



ENGELBERG CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

RESEARCH REPORT

Youth at Heart (*Yesh Matzav*) Multidisciplinary Youth Centers: Evaluation of a Pilot

Paula Kahan-Strawczynski ♦ Dganit Levi ♦ Noa Sher ♦ Viacheslav Konstantinov

The study was initiated by Ashalim and funded with its assistance
and that of Ms. Karen Lombart of Virginia Beach, USA

**Youth at Heart (*Yesh Matzav*)
Multidisciplinary Youth Centers:
Evaluation of a Pilot**

Paula Kahan-Strawczynski Dganit Levi
Noa Sher Viacheslav Konstantinov

The study was initiated by Ashalim and funded with its assistance
and that of Ms. Karen Lombart of Virginia Beach, USA

Editor: Ronit Bin-Nun

English translation: Evelyn Abel

Print Design and Production: Leslie Klineman

Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute

Engelberg Center for Children and Youth

P.O.B. 3886

Jerusalem 91037, Israel

Tel: (02) 655-7400

Fax: (02) 561-2391

Web site: www.jdc.org.il/brookdale

Related Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute Publications

Kahan-Strawczynski, P.; Vazan-Sikron, L. 2008. *Main Findings and Insights from an Evaluation Study of Three Models of Centers for Youth at Risk: Meitar, Ironoar and Muntada al-Shabab*. RR-511-08 (Hebrew)

Kahan-Strawczynski, P.; Vazan-Sikron, L.; Levi, D. 2008. *From Risk to Opportunity – A Program for Immigrant Youth: Findings of an Evaluation Study*. RR-515-08 (Hebrew)

Baruj-Kovarsky, R.; Ben-Rabi, D. 2013. *Ethiopian National Project: Youth Centers – Third Evaluation Study, 2012*. RR-635-13 (Hebrew)

Korazim, M.; Nir, S. 2013. *Evaluation of the AMEN Program to Promote Youth Volunteerism in Local Authorities*. RR- 638-13 (Hebrew)

Szabo-Lael, R.; Hasin, T. 2011. *At-Risk Children and Youth: Results of the Identification and Mapping Conducted by the National Program for Children and Youth at Risk*. RR-589-11 (Hebrew)

To order these publications, please contact the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, P.O.B. 3886, Jerusalem, 91037; Tel: (02) 655-7400; Fax: (02) 561-2391; E-mail: brook@jdc.org.il

Reports and English executive summaries are available on the website.

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an evaluation study of the pilot implementation of Youth at Heart (in Hebrew: *Yesh Matzav*) centers for youth. Through a broad range of after-school and evening activities, the centers offer a comprehensive community response designed for youth at the "start of, or midway along, the risk continuum" (hereafter: moderate-risk youth) who require preventive or therapeutic intervention. As such, the centers have the potential to prevent both the progression of the youth along the risk continuum and disengagement from normative frameworks and activity. The youngsters all attend the formal education system where some of them function satisfactorily. However, faced with personal and/or family difficulties, they may show signs of risk and distress. The idea behind the establishment of Yesh Matzav centers is to provide a normative non-stigmatic service.

The Youth at Heart model was developed as a unique, multi-system partnership between JDC-Ashalim, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services (MSAS) (Children and Youth Service), the Ministry of Education (Society and Youth Administration), the Ministry of Health (Health Education and Promotion Department), the Ministry for Environmental Protection (Education and Community), the Ministry of Culture and Sports (Popular Sports), and the Society for Advancement of Education (SAE). The pilot took place between November 2010 and October 2013. As part of the pilot, centers were implemented in five localities: Arad, Yafia, Kiryat Arba, Tel Aviv, and Be'er Sheva. After the pilot ended, in 2014, the program continued to receive organizational support: staff continued to be trained and the position of project director was worked out further.

The Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute (MJB) was asked to evaluate the implementation of the pilot. The study was conducted in 2012-13 (the second and third year of the pilot). The national steering committee of the program, including representatives of the ministries and partner organizations, served as the steering committee of the study. The committee followed the study, received the findings and served as a forum of discussion. As part of the development of the Yesh Matzav model, MJB and the Zofnat Research Institute composed a separate document describing the working model.

Description of the Centers

Target Population: (1) Youth aged 12-18 within the jurisdiction of the local authority, attending a formal educational framework, and identified by professional staff in the community or school as being at moderate risk; (2) Parents of youth attending the centers. Note that participation is voluntary, and the youth are not required to attend. Note also that youth may join the centers at different times.

