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Children at Risk-2013

Name of program

Children at Risk

Year of activity

2013

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Status of program

Overview – With the Matanel support of 50,000 NIS we were able to produce 16447 Hagadas for Passover. We sold each Hagada at an average price of 14 NIS and 230,264 Shekels were raised that went towards our pilot program " Peer Social Education Program for the Development of Social Skills."

The Peer Social Education Program for the Development of Social Skills is a program that promotes children on the Autism spectrum's social function in terms of social interaction and communication. Following 20 years of experience in the field the Association for Children at Risk (ACR) decided to develop a unique model aimed at developing the children's social-communication skills with their peers. Promoting social functioning among these children is crucial, and direct treatment concerning this issue can improve the children's integration into society. The ACR currently provides paramedical treatments in its kindergartens in various domains. However, paramedical treatments do not specifically target social interaction difficulties. Therefore, placing a specific emphasis on social interaction is crucial, and treatment of social difficulties must be incorporated in all treatment plans when treating a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The program combines structured learning modes for social skills, as well as experiences in

shared social activities with normative peers that are mediated by professionals, in order to develop social competence and transmit it to the natural environment enabling them to improve their ability to function better both at home and in society. The program started implementation in 27 kindergartens in the fall of 2013. Upon successful implementation, we will be able to replicate it to additional kindergartens across the country. Thus, the program has the potential to be an enormous breakthrough for autistic children all over the world.

Main achievements during the last year of activity

1. 216 children participated
2. 27 kindergartens, 16 in Ha'sharon region, 3 in Netanya, 7 in Rehovot and 1 in Givat Shmuel
3. 2-5 weekly sessions with peers according to the child's ability.

Evaluation

The program is directed and monitored by a teacher or therapist who undergoes special training. Each child goes through an individual assessment in the areas of social cognition, emotional understanding, and social behavior. The individual treatment program will accompany the child throughout his kindergarten period. All program activities will be divided into 3 groups: games, speech, and social interaction, thus fostering the children's advancement in all 3 domains according to their needs.

In order to master social skills, children with ASD must be taught them explicitly, and have the opportunity to practice them repeatedly. Each treatment session incorporates a therapist and at least one regular child. The games' group incorporate 2 regular children. The activity is comprised of a weekly individual session and 2 group sessions, thus, providing the child with an opportunity to implement and experiment with the newly acquired social skills learned during the individual session. This comprehensive program is divided into various social skills subjects related to groups listed above, each of them is taught over the course of 6 months, according to the child's individual treatment plan. At the end of the period, the ACR will evaluate each child's progress with tools that are standard and recognized.

Others

Provisional guide lines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

In 2014 we aim to double the number of participating special needs kindergartens to 60. We also will develop and conduct a two –year training session for 100 health professionals in the field in order to expand the program nationally.

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