely guaranteed.

Best regards,

Nili Dror
Director of the Division for Community Resources
The Ministry of Social Affairs and Services
I am pleased to present the first best practices booklet of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services. This is the first project of its kind that presents the wonderful activity that is being conducted at Israel’s Ministry of Social Affairs and Services in a summary version that is accessible to external peers abroad. Having frequent relations with various ministries and authorities in Israel and beyond, it is easy to discern the unique knowledge that the Ministry has. The project of writing this booklet was formed out of full recognition of this unique information and is intended for distribution to relevant professionals, and primarily to welfare agencies overseas. I strongly hope that this is the beginning of the formation of bridges between our ministries and colleagues worldwide, which will allow for distribution of the information and therapeutic models that are being developed and implemented within the activity of the Ministry. This is also an opportunity to receive similar information from welfare services in other countries relating to best practice as a source for learning on structural changes or professional options of various practices. The great importance of international partnering and mutual exchange of information are what allow for the best possible care to be provided to weakened and feeble populations.

This booklet demonstrates best practices as raised in the joint mapping work of the Department with the various services. The information regarding these practices includes, from time to time, external organizations that work jointly with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services to accomplish its policy. As a rule, the practices shown in the booklet contain consistent policies, such as a complex perception of social problems and development of multidisciplinary teams for correcting and combatting them. The approach practiced in most departments is a human, “customer oriented” therapeutic-educational approach. Moreover, the various offices of the Ministry operate out of full awareness for the plurality of Israel’s population, which consists of many groups that differ by ethnicity, religion, time in the country and more. The Ministry adapts its services to the various populations in order to maximize the effectiveness of its services and based on a multicultural approach.

First and foremost, thanks must be given to the Director of the Division for Community Resources, Ms. Nili Dror, as her support and space for free thought and innovation – which is integral to improving the system of services - has allowed for growth, development and
exploration of new worlds, as demonstrated by the contents of this booklet.

I wish to express my gratitude to the New Spirit Organization, the Begin Center and the Masa Program for running of internship programs. The interns, whom I consider an integral part of the department, are the ones who spurred the writing of this booklet.

Thanks go to the devoted, precious department staff: Divra Horowits, Benjamin Behar, Carly Olenick (intern), Avigail Remes (volunteer), Eyal Bar and Elisa Bareket (international social work interns). Special thanks go to Meirav Katzav and Celina Nieman, former interns at the department who started the process and managed all of this activity in a professional, speedy and welcoming manner.

It is important for me to be thankful for and emphasize the great cooperation with the Ministry’s professional staff – the division directors, the district directors, directors of fields, services and their deputies, the national superintendents and consultants to the services of the Ministry, without whose contribution, the writing of this booklet would not have been possible.

At the end of this booklet, you can read on the activities of the Department for International Relations & International Social Service and ways of contacting us. We would be happy to receive any comment or response.

Happy reading!

Renee Techelet
Director of the Department of International Relations & International Social Service
The Ministry of Social Affairs and Services
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Children and youth

- The National Program for Children and Youth at Risk
- The Service for Children and Youth at Risk
- The Service for Adoption
- The Service for Youth and Adolescents in Distress
- The Youth at Risk Rehabilitation Service
- The Youth Protection Authority – Youth at High Risk
- The Juvenile Probation Service
The National Program for Children and Youth at Risk is intended to engender a comprehensive change in the effort of Israel’s society to cope with children and youth who are at risk and with their families. Six government ministries have joined forces to implement the decision of the government to apply the recommendations of the public committee for assessing the situation of children and youths that are at risk and in distress (Schmid Committee).

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Services is leading and integrating the program; the Ministry of Education is participating in the running of the program at the district level and the Ministries of Health, Immigration and Absorption, Public Security and Economy are each taking an active part in the program and its implementation. In addition to this, other participants are the Local Government Center and the Israel Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).

The program is aimed at reducing the numbers of children and youth who are subject to threatening conditions within the family and their surroundings. This is a broad concept of distress that covers seven primary fields of life: physical existence in the aspect of health and development, belonging to a family, learning and acquisition of skills, mental well-being and health, social belonging and participation, protection against others and as a result protection against their own dangerous behavior. All of the resources of the program, as allocated by the government, are intended for development of solutions in the community. About a third of the resources are directed at programs, interventions and services for young children.

The program has an accompanying information system called the Town Information Infrastructure (TMI in Hebrew), whose purpose is to allow towns participating in the national program to document and extract information on children and parents participating in the solutions and to manage the activity that is conducted in the various committees and teams operating within the program.

The program is now implemented in more than 170 towns, town clusters and neighborhoods that have been chosen based on socioeconomic criteria, with the aim of providing assistance particularly to particular weak population groups. The main target groups are in the Arab population, the ultra-orthodox population and new immigrants. In addition to this assistance, which is the heart of the program, the program allows for reinforcement of preferences and interdisciplinary decisions to be made by the relevant authorities for aiding children and youth who are at risk, and forms a professional network covering this subject in the long term.
Emergency centers for children

There are currently 11 emergency centers operating in Israel as an initial channel for caring for children who are in danger in the family setting. The centers form a short-term interventional program for inquiry, assessment and care for the child and his/her parents during a crisis, and at its end some children may return home. It is emphasized that the emergency centers are not intended to separate children from their parents. Children are transferred to emergency centers for providing them a calm, protected environment, until it is decided that they can return home or must stay away from home, in a boarding school or in a foster family, for their own safety. The centers are intended for children of different ages, from two to fifteen years. Once a child is assigned to an emergency center, intensive contacts with the family are initiated in order to intervene and assess the various options. The aim of the service is first and foremost to provide the child optimal protection, when his/her natural environment endangers him/her. But the importance of the emergency centers lies in the attempt to minimize the change in the child’s life and restore him to his family after it has undergone treatment and it is determined that the home is a safe place for him/her. The treatment is done by a multidisciplinary team at emergency centers through a gradual process. Initially, the child is transferred to the emergency center at which an initial evaluation is conducted concerning his condition by the therapeutic team. While adjusting to the site, the specific courses of action that are appropriate for the child and his family are determined. Centers hold classes that are recognized by the Ministry of Education, allowing children to maintain or continue a normative routine. The work with the child’s family is an integral part of the work at the center. The family undergoes a therapeutic process that allows it to understand the complexity of the relationship with its child. This results in understanding of how to protect the child and whether the family can do so. After about six months, the emergency center makes a decision on long-term care, whether by the children returning home or by moving to a boarding school or adoptive family. The assignment of all children at an emergency center is made by court order.

Sexual abuse care centers

These centers are intended for children and youths, but their care is provided in the family framework. This is a flexible program that results in individual, unique care for each child and his family, and in which sensitivity to the family’s circumstances, the type of trauma experienced and the age of the child is at the forefront. The aim of the sexual abuse care centers is to provide focused treatment of this issue in view of the understanding that sexual abuse, particularly at young age, may result in trauma and impaired physical, mental and social functioning. Accordingly, the family is also involved in the treatment in view of the perception that adapted treatment is also necessary at home rather than only during the stay at the care center. The sexual abuse care centers have been operating for about five years while demonstrating cultural sensitivity and matching of the treatment to the different populations in Israel, such as: the ultra-orthodox, Arab, state-religious populations. Children and youths may be referred for treatment at the center both by a social worker and by their parents. The duration of the stay at the center varies with the abuse that the child has experienced as well as his living circumstances. Along with the child, the parents also undergo a learning and thinking process and an individual treatment plan is tailored to the family.
Protection centers for investigation of children

The protection centers for children and youth are intended to provide an initial support process for assessment and investigation of children who have been physically, sexually or mentally abused and for their families, if they are not the perpetrators of the abuse. These centers have been developed with the aim of improving the quality of the solution for children who have been abused by reducing the time and number of the checks and interviews that the child must undergo for making decisions concerning the abuse that he has suffered.

Their purpose is to form a friendly, pleasant setting that provides a supportive environment, thus assisting in the provision of support for children and youth under optimal conditions. This friendly setting is made possible by the holistic view that characterizes the protection centers that operate with the help of a multidisciplinary team. The team includes social workers under the Youth Law, child and youth investigators, pediatricians, an operational team and an attorney from the district attorney’s office. This effort results in uniform cooperation between the agencies that are responsible for the professional intervention that is provided in cases of child abuse, the main ones being the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services, the Israel Police and the Ministry of Justice. An investigation that the social worker appointed as a child investigator administers to the child is regulated and affected by the other agencies, preventing the need for further, protracted investigations. In addition, the questioning is recorded, allowing for precise documentation of the entire investigation proceeding. The law allows the child investigator to testify in court instead of the child, making the process easier for the child and saving him/her from further trauma of it. This cooperation also allows for flexibility and sensitivity according to the individual case of the subject. Today, about five such centers are working in Israel and actions are underway to expand the service.
Opening of an adoption file

The Child Adoption Law of 1981 allows an adoptee, at the discretion of the social worker, upon reaching the age of 18, to inspect his “adoption book”. The book is the record of identifying details of the birth parent. This process is called “opening the adoption file”. For the adoptee, it is a highly significant event as part of the process of forming a full, complete self-identity. The questions that engage adoptees when opening their adoption file are related to the circumstances of their being given for adoption, the resemblance to the biological family, questions of genetics, siblings and more. When opening the file, the adoptee is provided information on the circumstances of his/her being given up for adoption, including non-identifying details on the birth parent: the life circumstances of the parent owing to which he could not care for the child. Later, at the request of the adoptee, the social worker tracks down the birth parent and asks him or her for consent to meet the adoptee. In the meeting, which is initially held in the presence of the social worker, the adoptee and the parent can get to know each other and check their will for continuing the relationship. If both parties in the meeting consent, the identifying details may be given over in order to continue the relationship. This is a complex emotional meeting that deals with the pining, expectations, wishes and pain of the adoptee and the birth parent alike.

Accompaniment by the social worker is important both for the adoptee and for the birth parent, as the opening of the file is a very significant stage. For the adoptee, it is a meeting with his/her own life story; coping with a reality that required him/her to be given up for adoption, and sometimes coping with difficult information. Sometimes, it represents the shattering of the fantasy that accompanied the adoptee over the years, and this is a stage and part of the formation of his/her self-identity. For the birth parent, the opening of the file is a complex event: for some of the parents, the meeting is the fulfillment of the wish that has accompanied them throughout the years. For another parent, it is a kind of opening of a wound, the reliving of a trauma and sometimes coping with the fact that his/her family is unaware of the adoptee’s existence. Every person has a right to self-identity and has a right to know his life story. Therefore, we do everything possible to explain and to convince the parent how important it is to consent to a meeting with the adoptee. As part of the process of opening the adoption file, and at the request of the adoptee, the social worker mediates a meeting with other figures from the past and helps him meet his/her siblings. More than 400 adoptees apply per year to have their adoption file opened. Some of the applications are repeat applications of adoptees that made do with getting information the last time they had their files opened. When they apply again, the adoptees ask for their birth parents to be tracked down for a meeting. The law, as set forth, allows for the file to be opened once the adoptee reaches the age of 18, but adoptees who apply at an earlier age are those who are preoccupied by questions of identity over the years. However, experience shows that most adoptees apply at a later age. Most applications are from adoptees aged 25-35, sometimes because they are raising a family, and sometimes the application for opening a file happens at more advanced ages for reasons of curiosity of the adoptee’s family.
The Ministry of Social Affairs and Services has developed, in cooperation with JDC Ashalim, a unique tool for advancing and encouraging adoption in families and helping families throughout the years of adoption. This process trains seasoned adoptive parents to mentor and support new adoptive families.

