



Realizing the Rights of the Child in Israel:

Recommendations for Immediate Steps towards Implementation





The National Council for the Child ('NCC') is a non-for-profit organization that aims to advance and safeguard the rights and well-being of all children in Israel. Since its establishment in 1986, the NCC has been a key actor in all children and youth related issues on a national level. It engages, among others, in initiating and promoting public policy, offering direct programs and services for children, issuing numerous publications and statistical data on children in Israel, forging cross-sector partnerships, and operating as a main source of information for professionals, government and the civil society.

This report, "Recommendations for Immediate Steps towards Implementation", forms a summarized version of the policy recommendations contained in a preceding report - "Realizing the Rights of the Child in Israel: An Integrative Study of Children's Rights Implementation".

The following are accredited as to the complete report:

Principal Writers: Daniella Zlotnik-Raz, Yuval Sheer

Contributing Writers: Adi Naamat, Liron Eshel, Meital Beck

Academic Research: Beatrice Coscas Williams, Liora Amsalem

Editors: Ariel David, Vered Windman

Translation Services: Zamenhof Translation Services

Graphic Design (of the present document): Gofman Creative





Realizing the Rights of the Child - Immediate Steps towards Implementation

Israeli society, like every society, is measured by the treatment of its children, their well-being and the opportunities offered to them. Yet, the diverse aspects of children's lives are often surveyed through lenses which do not put children themselves at the center of their examination, but rather different indexes of general societal importance (such as future participation in the work force). It is the goal of the Israel National Council for the Child ("INCC"), as well of this document and the extensive research report that preceded it, to encourage a different point of view - one which puts children themselves, their lives, wishes, interests and rights, as the prime consideration when it comes to our treatment of children.

To this end, "Realizing the Rights of the Child", a comprehensive research project undertaken by the INCC, is the first major attempt in the Israeli context to craft a thorough, multi-dimensional, action-oriented analysis that makes use of the perspective of children's rights to analyze not only legislation but also policy implementation and the operation of social services. The report surveys select issues belonging to four policy areas: 'Youth Participation in Policy Design', 'Protection from Violence and Abuse', 'Children in the Digital Environment' and 'Non-Discrimination in Health and Education' (the criteria for the selection of these surveyed issues is detailed in the full report).

Aiming to create a rights-based analysis with an impact on actual policy, its different chapters include an examination of the right guiding their respective compositions, through the lenses of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the CRC Committee responsible for its interpretation; an analysis of the right's implementation in various policy areas; as well as a set of policy recommendations designed to answer various lacuna, obstacles and impediments in its realization.

Further adding to its uniqueness, the composition of the research report was undertaken with special efforts to integrate various points of view regarding the different subjects, beyond the INCC's. Thus, the different chapters include sets of respective recommendations formulated by youth groups operating within the INCC's Youth Parliament initiative, intended to foster the participation of youth in policy design. In addition, the composition of the policy recommendations was aided by consultation with relevant civil society organizations, thus integrating into them valuable insights. Through the joint work with CSOs and youth, we have been able to disseminate the perspective of children's rights as a pertinent tool to analyze problems and formulate solutions to children's issues.

This document, "Realizing the Rights of the Child in Israel: Recommendations for Immediate Steps towards Implementation" includes only part of the recommendations of the original research report and lacks the full background detailed there. We view this document as a catalyst of action and dialogue, and invite interested policy-makers and professionals to take hold of the full document by the INCC.



Index

Youth Participation in Policy Design

6-8

1. Ensure that Youth Participate in Policy Decision Impacting their Lives
2. Learn from the INCC Youth Parliament as a Guiding Model
3. Enhance Inter-Ministerial and Cross-Sectoral Collaboration regarding Youth Participation
4. Train Decision Makers and Professionals on Youth Participation Processes

Protection against Violence and Abuse

10-13

1. Enhance Identification and Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect by Professionals
2. Formulate Guidelines for the Prosecution of Adults that Expose Children to Domestic Violence
3. Develop and Expand Services and Programs for Abused and Neglected Children
4. Increase Public Awareness to the Duty to Report Child Abuse and Neglect
5. Increase Inter-Ministerial and Cross-Sectoral Collaborations to Facilitate the Identification and Treatment of Abused and Neglected Children

Children's Privacy in the Digital Environment

16-18

1. Enhance Child and Youth Privacy in the Digital Environment through Legislation and Regulation
2. Implement Policies to Protect Children's Privacy in Educational Institutions
3. Develop Mechanisms to Promote Protection of Child and Youth Privacy in the Digital Environment
4. Promote Data Collection and Research regarding Children's Digital Privacy

Children's Protection in the Digital Environment

20-22

1. Criminalize the 'Grooming' of Minors
 2. Removal of Offensive Online Content
 3. Increase Awareness to Children's Digital Protection among Children, Professionals and the Wider Public
 4. Increase Awareness to Children's Digital Protection through the Education System
 5. Establish Protocols for the Collection of Data regarding the Handling of Harmful Online Content
-



Non-Discrimination in Education: Early Childhood Education

24-26

1. Implement Legislation and Regulations regarding Daycares
2. Amend Daycare Operating Standards to Improve Staffing and Capacity
3. Ensure Adequate Training for Professional Staff in Daycares
4. Encourage the Establishment of Dedicated Early Childhood Holistic Centers on the Municipal Level

Non-Discrimination in Education: Parent Payments

28

1. Abolish Parent Payments in the Education System

Non-Discrimination in Health: Israel Family Health Centers ("Tipot Chalav")

30-31

1. Anchor the Operation and Funding of Family Health Centers ("Tipot Chalav") in Legislation
2. Expand the Range and Application of Family Health Centers ("Tipot Chalav") Services
3. Improve Information Transfer between Family Health Centers ("Tipot Chalav") and Other Services

Non-Discrimination in Health: Mental Health Services for Children and Youth

34-35

1. Reduce Waiting Times for Mental Health Treatment
2. Address the Severe Shortage of Mental Health Practitioners who Specialize in Treating Children and Youth
3. Ensure Mandatory Mental Health Education for Healthcare Professionals
4. Address the Severe Undermanning of the Educational Psychological Service

Summary

37

Youth Participation in Policy Design



1 Ensure that Youth Participate in Policy Decision Impacting their Lives

Youth¹ participation in policy design is integral to the realization of children's rights and the promotion of children's welfare, both by way of amplifying children's voices and integrating them into decision-making processes, and by providing decision-makers with the viewpoints and perspectives of children.

However, the issue of youth participation in policy design and public decision making processes remains lacking and under-developed in Israeli law and policy. For meaningful rectification of the issue at hand, future amendments of law and policies in that regard must ensure that youth's participation is conducted effectively and with real impact.