Dates of establishment: The centers were established at different times throughout the three-year pilot (November 2010-October 2013). The first center was established toward the end of 2010 and the last – during the second half of 2012.

Goal: The program is designed to advance this population with respect to the risk continuum, and to help these youths cope with the process of adolescence and the development tasks they face.

Principles of Action and Areas of Activity: The program is implemented on the basis of the Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach: to focus on the positive potential of youth and emphasize their strengths rather than concentrate on their problems and difficulties.

Three main *principles* follow from PYD: (1) an integrative approach – viewing the youth holistically with all their needs and capabilities; multidisciplinary teamwork; and creating a common language for the different disciplines; (2) involving the youth in decision making; (3) a systemic approach – working with parents as an integral part of the work with youth, and liaising with the school and community.

The *activities* combine elements from five areas – welfare, informal education, the promotion of an active, healthy lifestyle, the promotion of environmentalism, and working with parents.

The Evaluation Study

Study Goal

To learn about the implementation of the pilot and examine how participants and staff perceived the contribution of the centers. These findings could then be used as a basis for improvement and for a decision on the continued dissemination of the model.

Population and Study Design

The data were collected in two periods: the first – November 2012 to March 2013; the second – some nine months later – September-November 2013. The study population included all the youth attending the centers in the first period of the study (344).

The data collected and analyzed in the study relate to the second and third years of implementation (2012-13). All five centers were included, so that the study covered centers and participants who had been in the program for varying lengths of time.

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from various sources. The quantitative data were collected by means of three questionnaires. Center staff completed two of these and youth, one.

1. **Staff questionnaire on all participants at the centers:** Data were received on the entire study population (344 youth). The youths' characteristics were examined along with the characteristics of their own and their parents' participation. These data were collected in the first period of the study.
2. **Staff follow-up form** on youth for whom data were collected in the first period. About 9 months after the first period, data were received on 97% of the study population (335 youth). The topics examined were: continuing attendance, patterns of participation, and the perceived contribution of the centers. The data were collected in the second period of the study.

- 3. Youth questionnaire:** Self-completion questionnaire; all youth attending the centers in June 2013 were asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire (156 youth). The topics examined were: patterns of attendance, satisfaction with various aspects of the activities, and the perceived contribution of the centers.

The qualitative data were collected in interviews and focus groups of center directors, members of the national steering committee, members of staff, and of the local steering committee. They were asked about various aspects of implementation, the partnerships, and the perceived contribution of the centers to the youth.

Main Findings

1. Characteristics of the Youth

The analysis of the findings shows that the characteristics of the participants fit the population for whom the centers were designed: youth attending school who are at moderate risk, i.e., in situations of risk or personal/family crisis. These were some of the main characteristics of the youth attending the centers:

- ◆ **Sex:** A minority were girls – 38%
- ◆ **Age:** 60% were between 12 and 15
- ◆ **Country of birth:** 83% of the youth and 52% of the mothers were born in Israel
- ◆ **Single-parent families:** 35% of the youth lived in single-parent families
- ◆ **Pursuits:** 92% of the youth were in school. Of the other 8%: 2% were only working, 3% had no pursuit, and 3% were waiting to begin military/national service. According to the staff, 91% attended school regularly; 76% behaved normatively; and 69% behaved as called for in school.
 - **The strengths of the youth:** In the assessment of staff, 69% of the youth have a positive attitude towards life, and are motivated to take steps to advance their goals; 58% have at least one talent, such as for art, or are highly intelligent; 46% are able to form good personal relations that could help them create a supportive social network; 37% are highly self-confident and have a high sense of self-efficacy; and 30% appear to be enough to cope with personal difficulties.
 - **Relations with parents and parental functioning:** 23% of the youth have no relationship with one of their parents and a few, with either parent. The staff estimates that 37% have problems in their relationship with parents; for 85% of the youth, parents met their physical needs but parents met the emotional needs of only 53% of the youths.
 - **Risk behaviors:** Using factor analysis, summary measures were constructed for all the risk behaviors. This form of analysis made it possible to identify risk behaviors that generally would appear together (these were grouped in a summary measure). It was found that 26% of the youth were not involved in risk behaviors and situations that

exacerbate danger whereas another 26% were involved in three or more. The common behaviors were: loitering and unlawful conduct (37%), a problematic social condition¹ (32%), bad moods (31%), neglect and negative body image (28%), and regular smoking or drinking (27%).