The training of seasoned adoptive families as mentors for new adoptive families occurs at the Central School for Social Workers, with the guidance and funding of the Service for Children and Youth at Risk and the Community Work Service of the Division for Personal and Social Services of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services. Organizations for adoptive parents, Ometz Leametz (Bravery to Adopt) and Nitzanei Tikva (Buds of Hope) run the training and accompaniment, with the aim of empowering parental leadership, discussing adoption problems and providing tools for support and accompaniment of those who undergo the process for the first time in their lives. The service of training adoptive parents as mentors was established with the aim of supporting the adoptive family community in all parts of the socio-political spectrum in Israel. This aim is based on the concept that adoption is not a single-time event, but a complex event that has life-long implications for the child and for the adoptive family. This community framework for adoptive parents, which is made possible through the parents’ organizations, is an important tool for coping with this complexity. A course for training mentors allows seasoned adoptive parents to acquire better tools for assisting and supporting other adoptive families and to strengthen the community.

This training program also constitutes a bridge between different groups in Israeli society. The Nitzanei Tikva Organization deals with adoption in the Arab sector, and its parents take part both in training and in workshops that are administered by mentors alongside Jews from all parts of the population, including same-sex couples.
Warm Home for teenage girls

Warm Home for teenage girls is an intensive therapeutic setting for girls aged 13-18 who are at high risk due to difficulties in the family or interpersonal communication following abuse that they have experienced, an immigration crisis and cultural differences. Warm Home offers these girls therapeutic, social, academic and cultural services, including warm meals. The aim of the service is to extricate girls from the cycle of danger and distress by providing a positive experience of acceptance, warmth, belonging, empowerment and life skills, based on the understanding that teenage girls may be exposed to abuse and distress as a result of their status, their family, social situation and adolescence crises. Protection, reinforcement and development of opportunities for growth and development of these girls are crucial to them leaving this cycle. This makes gender-oriented treatment very important due to the prominent tendency of teenage girls of using their body in order to appeal to others with the hope that this will allow them to have meaningful relationships that they have not experienced theretofore. The experience that they gain at Warm Home includes strengthened maternal relations with the matron with the aim of forming understanding and experiencing a meaningful relationship.

Warm Home operates under the principle of a “therapeutic environment” in which life events, universes of content and problems with which the girls contend serve as material for work and for responses. The team consists of a social worker, an instructor and a matron. The exposure to a range of functionaries allows each girl to connect with figures who will benefit her.

The group of youth and adolescent girls serves as a basis for empowerment, decision-making ability and personal responsibility. The Warm Home constitutes part of a sequence of treatments that are provided in the service. For this reason, a girl is referred to it only by a social worker who has determined that this setting may help the girl cope with her problems. The girls come to the home twice a week, for 5 hours each time, for a period of up to a year, with an option for an extended stay, with the approval of a district superintendent. Ideally, during this year, the girl will gain a sense of belonging and support, as well as therapeutic tools and life skills. She will also have significant bonds and relationships, and experience success in integrating into a normative academic or work setting.
“Afikim” – employment program for youth at risk

“Afikim” is an individual intervention program with the aim of helping young people who are at risk, lacking familial and financial support to integrate and advance in the job market. Some have a criminal record or a history of addictions, and most have learning difficulties and a low educational background. All stages of the program allow these young people to leave the cycle of unskilled odd jobs and gain better, more stable job prospects. It is based on the understanding that stable financial backing is a primary tool for leaving the cycle of poverty and danger and provides a genuine opportunity for a better future for young people who are at risk.

The program lasts 18 months and offers a model of action that focuses on the young person for improving his or her ability to persevere and advance in the employment world. The program is based both on individual accompaniment and on use of group tools in order to advance the personal process. For the young person, individual accompaniment is continuous throughout the program and is focused on employment in order to realize the different potential of each participant. Concurrently, professional training is provided with the aim of allowing the young participants to choose a vocational direction. In addition, they are accompanied to ensure high quality job assignments, which include work stability, pay and social conditions and prospects for promotion and self-realization. The group accompaniment is conducted through three workshops: the first as a preparation for the job market, the second for providing learning skills and the third for specific assignment. For young women, there is also a group meeting during the intervention.

The positive results of the Afikim program have led to the formation of another program, Afikim Integrates, which will help realize similar goals for the population suffering from greater difficulties.
Removing minors from the cycle of prostitution

The Service for Youth and Adolescents in Distress is currently acting to develop a large-scale program in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area to cope with youths of both sexes who are exploited for prostitution, which are at the extreme end of the spectrum in terms of danger, lack of ties and risk.

The program includes implementing an open space for the benefit of participants, which is open 24/7, to receive minors in any condition and at any time without any tests or questions, with the initial aim of extending assistance and minimizing damage. Simultaneously, the open space’s team conducts street work in order to track down minors working in prostitution with the intent of assisting them.

This service is based on the understanding that in extreme cases, it is not possible to extract youths and young people from the cycle of prostitution all at once for the purpose of care and rehabilitation, but basic trust must first be developed using tools for coping and reducing risks involved in abusive behavior.

The phenomenon affects vagrant adolescents and young people who are not integrated into any academic setting, who lack support and suffer from emotional, social and family distress, and live on the street. This population is exploited for prostitution as a survival strategy for food, clothing or looking for love and attention that they lack in their natural environments.

These are youths and young people who have lost trust in themselves, their families and society. Only after developing basic trust with them is it possible to create a situation in which they can distance themselves from exploitation for prostitution and move to a rehabilitative therapeutic program.

Formation of contacts with young people in this situation is based on “street work” – going into the territory in which they operate, forming availability and accessibility while they are active, and forming neutral, non-judgmental initial contacts between minors who are exploited for prostitution and who are at the end of the continuum with the multidisciplinary team. This work forms complementary solutions that are intended for emergencies and survival in the street, such as food and shelter.

Today, there is a center that provides young people a warm shower, a rest and protection six days a week. This center is expanding its size and activity. The purpose of these actions is to create a desire for change among youths and youngsters who are at high risk. A wish for change will allow for a personal and collective program to be formed for these young people, for receiving care in the community or outside the home.
“Doing Business” program at Miftanim

The “Doing Business” program is a new, creative strategy for preparing youths who face risks and lack of ties for the employment and entrepreneurial business world. The service operates with the “Zionism 2000” organization and the National Insurance Institute for rehabilitating youths and forming business enterprises that are committed to meeting the requirements of the market, but are run for and by youth at high risk. The preparation for the employment world is the key therapeutic-rehabilitative tool for leading youth toward reintegration in society as functional citizens.

This program allows hundreds of youths who have not found their place in formal education settings to take responsibility for their future and engage in projects that have been built for them. The projects are a business for all intents and purposes, which teaches youths business management and provides them pay, but at the same time allows them to achieve normative functioning in society. This is an educational-social framework that provides life tools, including preparation for a work life, forming a network of business connections, and besides this also strengthening of youths’ self-image and self-sufficiency.

The index of success of the Youth at Risk Rehabilitation Service’s work is measured by the self-sufficiency of its graduates, which allows for social leadership and breaking of the cycle of neediness. To achieve this end, the “Doing Business” model has been developed for youths, based on the understanding that the age that is of greatest significance for developing a career concept for the future is adolescence. Youths who face danger and lack of connections need special attention due to their sense of past failure in studies and disruption of their sense of capability and faith in their employment outlooks. Appropriate, structured preparation of these youths for building a significant future image and providing life skills are of pivotal importance at this developmental stage.

In the process of forming the business project, the youths undergo business and vocational training. The project is based on a youth workforce and is accompanied by an adult business manager. He is committed to meet the requirements of the market, and must make financial sense to achieve an operational balance and ensure its long-term operation.

The businesses operate in a range of fields: woodwork, metalwork, digital printing and more. Moreover, the projects maximize the use of infrastructures that exist at the Miftanim Organization – the vocational workshops for preparing youths for the job market. At these workshops, youths of both sexes acquire employment skills and take vocational studies and are also paid a manufacturing fee for their work. The projects allow for the pay of youths to be increased and maximization of the skills and the tools provided to them in a challenging, empowering environment.
Dynamic treatment structure – transition from a locked space to an open space

The Youth Protection Authority is intended to serve as Israel’s mainstay agency to develop and operate a diverse network of settings that specialize in education, rehabilitation and care in an authoritative, out of home setting for youth and adolescents who are in states of high risk and danger, at the end of the therapeutic spectrum, who are referred by law or under the shadow of the law. To this end, a diverse network of settings that specialize in the field has been developed, with the aim of assisting youths in rehabilitating their lives so that they can return to their communities and continue their lives as normative youths. The youth protection centers are built as a network covering a sequence that supports dynamism and transfer according to the individual needs of each youth. Underlying this structure is the concept that holds that a broad therapeutic range and transfer of youths between the different center types should be allowed for, according to their conditions and needs. Different types of spaces are held in the youth protection centers: a protective space, which is a locked complex, an advancement complex, which is an open, comprehensive boarding school, an integration space, which is a hostel integrated in the community, a detention substitute and homes for intervention and care during a crisis.

The centers in the different spaces represent a therapeutic community and provide academic, educational and vocational contents alongside personal and group therapy and family intervention. By nature, the spaces differ from each other by duration of intervention, intensity and the ability to control and monitor the youths at any given time.

The more open the space is, the more independence and responsibility the youths must show. The service operates with sensitivity to gender and sector needs as necessary, but as a rule operates with the aim of forming normative workspaces to the extent required. The system operates as a network that provides for transition between the various therapeutic spaces according to the given condition and the needs of the adolescent.

Accompaniment of youths back to the community – “From Sheltered Protection to Independence”

The homes of the youth protection center are intended, among other things, for preparing learners for their reintegration in normative community life, and act to form the tools and skills that may help the learner upon his/her return to the community. The accompaniment and tracking of graduates of the authority’s homes who return to the community at the end of their stay are conducted by law. However, the follow-up concept considers them to be a complementary link of the therapeutic system at the home. The Youth Protection Authority assumes the responsibility of devising a rehabilitative program in preparation for leaving the homes and assisting graduates with their integration back into the community. Based on the understanding that upon leaving the home and returning to the community, repeat deterioration of the youth may disrupt the treatment that has been provided to them at the homes, the work with youths must be continued and built upon in the community as well. Moreover, the tracking of the adolescent’s integration in the community contributes to refining the tools that should be strengthened during the stay at the home. Because the geographic distance between the home and the community may impair the efficiency and effectiveness of contacts with the graduates, the community accompaniment and follow up workers effectively accompany the graduates, while maintaining contact with the home’s staff and holding consultations during the follow up period. The “From Sheltered Protection to Independence” program is run today by the Elem (Youth in Distress) Association through regional coordinators and a set of volunteers. The follow up is conducted for one to two years, at gradual intensity, and decreases as the time passes.
Adventure-based therapy

In recent years, field work-based therapy programs have been adopted by some of the Youth Protection homes. The programs are run at varying frequency, from going into the field once a year, then to several times a year and also to homes that have made field excursions an integral part of their educational perception and therapeutic tools. This is done based on perception of the importance of educational-therapeutic work that is based on intervention through field work and challenge (adventure-based therapy).

Professional experience, alongside studies on the subject, show that field work has major advantages in the therapeutic process. Immersing participants in unfamiliar surroundings that include uncertainty and risk calls for challenges, self-revelation and an expansion of the perception of reality, satisfaction and success and alternative learning processes. Moreover, it forms new, meaningful relations among the participants and between them and the instructor and therapist staff. All these components allow for potential for genuine change in the cognitive and behavioral patterns of the program's participants, alongside personal growth and emotional development.

There are a range of forms of field based treatments. For example, group treks that last one to six weeks, fixed trip days along the year, individual trips of a youth with a guide and more.

