



Amit I'mishpacha: A Friend to the Family

The Pressures of Raising a Child with Special Needs

The challenge of raising a child with special needs increases the onus on the family's daily routine and exacerbates financial, physical and emotional pressures on the family and caregivers. These families are often socially isolated, with few friends and family who can be relied upon. Although these families are often in ongoing contact with professionals from the education system and, in some cases, the welfare system, many lack day-to-day emotional and practical support. Assistance in the home would complement the professional guidance that the families receive, reduce the stresses of raising a child with special needs and ultimately enable the family to better meet all its children's needs.

Creating a Support Network

JDC-Ashalim initiated A Friend to the Family in 2004 in an effort to minimize the risk factors in the home setting that influence family relationships and the treatment of the child with special needs and of other siblings. This program is building a nationwide network of trained volunteers who assist families with special needs children within the home on an ongoing basis. The volunteers help the family in different ways, in accordance with the family's needs: They may relieve the parents of household duties, tend to the child with special needs or provide attention to other siblings in the family. By supplying a sufficiently wide range of support resources, Ashalim aims to ease the daily burden of the tens of thousands of families and children in these situations.

Volunteers in A Friend to the Family include Army or National Service volunteers and other local community members. The volunteers are given preparatory training as well as ongoing supervision from local social welfare services. In addition, some of the volunteers themselves bring to their work personal experience with people with special needs.

A Friend to the Family operates in thirteen localities, reaching about 300 families. For these families, the program has done more than just ease the pressures of their daily routines. The volunteer relationships also have enriched their lives and brought the families out of their social isolation.

Program Partners

A Friend to the Family operates in partnership with JDC-Ashalim; the Ministry of Social Affairs; the Israel Defense Forces; National Service (Sherut Leumi); universities; local non-profit organizations; and municipalities.

WordAbout



Ashalim – The Association for Planning & Development of Services for Children and Youth at Risk & their Families
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