This requires the adoption of legislation or regulation on the subject, that shall obligate government ministries to conduct participatory and consultative procedures with youth, and shall provide guidance as to the formulation and implementation of such processes in relation to youth participation in legislation-making, policy design, policy implementation, and in Knesset deliberations.

Additionally, such legislation and policies should address the establishment of relevant governmental positions responsible for guidance regarding youth participation and its implementation.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Require government offices to conduct participation and consultation procedures with youth as part of the measures taken to promote government legislation, design and implement policy, and design national-level programs on issues concerning the lives of children and youth. Said requirement may be established as part of: (1) designated legislation; (2) regulations (e.g., pass regulations in respect of the Registration of Information on the Influence of Legislation on the Child's Right Law, 2002); and (3) binding procedures of every relevant office and/or agency.²
- B. Adopt guidelines and/or a unique procedure by the Knesset regarding hearing and participation of youth in Knesset committee activities.
- C. Adopt guidelines regarding participation of and consultation with youth in policy formation and implementation as part of cross-sectoral collaborations and public participation procedures in government offices (headed by the Government and Society Division in the Prime Minister's Office).
- D. Develop the position of a youth participation supervisor in government ministries (whether as part of the position of public participation supervisor or as an independent position). The supervisor will be the coordinating, consulting and accompanying entity in all matters regarding youth participation and consultation procedures as part of the government agency's work.

¹ This document does not seek to define youth, nor suggest age limits for participation in policy design. Moreover, it acknowledges that younger children too have valuable voices and insight and can collectively contribute to policy design that uniquely relates to their lives (for example, in relation to early-age education, play and recreation, etc.). However, we recognize that knowledge-based, consultative, and meaningful participation in policy design and implementation is generally more suitable for children above the age of 14 and will, therefore, refer to youth participation in policy design.

² Nonetheless, in order to anchor a broad requirement to conduct said youth participation procedures, and to ensure allocation of the required resources and implement the suitable mechanisms for participation procedures among the relevant offices and agencies, promoting the issue through the legislative channel - whether in law or in regulations - is preferable.

2 Learn from the INCC Youth Parliament as a Guiding Model

The INCC Youth Parliament is a special program intended to foster youth participation in policy design, that gathers each year about a hundred Jewish and Arab youth for a series of mutual learning sessions and consultations with high-level government officials in different themes, culminating in a series of topical recommendations authored by the youth.

As a unique youth participation program, its operation, reports and recommendations form an invaluable repository of knowledge, expertise and insights regarding youth participation. Thus, it can aid in the development and incorporation of different mechanisms, models and tools for inclusive and meaningful participation of children.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Learn from the Israel National Council for the Child 'Youth Parliament' program as a 'sample mechanism/ model' for relevant government offices and agencies in conducting participation and consultation procedures with youth, with modifications. The modifications will be tailored to the needs, capabilities and special status of government entities when initiating participation procedures. Government entities and civil society will lead the modification measures.

3 Enhance Inter-Ministerial and Cross-Sectoral Collaboration regarding Youth Participation

As a developing field, the realization of youth participation in policy design and implementation demands broad cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial collaborations to promote learning; sharing of information, best practices and resources; and enhancing skills and expertise of all relevant stakeholders, including from government, local authorities, civil society, educational institutions, professional associations, and child-led organizations.

Furthermore, many issues in the lives of youth are under the joint purview of several government ministries, and therefore the relevant consultation process, along with the respective policy design, should occur in an inter-ministerial framework.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Establish a dedicated inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral forum on the topic. The forum will serve as a platform for the exchange of information and best practices and joint learning of advanced participation tools and practices, including in digital means. In this regard, the forum will aim to combine knowledge, resources and expertise from the developing field of public participation in government offices and agencies with the children's rights discourse, the importance of hearing youth on policy issues impacting their life, and the modifications needed to achieve this goal (led by government entities, civil society and local government).
- B Promote inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral collaborations for carrying out youth participation and consultation procedures (for example on complex issues that involve several government offices)

Train Decision Makers and Professionals on Youth Participation Processes

In order to enable meaningful and impactful participation of youth in policy design, it is vital to ensure that policy makers as well as other relevant stakeholders recognize children as holders of human rights, including the right to be heard, and that they can offer valuable contributions to policy design and implementation affecting their lives. This requires that policy makers involved in government participatory processes with youth, as well as other stakeholders involved in promoting and implementing policy in areas affecting children and youth, are provided with relevant, comprehensive and rights-based training. Such training should combine both theoretical and practical aspects, thereby enhancing the capacities, knowledge and skills required for youth's effective participation in policy design and implementation.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Provide advanced training to policymakers in relevant government offices and agencies involved in public participation areas and in areas impacting children and youth and expected to participate in such consultation procedures. The training must combine theoretical content (e.g., children's right to participate as stated in the Convention, principles for conducting meaningful participation procedures, communication with children according to their age and evolving capacities) and practical (simulations) aspects.
- B. Provide the aforesaid advanced training to relevant entities in local government and civil society organizations involved in promoting and implementing policy in areas affecting children and youth.

Protection against Violence and Abuse



1 Enhance Identification and Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect by Professionals

The identification of children who are subject to neglect and abuse is a crucial first step for proper intervention and prevention, without which children will remain unaided, thereby exacerbating the short- and long-term impact of these offenses on children's lives.

Professionals who work with children on a regular basis perform a critical role in this regard. While Israel does have laws that require the reporting of child abuse and neglect, many professionals who work with children are either unaware of their responsibilities in this regard, or unaware as to how to duly perform them. A 2020 survey of 655 professionals who work with children in the education, medical, justice, and social work fields revealed that a staggering 53% of them did not know how to act once they became aware of child abuse.³ Furthermore, less than half reported undergoing training on the subject. Counteracting this lack of knowledge will provide needed 'sets of eyes' and is necessary for the safeguarding of children.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Promote legislation requiring professionals in the health, social services and education systems who work directly and closely with minors in their surroundings (such as education workers, physicians and nurses, social workers and psychologists), and whose profession requires a license or certification, to undergo dedicated training on identifying and reporting child abuse as a condition for receiving the license or certification.⁴ This training must also include content dedicated to identifying and reporting children exposed to violence in the home.
- B. Promote legislation requiring professionals working in the health, social services and education systems who work directly and closely with minors in their surroundings to undergo periodic refresher trainings on identifying and reporting child abuse.
- C. Appoint referents for two designated specialties: (a) Domestic violence and (b) Sexual offence against a child, in the various public agencies that engage with children: Israel Police, Child Investigation Services, State Attorney's Office, the court system, social services and the education system. These referents will be responsible for all matters relating to (a) children exposed to violence and children who are victims of violence and; (b) children who are victims of sexual offences handled by these agencies. The referents will be responsible for tailoring responses with respect to these children according to the required sensitivity, and for collaboration between the various agencies with respect to these children. The referents in the various agencies will undergo dedicated and ongoing training and will be the contact persons for both the victims and the other agencies.
- D. Develop and subsidize training regarding identification and detection of child abuse victims for staff in informal educational frameworks who engage with children and youth (counselors in out-of-home frameworks, youth movements and after school activities instructors, youth advancement workers, service year volunteers who work with youth, etc.).