These treatments allow for working in a small group and focusing on the subject's strengths and successes rather than his pathologies and difficulties. The attending staff members testify that such treatments form a significant increase in learning ability, reduction in the use of medication, improvement in the social climate and reduction in the level of violence at the homes, and have led to improvement of relations with the family and also an increase in military enlistment rates.

Currently, the Youth Protection Authority is acting with other parties to form an assessment institution, the first of its kind in the country, for assessing individuals under field conditions.
“Restorative justice” program

“Restorative justice” is an alternative approach to the criminal proceeding that is practiced in the enforcement and legal systems in western countries, including Israel. The purpose of the proceeding is to correct the wrong that was carried out by a juvenile perpetrator against the victim. This leads to restoration and mitigation of the harm and amendment of the material and emotional damage that stem from the offense that the minor carried out. The proceeding is held by a meeting between offender and victim, and in some cases with their families too, and involves the perpetrator taking responsibility. It is practically expressed in actions, such as giving compensation, an apology, service for the victim and/or community and also willingness of the offender to receive care for his/her problems and needs in order to prevent the recurrence of the offenses. These actions allow for righting of wrongs in a manner that the legal proceeding does not allow and also prevent a legal proceeding in many cases.

This approach stems from the recognition that the criminal proceeding is not a sufficient solution for coping both with juvenile offenders and with victims who often argue that penal action would add insult to his past injuries. For the perpetrator, the criminal proceeding does not allow for active participation in the adjudication of the case, assuming of responsibility for actions and understanding their meaning and consequences in a manner that forms a long-term correction. The Juvenile Probation Service runs two primary programs in this field. One is conferring – mediation between the offender and victim. In half of the cases, participation in the program prevented legal involvement. Another program is family discussion groups, involvement of the families of the offender and victim in order to form a correction process that is controlled and responsible socially. In these meetings, a treatment plan is developed in order to prevent additional offenses and correct the wrong that has been committed. The execution and follow up stages are undertaken by the family of the offender, and they are monitored and controlled by a probation officer. The programs have been run for about two decades and have demonstrated success in the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders.
The “wraparound” program is a dynamic system that has been adapted to care for youths who pose a major risk to themselves and/or their surroundings, and allows them to stay with their families and in the community despite a court order to remove them from their homes. The program ensures the safety of these youths and their families by “wrapping” them with a set of services at home and in the community. These services are tailored to the needs of the youth and those of their families within the local community. The basis for running this program lies, like in the “restorative justice” program, in the approach that the criminal proceeding does not provide for a long-term solution for offenses that the youth has committed and sometimes worsens his or her situation. As an intensive, focused treatment proceeding, the “wraparound” program provides a deeper solution and better direction for youths to normative integration in society.

The special, personalized match to each youth is carried out by a multidisciplinary team whose members encounter the youth, their close family and other relevant figures in the community or in the family. Such a meeting is held once a week at the youth’s home in order to track the treatment proceeding, its progress and achievement of goals. It is a pilot program that started in 2011 and is now expanding to additional authorities in view of data on the proceeding kept by the authorities that have executed it, showing its positive effect on youths and their families.

The public benefit service is a corrective means in the community that has an educational-social aspect that is intended for juvenile offenders. It involves engaging in unpaid work during free time. The Juvenile Probation Service is in charge of assessing the defendant's suitability for correction in this manner and for giving the judge a recommendation on the matter. The means of public benefit service will be applied to a minor offender by a court only. Upon being issued an order of this type, the youth is assigned for service by a regional coordinator, who later tracks the process and is in contact both with the minor and his employer. In this process of assigning a youth to the public benefit service, emphasis is put on adapting the workplace to their ability and needs based on the concept that public benefit service constitutes a rehabilitative process that is intended to allow the juvenile offender to reintegrate in society. This may be accomplished only after the youth has succeeded in completely correcting the damage that his or her offense has caused. This activity allows them to develop social responsibility, skills and work habits, such as: timekeeping, team work and perseverance. In 2013, more than 1,900 minors participated in the program. A high percentage of youths are completing the work hours assigned to them, which is testimony of the success of the service as a therapeutic-educational proceeding.
The Service for Individual and Family Welfare
The Adult Probation Service
“Otzma (power)” center for poverty-stricken families

“Otzma” centers at the social services departments offer a multisystem answer to poverty-stricken families. Their aim is to improve the economic and personal well-being of these families by utilizing all of their rights, implementing employment programs, creating involvement in the community and advancing the independence of the participants. The program is run based on the principles of “generalizing practice”, combining individual, group and community intervention. The program is based on a multi-dimensional perception of poverty based on implementation of the policy of putting “the customer in the center”, i.e. relating to the needs of the customer, the knowledge that he/she brings with him and the strengths lying within him/her. “Otzma” centers allow by this fashion for specialization in intervention with this population.

The program constitutes part of the network of services of the social services departments. It provides customers a range of services including giving information on rights, encouraging participation of clients at points of influence in the community, individual and collective assistance in the utilization of rights, advocacy, and enrolling and pooling of resources such as economic-employment rehabilitation programs. The staff takes part in changing the living circumstances and coping actions of the participants, while considering their preferences. The “Otzma” centers program allows for the development of knowledge, tools and interventional skills in a life of poverty and exclusion as an expertise. There are currently 26 centers operating in 17 localities, and the program is being institutionalized on a larger scale.
The Service for Individual and Family Welfare is running a program to care for women who are in the cycle of prostitution, which has been adopted as a national program. The program has aspects of education and prevention, health and hygiene, and treatment and rehabilitation in all aspects of life. Since 2009, the service has been running a sequence of care settings in two main tracks: a track of damage minimization and a track for care and rehabilitation of women. The guiding concept of the program holds that prostitution is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon, in the aspect of motives and causes of prostitution and in the aspect of social perceptions of the phenomenon.

The aim of the sequence of solutions is to provide dynamic and flexible care for the phenomenon for all parties with the aim of minimizing the proportion of women who constitute part of the prostitution cycle.

Minimization of damage is intended for women who are exploited for prostitution and who suffer from abuse and neglect in the physical and mental senses. For this purpose, a number of solutions are employed. Firstly, there is a national hotline as an initial answer that is staffed at all hours of day and is a source of information concerning support settings. In addition, there is a mobile clinic that is run with the Ministry of Health to provide survival services such as food, contraceptives, medical test to detect diseases and first aid. Moreover, there are emergency apartments that accommodate women unconditionally and offer temporary shelter. Aside from the initial answers that it provides, the apartment is a place for organization and thinking prior to change, including withdrawal from drugs and alcohol, the latter being a characteristic of many of these women. The purpose of all of these solutions is to make initial contact with the women that will lead to integration in therapeutic and rehabilitative settings: a hostel, day and evening center and an ambulatory track. All of these answers are different volumes of personal and group activity for mental care and tools for returning to a normative life. In 2013, about 530 women were cared for within the continuum of the program, representing a significant growth of about 13% since 2012.
Support center for bereaved families that are victims of unlawful death

The support program for families that are victims of unlawful death (murder and manslaughter) is led by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services for families that have experienced death of innocent family members, i.e. not due to defense actions, hostile actions or criminal activity. The program is run in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Public Security in order to form comprehensive, extensive answers for the various aspects of loss and bereavement. This service is unique and is based on active identification of affected families at the initial mourning stage, which is a critical stage in the coping process. The plan’s concept holds that loss of life as a crisis process may lead to loneliness and difficulty in returning to the circle of society and normal conduct. The accompaniment and assistance starting from the critical stage are particularly important for the success of the intervention.

The program is novel, innovative and pioneering and has been running for about three years based on a set of five regional support centers that provide assistance in the emotional and legal fields. The intervention of the support centers is done while considering the family system, its individuals and their experience with the aim of providing tools to regain functioning. The intervention is already initiated shortly after the murder, in the family’s home, followed by activity at the centers. The centers are responsible for referring individuals and families to assessments, caregivers who meet the criteria and for applying to organizations that provide assistance in the community. At the same time, therapeutic groups are run at the centers themselves and an application is made to the Ministry of Justice for legal aid in civil proceedings related to the loss and accompaniment in the criminal proceeding. Both the criminal proceeding and the involvement of the families in the steering committees of the program allow them to make their voices heard and experience a sense of influence and closure.

The service for the individual and family operates a similar program for families that have lost their loved ones in road traffic accidents, with emphasis on mental care. In addition, efforts are being made to develop an additional plan dealing with suicide.
Alongside the family courts and the rabbinical tribunals in Israel, therapeutic units operate that consist of an interdisciplinary team composed mostly of social workers and psychological and psychiatric advisors. The units are intended for family members who have been referred by a judicial instance for prevention of escalation of a conflict and shortening the legal process. The units deal primarily with subjects of divorce and domestic violence. Their job is to engage in therapeutic intervention by assessing the family’s situation, assisting in providing solutions and forming consensuses. For example, these services may result in a joint formation of a divorce agreement or referral to therapeutic services in the community.

The existence of these units is outlined in the law and reflects the institutional insight that on certain matters, a judge needs a therapeutic team at his side. The guiding concept holds that family conflicts are a severe stressor for spouses and children, sometimes accompanied by a protracted emotional and legal struggle, which may endanger the well-being of minors. Unlike the court whose goal is to hand down a ruling, the therapeutic units assist by solving the conflict. The family conflict is resolved by dialogue and consensus regarding therapeutic tools, such as marital and family therapy, mediation, child and parent workshops and group work to assist the family members in coping and retaining their rights and the benefit of minors. Some of the services are provided over a longer term than mere initial care and consist of a number of sessions.

These units constitute a service that advises judges at the courts and rabbinical judges in the emotional aspects and the effects of the conflict on the family members. A major part of their work is participation of children and hearing them out in the judicial process within the implementation of the UN Convention on Child Rights.

Hearing out children is another tool that the court and the support units have today for making a legal decision or mediation decisions. It started as a pilot program, and is now being expanded to additional courts.

Israel’s Ministry of Social Affairs and Services is a pioneer in providing the service of the support units of the State. In most countries in the world, such a service is private, if it exists at all. This is due to the fact that unlike other countries, applying to judicial proceedings on family subjects in Israel does not require a previous mediation process by law. The service is aiming at enrolling in the AFCC (the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts), which deals with this issue, including publication of international studies and holding of conferences for joint learning. This will allow for strengthening and development of the services in Israel, will contribute to exchanges of information and will provide Israel an important position in the field.
The animal therapy program for violent parents and their children is a unique, original program that has been developed by senior professionals in the Adult Probation Service. The aim of the program is to put an end to parental violence, strengthen ties between the violent parent and child and form good communication between them. The program consists of three staggered stages: the first stage is participation in a dedicated therapeutic group. The second is participation in a therapeutic farm for parents and children who have experienced violence. The third stage is accompaniment the subjects’ homes for implementing the change. A study that was undertaken concerning this therapy method indicates a high success rate; 91% of participants in the program did not open a new criminal case. The therapy forms a significant change in the functioning of the treated parents, the relationship with the children and their functioning within the family. The activity at the therapeutic farm provides an empowering, unique experience for the parents and their children within therapeutic groups and through contact and work with dogs, therapeutic horse-riding for children, movement therapy and art therapy. The activity at the farm is held in therapeutic and organizational cooperation with the therapeutic farm staff and probation officers who facilitate the groups. This activity is made possible only after the parents participate in a therapeutic group that deals with stopping the lawbreaking behavior, processing of the shortcomings in parent-child communication and in parental functioning in general. It is noted that after the therapeutic stage, each family is accompanied by a supporter who assists the family in implementing the change and involving other family members in the newly acquired communication skills. In 2007-2014, 260 parents and children participated in 18 programs at the therapeutic farms. Today there is a trend of increasing the number of programs and therapeutic farms in various regions in the country, and we are at the beginning of an accompanying study on this subject.
Communities

- The Community Work Service
- The Volunteering Service & Overseas Volunteers
The "Gishurim" program encourages the implementation and application of tools in the field of mediation, community dialogue, formation of consensus and cultural competency at community mediation and dialogue centers. These centers are set up according to the cultural and social needs of each town. The program has evolved based on a deep understanding of the need to encourage the intercultural discourse and act to settle and prevent conflicts through medication, formation of covenants and creating community dialogue. The goal of the program is to create social and community resilience in Israel’s society as a result of its multiculturalism. The uniqueness of the centers is reflected in professional employment of community activists and mediators who are volunteers from the various communities and cultures. Alongside conflict resolution in the community, the centers have an important function in increasing the involvement of residents in everything related to the effect on the public agenda and improvement in the quality of common life in the town.