2. Patterns of Youth Attendance at the Centers

Number of Youth at the Centers

The number of youth attending the centers during the first period of the study matched the predetermined extent of implementation: At large centers, about 100 youth participated; at small centers, about 60 youth participated.

How the Youth Heard of the Centers

The youth heard of the centers in various ways. The most common way was through friends (58%), though 26% heard about the centers through acquaintance with a staff member, and 12% were referred by a community service (mainly school or social services).

Reasons for Attending the Centers

The centers were apparently perceived, at least initially, as an after-school social clubs,: 68% attended to be with friends, and 61% – as a place to pass the afternoon. An additional reason was in order to talk to a member of the staff (34%).

Length of Time at a Center and Regularity of Attendance

Attendance at the center is voluntary and there are no expectations about duration. The assumption is that the adolescents will continue to attend so long as the center meets their needs. We found that most of the youth were "old-timers":

- ◆ In the first period of the study, 49% of the youth had been attending for more than a year. At that time, most of the centers had been active for about two years.
- ◆ 64% of the youth in the first period continued to attend the centers in the second period as well, some nine months later. The other 36% had stopped for various reasons.

Frequency of, and Uninterrupted Attendance at, the Centers

In the first period of the study, most of the participants attended quite intensively: 70% – at least one day a week, and spent an average of seven weekly hours there.

3. Patterns of Implementation of the Centers

Despite differences of locality, the model of Yesh Matzav was implemented as planned.

Yearlong Work Program

In the first period of the study, the program was largely constructed by the center director and social worker, with the occasional collaboration of other staff members. The program was adjusted during

¹ The summary measure for problematic social condition consists of these risk situations: difficulty of adaptation and integration, as well as reports loneliness, alienation, and victimization outside of the center.

the year on a trial-and-error basis to adapt it as best as possible to the youth's needs and wishes. By the start of the second period, it seemed that experience had been accumulated and therefore the activities were more structured and planned, the working directions were clearer, and the staff were partner to the process.

The Staff at the Center

- ◆ *Center staff:* It was decided that the permanent staff would consist of a director, social worker, two youth counselors, a health counselor and a sports counselor. On the whole, all these positions were filled. In addition, the centers have various therapists who are not part of the permanent staff, but work there for different periods, such as an art therapist or family therapists. Most of the centers also have volunteers and soldier-teachers.
- ◆ *Principle of action – integrative approach:* According to this principle, all the needs and aptitudes of the youth are to be viewed holistically, and activities are to be integrative. During the establishment of the centers, efforts were made to fill all the staff positions quickly. The study revealed that the work of the staff evolved to become more defined and structured as reflected by more regular staff meetings and teamwork with the staff putting their heads together and acting collaboratively. One of the main challenges was to develop and create a common language for all the staff members as they hailed from different disciplines.

Types of Activity and Extent of Participation

The yearlong program of the centers consisted of diverse activities:

- ◆ Youth participated in 6.8 activities on average (this was the situation both during the data collection and in the past).
- ◆ Prominent structured activities – 80% took part in group workshops, and 60%-70% – in each of the following: prevention of risk behaviors, personal talks with a staff member, social activity and sports.

Working According to the Approach of PYD

- ◆ Although in the first two years of the pilot, no instruction was given on how to implement the approach, most of the directors believed that they actually did work according to it. In the third year, staff received instruction on involving the youth in decision-making – which is a key principle of the PYD approach.
- ◆ The analysis of the pilot in terms of the PYD approach showed that the centers did implement some of its principles. The self-reporting of directors also indicated that the centers had implemented the approach though not yet to the point of sustainability. On the whole, implementation was not driven by an intent to work according to the approach, but according to methods considered effective in advancing youth. While some of these methods correspond with the principles of the approach, the directors were unaware of this.
- ◆ It must be noted that despite the efforts made, directors and staff reported difficulty in involving the youth: they said that the youth found it hard to say what they wanted, took little initiative, and preferred to choose from options presented to them rather than suggest new

ones. Thus, it was reported that only 53% of the youth displayed initiative and leadership at the center. At some centers, an attempt was made to establish a youth forum, with no success. Instead, a team of youth was set up to plan specific activities.

Planning Intervention for Youth

It was decided that a personal program would be built for every youngster.

