

SHEKEL – Community Services for People with Special Needs

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Status of program:

SHEKEL continues its vision of developing and operating innovative services to benefit populaces with disabilities within the wider community, throughout Israel. SHEKEL's ongoing efforts are conducted by a skilled and dedicated team of professional staff who are deeply committed to the principle that everyone has a right to live and realize their potential as an integral part of the wider community. SHEKEL's public board plays a leading role in determining this policy, based on developing innovative models and services, accompanied by evaluations and research.

SHEKEL – Community Services for People with Special Needs continues to replace institutionalization for people with special needs with integration into mainstream society, by creating independent group housing, meaningful employment, accessibility, sports and leisure activities, therapeutic treatment for special-needs victims of violence and abuse and an extended school day program for children in special education kindergartens and schools. SHEKEL annually cares for over 8,000 children and adults with physical, emotional and mental disabilities from all sectors of Israeli society.

SHEKEL's professional staff numbers 600, not including an additional 700 volunteers from all over the world.

Main achievements:

Independent Housing

- Nearly 300 tenants currently live in 80 apartments within the wider community. Over the past year, three apartments were renovated, five apartments were re-equipped as necessary, and one new apartment was purchased with a generous donation.
- A new program was opened for independent supported living.

Employment

- A total of 535 individuals with disabilities participated in SHEKEL employment programs (an increase of 22 persons). 126 were employed in Israel's mainstream employment workforce, through SHEKEL's supported employment program. 288 worked in SHEKEL's in-house production lines and workshops. 121 attended SHEKEL's employment-oriented day centers. SHEKEL operated employment programs in Jerusalem and Israel's central region. The broad spectrum of vocational programs included wide-ranging training programs. Emphasis was placed on business development and transforming workshops into business-oriented enterprises capable of competing in the free market.
- With the help of the **Matanel Foundation** and other public and private funders, SHEKEL opened the "Harutzim Bistro" café, with two additional branches in Jerusalem, as part of SHEKEL's training and employment program. SHEKEL's gift shop was incorporated in the café.

Leisure and Education

- Many hundreds of participants enjoy SHEKEL College's 90 enrichment activities. A total of 1,375 people with disabilities participated in the program, representing an increase of 200, or 17%, since 2014.
- Collaborations were initiated with additional community bodies, such as Hebrew University.
- Activities included the following: courses in the framework of SHEKEL College; collaboration with academia; the LAMAH Center (mental health rehabilitation via sufferers providing services); the Passport to the Community program, which encourages social activity for people suffering from mental illness; sports and health-building courses; social clubs; the Culture for All program, which encourages people with special needs to enjoy cultural performances via subsidized tickets; an experiential vacation; and special events.

- Thousands visited SHEKEL's International Film Festival and hundreds came to see SHEKEL's theater productions. The Festival lasted for five days as films were screened from morning to night. Twenty-two films from around the world were shown in 32 screenings, and a total of 4,742 people participated.

Extended Daycare Services

- SHEKEL implemented extended school day programs in nine special education schools in Jerusalem, as well as at the Center for the Hearing Impaired in Abu Tor. Five of the schools were located in West Jerusalem and four in East Jerusalem.
- In addition to the school frameworks, enrichment programs at the Rimonim Preschool were implemented.

Therapeutic Services

- Numerous patients received therapeutic treatment at SHEKEL's Therapeutic Center. The Center treated 166 patients: 58 females and 108 males. Additional hundreds of professionals benefitted from the Center's seminars and advisory services.
- The treatments were of a diverse nature: short and long-term; one-on-one and family treatment, counseling for parents and guidance for staff members.

Accessibility

- The Center continued to be involved in preparation of master plans for accessibility in local authorities. Activity continued in the area of accessibility in public transportation and other areas to be described below. There has been a significant increase in requests from businesses and entrepreneurs who require accessibility approvals as well as community centers (structures, infrastructure and environment) and services.
- Volume 19 of SHEKEL's professional publication on accessibility, "A Matter of Approach", was published on the subject of accessibility and legal issues; accessibility approvals were obtained for 120 projects; and consulting was provided for: new transportation routes, public buildings, mikves for the Moriah Corporation in Jerusalem, a transportation master plan; and ongoing consultation.
- Program for the hearing-impaired in Haifa and the North: 52 lectures were given, attended by 1,050 participants; 41 hearing tests were conducted; 391 individual consultations took place for individuals requesting hearing devices; auditory consultations were given to 41 individuals; there were 21 visits to homes of the elderly; assistive devices were lent to 47 individuals.