The community mediation and dialogue centers have encountered significant success in a range of conflicts that occur in the community, including complex conflicts with multiple participants. The mediation program constitutes a broad, professional national network for these centers and for the initiatives for forming new centers. Within the program, the teams of the mediation and dialog centers in the community get professional accompaniment and regular guidance. At the same time, the program has a set of training courses and professional forums for learning and for the development knowledge and tools that are missing in the field. Within this framework, a national peer network operates to allow for the forming of connections, mutual inspiration, cooperation and joint development of knowledge. Such mutual inspiration is also occurring between the program’s administrators and the U.S. Embassy and the Mediators beyond Borders Organization, which deal with the issue at the international level.
The “Accessible Community” program is acting to achieve equal opportunities for persons with disabilities by increasing their access to and integration in the wider community. The program is based on community activists who have various disabilities themselves, or their families who are acting for social change both in the sense of accessibility and for changing of attitudes towards the subject in the general public. The program allows for expansion of the degree of personal responsibility of disabled persons for leading change and for maintaining a social network to exit from the cycle of loneliness. The program is intended to raise the affairs of persons with disabilities to the agenda and assert their rights to accessibility and integration in the community for both routine and emergencies situations, based on values of equality, human dignity and social justice. Based on this concept, the removal of environmental, social and communication obstacles is the key to an accommodative community that integrates people with all types of disabilities in the mainstream.
Tzachi – community emergency response team

For twenty years, the Community Work Service has been advancing the preparation and readiness of towns in regional councils to cope with crises and emergencies in towns through local town emergency and resilience teams – Tzachi for short. The local town emergency team is a community organization of volunteer activists who live in the town and help its residents cope before, during and after crisis and emergency situations and events, events that have consequences for the life routines of the town’s residents. Crises with which the residents of the town cope, and in which the emergency team provides assistance, may be due to security, social or community issues. The local town emergency team operates in coordination with the leadership of the town and with the regional council. It consists of six specialized teams dealing with the fields of the individual, family and community, education, culture and youth, public information and spokespersonship, logistics, assistance to security agencies, providing initial medical assistance and support for healthcare agencies. The team members deal with activities such as mapping and identification of needy individuals for providing aid in the town and populations with special need, coordination of the initial support actions for casualties and the needy, organization and management of the immediate response to an emergency and crisis event, operation of a public information system for residents of the town, management of a town emergency call center, initiation of programs for increasing the community resilience of the town and assisting residents in restoration work after a crisis and emergency event. The social services department in the regional council and the community social workers deal with identification of volunteer community activists for town emergency teams and their training for various functions in dedicated local town emergency teams. The training is conducted as a basic course before community activists start their activity in emergency teams and continues into their activity. The experience that has been accrued over the years in which the community emergency teams have been working in various regions, such as in the towns bordering on the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, northern settlements and periods in which the civil home front has been attacked due to wars, emergencies and crisis, improves the effectiveness and benefit of local town emergency teams in strengthening community resilience, social unity and solidarity in the town, by providing actual assistance to residents of the town and in assistance to regional councils and emergency and rescue agencies.
Emergency volunteering service

The emergency volunteer service is an important, integral part of the emergency preparations of the authorities in Israel for emergencies (wars, earthquakes, fires, etc.). To operate optimally in an emergency while maximizing the utilization of volunteer time, a unique model of using volunteers during emergencies has been built. The model has an extensive preparation stage that consists of mapping of tasks according to the various emergencies, definition of the roles of volunteers and enrollment and training of task coordinators (two per task). During the state of emergency, each authority sets up an operations room. Volunteers work in coordination with the authority’s operations room to receive information on needs that arise from the ground, receive and direct spontaneous volunteers (who number in thousands, based on past experience) for the various tasks, and ensure their insurance and supply of meals and transport to the extent required.

“Mother to Mother in the Community” project

“Mother to Mother in the Community” is a voluntary project that operates within the volunteering units of councils nationwide. The purpose of the project is to empower women after childbirth through experienced mothers volunteering to support new mothers who are coping with physical difficulties and the emotional storm involved in their transformation into mothers. In modern times, many young mothers remain after giving birth without sufficient social or community support circles, leading to a brief, overpowering sense of loneliness, isolation, depression and despair. The “Mother to Mother in the Community” project is intended to restore some of the tribal feeling to contemporary life.

Within the project, the female volunteers are given comprehensive training, and then come to the home of new mothers once a week for two hours. Within their voluntary work, the volunteers help in caring for the infant, listen, allow new mothers to “vent” or in other words, are around to help them out. This action allows the new mother to feel cared for, full and satisfied with herself, and gives her energy to satisfy her infant’s every need.
Individuals in situations of crisis and distress

- The Volunteering Service & Overseas Volunteers
- The Service for Senior Citizens
- The Service for Addictions Therapies
- The Adult Probation Service
- Appellate Committees and Assistance to Individuals
Citizen’s consultation service

The citizen’s consultation service is Israel’s largest project in the field of utilization of rights.

This service that operates in cooperation with the local councils is intended to improve the quality of life of the individual and the community by providing initial orientation in a range of subjects, such as: labor laws, repossession and rights in the field of healthcare. The service is provided to citizens by volunteer advisors, most of whom have experience in the relevant fields, who help applicants by providing information and consultation on rights and duties, referral to services that are available to them at the local and national level and assistance in effectively expressing the needs of the applicant.

The citizen’s consultation service is offered to any citizen at no cost and currently operates at 62 stations nationwide, on all weekdays. In addition, the service operates a website containing relevant information and a forum through which the advisors of the service may be contacted. The citizen’s consultation service currently deals with about 400,000 applications per year, of which more than 250,000 are of customers who are cared for by the social services.
The Ministry of Social Affairs and Services runs the “Supportive Community” program, which offers support services for elderly individuals who live in their own homes and wish to continue to do so, while maintaining quality of life, even when they are physically and mentally weakened.

The program is intended for elderly individuals living alone and for elderly couples within the community that is familiar to them. The integration of the elderly individual into the community is accomplished through ensuring a range of services that help him remain at home and in his community. These services include an emergency helpdesk, medical services, social activities and community patron or matron services.

The goal of the program is to increase the joint activity of community members and to make the community support the elderly. It allows for an opportunity for social involvement of elderly people who are interested in contributing, being active and volunteering in the community. The leisure activities and social activities are answers for alleviation of loneliness and community bonding alongside an increased sense of community, involvement and responsibility of the members of the wide community towards its elderly members.

The participants in the program enjoy regular social activity at least once a week, according to their functional levels, including individuals who are confined to their homes and surroundings. This activity is held in a unique framework of the “Supportive Community” program, or in combination with settings of leisure services in the broader community. Today there are 260 supportive communities nationwide alongside new developments.

This way, the program provides for activity that adapts itself to various needs of the elderly in the community according to the ever-changing reality.
The phenomenon of abuse and neglect of the elderly occurs both in the community and in settings that are designed for elderly tenants. Most cases of abuse are perpetrated by somebody in the near vicinity of the elderly victim, including family members and caregivers.

The workers of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services act to prevent the phenomenon and provide treatment of a wide range of forms of abuse, whether of physical, sexual or mental nature or in cases of financial exploitation, infringement of rights or even denial of basic needs to an elderly person.

The intervention in this regard is carried out in a multidisciplinary manner and includes the legal, therapeutic, medical and educational (for prevention) aspects, in order to allow for effective intervention. The Service for Senior Citizens also employs methods for identifying and actively searching in the community to allow for extensive care and activity on this subject in retirement homes and in the rural sector.

Among other things, actions are being conducted to increase the awareness for the subject and public information actions are being held within the general public and in various settings in which a large elderly population is concentrated. In addition, workshops are held for the middle generation and for family members providing care. This action produces exposure and raises the duty of reporting in the broader community. As part of the short term treatment, actions are taken to keep the elderly victim away from the offending party until a treatment plan is formed, such as an emergency arrangement within a retirement home, a holiday unit, shelters for women or moving the offending party away from the vicinity of the elderly victim to the extent possible. Later on, the action that is taken may be legal, through protective court orders, or therapeutic, at the individual or group level, covering victims and offenders alike.

Since 2014, a program called “Continuing Son” has been addressing neglect and abuse of elderly individuals at 47 social services departments of local councils and in 15 regional councils. In each such department, there is a multidisciplinary team being formed, which helps workers form an intervention plan in complex cases with the help of a team that includes a social worker for care for the elderly, a social worker acting under the Protection of Wards Law, a lawyer from the Yad Riva Association and a geriatrist. The Service for Senior Citizens will be introducing the program to additional councils each year.
Rehabilitation of addicts by the social services in Israel does not deal only with physical functions, but also with mental and social aspects of addiction. This is a long-term process that lasts for about two years, during which great emphasis is placed on the addict's normative functioning and integration into the workforce.

Therapy is conducted at the individual, group and family level in order to ensure maximum success, based on the concept that addiction affects the broad social environment, thus necessitating systemic family therapy.

Group therapy allows the addict to experience an inspection of internal and interpersonal processes that he/she and the group members experience, improve interpersonal skills, cope with a framework and learn about giving and receiving feedback. In addition, group therapy allows services to be adapted to unique populations, such as: prevention or preparation for withdrawal, drug-free ex-addicts, wives of addicts, immigrants, migrants and others. The purpose of the therapy is to assist addicts in integration into society as functional individuals who are clear of addictive substances and behaviors. The rationale is minimization of damage by early identification, reduction of dangerous situations and increasing the number of applications of youths to the service in view of the frequency of alcohol and psychoactive substance abuse by all classes of the population. The addiction therapy service is in charge of forming a uniform therapeutic doctrine and policy by developing a unique community and out of home programs. It oversees hundreds of withdrawal institutions for licensing or issuing closing orders, and forms a high quality of rehabilitative therapy.

Integration of the addict in the job market is part of the addict therapy service based on a broad view of addiction and with the aim of placing the addict in a setting that will prevent relapse. This is done after professional individual assessment, following which the rehabilitation subject is integrated in a vocational rehabilitative setting through the National Insurance Institute or looks for a job independently. The adoption of the employment model yields positive results in the assignment of approximately 70% of participants.
Group intervention at the adult probation service

The Adult Probation Service acts to rehabilitate adult offenders and reintegrate them in society. The service assists in the process of decision making in the law enforcement system in general and in the courts in particular by submitting assessments. The Adult Probation Service is a state entity and its workers are the probation officers and administrative workers (they are part of the Division for Correctional Services of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services). The workers of the service provide direct service to the entire population that is referred to the courts and to the law enforcement system under the criminal law.

The service is in charge of assessment services, care and rehabilitation for persons involved in criminal incidents as defendants, suspects and victims above the age of 18. The various rehabilitation programs are provided under court orders.

