



2011 Evaluation Report to The Matanel Foundation on Orr Shalom's Constructive Vacations Program

Evaluation after each of the four camps takes the form of three meetings:

- The counselors with the Camps Manager
- The Camps Manager and the Camps Director
- The Camps Manager with Kfar Hasidim's Manager

The conclusions of these meetings are written in a report by the camp's management team, and sent to Chamootal Gordon-Shamir, the Director of Orr Shalom's Therapeutic Family Group Homes program, who bears overall responsibility for the program. The camp's staff aims to implement the conclusions of the reports in the next camp. The staff is continually looking how to upgrade by examining what worked well and trying to improve what did not.

The final report to Chamootal Gordon-Shamir also includes a comprehensive and confidential report on every child who participated in the camp. These reports are sent to the house parents and therapeutic staff in the Orr Shalom therapeutic family group homes in which the children live, and they feed into the therapeutic treatment plan of each child.

Main Points of 2011 Evaluation Reports

1. We need to maintain the emphasis on training the staff. In line with our experience throughout our Orr Shalom family group homes, the profile of the children attending these camps is becoming more extreme. The children are coming to us following the most distressing circumstances. As a result, many of the children suffer from severe emotional, behavioral and learning difficulties, as well as psychiatric problems, eating disorders, paranoia and other problems. Despite the fact that the profile of the children is so difficult, the team was able to provide a safe, positive and enriching experience for the children in 2011, but we do need to continue the training. To do this, we need to bring in professionals who will provide training on key issues, particularly about what to do when children display extreme behavior, and how to more successfully prevent this. Also all the staff need to know ahead of time the background of each new child joining the camp.
2. The training day specifically for the sherut leumi girls that was introduced in 2011 is critical and needs to continue. We still have more work to do in terms of clarifying exactly the responsibilities of the sherut leumi girls in the camp.
3. We need to ensure that the children feel they are part of a "family" at the camp although they are split into smaller groups according to age for many of the activities. We need to think about how to make the children feel comfortable with all the counselors at the camps, and not just the counselors of their particular group.



4. All children, and particularly Orr Shalom's children, need clear boundaries. We need to be clearer on some of the rules at camp eg dress code, use of phones etc. We need to discipline the children in an educational way wherever possible eg asking them to do an activity for their group, asking for forgiveness if they have hurt someone etc.
5. We have managed to upgrade the Shabbat experience in 2011. There is now a clear format for the "Shabbat conversation" that takes place with the children as Shabbat comes in ie conversation with the Camp Manager, story with a message, timetable for Shabbat; meals include brachot, songs, a story by the counselors, sitting at tables according to age groups; all the children join in every meal and stay at the table until after birkat hamazon; after Friday night dinner, there is a special evening for the older groups and a special evening for the younger groups run by the counselors. We need to consider running alternative activities during prayer time on Shabbat.
6. This year, for the first time, we worked much more in smaller, age-specific groups. In addition, we split the older and younger children on some of the days out and hikes – this worked very well and we should continue it in 2012.
7. In order to sharpen the understanding of the kaytana among the therapeutic staff in the Orr Shalom homes, we need to present at one of the homes' management meetings, give a very thorough explanation of the kaytana and its aims, cooperation with the homes, the importance of providing detailed information about each child, kaytana as part of Orr Shalom's care, creating a continuum for the children etc.
8. General feedback from the counselors included the following statements:
 - The children felt "seen"
 - A feeling that everything is being supported and a sense of security
 - The move from larger groups to small groups was positive, even if it means sometimes leading with a single counselor
 - There was a feeling of "togetherness" in the groups
 - The children are learning not to act out, but rather to talk
 - The activities were more in depth
 - The national service girls felt part of the staff. There needs to be more clarity about their precise responsibilities. They found the long hours very hard and the children very difficult.
 - We need to keep the emphasis on team work among the staff, and really helping each other in order to succeed.