³ Haruv Institute (n.d.). It is time for training for professionals regarding identification and reporting of child abuse as a prerequisite for accreditation. (Hebrew) https://fs.knesset.gov.il/23/Committees/23_cs_bg_577891.pdf

⁴ Similar to the proposed Law of Training for Professionals to Identify and Report Child Abuse (2019), submitted to the 22nd Knesset.

2 Formulate Guidelines for the Prosecution of Adults that Expose Children to Domestic Violence

Currently, Israel does not have in place guidelines with respect to the prosecution of adults who expose their children to domestic violence. This gap creates barriers due to uncertainties as to whether and how the criminal justice system will intervene in such cases – thus undermining deterrence as well as protection of children.

In the recent case of Shira Isakov, the father of her child was convicted of child abuse for attempting to murder her in the child's presence. It is unclear whether similar prosecutions will be brought in the future given the lack of clearly articulated prosecutorial policy – thereby demonstrating the need for formulating a regular prosecution policy regarding this offense, in recognition of its significant impact on the children themselves.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Formulate policy that will regulate and provide guidance with respect to indicting perpetrators in situations in which children are exposed to violence between their parents, by issuing a State Attorney Guideline on the matter. The relevant guideline will regulate and regularize the filing of an indictment against a parent when a child is exposed to domestic violence, similar to the case of Shira Isakov, in which an indictment was filed for abuse of a minor due to exposure of their child to the attempted murder.

3 Develop and Expand Services and Programs for Abused and Neglected Children

Beyond their identification, the services and programs destined for children who are victims of violence and exposed to violence are lacking in several respects.

Regarding the latter, there are currently neither comprehensive plans that budget and recruit professionals to serve children who are exposed to violence, nor dedicated treatment programs catering to this specific group of victims. Furthermore, current regulations regarding domestic violence shelters have an age limit regarding resident children, and therefore in many cases reject adolescent children – forcing parents to find other solutions for the entirety of their children and them included, or separating the adolescent youth from the parent and the younger siblings.

Finally, the social services departments which are dealing with the violence cases themselves are overstrained, and therefore often lack enough social workers to properly handle cases of child abuse. This core issue affects the treatment of all different cases of abuse, and has a severe impact on the realization of a variety of children's rights – first and foremost their right to protection. This problem is further exacerbated in poorer municipalities, actively hampering the right to equality of children in these municipalities.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Widen the deployment of treatment frameworks for children exposed to violence and child victims of violence (parent and child centers, "Netivim Lehorut" [Pathways to Parenthood], domestic violence prevention centers), and increase the allocation of positions in these entities in order to address the shortage of treatment responses for these children.
- B. Establish shelters that include adolescent units, deployed nationwide, that will be able to provide an optimal holistic rehabilitative response to the parent and to his or her children, and to minimize further harm to the child and to the family unit. These shelters will prevent separation of adolescents from the parent who was a victim of the violence and from their siblings due to an age limitation, as is the case in most currently operating shelters.⁵
- C. Formulate a plan to address the shortage of allocated positions for social workers in social services departments who work with child and youth abuse victims, by increasing the number of allocated positions and filling unfilled positions – mainly of social workers who work with youth and social workers treating domestic violence.

Increased allocation of positions will be achieved through gradual complementing funding ("differential matching") of the funds provided by the government to local authorities. The differential funding will be structured so to ensure effective allocation of positions in low-ranked socioeconomic local authorities.

- D. Develop online help platforms for child and youth victims and their friends, and coordinate them in a dedicated website; these channels will include online correspondence options, video consultation and an option for anonymous inquiries. These solutions will be tailored to the needs of diverse youth groups (such as at-risk youth).

4 Increase Public Awareness to the Duty to Report Child Abuse and Neglect

While Israel has in place legislation that requires every adult to report child neglect and abuse, there is evidence that more has to be done in the realms of public education and outreach. A 2018 survey shows that more than half of the Israeli public is not aware of the legal duty to report child abuse. The same survey shows that 43% of the public would not report child abuse out of a concern that the report would harm the child.⁶

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Place responsibility on the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services, on the Ministry of Public Security and on the Ministry of Education to conduct campaigns aimed at increasing public awareness regarding the scope of child abuse, its severity and ramifications. More specifically, design campaigns aimed at raising awareness among children who are victims of abuse and children who witnessed abuse, in order to inform them about hotlines and help entities.

⁵ According to the Israeli Social Work Regulations, female victims of violence who require treatment and/or protection can stay in shelters with children up to the age of 13 for several months, and thus their adolescent children remain with the harming parent or with other family members, or are removed from the home to alternative frameworks (boarding school frameworks/foster care/emergency centers, etc.).

⁶ Ofir A. (2018). Half of the Public Will Not Report Suspicion of Child Abuse, Nekudat Mifgash, 15, p. 17-19.

5 Increase Inter-Ministerial and Cross-Sectoral Collaborations to Facilitate the Identification and Treatment of Abused and Neglected Children

A significant barrier to detecting and responding to child neglect and abuse in Israel is the lack of coordination between different governmental entities that come into contact with children. Often different entities have only partial information about at-risk children, and the sharing and cross referencing of this information that is crucial for early identification is impeded by privacy laws and administrative issues.