The main rehabilitative method that is employed at the Adult Probation Service is group intervention that is intended for various populations of offenders, such as general violence and domestic violence offenders, narcotic offenders, traffic offenders, property and fraud offenders, sexual offenders and others. Group therapy is based on the concept that the group and its members constitute a motivating, change engendering factor that can stop law-breaking behavior. This therapy also has economic and regulatory advantages, because a large number of people are treated and overseen simultaneously by just one or two professionals. Most of the groups are “train groups”, which the participants leave at the end of the therapy period and the end of the probation order, while new individuals take their place. There are “classic” groups that are based on dynamic, behavioral and cognitive sessions. Other groups are focused on the characterization of the offense or interventional style. In addition, there are unique groups that deal with unique subjects, such as therapeutic groups for persons under house arrest, interpersonal communication patterns and groups that address a population with a particular cultural characterization.

Some of the therapy groups cooperate with outside parties, such as groups that deal with violence between spouses, drinking while intoxicated and a program for preventing traffic offenses. The group method started to operate systematically in 2009. Since then, it has continued to expand, and there is an increase of about 40% in the number of participants and groups. It is noted that this move started to be studied in late 2012. In 2013, 163 groups operated nationwide, caring for 2,168 individuals.

Number of groups and range of groups in the service in 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Type</th>
<th>Number of Groups</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General violence</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent parents</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violent couples</td>
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<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homicide / trauma</td>
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<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alcohol and traffic</td>
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<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fraud and property</td>
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<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women offenders</td>
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<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug addicts</td>
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<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young offenders</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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ABT – Adventure-based therapy

The adventure-based therapy program includes challenging, hands-on activity and is integrated into group therapy. The program is intended for participants in therapeutic groups whose main purpose is to end lawbreaking behavior in general and violent behavior in particular. Adventure-based therapy under extreme conditions and with physical exertion helps in coping with various social situations and stress, learning alternatives to the behavior and stopping lawbreaking behavior.

The program allows for uncovering and intensive contact with the participant’s mental and emotional aspects, promotes therapeutic processes and allows for familiarity with the individual and his/her subconscious inner world that is inaccessible in a regular therapy group. The processing is done during the regular group therapy and through it at all stages of the program – at the field activity preparation stage, at the activity itself and at its end. The process that the subject undergoes allows him/her and the group to experience inspection, acquaintance and coping with mental, behavioral and delinquent factors alike.

Adventure-based therapy includes a range of activities, such as: a mountain hiking and marine activities. The program is matched to the goals of each group according to its developmental stage and its unique attributes. It is operated along with an association that specializes in field activity and in full cooperation with the probation officers facilitating the therapeutic group, who go out into the field with the group. From 2009 until the end of 2014, about 800 individuals underwent adventure-based group therapy in various forms, in 75 groups, most of which slept in the field overnight.
Individuals in Situations of Crisis and Distress

Appellate Committees and Assistance to Individuals

The Division for Community Resources

Financial assistance in individual cases

The grants committee for assistance to families and individuals (hereinafter: “the committee”) operates within an annual ministry budget that is dedicated to this issue as well as money that is received for this purpose from the estates fund of the Custodian General. This financial assistance is given for urgent needs of needy individuals.

The committee provides assistance after the Social Services Department has acted within its budget as required according to the Ministry’s regulations and rates for assisting the client. The committee’s grant will be used as supplementary support or as aid in a field that does not appear in the regulations and rates.

The committee operates within a limited annual budget. It determines priorities according to the client’s neediness, therapeutic status and the type of applications received at that time.

The Department for Assistance to Individuals and Families will publish, at the beginning of each year throughout the four districts, a notice concerning the possibility to submit applications.

The committee will only discuss applications that have been fully submitted and include all of the forms that are required according to the briefing that appears at the end of the application form. An expense refund may be received up to a year from the day of purchase, according to the budget. In unique, argued cases, the committee will consider a refund beyond a year.

List of applicants that will receive high priority:
- Needy individuals applying for the first time
- Residents of towns affected by confrontation
- Holocaust survivors
- Lonely individuals who lack backing and family support

Fields of aid for approval of a grant
The grant will be given for the following purposes:
- Expenses for individual equipment that will contribute to advancing the situation of the needy individual.
- Expenses on home equipment for rehabilitation of families, in accordance with a treatment plan.
- Expenses on individual and home equipment in cases of fire, when there is no insurance.
- Expenses for special items and services and in special circumstances.
- Medical expenses, rehabilitation and dental care accessories. It must be made sure that rights are fully utilized. In extraordinary cases, the committee will consider assistance in this field.
People with disabilities

- Continuum of Assessment and Advancement Services (IDD & PD)
- The Healthcare Services for People with Intellectual Developmental Disabilities
- The Service for Out of Home Rehabilitation – the Division for Rehabilitation (PD)
- The Community Care & Rehabilitation Service (PD)
- The Occupational Rehabilitation Service (PD)
- The Service for the Blind (PD)
- Treatment of People with Autism
- The Assessment, Advancement and Assignment Department (IDD)
- Medical Services for People with Intellectual Developmental Disabilities
- The Community Care Service – for People with Intellectual Developmental Disabilities
- The Service for Supportive Housing for People with Intellectual Developmental Disabilities
The continuum
A person who is suspected of having an intellectual or developmental disability will be sent for assessment through the assessment unit of the Division for Intellectual Developmental Disabilities (IDD). If the committee has decided that the individual does not have an intellectual or developmental disability, but does not appear to be functioning as expected, he will undergo dynamic assessment that lasts eight months to a year. The purpose of this assessment is to determine whether there is a restriction, and if so what it is and to recommend means of treatment and which unit will be responsible for the particular subject at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services. If there is concern for mental illness (which is covered by the Ministry of Health), the dominant disability must be assessed and the individual sent for long-term inter-ministerial dynamic assessment.

The process of assessment for intellectual developmental disability
The Ministry of Social Affairs and Services is responsible for the mental disability assessment processes. The only entity that is qualified to decide whether a person has an intellectual developmental disability in Israel is an assessment committee that operates by law with the aim of maintaining uniformity and high standards for conducting the process, which requires a high level of sensitivity towards the subject individual and his/her family. At the beginning of the assessment process, information is gathered concerning the person in one of twelve assessment centers that operate in Israel today that are under the full supervision and financing of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services.

This process allows for all components of disabilities, as defined in Israeli law, to be covered. These definitions correspond with the standard practiced in the world. In this process, there are three to four examinations by a multidisciplinary team that includes practitioners of social work, psychology, psychiatry and medicine. Later in the process, the materials are transferred to the assessment committee that has been appointed by Minister of Social Affairs and Services. The members of this committee are a social worker, a psychologist, a psychiatrist and an educator. Based on these and additional materials upon its demand, the committee determines whether a person has mental disability and the appropriate treatment for the condition. This procedure is conducted once every three years based on the understanding that mental disability is not a static condition. This way, the manners of treatment are matched to each individual according to his/her stage in life, varying needs and difficulties.

The ministerial oversight of the assessment process forms a professional and human process for the individuals undergoing assessment. The action of the assessment system and the assessment committee can also be provided in a mobile format. Moreover, the procedure examines not just a person’s objective abilities, but also his strengths and difficulties, to which the routes of treatment are adapted. Moreover, as a professional committee that is outside the Ministry, the assessment committee is not only an objective entity that is monitored by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services but also constitutes a motivating body for developing new services, which subsequently produces dynamism in the activity of the ministry.

The inter-service dynamic assessment unit
This unit is intended to conduct long-term dynamic assessment (staying in a setting for up to a year) for establishing a differential diagnosis between the population of persons with intellectual developmental disabilities and the Division for Rehabilitation’s population.
Individuals are referred to the assessment unit through an inter-service exceptions committee or through an assessment committee of the Division for Intellectual Developmental Disabilities (IDD), after referral they cannot be assessed through the standard means of assessment.

The first stage is the stage of adjustment to a setting, to other tenants, to the staff, the rules and the daily routine, while undergoing a process of acquiring everyday skills. Throughout this process, the individual’s functioning is observed. At the second stage, the patient undergoes psycho-diagnostic assessments. Each patient has a personalized treatment and intervention plan developed for him or her, covering many parameters, including employment, social relations, interpersonal difficulties, vocational ability and more. A multidisciplinary team composed of a social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist, occupational therapist, a matron and rehabilitation instructors conduct these specialized plans. Later, the individuals take formal examinations again. At the end of the period, a comprehensive assessment report covering all fields of life is provided, including use of the observations conducted throughout the period. The assessment report allows for assignment of the individual to the division that is most suitable for his/her needs and recommends the most appropriate setting for the individual. The maximum occupancy of the unit is 16 individuals.

**Inter-ministerial dynamic assessment unit**

This unit was established by the Mental Health Service of the Ministry of Health and the Division for Rehabilitation of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services to conduct long-term dynamic assessment of young adults who usually suffer from two or more mental disorders, who have borderline functioning with a mixture of components that include mental/adjustment deficiencies, psychiatric disorders and neuro-psychological disabilities. This is a population with severe behavioral/personality disorders, poor social judgment and constituting a high risk to themselves and others. Due to these attributes, it has not been possible to reach a diagnosis heretofore and determine the modes of treatment and the party that will care for these individuals.

This setting uses diverse assessment and evaluation tools in various conditions – individual, group, observational and others, through a multidisciplinary team that includes a social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist, occupational therapist, matron and rehabilitation instructors. The duration of the stay in the setting is up to six months, and the maximum occupancy of the unit is 16 individuals.
Out of home settings for people with Prader Willi syndrome

Prader Willi syndrome is a result of a genetic defect in a chromosome that causes damage to the brain’s satiety center in one of fifteen thousand (15,000) births. The resulting attributes are excessive eating, low stature, incomplete sexual development, behavioral disorders, learning deficiencies, cognitive deficiencies, obesity, high pain threshold, angry and violent outbursts and dysfunction of additional systems. Individuals affected by the syndrome demonstrate cognitive depression and borderline intelligence to slight retardation. There are cases in which the retardation is at a medium level.

Obesity is a prominent, more familiar feature of the syndrome, and may be fatal if it is not treated properly. There are other characteristic phenomena such as great stubbornness, obsessiveness, scratching and dealing with various skin irritations, squinting and myopia, a high frequency of diabetes, lordosis and heart disorders.

The damage to the satiety center and the lack of sensation of satiation cause uncontrollable eating, including theft of food, eating from bins, eating uncooked food straight from the freezer, and also leads to exploitation of people suffering from the disease in exchange for food.

Coping with weight loss 24 hours a day that is achieved only by a strict diet and regular physical activity requires close supervision throughout the hours of day, for years.

In Israel, there are two out of home settings for persons with this syndrome, which care for about 40 individuals. The settings are located in villa’s within the community, which constitute a home for the patients. They include a multidisciplinary team including a social worker, psychologist, matron, rehabilitation instructors, employment coordinator, psychiatric consultant and a dietician. Each patient has a personalized plan that includes behavioral therapy, accompaniment, supervision, maintaining nutrition and attention to a full, structured daily routine – sporting activities, enrichment activities, emotional therapy and integration in adapted employment with accompaniment and supervision and as much integration in the community as possible.
Preparatory frameworks for independent life

This program is intended for young people aged 18-25 with physical or sensory disability. Most are high school graduates of mainstream schools. Upon graduating, these young people face a hopeless situation. The normative post-graduation life tracks, such as military enlistment, are not open to them because the military will not accept them due to their disability.

Despite the great efforts that these young people have made to integrate in the mainstream education system, many of them have accumulated, due to their disability and life circumstances, major deficits in various fields of life, such as the academic fields, social and interpersonal skills and everyday functioning skills. In addition, they are not yet mentally mature enough to cope with a post-high school setting or to independently integrate into the circle of employment.

