



**The role of social welfare services
during the COVID-19 pandemic period -
observation from "almost the day after"**



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The mission of social services

- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services in Israel is responsible in times of normal routine for initiating the development of budget planning and supervision of social services for recipients of routine and emergency services.
- The services are organized in such a fashion as to address short-term and chronic life hardships.
- The services are aimed at rehabilitating various populations and returning them to proper functioning, towards fortifying and improvement of individuals, social units and families, and to prevent recurring problems and situations.



Location of social services

- The direct responsibility for the provision of social services lies with the local authorities and in accordance with the Social Welfare Law of 1958, which stipulates that each local authority shall establish a Department for Social Services.
- The Social Services Departments operate in accordance with Ministry policy which is communicated through guidelines.
- Any local authority will establish the plans in its professional field in accordance with the budget it receives and in accordance with the Ministry's policy.
- As such, differences exist between authorities regarding the variety and implementation of social interventions.



Where and what

- National crises are managed by the Government.
- The implementation and operation in the field are carried out by the local authorities.



New practice

- The government operates by means of existing guidelines in the areas of security emergencies, earthquakes and epidemics.
- The field of managing an epidemic at the national level has not been implemented, written or trained (practiced)



Where to – a new situation emerges

- March 2020, morbidity rises.
- The State focuses on health issues.
- Guidelines emerge and are updated daily.
- Concerning the epidemic, there is no unified approach or concept of government management which includes all government ministries by particular professional field and implementation/operation.
- Decision-making is done in motion and ad hoc.



Social work in the center

- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services must decide what to do with social work in a situation where it is "pushed aside".
- During the situation the "finest hour" of social work emerges.
- The complexity of the differences between the authorities.



Who and what

- Decision to close and cancel all services.
- There is a struggle over the partial opening of services.
- Local authorities get approval to operate 30% of the social worker positions - a perceptual gap between national government and local government.
- Cases of mayors deciding contrary to the position of the Ministry.
- A month from the start of the epidemic - deciding on a full opening, with about 100 regulatory operational guidelines being issued.
- Guidelines become primary legislation - an absolute decision which enables operation, a clear, stated policy.
- Coordinated health care and social welfare guidelines including legal advice - ministerial independence is required.
- Budgeting including COVID-19 additions.



Out of home services

- Out-of-home services and institutions (frameworks) coping with rising illness levels.
- Prevention of going on vacation.
- Prevention of visits.
- Quarantines and quarantine hotels.



Quarantine

- Guidance and operation of social work in COVID-19 quarantine hotels.
- Social services issues in hotels.
- Detailed listings of major social issues, integrated interventions joint with authorities and health maintenance organizations.
- About 1100 public inquiries per month, working around the clock.



Quarantine at the city level

- Remote work, work in capsules, mobility of social welfare services according to the level of particular urban morbidity per city.



Zoom and...

- Uniqueness and complexity of working remotely - Zoom is here to stay, practical meaning and implication, and learning and training are required.
- Purchase of necessary professional equipment.
- Digital literacy.
- Closing professional gaps.





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