Various inefficiencies, non-standardized data collection as well as confidentiality laws are significant obstacles to such sharing and coordination. These prevent both individual treatment, when it concerns children who are victims to violence and exposed it (and who's treatment is spread among many entities), and both the pooling of aggregate data, designed to measure the dimensions of these phenomena in Israel, as well as the authorities' response to them.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Establish a dedicated and multidisciplinary forum comprised of representatives of government ministries, local government and civil society on the issue of domestic violence. The forum will be tasked with formulating work plans and advancing procedures regarding the rights of children exposed to violence and child victims of violence.
- B. Establish mechanisms for joint work conducted between professionals and agencies accompanying the child (Tipot Chalav [Family Health Centers], healthcare services, educational institutions, social services, etc.) in order to create a treatment-service continuum for children exposed to violence and child victims of violence.
- C. Pass legislation that will enable sharing of confidential information about children who may be subject to abuse in accordance with the Vinter Committee's (2010)⁷ finding that certain confidentiality laws are a significant obstacle to data sharing and crossreferencing which can lead to early detection of abuse.
- D. Develop a computerized system for information sharing between entities treating children, in order to cross-reference information about at-risk children, identify and detect at-risk children and assess a child's risk; this, according to the recommendations of the Vinter Committee (2010). The system will ensure the right of children to protection, while providing the utmost protection of their right to privacy.
- E. Establish a procedure for collecting data about the number of children exposed to violence and of child victims of violence, from every governmental service that engages with these children, according to the structure of the organization (Israel Police, Youth Law social workers, protection centers, psychological counseling Service, etc.) and according to the agency's activity with these children (children who are witnesses in a criminal investigation, live in the home of adults investigated for violence, children treated individually by social services or the education systems, children in out of home placement, etc.).

This data will be pooled and published regularly, with the aim of assessing the scope of the phenomenon and the number of children known to the agencies as exposed to violence and as violence victims, and among them the number of children receiving treatment, by governmental agencies.

⁷ Vinter Committee (2010). Identification of minors at risk and the formation of safety network in the community: the inter-ministerial commission report (Hebrew)



Children's Privacy in the Digital Environment



Enhance Child and Youth Privacy in the Digital Environment through Legislation and Regulation

Israeli law and policy concerning privacy protection lack sufficient application to the issue of children's privacy in the digital environment. Currently, most Israeli legislation concerning privacy, and its subsequent case law, lack sufficient clarification as to the meaning, scope and interpretation of the right to privacy in relation to children.

This requires adopting, or amending of relevant legislation or binding regulations that address the diverse aspects concerning children's and youth's right to privacy in order to answer the challenges that are unique to them in the digital environment. Legislative and regulatory amendments should address data collection and protection; children's capacity to consent; privacy-related rights; the supplying of child-friendly information and privacy statements; and the setting of sanctions and protective measures in these respects. Such legislative and regulatory frameworks should be developed while incorporating children's and youth's views.

Recommendations for Implementation:

A. Establish a legislative and regulatory framework regarding the array of aspects pertaining to child and youth privacy in the digital world including:

- (1) Commercial companies and third parties that collect information about children and youth (i.e. limiting children and youth-targeted marketing; imposing harsher sanctions on violation of their privacy, etc.);⁸
- (2) The issue of consent pursuant to the Privacy Protection Law (1981), the regulations passed pursuant to the law ('Privacy Protection Law'), and its specific application to children and youth. As part of regulating the issue of consent, establish defining criteria for setting a suitable age threshold for granting different rights to children and youth (such as viewing information or decision-making regarding information collection and its use, and this according to the quality of the information and its sensitivity);
- (3) The regulation regarding databases and their security (including deleting databases of children and youth when no longer needed; explicitly affirming the right to view and correct the information, etc.); and
- (4) The right of children and youth to be heard and to participate in decision-making procedures with respect to privacy (in legislation procedures, in formulating regulations, procedures and recommendations, creating campaigns, courseware, etc.).

B. Establish a requirement of all entities collecting and using data about children and youth to provide privacy statements in Hebrew and Arabic, applying user-friendly and easy to understand wording.⁹ The information must include explanations regarding the collection and use of data and about possible privacy violation ramifications.

⁸ Including the adequacy of Consumer Protection Regulations (Advertisements and Marketing Methods Targeted at Minors) (1991) in light of lacking regulation of children- and youth-targeted marketing on digital platforms

⁹ For example: commercial companies, internet suppliers, social media, various applications and educational institutions.

2 Implement Policies to Protect Children's Privacy in Educational Institutions

Establishing legislative and regulatory frameworks is also necessary in relation to children's privacy protection in educational and other institutions. This requires setting comprehensive and legally-binding policies to regulate the use of digital technologies that endanger children's privacy in educational institutions.

The issue of children's privacy in the field of education warrants special attention, and can particularly benefit with uniform, comprehensive and binding guidance that presents the full status of students' privacy protection in education; establishes relevant procedures and measures; enables the evaluation of their implementation and operation in practice; and clearly establishes the obligations of schools in relation to the students' right to privacy.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Regulate in primary legislation the use of technologies that may endanger privacy in educational institutions (particularly, cameras¹⁰, surveillance technologies and artificial intelligence), and in any entity that engages with children and youth and uses these technologies – while addressing the following topics, among others, in the legislation: terms of use, purpose of use, period of time for saving recorded material, and anchoring the requirement to inform children and youth regarding the introduction of such a technology.
- B. Establish a uniform procedure, by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Privacy Protection Authority that will address all privacy issues in educational institutions, and clearly delineate the procedure for educational institutions and all those who enter their gates. The procedure will include the obligations imposed on the educational institution as well as relevant recommendations for the education staff, parents and students. The procedure may be set forth in a uniform Director General Circular or in a different policy document, and will enable increased access to all relevant entities. The procedure will be accessible as a school manual that will delineate to children and parents the procedures and various aspects pertaining to privacy in the school, information collection in school systems and student rights in these contexts.

3 Develop Mechanisms to Promote Protection of Child and Youth Privacy in the Digital Environment

Realizing children's and youth's right to privacy requires the development and incorporation of mechanisms that can offer guidance, as well as consultation and support services, to relevant stakeholders operating in the digital interface with children and youth. In light of its expertise on issues relating to children's privacy in the diverse areas relating to their lives and taking note of its guideline and informative and educational materials, the Privacy Protection Authority (PPA) should be involved in the design and operations of such mechanisms.

Additionally, mechanisms and models are required to encourage the adoption of self-regulation that standardize children's privacy and data protection by both private and commercial entities that interface with children and youth in the digital environment.

¹⁰ Similar to the Installation of Security Cameras for the Protection of Toddlers in Daycares Law (2018) ('Security Camera Law').

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Develop a support center headed by the Privacy Protection Authority for all professionals operating in the digital interface with children and youth. The center will provide ongoing consultation and guidance regarding execution of their various obligations and optimal modes of engagement.
- B. Create a “seal of approval” for entities that interface with children and youth, such as social media with presence in Israel, content managers and managers of applications popular among children and youth in Israel. This will include granting a standard of excellence to entities that maintain a high standard of privacy protection, with the aim of encouraging private companies and civil society to adopt a code of conduct and high-level responsibility with respect to children and youth.

4 Promote Data Collection and Research regarding Children’s Digital Privacy

As a developing and constantly-changing field, regularly updated research and data collection are necessary to develop effective legislation and policies designed to protect children’s right to privacy and data protection. Such research is also crucial in evaluating and monitoring the effective implementation of legislative, administrative, technological, educational and other measures taken up by government and public and private entities to safeguard children’s privacy.