They desire integration in normative programs, to leave the protection of the family and to lead an independent life like any youngster of their age, and to contribute to society as well.

The preparatory course combines attention to personality, functionality, academic and vocational aspects. It is held outside of home in a setting that allows for life with a group of peers accompanied by a multidisciplinary team. In the program, the participants leave the family circle for personal and social independence and approach independence in their adult life. Each participant goes out to study and engage in national service, and in the afternoon participates in a life skills program.

The purposes of the program:
1. Development of life skills for independent daily functioning at home and outside the home.
2. Development of personal and social skills, social autonomy and strengthening of the self-image.
3. Acquisition of education or training that will help in attaining a vocation and future vocational integration.

Each participant has a personal program adapted to his disabilities, needs and abilities by a multidisciplinary team that includes a social worker, a matron, social instructors, nursing therapists, a psychologist and nurse. The program lasts for three years. In Israel there are two preparatory programs for independent life, one in the north and one in the south, which treat about 65 people.
Family centers – for families of children with special needs

The family center is a community service setting that provides a broad solution for families that are coping with raising a child with a disability. The activity of the centers deals with providing information on rights and methods of care and comprehensive, supportive professional assistance that is based on satisfaction with the sense of acceptance and accommodation of the family. All of these actions can significantly improve the well-being and resilience of the family and its ability to satisfy the needs of a child with a disability. These centers are opened based on the concept that without a support and assistance system, the difficulties may drive the family to despair and endanger the child. Bearing a child with a disability requires adjustment and plenty of strength. Some families experience this as a crisis and sometimes this damages the balance of the family system. The family must make decisions on treatment methods, the extent of treatment and the appropriate therapeutic settings. Treatment of a child with a disability also involves an investment of time, physical and mental strength and high fiscal cost. In recent decades, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of the family, its needs and the great influence that it and its situation have on the situation of the child. As a result, equipping the family with suitable tools for raising a disabled child in the best possible manner is a key to ensuring the child’s quality of life, preventing neglect and abuse, advancing and strengthening the child and for developing tools that will allow him to have as independent and full a life as possible. The Community Care & Rehabilitation Service factually implements these insights by providing information services and organizing lectures, study days, providing support as well as individual and group instructing based on consultation by experts and by focusing on individual issues such as: leaving home and sex education. In addition to this, the centers provide social and professional networks of supporting families that have been raising a child with physical or sensory disability. This way, the day centers allow for support of parents and strengthen the ties between families and professionals in the field.
Supportive communities for disabled adults in the community

Supportive communities is a program that assists persons with disabilities and the needy in emergencies. The program has developed due to lessons learned during the Second Lebanon War in 2006, which exemplified the damage to the civil home front and the need to make preparations for setting up community infrastructures for the most vulnerable populations, including disabled individuals. The community infrastructures that existed before the war proved their ability to provide assistance and a solution to the needs of this population during the emergency. The development of supportive communities occurred in the spirit of the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Law. The adult disabled population leaves the special education system or the integrative education system in favor of a state of need for a sufficient system of rehabilitation services that will accompany it and provide a network of support and security that will allow its members to enjoy equal opportunities.

The supportive community services are intended for the population suffering from the entire spectrum of disabilities: persons with physical disability of various degrees of severity, persons with sensory disability and persons with intellectual limitations and learning, functional and adjustment disabilities. The safety net is provided to disabled individuals and their families through a basic basket of services at a very modest cost. The basket includes connection to a panic button, healthcare services in times of emergency, simple home repairs, social activity and social services. These services are provided by a patron and social worker to an extensive group of households who are in the area. Studies and experience in running the service show that the program provides an extensive, significant answer at very modest costs and increases the sense of well-being, quality of life and personal security among persons with disabilities who benefit from the service.
Youth centers for preparation for independent life

The youth centers are intended for youths with physical and sensory disabilities and complex learning deficiencies, including low cognitive state. They constitute a preparatory and containing framework that will help them reach objectives and integrate in society in the best possible way in various fields of life such as independence, education, employment, leisure, matrimony and family. The purpose of the service is to provide an adequate, multidisciplinary solution to disabled youths in order to prepare them for independence in various aspects of life.

The youth centers also allow for an increase in awareness of the needs of the population of youths with disabilities and their integration in the community. All of these actions are done based on the understanding that fields that engage the attention of youths in general such as the transition from dependence to independence, personal development, sexual development, marital relations, formation of interpersonal contacts and communication with the world, a full, rich social life and good self-image and esteem, are very complex for youths with disabilities.

To provide a solution to the needs of youths who are at risk, dozens of neighborhood youth centers have been built and expanded. The youth centers are diverse in their courses of action and character of activity. These services are provided to youths according to needs that are identified on the ground, allowing them dynamic, contemporary, relevant and beneficial activity. The activities at the youth centers deal, among other things, with decision making, fostering an independent personality and more. The community rehabilitation service runs the program as an inter-ministerial partnership with the Joint Distribution Committee, the Ministry of Education and the National Insurance Institute with the JDC’s initiative.

To this day, centers of this type are operating in three local councils, and the activity is now being expanded to additional councils. The existing centers have proved themselves as a primary, important safety net for these youths.
Supported employment

The supported employment service operates to integrate physically disabled individuals in the open market in the best way possible, including receipt of appropriate pay. It is intended for individuals undergoing rehabilitation who are sufficiently motivated and capable of being integrated in work in a normative employer-employee relationship according to the policy of the service, which advocates encouragement of disabled individuals to work in the free market or in settings that are closest to them. This policy is based on a guiding principle of accommodation of the disabled population in mainstream society and provision of equal opportunities.

A person will be integrated in a supported employment program after evaluating his/her ability and suitability for vocational integration. Within supported employment, a personal and group vocational rehabilitation program is developed according to the needs of each participant, including workshops covering vocational task oriented contents and visits to workplaces. The program lasts six months and includes participation in training groups as necessary and computer workshops. After this, participants are assigned to workplaces. These employees and their employers are accompanied until optimal integration in the workplace is achieved, usually for about a year and a half.

In order to ensure optimal integration in the open market, assignment to a workplace alone is not enough. Activities are also conducted to develop an employment horizon and develop a career for every single participant by upgrading the status of each employee, and through vocational training programs at the current workplace, and also by looking for more advanced jobs in other workplaces.
Transition programs for youths

The transition programs are intended to allow an adolescent with disabilities to form his own meaningful career track, thus advancing his participation in community life. These programs constitute a bridge between two key stages of life – school studies and employment. The programs are intended for physically disabled individuals aged 16-21.

The purpose of the programs is to create continuity in the process of career development irrespective of graduation from education institutions and provide tools for maintaining an independent lifestyle, including personal growth, acquisition of knowledge concerning the employment world and gaining practical experience. They combine the formation personal vocational ambitions with acquisition of skill and knowledge that allow for a field of occupation to be chosen. This is done at an individual way and through groups at schools or in the afternoons.

The knowledge of the employment field is accrued in this program through a range of channels: theoretical workshops, visits, experimentation in problem solving and more. At the same time, a practicum is held one day a week for advancing the skills of participants and allowing them to experience initial workplace integration in the community.

This experience leads to learning and feedback concerning vocational functioning, including acceptance of authority, using initiative, team work, efficiency, quality and persistence at work. This way, the program’s participants gradually adjust to the employment world and their chances of being integrated there better in the future increase.
The information stations for the blind and visually impaired in Israel provide a service that is intended to provide rehabilitative information shortly after the visual impairment has been identified in individuals whose sight has been significantly impaired. Therefore, they are located at hospitals nationwide near eye clinics. The stations constitute an immediate bridge between the medical services and rehabilitation services. The concept guiding this service relies on studies that show that directing a person who is blind or visually impaired to the appropriate rehabilitation service as soon as possible after the time of sight deterioration is vital for his quick, effective rehabilitation. The connection with nurses and physicians at eye clinics, alongside various actions for announcing the information stations ensure effective implementation of this concept.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Services makes diverse rehabilitation services in the functional, social and employment field and material assistance available to persons whose sight has deteriorated. The information stations that are run by the Aleh Society for the Blind are entrusted with providing consultation and information that are required for continuing to the rehabilitation stage, early identification of the target population and guidance for the newly visually impaired individual for the appropriate rehabilitation.

The Service for the Blind has registered nearly 100% of visually impaired individuals in Israel and is charged with issuing “blind cards”. This record allows for based statistical information on the development of visual impairments in Israel. The information that is available to the Service for the Blind allows for planning of services and reliable tracking of the development of the disability in Israel.
Civil service for blind and visually impaired individuals.

Unlike most youths in Israel, blind and visually impaired youths are not drafted into conscript military service. However, many of them wish to contribute and serve like others of their age. This program allows blind and visually impaired individuals who have graduated from high school to volunteer for civil service for at least a year.

The blind individuals in national service perform their duties within routine work settings, with adjustments that allow them to do their job like any other serviceman. This way, the program allows for positive consciousness to be formed among employers in various workplaces concerning the integration of blind individuals in work. Moreover, this way blind youths acquire employment skills once their high school studies are over and before acquiring a profession or integration in academic studies.

The participants in the civil service program for the blind and visually impaired are accompanied by experts in the field of caring for the blind throughout the year of volunteering, depending on the regions in which they live and the activity, and they see to their duties and rights as civil service volunteers.

After finding an activity site, the adaptation of technological equipment that is required for the participant so that he may perform his activity or function in the best possible manner is examined. Instead of 40 hours a week, which is the standard civil service program week, visually impaired volunteers contribute 30 hours a week, and the rest of the time is intended for additional activity that is aimed at development of independence, mobility, preparation for the psychometric examination, personal coaching and more. The program is run by the Shlomit Association and the Aleh Society, which provides wraparound services that are required for the blind volunteers. It has proved itself as a focus for volunteering by many visually impaired and blind individuals who wish to contribute their abilities to society, and the number of applicants wishing to enroll in the program increases from year to year. Once the service period is over, some participants are hired to work in the activity sites at which they volunteered, such as the President’s House, the municipal operations desk, hospitals and others.
The “Please Touch” Theater invites the public for a special cultural experience in which members of the public gain an unmediated encounter with blind and deaf individuals who are creative, independent and full of joy of life, and who are happy to provide the hearing and seeing audience a wonderful gift in the form of art.

The “Please Touch” Theater provides the audience an artistic and social experience that changes people’s worldviews. It forms connections between communities and sectors through art and emotion, regardless of religion, race and cultural background. The theater was formed by the “Please Touch” Center, with the aim of integrating deaf and blind people in society, advancing their needs and ambitions and giving them an opportunity to express themselves and exercise their most basic right – to give and contribute to society.

Through performing on the stage, the deaf and blind “Please Touch” ensemble actors get to express themselves in an artistic manner and give the audience a meaningful experience that advances their awareness and acceptance of the deaf and blind population in Israel and highlights values such as fraternity, mutual respect, tolerance and coexistence.

The deaf and blind actor ensemble of the “Please Touch” Theater consists of 11 actors, some of whom are completely deaf and blind, and some have residual hearing or sight, and a group of about 15 new actors accompanied by touch sign language interpreters who accompany them during the rehearsals and performances. Most of the actors suffer from Ascher’s syndrome, a genetic syndrome that manifests itself in hearing deficiency or primary deafness, which develops into an eye disease. The disease develops during adolescence or later in life causing acute visual disorders or blindness. The theater’s first show is called “Hearing Light in a Zigzag”. This show has been performed in Israel and internationally and has gained critical acclaim from viewers and critics. The second show, “Not on Bread Alone”, is being shown at the “Please Touch” Center in Yaffo Port. The permanent employment of the actors in the theater strengthens their confidence, improves their interpersonal communication ability, reduces their social isolation and allows for a meeting and contact with a hearing and seeing audience and with people who have disabilities that are the same as and different to their own.
Daycare centers for toddlers on the autistic spectrum

The Service for Treatment of People with Autism runs rehabilitative daycare centers for toddlers aged one to three years. The service is unique and has been provided by law since 2000, with the aim of ensuring a range of rehabilitation services that are accessible to the population of toddlers with disabilities, including the population that is on the autistic spectrum. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Services cooperates with the Ministry of Health at the center in order to provide a solution to all fields of development of the toddler using a multidisciplinary team that includes a social worker, speech pathologist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, physician and more. The guiding professional concept states that early treatment is a primary tool for improvement in the quality of life of these children in the future and their normative integration in society.

