



New Beginnings

Children Face Challenges During Critical Years

Every child, regardless of where they live, has the potential to thrive and develop in a healthy and enriched environment. Regrettably, 80,000 Israeli children from birth to age six who are defined as "at-risk" lack this basic opportunity. Representing 8% of Israel's total child population, these youngsters face a plethora of obstacles to their development, such as lack of proper parental care or early intervention programs, severe learning difficulties and poverty.

While Israel boasts many early childhood services, those that need them the most, such as socio-economically depressed communities, often do not fully benefit. Services are either insufficient to meet community needs or inaccessible for those who need them. Coordination issues reduce efficacy further as services fail to reach their intended recipients.

Creating a *New Beginning* for Israel's Children

New Beginnings was launched to reverse this situation. It aims to improve children's future prospects by investing in early intervention and treatment. In some 50 distressed localities where *New Beginnings* will be implemented, early childhood services will be centralized, upgraded, expanded and monitored. Children will receive the tools and support they need to succeed, while parents and educators will learn how to foster children's growth and development.

Examples of *New Beginnings* programs include: service improvement within existing day care centers, home visits by professionals, stimulating play parent and child programs, empowerment for fathers, nutrition and health promotion, identification of developmental delays, and accident prevention. These and others will help *New Beginnings* achieve its specific goals, which include:

- Emphasizing programs that prevent children from becoming "at-risk"
- Integrating and expanding existing services in the community
- Making existing services more geographically and culturally accessible
- Augmenting services for those at greatest risk
- Upgrading physical structures in the community
- Training professionals and caregivers to build expertise in early childhood issues.

Together these efforts will culminate in a city-wide model of comprehensive intervention providing accessible, quality, professional services for at least 50% of Israel's most disadvantaged children.

Program Partners

New Beginnings is a partnership between the Israeli Government, philanthropic foundations and JDC. It has been designated as the primary vehicle to implement the recommendations of the Schmid Report¹ among the birth-six age group.

¹ The Israeli Government's Schmid Report outlined the findings and recommendations of a commission led by Professor Hillel Schmid about the state of children and youth at risk in Israel, from birth to age 18.