Research and data collection should include quantitative, qualitative and comparative publications; be informed by children’s and youth’s views and perceptions; and disseminated broadly to the relevant stakeholders, including policy-makers, professionals, parents and children themselves.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Conduct quantitative and qualitative studies and comparative reviews of optimal courses of action regarding child and youth privacy in the digital world, as part of a process aimed at developing solutions suitable for children and youth by government entities; gain knowledge about the privacy perceptions of children and youth; and about the main barriers that lead to non-reporting of online harm and the desire for anonymity among children and youth.

Children's Protection in the Digital Environment



1 Criminalize the “grooming” of minors

While unfortunate, it is universally recognized the internet has served to open new arenas and pathways for sexual violence. One such path is internet ‘grooming’, in which an adult establishes and sustains an online contact with a minor, through persuasion, encouragement, pressure, deception et cetera – in order to perform a sexual offense or sexual abuse. The enactment of legislation in which the ‘grooming’ stage itself is considered an offense, shall act as a further deterrent to online sexual harm against minors, and will place Israel among other countries that have illegalized online ‘grooming’.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Establish in legislation the offense of “grooming” (luring a minor) – as part of efforts to fight the phenomenon and to deter adults seeking to sexually harm or exploit minors similar to many countries which have enacted this in specific legislation.

2 Removal of Offensive Online Content

Another such area of legislative lacuna regarding children's protection in the digital environment is the phenomenon of cyber-bullying. Contemporary data repeatedly demonstrates that cyber-bullying is both common and harmful. Nonetheless, to date, child victims, and their parents, do not have a uniform and quick process to request the removal of harmful and abusive materials online

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Establish in legislation the authority of state agencies and/or the courts to remove harmful online content, including cyber-bullying content and online sexual exploitation and abuse content against children and youth.

3 Increase Awareness to Children’s Digital Protection among Children, Professionals and the Wider Public

One of the major constraints faced by the efforts to ensure protection of children in the digital environment is the lack of education and information – a predicament shared, unfortunately, by all types of actors involved: children themselves, professionals working with them and the wider public. Tackling the online protection of children in a holistic fashion, as a social phenomenon, informing and educating each of these three groups should constitute independent, yet inter-related goals.

Information and training should include both awareness regarding different harmful phenomena related to children’s activities in the digital environment, such as online sexual violence and cyberbullying, the recognition of these phenomena and the severe repercussions they entail, as well as the different ways one could act in face of these harmful phenomena, both as an observer – child or adult – and as a victim. This would include special attention to professionals working primarily or frequently with children, such as social workers and judges, who would need to be introduced to regularized training regarding online abuse and its ramifications.

Recommendations for Implementation:


- A. Increase awareness among children and youth regarding available reporting mechanisms on websites, social media and online games in order to report cyberbullying and online harm cases and to submit removal of harmful content requests to online content suppliers and/or to the National Bureau for the Online Protection of Children (105). The awareness campaigns should be conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services, Ministry of Communications, National Bureau for the Online Protection of Children (105) and relevant civil society organizations that engage in issues of online protection and child rights, and with the participation of youth.
- B. Conduct public campaigns regarding online child protection and respectful online engagement led by government agencies and civil society organizations. Specifically, the campaigns should raise public awareness about the severe negative ramifications of online harm for children and youth, and about the importance of asking for help and reporting such harmful incidents to the authorized entities.
- C. Require periodic training for social workers and psychologists working with children and youth on the topic of online child protection, the unique characteristics of online harm and its treatment. The training should be conducted both as part of their professional studies as a mandatory course as well as through ongoing professional training in the work place, and should be updated from time to time, taking into consideration developments in the digital world with respect to online child protection, types of online harm and their impact on children and youth and optimal treatment methods.
- D. Develop a training program for judges and prosecution entities regarding online sex offenses, their gravity and unique characteristics, particularly with respect to children and youth. The aim is to ensure an appropriate response to the phenomenon of online sex offenses in Israel in all stages of the criminal process, particularly regarding sentencing.

4 Increase Awareness to Children's Digital Protection through the Education System

The school system remains the most regular and long-term point of contact for children, and features education and dissemination of knowledge as primary goals – thus, it should serve as a key element in awareness efforts regarding the online protection of children. This includes addressing children themselves, through a national, dedicated study program devoted to online protection and engagement, as well as the educational staff, through periodic training regarding these subjects, and how to handle cases of abuse they encounter in their daily work.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Develop a national study program about online protection and respectful online engagement. The program should be tailored to the various education streams in Israel, to the students' age and their different needs. The program will underscore child rights and encourage reporting and requesting assistance from authorized entities in case of exposure to online harm. Development of the program should be a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Education and civil society organizations with relevant expertise and experience on issues pertaining to online protection and child rights.



B. Require periodic training for teachers and educational counselors regarding online child protection and implementation of Ministry of Education guidelines for school handling of online harm cases. The training should be provided as part of the counselor's professional studies as a mandatory course, as well as ongoing professional training in the work place, and should be updated from time to time, taking into consideration developments in the digital world with respect to online child protection.

5 Establish Protocols for the Collection of Data regarding the Handling of Harmful Online Content

Despite the importance of the subject, data regarding several important aspects of children's digital protection is severely lacking. A major point of concern is the lack of data regarding harmful content online targeting children – as of now, no centralized body gathers neither the number of reports and requests for removal regarding such content, nor the responses of online content suppliers and media to these reports and requests, and these different content suppliers are not under any obligation to provide this kind of data.

Recommendations for Implementation:

A. Establish a procedure for collecting data from leading content suppliers (e.g., websites, social media, online games played by children and youth) regarding their response and handling of reports and requests for assistance, as well as requests to remove content with respect to exposure to harmful content and/or cyberbullying pertaining to children. This data should include, inter alia, the number of reports and removal requests received regarding harmful online content and/or cyberbullying targeting children and their outcomes; decision criteria for removing harmful online content pertaining to children. The data will be collected while ensuring the right to privacy of the reported children.

Non-Discrimination in Education: Early Childhood Education



Early childhood is a critical period of accelerated physical and cognitive growth. Accordingly, extensive research indicated that educational gaps among children in their early years can build and accelerate, and that efforts to remedy these gaps at school age, while beneficial, may be too late.¹¹

The issue of ensuring quality early childhood education, then, stands to be particularly impactful – especially considering the wide educational gaps in Israel, gaps which are usually measured in concepts such as ‘high school graduation’ and ‘university attendance’.