The actions that are held at the rehabilitative daycare center are multisystem and combine different treatment methods. A personal program that includes rehabilitative treatments in the fields of language and communication, motor skills, functioning in everyday life, therapy with movement, music, art and more is developed for each toddler.

In addition to this, a major proportion of the work deals with providing instructing and consultation for parents at the individual level and to groups, including giving lectures. Today, there are 35 daycare centers in the country, and the program is being expanded.

Day center for families of children and adults with autism

The family day centers are run by the Alut Society for Autistic Children and focus on providing service for the families of children and adults with autism. The service is provided to parents, siblings and grandparents of children with autism. The service is based on a systemic approach whereby the child is part of a family system, and therefore the family is to be assigned resources that will strengthen and empower it in conjunction with the treatment for the child. The purpose of the service is to provide parents and other relatives who are coping with a diagnosis and with raising a child with autism the help and support that they need at each stage they are in and throughout the lifecycle, by professionals who specialize in the field of autism. Solutions for families are provided by six regional branches that are staffed by social workers who specialize in autism. Each of the centers operates to help in three main fields. The first is concentration of information that allows recipients to get help in exercising their rights, legal aid and holding of workshops and lectures, focused on and specializing in autism. Secondly, accompaniment and emotional support at the individual and group levels for families of children and adults with autism are granted. Thirdly, the centers operate to increase the awareness of the importance of early assessment by work with medical teams that treat these children and with NGO’s that operate in similar fields.
**Vacations and recreational programs for the family**

Family vacations are intended for families with one or more children on the autistic spectrum who live at home. The vacations allow families to go on a family vacation, which is not something that they can take for granted. Most of these families do not go on vacations independently. The aim of the service is to allow them to have a vacation and rest alongside normative activity, which would not have been possible in any other way. Moreover, the relaxed atmosphere in the vacation allows families and their children unique interaction that constitutes a therapeutic space. The vacations last three to four days and are intended for the whole family. The family itself decides how many members will come, and in addition to parents, siblings, grandparents, spouses and others may participate. The vacations are usually held at hotels in which there are other guests. Each vacation has a different character of activity and families can choose an activity that suits them. Within the vacation, the children are accompanied by guides, and joint actions are held alongside the activities of the children only and/or of the families only. This way, families are exposed to activities that they did not dare to try out by themselves, and this experience allows parents to develop confidence that all this is indeed possible.

**Consultation and assignment for people with high functioning autism**

The Service for Treatment of People with Autism runs an assignment system that specializes in the assignment of adults with high functioning autism to workplaces in the free market. Within this system, direction, training, consultation and accompaniment services are provided. The aim of the system is to integrate its customers in employment in the free market in a manner that will maximize their potential in the long term. This process is done by the Ackerstein House Organization and includes assessment and vocational evaluation, identification of a workplace, assignment at the workplace and personal accompaniment by an occupational accompanier in the assignment process, including after the individual is working. Ackerstein House runs a unique training process. This process includes a stay at a vocational observation and evaluation center for a month, during which comprehensive information is gathered on the candidate for summarizing his individual employment profile. This profile allows for finding a job that suits the subject’s abilities and individual needs. In addition, each person is assigned personal support and there are group workshops that deal with contents from the vocational sphere. Alongside the support and accompaniment that the individual himself receives, after a suitable job is found for him, he is integrated in it and there is full accompaniment for his employer too.
Tailor-made personal advancement programs

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Services operates a set of advancement programs that are tailored to people who have been diagnosed with intellectual developmental disabilities. Coordinators who are in charge of establishing an individual program for a person with intellectual developmental disabilities operate within housing settings and in the community under the professional responsibility of the Ministry. In addition, the department operates in cooperation with academics and professional teams in Israel and overseas to develop a work concept, supportive tools and formation and implementation of unique intervention programs. The personal advancement programs are the result of the superordinate goal of the Ministry – improvement in the quality of life of a person with an intellectual developmental disability. They allow him/her to have a greater degree of independence, self-fulfillment and expression and the ability to make decisions and influence his own life. The programs deal with skills and abilities in all fields of life from self-help to coping with stressful situations and emergencies. Moreover, the plans are adapted to the individual's age and level of mental and physical disability. The development of the individual program enables a person with an intellectual developmental disability to more fully exhaust his potential and to have a higher chance of self-realization, particularly in terms of the involvement of the person with an intellectual developmental disability himself, his family and the various settings in establishing the goals and the actions to fulfill them.

Consultation, treatment and instruction in the social-sexual field

For more than a decade, the Division for People with Intellectual Developmental Disabilities (IDD) has been maintaining a broad, dynamic network for consultation, treatment and instruction in the social-sexual field. This intervention is conducted in many fields, such as adoption of social codes that are related to contact; for example, whom one is allowed to hug, instruction for couples and focused treatment of sexual abuse that deals not only with the victim, but also the abuser, if he is intellectually developmentally disabled. This is part of the activity of the division for providing care of this type in Israel. The centers include multidisciplinary teams in the sexual-therapeutic field for persons with intellectual disabilities, and operate at more than ten points nationwide. The service is run from static and mobile platforms alike. Instructing may be conducted at the individual and group level, and covers the patient himself, his family and professional staff and workers in the community or in a ward's housing facility. This extensive network allows for preventive, public information and treatment actions in an extensive and effective manner.
Medical services for extending life expectancy and improvement of life quality

For four decades, a chief physician has been part of the unit that treats people with intellectual developmental disabilities and is responsible for a multidisciplinary staff that cares for approximately 35,000 persons with such disabilities.

The medical staff deals with a range of projects, a major part of which deal with extension of the life expectancy of this population, with emphasis on good health and long-term mobility. The objective is to attempt to change the predominant trend of high death rates among the intellectually developmentally disabled with increasing levels of disability. The guiding concept is equal rights and a desire to allow disabled individuals to have as normative a life as possible.

Activities on this issue involve a number of aspects. Today there already exists an increase in the life expectancy of people with intellectual developmental disabilities due to better medical conditions in recent decades. Medical services that are suitable for this population in the aging stage must yet be produced. The department is currently conducting a study on this subject with the University of Haifa and has also initiated a number of conferences on the subject in Israel and overseas.

Moreover, the department runs projects for advancing treatments and a healthy lifestyle for disabled individuals, in order to create awareness. Only cooperation and initiative of people with intellectual developmental disabilities for the sake of themselves can result in a healthier life for them in the long term.

Moreover, the department is acting to distribute information to relevant professionals in Israel and internationally by extensive professional writing on the subject. The advancement of the subject of health, covering both the caring population and the treated population, ensures an increase in the quality of life and the quality of services provided to individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities over an extended period.
The “Equal in Uniform” program

The “Equal in Uniform” program offers an equal opportunity for people with intellectual developmental disabilities to enlist as conscripts into the Israel Defense Forces. Service in the Israel Defense Forces is one of the core values of Israeli society. In cooperation with the Akim Association and the IDF, the community care service has been able to develop this program, which represents an aspiration for equality between people with intellectual developmental disabilities and the rest of the population. Aside from the social contribution, military service contributes to the confidence of participants in the program and makes them feel an important part of Israeli society. People with disabilities who are relatively independent participate in the program. Upon their acceptance for the service, they participate in a course for preparation and volunteering in an IDF unit for half a year. If this probation period shows their aptitude for military service, they undergo military indication like other servicemen, including vaccinations and being issued IDF uniforms and boots. The length of their service ranges from one to three years, and is accompanied by a social worker and the program coordinator. In addition, each serviceman is assigned a career officer to accompany him personally. Integration in service concentrates on combat support and rear area duties, including service in intelligence bases, in logistic, clerical and other functions. Upon being discharged from the IDF, the participants get the same rights as other demobilized servicemen and assistance in job assignment.
The Community Care Service is acting to improve employment in rehabilitative factories for people with intellectual developmental disabilities by adopting the ISO 9001 quality standard.

This standard is a management tool that certifies organizations that prove quality action in their field. It is to be implemented in sheltered factories that currently have difficulties in coping with the increasing competition from various manufacturing parties.

The development of innovative fields, use of new technologies and the development of novel and effective management tools will all contribute to maximizing the advantage of rehabilitative factories compared to ordinary factories or other sheltered factories.

The program has been implemented by more than half a million organizations around the globe. Its implementation in Israel will advance activity in the field with the aim of improving the quality of life of people with intellectual developmental disabilities by improving their employment. The structuring of an ISO 9001 standard supportive system will allow for modernization of sheltered factories, improved wage levels, improved occupational functioning of their workers and gauging of quality performance that will allow for occupational mobility in the free market.

In the field of caring for people with special needs, the program is currently being implemented successfully at the occupational rehabilitation center at Loewenstein Hospital and is being executed at the Keren Vocational Rehabilitation Centers and at the Danel personnel company.

The Community Care Service is aiming to create a professional center for dealing with the field of quality control at rehabilitative factories and uniformity in the same way in which they are managed by a professional company.
Rehabilitative agricultural work

“Tlamim” (furrows) Employment is a program for providing a therapeutic vocational answer in the field of agriculture for people with intellectual developmental disabilities.

The program is operated at a farm that has a range of agricultural sectors and ecological constructions that allow individuals to choose occupations, with emphasis on enrichment of professional knowledge and use of a range of supports – emotional, vocational, and functional, as a means of personal empowerment of individuals at the farm.

The occupation is adapted to the execution ability and skills of the participating individual. The aim of the occupations is to provide work skills and professional knowledge with the aim of advancing the individuals towards supported employment in the community.

The program is based on a concept of the importance of community involvement and a policy of accommodating people who are different within the existing environment.

Working at the farm is possible after an assessment of vocational abilities and needs with the guidance of the site’s professional team: in the sheep pen, vegetable garden, ecological building, work in the kitchen or in the field of arts, using the farm’s resources. Each group has about 7-9 members and gets professional accompaniment based on personal care. Work is accompanied by morning and afternoon talks that are intended for conveying required knowledge and work procedures and for coping with difficulties. The professional team does not make do with just work, and during the work, programs are developed for advancing the program participants’ employability.
Housing in the community

To allow for a large number of people with intellectual developmental disabilities to live in homes in the community, in recent years the supportive housing service has been expanding its solutions for these people in apartments within ordinary apartment buildings. The service is suitable for people who are relatively independent and are interested in leaving their parents’ homes. Within life in the community, they purchase home products for themselves, go out to in the morning to work independently in the free market or with the assistance of support in settings that are appropriate for this community and go to community activities in the afternoon. A guide of the service accompanies them in apartments. The purpose of this service and the actions for its expansion is to increase the integration of persons with intellectual developmental disabilities in the community and the near surroundings in order to allow them to live a normative life as much as possible. Housing in the community has a home-like character that creates basic conditions of well-being and privacy and preparation for independent life. These apartments have been opened as an answer to the wishes and needs that have arisen among persons with disabilities and their families. Living in them allows the tenants’ quality of lives as adults to be improved and maximizes their ability to make decisions concerning their lives. NGO’s and economic entities run the homes in the community using slightly different models, but in all of them, the tenants maintain a home lifestyle that combines joint activity and individual activities. In other words, a common life of making meals and going out for free time alongside maintaining the right of each participant to privacy and personal choice is afforded. This puts emphasis on the development of hobbies and personal preferences. In addition to consideration for the various needs of every person according to his disabilities, there is also consideration of plurality in Israel’s society and matching to different sectors, and there are adapted settings for religious and secular lifestyles, some of which are adapted to a Jewish lifestyle and others to an Arab population and so on.
Dental care in housing settings

People with special needs suffer from oral, gingival and dental disorders at a higher frequency than the general population. Causes for this include difficulty in maintaining oral hygiene, lack of awareness or difficulty in cooperating and understanding the nature of care, resulting in displacing oral care in the order of priorities. Dentists are usually not equipped or prepared to admit people with intellectual developmental disabilities at their clinics, and the main strategy for dental care for these people has been using general anesthesia for dental work.

