



## Engelberg Center for Children and Youth: Update on Recent Developments

Over the past two decades, Israel has significantly shifted its approach to services for children and youth, placing greater emphasis on community-based programs, more systematic data-based planning at the local level, and inter-ministerial and inter-agency collaboration. MJB's Engelberg Center for Children and Youth has been deeply involved in supporting this national shift, with a special commitment to disadvantaged and minority populations. Highlights of recent activities of the Center include:

### *Examining Current Policies for Out-of-Home Placement of Children at Risk*

This high-level committee, chaired by the General Director of the Ministry of Social Affairs, is dealing with the very sensitive and charged issue as to when a child should be removed from his or her home and that this is done in the best possible way. MJB is preparing an in-depth overview of how the child welfare system presently addresses this issue, and is assisting the committee in preparing the final report that will include a set of recommendations as to how to strengthen the present efforts.

### *First National Study on Foster Care Services in Israel*

Foster care is a key component of the service system for children in high-risk situations. The effectiveness of such systems is being reconsidered in many countries. In Israel, the system is undergoing major changes, with many new initiatives designed to improve and reform the system. MJB recently completed the first national study of foster care services, which is now serving as a basis for informing these efforts.

### *Examining the Needs of Very Young Children and their Parents*

There is broad consensus that the first 3 years of life are critical. At the same time, efforts to address the needs of young children and their parents are not sufficiently developed and are fragmented. MJB is working with JDC-Ashalim's inter-ministerial committee to review the needs and services available, and to examine the perspectives of policy-makers, practitioners, and parents regarding key priorities.

### *Strengthening the Work of the Educational System with Low-Performing Students*

In 2006, MJB conducted the first-ever national study of how Israeli schools work to help low-performing students. In 2012, we performed a follow-up study to obtain an updated picture of these activities in light of a series of recent major reforms. Our findings revealed considerable progress, including an increase in the extent of work with low-achieving students and a reduction of gaps between Jewish and Arab sectors. At the same time, the findings highlighted the very significant need to strengthen these efforts and pointed to a number of possible directions.

### *Removing Barriers to Higher Education for Arab-Israelis*

In response to the difficulties that many young Arab-Israelis face in accessing and succeeding in higher education, the Council for Higher Education has developed a major, multi-year plan to assist them on the path to higher education. MJB recently completed the evaluation of the initial pilot and is now beginning a comprehensive, multi-year evaluation of the new national program.