In recent years, several significant measures were taken in order to guarantee quality and safe education to children under the age of three, including the enactment of the Installation of Security Cameras for the Protection of Toddlers in Daycares Law and the Daycare Supervision Law and the transfer of responsibility over daycares for toddlers to the Ministry of Education.

Yet, despite these measures, the current situation is not free of major issues. Firstly, the Daycare Supervision Law (and subsequently, the Security Cameras Law) is only applicable to institutions which hold more than seven toddlers. Thus, institutions with six or less toddlers are not supervised according to the law, and therefore a significant percentage of Israeli toddlers attend wholly unsupervised institutions. Local government authorities are also not familiar with all early education institutions in their municipality. Secondly, the recent legislation, despite the important changes it heralds, is often not properly enforced and executed. Thirdly, as of date, there is a shortage of supervisors who can arrive at the daycare centers in order to provide oversight of the various aspects of safety, pedagogy, the existence of an educational plan, and the training of the educational and care staff. Finally, the Security Cameras Law did not determine the subsidization of the cameras required by the law, and therefore the financing of the cameras and their installation is left to the education institutions themselves, leading to tuition increases as well as impeding the full implementation of the law.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Fully implement and enforce the Toddler Daycare Supervision Law and the Toddler Daycare Supervision Regulations (Conditions for the Operation of a Toddler Daycare Center). To this end, the Daycare Center and Nursery School Division (hereinafter: “the Division”), or alternatively a dedicated early childhood division in the Ministry of Education, must complete the process of mapping all private daycares throughout the country, increase the number of supervisors in the Division, and act to increase the budget allocated to implement the law and the regulations.
- B. Fully implement the Camera Installation Law for the Protection of Toddlers in Daycare Centers for Toddlers (2018). To this end the Division must complete the process of mapping private daycares, increase the Division’s supervision activity regarding compliance with the provisions of the law, and act to fund camera installation costs in both recognized daycare centers and private daycares so as to prevent imposing the costs on the parents; particularly, act to subsidize the equipment for frameworks in low socioeconomic clusters.

¹¹ For an overview of current research, as well as specific findings in the Israeli context, see for example the following publications by Taub Center: Emerging Inequality in the Early Childhood: Poverty and Future Educational Attainment (2019) (Hebrew), Early Childhood Education in Israel and Educational Attainment. (2020) (Hebrew), Early Childhood in Israel – Findings from Selected Research (2021) (Hebrew).

2 Amend Daycare Operating Standards to Improve Staffing and Capacity

The Child Daycare Oversight Regulations [Conditions for the Operation of a Child Daycare], applied as part of the Supervision Law, formulated unitary standards for the operation of daycares. Among others, the Regulations addressed the issue of staffing. With the transfer of daycares to the Ministry of Education, it has been decided to reduce the ratio of toddlers to daycare staff, yet the improved ratio set by the Ministry is still far from the average ratios set by other OECD countries, and from the ratio recommended by the Rosenthal report¹² (which dealt with standards required to operating educational institutes for toddlers). In addition to the issue of staffing, the Oversight Regulations also addressed the issue of the maximal number of toddlers in each classroom, and set a maximal number of children for every toddler group in a day care. Similarly to the regulations concerning staffing, the maximum capacity set by the regulations is significantly higher than the one recommended by the Rosenthal report.

The maximal capacity of daycares and their staffing standards necessarily affect the ability of staff in the daycare to be responsible for children's safety, to respond to their needs and to engage with them in a way that fosters their development.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Change the criteria set forth in the Supervision Regulations, in order to improve the regulations set forth regarding standards (ratio between the number of toddlers to staff; and this according to the recommendations of the Rosenthal Report), regarding capacity (total number of toddlers in every class), and regarding staff training (as detailed in the next section).

3 Ensure Adequate Training for Professional Staff in Daycares

The Oversight Regulations address, among others, the training of the educational caregivers in the Daycares, and mandate that they need to undergo training lasting at least 220 hours, in order to grant educational caregivers in the Daycare sufficient expertise. Even so, the Regulations allow the educational caregivers to begin their training while working in the daycare. Thus, there is no obligation that an educational caregiver will have the sufficient skills at the beginning of the work in the daycare, as long as she or he finishes her or his training less than a year after she begins to work. This enables care givers to begin work untrained, as well as to evade training by working in different daycares for periods of time shorter than a year.

¹² Rosenthal Committee (2009). Report of the Advisory Committee on Standards for the Operation of Education Frameworks for Infants. (Hebrew)

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Implement the supervision regulations regarding professional training for caregivers, particularly specifying mandatory professionalization that will include pedagogical training similar to the education professions - for all caregivers, and in all frameworks, as a threshold condition for beginning their work.
- B. Expand the scope of required professional educational guidance, mentoring and supervision hours for all educators-caregivers as part of the regulations, to be determined in relation to the daycare size (in contrast to the scope of hours currently specified in the regulations, which is only 4 hours a month for all daycares, irrespective of size).

4 Encourage the Establishment of Dedicated Early Childhood Holistic Centers on the Municipal Level

It has been long-recognized, including by relevant reports of government ministries and committees, that the unification of different early childhood service providers (Education services, Tipat Chalav, parental guidance, development tracking) in a single, 'one-stop-shop' campus is of a significant benefit both to children, parents and public services alike. Such centers allow for better detection and treatment of developmental issues; an increase in the number of serviced parents and number of professionals attending the child; conserves treatment resources and making the various services more accessible to parents.

Models for such centers, operated and supervised in an inter-ministerial capacity, are already devised, and have been implemented in select municipalities. Despite its benefit, this model has yet to be implemented on a national level.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Financially incentivize the planning and building of early childhood campuses in local authorities that will consolidate all service providers to toddlers and their parents in the local authority under one umbrella (Tipat Chalav, education and daycare facilities, child development center, professional staff training center, parent treatment and guidance center, etc.).¹³

¹³ For further information, see: Trajtenberg, M. (2019) "Turning the Pyramid Upside Down; A New Vision and Policy for Early Childhood Education", Samuel Neaman Institute (pp. 30-37). (Hebrew)

Non-Discrimination in Education: Parent Payments



While the State of Israel is obligated to provide free and equal education to all children, there is a practice in place of asking parents to make financial contributions through a “parent payment” system. This arrangement constitutes a key impediment to the realization of this core obligation. Furthermore, parent payments hamper the State’s ability to succeed in narrowing social gaps, and create damage by deepening and exacerbating already existing gaps between students.