Based on the concept of equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and accommodating them in the community, in recent years, a unique dental service has been developed for people with intellectual developmental disabilities. Care of this type poses a challenge in view of the systemic diseases that are concomitant to most disabilities, requiring unique knowledge and experience alongside a need to work in a special manner on these patients.

The treatments that have been developed have significantly reduced the need for general anesthesia for dental work on this population. Behavioral techniques are used primarily, such as: explanations accompanying the treatment, voice control, gradual acclimating, distraction, positive reinforcements and more. These techniques allow for a wide range of treatments involving oral health for people with intellectual developmental disabilities, including preventive treatments, elective treatments and fixed prostheses. These unique dental treatments are part of the range of specialized treatments for these individuals, which are provided at daycare centers and hostels operated by the supportive housing service. Besides this, leisure activities that are based on a virtual reality and a range of therapeutic activities such as occupational therapy, therapeutic riding and gardening are undertaken. In view of the success of the dental system at daycare centers and hostels, there is demand for this service from other populations, primarily those with disabilities living in the community. To this end, portable treatment kits have been developed and this service is gradually being opened more to people with intellectual developmental disabilities in the community.
Processes of streamlining and improving social services

- The Division for Research, Planning and Training
- The Reform at the Social Services Departments of Local Councils and Authorities
- The Immigration and Cultural Competency Directorate
- The Department of International Relations & International Social Service at the Ministry of Social Affairs & Services in Israel
Result-oriented thinking in the social services

The results project is a strategic move of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services aimed at development, institutionalization and adoption of result-oriented thinking in the social services in Israel. Result-oriented thinking is defined here as the aggregate of organizational norms and processes that encourage the social services to define the results that they are interested in achieving, routinely measuring the degree of their achievement and planning their activity accordingly. The project is aimed at improving the quality of care that the social services provide through the use of result-oriented thinking in the services that are overseen by the Ministry. The project was started in 2007 by the Division for Research, Planning and Training of the Ministry along with Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute and with the support of the Mandel Institute.

The results project of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services is focused on self-gauging and monitoring of results, i.e. regular, continuous tracking by the professional staff running the service of the rate of change among service recipients. Result-oriented thinking allows for strengthening of proactive, relevant action, unlike reactive action that tends to adapt itself to changes in reality belatedly. The project has been implemented heretofore in three stages: the first stage of the project has been defined as the stage of experimentation and learning. The second stage has been based on the lessons of the first, dealing primarily with development and deployment. Currently, we are at the third stage, which involves institutionalization and implementation of result-oriented thinking for the target populations that are under the responsibility of the Ministry. After more extensive learning of the courses of activity for the defined populations, action will be conducted to develop a regulated, general “work doctrine” for the entire Ministry.
Since 2006, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services has been running a network of online knowledge communities that serves as a scene for discourse and mutual learning of professionals in the Ministry’s fields of occupation. The communities allow professionals in the social field who work within organizations and various authorities to create, gather, share and distribute to each other professional information. The communities have online discussion groups, and a database of academic articles, studies, presentations, literature reviews, reports and diverse case studies may be found in them too.

The communities operate based on a number of guiding principles that include:

- Encouragement of the use of existing knowledge and encouragement of learning and creation – the homepage of each community consists of a virtual library of sorts, containing a pool of knowledge items and an active virtual forum of a discussion group. This provides an encounter between existing, established knowledge and newly generated knowledge.
- Community orientation – forming a supportive professional environment, a sense of belonging, reciprocity and professional identification between different professionals providing services to populations with similar attributes. The community orientation is based on the fields and subjects of occupation rather than the community members’ organizational affiliation, professional affiliation or assignment to a function.
- Ownership and independence of use of information – the knowledge communities belong to members and are managed by their moderators. The Ministry has initiated and is hosting them on its website, but does not demand any role or authority for itself. The information items are also sorted by the needs of the community members, as they define them.
- Plurality – the community’s members include professionals of various professional statuses and organizations.

This gives the community a unique opportunity for cooperation between a range of functionaries in the building of knowledge. Security and confidentiality – the knowledge communities are built as closed groups. People who join them are assigned a username and password. The list of community members is visible to members so that they can know who can read what they will write.

Today, there are 33 different knowledge communities under the Ministry, with more than 13,600 registered members.
The Ministry of Social Affairs and Services is operating today under a comprehensive reform in the social services departments. The decision to initiate reforms was made due to organizational problems and difficulties that impaired the functional ability to provide appropriate solutions for needy populations. The reform is a move whose purpose is to create change and advance the work of the departments by creating legal infrastructure that regulates their actions, establishing the limits between the various divisions and services, adapting the resources and personnel to the tasks of the department, and forming strong management and knowledge infrastructure to ensure action based on proactive planning rather than reactions. The reform also includes professional development of the staff of the Ministry and the development of technological infrastructure that is suitable for the current modern era.

The districts that operate in the field are leading the implementation of the reforms, but in general the reform is being implemented with the full, transparent participation and cooperation of all stakeholders.

The implementation is occurring in stages: firstly, by a mapping process that includes gathering of information concerning the current structure of the department according to the directions of the reform leaders and formation of a set of expectations and evaluations of the department. This action is done by each separate department for itself, by receiving guidelines and use of a computer tool that has been developed for this purpose. After this, an implementation plan is written according to the mapping assessment that has been carried out. Until now, most of the departments of the Ministry have joined the process. 60 organizational consultants have been trained for the stage of construction of the implementation plans in the departments and have been assigned to departments in all districts, after 173 departments have finished the mapping process and are starting to write implementation plans.

This is a process of change that poses both difficulties and opportunities. This makes it very important to ensure involvement and transparency on the part of the departments undertaking the change process and maintaining the basic principles of the reform while demonstrating sensitivity to the high variance between the departments, divisions and services and their varying needs.
Israel has an immigration policy that is based on the tenet that we are a land of return.

In the light of Aliyah/immigration to Israel, Israel has a heterogeneous population composed of groups differentiated from each other in areas such as language, religion and culture. Each group has its own unique character in terms of tradition and lifestyle, as well as in perceptions of social welfare and at risk situations.

Immigration is a reality that increases risks and hardships, and which may be greater among some Olim (new immigrants) early on and sometimes for several years after their Aliyah. New and veteran immigrants have unique needs.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Services is in the process of overhauling the concept of social welfare services in respect of the way Olim/immigrants are handled when they experience an immigration crisis and in the way they are absorbed and integrated into Israeli society.

The Ministry is therefore seeking to build intervention methods, programs and culture-sensitive services to enable Olim to extricate themselves from precarious situations. The Ministry also seeks to integrate Olim in society in the best possible manner and to have them consume social welfare services effectively in order to improve their quality of life. The Ministry’s approach is that, as far as possible, Olim must be integrated in programs designed for the general population, while at the same time concern and sensitivity must be shown towards their unique needs, and their culture and lifestyle. Special programs for Olim will only be implemented when barriers or specific needs exist that necessitate a separate response for a specified time.

The Immigration and Cultural Competency Directorate was set up in the Ministry of Social Affairs for the purposes of advancing sweeping
steps and promoting joint action by all the Ministry's departments in order to facilitate development of a comprehensive and broad vision for the handling of Olim in a culturally sensitive manner. This shared vision is based on identifying the groups of new and veteran immigrants for whom a proper solution has not been found, and who are at the end of the care spectrum, or who have not made contact with the welfare services despite experiencing hardships and difficulty integrating. Having identified the barriers and the forces at play, the Directorate is promoting and developing special programs tailored to their needs, in conjunction with the Ministry's services. Along with the development of culturally sensitive solutions, the various services in the designated Ministry departments provide Olim with solutions on a current basis, by virtue of their responsibilities and as part of the array of infrastructures to handle the target groups. The Directorate is working on the formulation of a uniform Ministry policy designed to handle Olim/immigrants in a culturally sensitive manner, under a broad vision - in accordance with Ministerial priorities.

The Directorate brings together knowledge and resources to develop innovative models adapted to the cultures and needs of the Olim. Knowledge is distributed in the framework of a knowledge community (more about the knowledge community elsewhere in this booklet).

The Directorate is working in the framework of a subcommittee on reforming of the social services in order to build standards for service, public inquiries and cultural competency in the Social Services Departments.

The Directorate is cooperating with the Division for Human Resources to build standards and measurable objectives for diversification of the Ministry's workforce.

The Directorate uses the locale-based social welfare absorption model to improve the culture-sensitive intake system among Olim groups from Ethiopia, France and the Ukraine.

The Directorate conducts special training in cultural competency and in dealing with those who are different in the framework of the Ministry's Central School.

The Directorate partners in building a multivariate model for linguistic and cultural mediation, with emphasis on providing care planning committees with an immediate response.

The Directorate works in conjunction with Olim organizations and the Volunteering Service & Overseas Volunteers to utilize volunteers who speak the language to help out in the Social Services Departments.

The Directorate runs the “New Way” program to integrate citizens from the Ethiopian community in an optimal manner in the framework of the social welfare services.
The Department of International Relations & International Social Service deals with a wide range of issues concerning all services of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services, its divisions and districts. The Department is the miniature “foreign ministry” of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services, and is a central point of contact concerning work relations with international communities.

The department is the official coordinator and liaison with international organizations such as the UN, the European Union and the U.S. State Department. The contact with these organizations is based on reports regarding welfare matters, exchanges of information and use of international tools for developing relations and activities. The work relations of the divisions of the Ministry and the services of the Ministry are conducted regularly vis-à-vis many different countries. In the past, agreements have been signed for cooperation and exchanges of knowledge with China, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, and delegations from these countries have come to Israel in order to strengthen their ties and improve shared knowledge. These professional ties, and foreign relations in general, allow for the formation of new cooperation efforts, make professional knowledge from the rest of the world accessible and facilitate learning about new fields. In that sense, we also see ourselves as diplomatic representatives of the State of Israel, taking part in showing its advancement and progress in fields which are not always in the global headlines.

One of the main issues that the Department concerns itself with is the International Social Service, whose target population includes citizens of Israel worldwide and non-citizens who are in Israel’s territory, such as: tourists, illegal migrants and asylum seekers who need social assistance that has an international aspect. These cases are processed by forming connections and initiating international professional work with entities such as the International Social Service (ISS), embassies, foreign NGO’s, federations and other government ministries. Relations with these entities aid in finding relevant information, advancing exchanges of information and forming professional connections.

Israel does not stand alone in its strive for social welfare, justice and equality. It is a part of the global community, and as such, must join hands with all of the other countries and various organizations which concern themselves with the same goals and efforts. We believe that only through cooperation, exchanges of information and mutual learning we could achieve these goals, despite the hard challenges which stand before us. This is both a great challenge and responsibility. We hope that this booklet is one more step in reaching this destination.

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