Over the years, many attempts have been made for the abolition of parent payments, yet to date none of them have been successful. Government-appointed committees have devised several solutions to financially compensate the schools for potential loss of funds while maintaining equal access to education, yet these proposed reforms were never implemented. And so, despite the numerous solutions proposed over the years, the problematic charge of parent payments has not stopped and even expanded, continuing to deepen the gaps between students in Israel.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Abolish the burden of parent payments in the school system, while requiring the State to fund all the various activities and services of education institutions, including personal accident insurance, textbooks, culture basket, class parties, fieldtrips, parent committee and organization fees, additional study program (‘Talan’), and the purchase of optional services and end devices. Establish that the aforesaid costs are imposed on the State, and the comprehensive prohibition to charge parent payments in an amendment to the Compulsory Education Law (1941).¹⁴
- B. As a supplemental measure to section A above, the Ministry of Education must set forth a service specification of all types of services currently funded by parent payments, while ensuring an adequate education standard for all education institutions.
- C. Complementing the budgetary sources in the aftermath of the abolition of parent payments may be achieved in accordance with the various solutions put forth over the years, for example through progressive collection of payments from the entire population by a minimal increase of several permille to National Insurance Institute payments, in the spirit of the Langerman Committee recommendations.¹⁵

¹⁴ For example, a draft law in this spirit was submitted in the 20th Knesset by MK Yakov Margi: Compulsory Education Law (Amendment – Cancellation of Parent Payments), 2016. That draft law was formulated with the assistance of the INCC and sets forth that the State must fund the costs and that payments will be charged by the National Insurance Institute from all citizens of the State.

¹⁵ Langerman Committee (1992). Report of the Public Advisory Council regarding Parent Payments. (Hebrew)

Non-Discrimination in Health: Israel Family Health Centers ("Tipot Chalav")



1 Anchor the Operation and Funding of Family Health Care Centers ("Tipot Chalav") in Legislation

Israel's Family Health Centers (also known as 'Tipot Chalav') have an important role in guaranteeing children's right to health and development, through providing preventative medical services to children from birth until the age of six. Yet, despite the vast potential of Tipot Chalav services to children and their families, the range of services given in Tipot Chalav stations have narrowed in last years, with the quality of services decreasing in tandem, as a result of budgetary and manpower services which made Tipot Chalav unable to properly handle population growth.

Currently, Tipot Chalav services are not properly and comprehensively anchored in primary legislation. The law does not specify the funding that will be available to Tipot Chalav, does not specify the manpower required in relation to population size and doesn't specify services that they should provide, other than routine examinations and vaccinations. In lack of such legislation, their activity is primarily directed by a circular of the Ministry of Health dating from 2007 - a circular that includes, among others, staffing standards. Yet, in practice, these standards are not fulfilled, and the major overstrain on nurses often leads to the weakening of these services, which are critical to health and development of babies and toddlers.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Formulate primary legislation to regulate all the functions of Tipot Chalav (family health centers) as well as an automatically-updating budgetary mechanism for the funding of clinic personnel positions (as detailed below).
- B. Establish a relationship between the number of Tipot Chalav personnel and natural population growth, corresponding with the number of children in the locality; accordingly, the updated budget addition will be anchored in the Ministry of Health annual budget base.
- C. Formulate a uniform and updated procedure that will integrate the activity of all Tipot Chalav in Israel under a single regulatory agency, independent of the identity of the clinic operator. In establishing an oversight process, uniform quality metrics will be defined that will serve as objectives for all service operators (to ensure service universality, accessibility and uniformity).¹⁶

2 Expand the Range and Application of Family Health Care Centers ("Tipot Chalav") Services

As of date, Tipot Chalav stations across the country mostly provide a limited and minimal service, and as a result do not fulfill their potential to provide comprehensive and holistic services. Services given in Tipot Chalav stations narrowed to vaccinations and routine eyesight, weight and height examinations, while other services such as parental guidance and house visits - critical, among other things, to detect risk situations and developmental delays - are not provided at a significant percentage of the stations. This limited provision of services is thus a significant impediment to the realization of the serviced children's right to development, health and equality.

¹⁶ Following the recommendations of various committees, such as the Netanyahu Committee and the Amoraï Committee, in 2006 the Ministry of Health planned to conduct a pilot in several local governments, transferring the responsibility for providing all Tipot Chalav services to the HMOs in order to establish one entity that will be responsible for providing care for children from birth and to create a care continuum. However, the pilot was not conducted and has not been reexamined since.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Implement the Ministry of Health advisory forum action plan for the first years of life, among other things regarding: nationwide clinic dispersion, clinic renovation, expanding appointment availability, setting up an advisory call center, integrating health professions into the clinics, conducting house calls, training, and a salary framework for clinic personnel.¹⁷
- B. Expand the variety of services given in Tipot Chalav stations in order to provide a comprehensive response to the needs of children in Israel in their first years of life. The following services will be included in clinic activities: (1) mental health services for parents and toddlers; (2) paramedical and therapeutic services for toddlers and infants; (3) proactive detection and prevention of risk situations among parents and children; (4) guidance and advisory services for parents and soon-to-be parents; (5) an individual and group accompaniment program in the first months after childbirth¹⁸; (6) initial information and treatment for parents raising toddlers with special needs; (7) conduct a structured house call (in terms of time, frequency and nature of the visit), while giving priority to children meeting unique criteria still to be determined (e.g., families who do not come for routine visits, first child, preterm child, child with special needs).

3 Improve Information Transfer between Family Health Care Centers ("Tipot Chalav") and Other Services

Currently, there are a number of obstructive factors which prevent the implementation of a joint policy of information sharing between Tipot Chalav stations and other services concerned with children's welfare (HMOs, hospitals and schools), that would improve preventative treatment for children. A central impediment to the realization of such policy is that Tipot Chalav stations do not receive information about births, and therefore they cannot ascertain that all babies receive vaccinations and routine examinations, detect developmental delays as early as possible, or identify risk and neglect situations amongst children.

In addition, the information regarding vaccinations that is found in Tipot Chalav stations is not transferred to schools, depriving them of knowledge regarding the pupils' vaccination history. Furthermore, the computerized information sharing system of Tipot Chalav, operated by the Ministry of Health ("Machshava Bria"), is not operated by three out of four HMOs in Israel.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Unify and improve the information transfer process between hospitals, Ministry of Health, HMOs and Tipot Chalav computer systems, in order to register newborns and ensure optimal tracking and treatment (particularly, administering vaccinations, conducting screening tests, detecting risk situations). This information transfer is especially important with respect to population groups that do not have legal status (since in their countries of origin there are no established comparable services).

¹⁷ "Plan for the Activity of the Steering Committee and the Advisory Forum for the First Years of Life", Dr. Shoshi Goldberg, National Head Nurse and Head of the Nursing Administration, Ministry of Health, December 2, 2018.

¹⁸ For example "Mother to Mother in the Community", a support and accompaniment program for mothers in the first year after childbirth.



Non-Discrimination in Health: Mental Health Services for Children and Youth



1 Reduce Waiting Times to Receiving Mental Treatment

Timely access to mental treatment is integral to its function; yet, long waiting periods form a continuous problem for children and youth in Israel when it comes to the provision of mental care. Reports composed by the Ministry of Health and the State Comptroller¹⁹ found that it can take several months, and even more than a year in some cases, for a child to begin psychotherapeutic treatment. In addition, the lack of community-based alternatives for acute mental issues often force children into unnecessary hospitalizations. These issues span the mental health services provided by all HMOs, and constitute a widespread, ongoing violation of Israeli children's right to health, as well as of the National Health Insurance Law, that requires a systemic response.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Formulate a multi-year plan to shorten waiting times for community psychotherapy services for children and youth, while establishing required standards for treatment availability and access. As part of this plan, and in addition to regular psychotherapy services, community alternatives to psychiatric hospitalization of children and youth (such as day treatment) which are the responsibility of the HMOs will be expanded. The aim is to provide interim solutions in the community which will be able to offer treatment for acute mental conditions and avoid hospitalization of children and youth owing to lack of suitable solutions in the community.

2 Address the Severe Shortage of Mental Health Practitioners who Specialize in Treating Children and Youth

A root cause of the long waiting periods of children and youth to mental health treatment is a severe personnel shortage of mental health care professionals; while this shortage is felt across several mental care specializations, it is acknowledged as particularly severe when it comes to children and youth. This shortage in practitioners is salient regarding psychiatrists who specialize in children and adolescents and regarding mental health professionals who provide various specialized responses and treatments (such as eating disorders). The current shortage in psychiatrists is felt particularly in the social and geographic periphery.

This shortage is further exacerbated in the Arab community, in which there is an even worse lack of mental health practitioners – both psychiatrists and psychologists – contributing to a dismal service of Arab children, greatly undermining their right to health.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Formulate a dedicated plan to address the shortage of child and adolescent psychiatrists. The plan will include budgeting specific grants to encourage specialization in child and adolescent psychiatry as part of the training of individuals specializing in psychiatry, and to promote filling child and adolescent psychiatrist positions in geographic areas with a long-term shortage of professionals in this field. This plan should specifically address the severe shortage of child and adolescent psychiatrists in the Arab society.
- B. Formulate a dedicated plan, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Council for Higher Education, to promote the training of psychologists from the Arab society. This plan will foster enrollment, admission and completion of a Bachelor's degree in psychology, as well as the transition of psychology graduates to a Master's degree clinical psychology track.

¹⁹ See e.g. The State Comptroller (2020). Annual Report 70b. (Hebrew)

- C. Map the existing shortage of specialized responses (treating sexual abuse, trauma, eating disorders, etc.) among child and adolescent psychiatrists and psychotherapists, and ensure routine training is conducted among mental health professionals in the required specialization fields.

3 Ensure Mandatory Mental Health Education for Healthcare Professionals

Healthcare professionals who work with children in the community form an ongoing point of contact for children. Thus, training them in identifying suicide risks and mental crises can be a significant aid in expanding the network of identification and provides critical training to those who often serve as 'responsible adults'.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Formulate a plan for mandatory continuing education in mental health and in identifying suicide risks for healthcare system professionals working in the community who engage with children (particularly pediatricians and nurses).

4 Address the Severe Undermanning of the Educational Psychological Service

Israel's Ministry of Education, jointly with local government authorities, provides psychological services to children who attend the Israeli public education system, intended to promote the mental health and welfare of students. Optimally, the Educational Psychological Service is meant to provide early and accessible treatment and prevention to all students, aged 3-18, as stated in its guidelines. However, this potential is far from being realized fully. The official staffing ratios of educational psychologists are incommensurate with the growing demand and various roles of educational psychologists, and lay the ground for a permanent personnel shortage. In fact, data from recent years indicates that even those official ratios are constantly undermanned, and the 3-5 and 15-18 age groups are often not serviced.²⁰ Thus, the fulfillment of children's right to development is hampered.

Recommendations for Implementation:

- A. Formulate a plan to reinforce the educational psychology service by filling existing open positions and increasing the number of allocated positions. This plan should include improvement of current educational psychologist employment terms (salary, percentage of position, etc.) that hinder filling current open positions. The aim of these measures is to enable the provision of continuing treatment as well as conducting significant prevention processes that are not available due to the shortage of treatment professionals. As part of this plan the responsibility scope of the educational psychology service will be expanded, requiring full service to be provided to preschool (age 3-5 years) and high school (age 15-18) children and youth.

²⁰ Ministry of Education (2010). Director General Directive 5770/8(a), Outline of Educational Psychology Services. (Hebrew)



Summary

The recommendations detailed above were not devised with an intention to foster future economic growth, to shape the future work force, or to contribute to 'state security' – external considerations which are oft-mentioned in discussions regarding different aspects of children's lives in Israel.

Instead, through the use of the lenses of children's rights, they place children's lives themselves front and center: their participation in decision making processes related to their lives, their protection against abuse in the physical world as well as in the digital environment, and their equal treatment when it comes to health and education services.

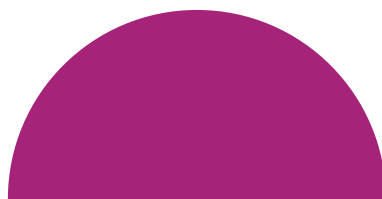
Thus, the imperative call to action that this document entails extends beyond the individual recommendations contained herein. Rather, this document serves as a call, a clarion call, for a new kind of public discourse, one that places children's rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as the guiding compass of every public discussion regarding the lives and welfare of children in Israel, and as the chief criterion according to which we measure the treatment of children, and public services provided to them.

This children's rights-based discourse, so we hope, will be shared by all pertinent actors involved – the different state organs, civil society organizations, professionals, business sector, and of course, the children themselves.

Commensurate with the composition of this document and the report that preceded it, we hope that the perspective of children's rights will not merely serve to inform the decision making processes of adults, but will also encourage the latter to integrate children themselves into these processes, whenever these affect children's lives.

As the title of this document suggests, the steps outlined here are immediate in their urgency – some of them concern, indeed, children's very right to life and protection. However, while urgent, the change encapsulated in this document, should not be envisioned as an immediate and one-off set of decisions to be taken – but rather as a long process of change in outlooks, priorities, viewpoints and means, of which the recommendations detailed above are only the beginning.







המועצה הלאומית לשלום הילד
Israel National Council for the Child
المجلس الوطني لسلامة الطفل