- ◆ By the first period of the study, a personal program had been built for 28% of the youth.
- ◆ Of continuing participants between the two periods of the study, the extent of youth for whom a personal program had been built increased from 26% at the first period to 38% at the second period.
- ◆ It was decided that responses would be differential according to level of need and intensity of care required, and that youth requiring that care would be defined as such only in relation to the center. The steering community assumed that 25%-35% of the center youth would be identified as requiring an intensive response. Indeed, in both periods, some 30% were thus identified.

Parental Participation at the Centers

- ◆ The staff are in contact with the parents of 62% of the youth.
- ◆ Among the youth who attended the center in both periods, the parents of 40% took part in some activity, such as casework with the social worker, a therapeutic parents group, family therapy or a social activity for parents and youth together. In the first period, the most common activity was casework with the social worker; in the second period, parents were offered more activities. Accordingly, the extent of participation rose for all activities, especially for the social activity.

4. Assessment of the Centers by Youth and Staff

Assessing Youth-Staff Relations

- ◆ The staff appraised their relations with most of the youth as close and open. For instance, they judged that 76% of the youth spoke to them about personal matters and felt they could turn to them in time of need. The youth appeared to concur: 91% deemed that the staff understood them and 69% reported having personal talks with a staff member.
- ◆ The staff were perceived as available and welcoming: 94% of the youth believed that they could turn to the staff with suggestions about the center, and 85% reported being asked by the staff about their interests and wishes regarding the center.

Assessing the Functioning of Youth at the Center

- ◆ The staff reported that 94% of the youth got along well with their peers at the center, helped them and were considerate of them, and that 78% took active part and approached tasks willingly.

- ◆ Difficulties were also reported: According to the staff, 17% of the youth acted violently at the center. Similarly, 20% of the youth reported violence or vandalism at the center, and 14% said that, occasionally, there were youth at the center who frightened them.

Assessing Physical Accessibility and Conditions

- ◆ The center was perceived by youth as being very accessible physically: 91% believed that it was easy to get to.
- ◆ 74% of the youth believed that the center was adequately equipped, and 80% – that the equipment was in good condition.

5. Perceived Contribution of the Centers to Youth

The data on the contribution of the centers to the youth, as perceived by the participants and the staff, were examined quantitatively based on the reports of the youth themselves and the reports of the staff in the second period of the study.

- ◆ It was a normative space to pass the after-school hours: 85% of the youth agreed that this was a contribution of the center, and it was cited as the main reason for attending.
- ◆ Improvement in sense of personal wellbeing: 62% of the youth agreed that their self-confidence had improved and an identical proportion felt they could turn to the staff for advice about things that bothered them. Moreover, the staff assessed that the center had improved the mood of 55% of the youth.
- ◆ Acquaintance with new areas: The youth agreed that they were more environmentally conscious (57%), health conscious (44%), and more aware of the importance of physical exercise (44%).
- ◆ Improved relations with parents: 32% of the youth agreed that the center had made a contribution in this respect.
- ◆ Scholastic contribution: Among the youth with scholastic needs, 32% had improved their relations with school staff, and 33% – their scholastic performance.
- ◆ Reduction of risk-behaviors: The staff judged that 32% of the youth had less contact with peers that had a negative influence on them, and 37% spent less time loitering.
- ◆ Display of initiative and involvement: The staff estimated that due to the youths' attendance at the center, 45% of them showed more initiative at, and involvement in, the center, and 33% – more initiative and involvement in their close milieus.

6. Organizational Partnership in the Program

In establishing the centers, Ashalim initiated a unique partnership of five ministries and the Society for Advancement of Education. In the first circle, a partnership was formed between MSAS, the Ministry of Education and the Society for Advancement of Education. Partners added in the second circle were the Ministry of the Environment, of Culture and Sports, and of Health. It was found that alongside the consolidation of the special advantages of partnership, the different parties held

different expectations of, and understandings about, the partnership. It is therefore important to continue to hone the agreements between the partners on their working relations and the levels involved.

7. Summary and Programmatic Directions

Summary of Main Findings

- ◆ The Yesh Matzav model was implemented as planned with some variation between the localities.
- ◆ The characteristics of the participants matched those of the population for which the centers were designed: adolescents attending school, at various levels of risk, mainly at moderate risk on the continuum.
- ◆ The number of youth attending each center matched the predetermined extent of implementation.
- ◆ The centers worked from an integrative conception and systemic orientation: the whole of the youth's characteristics and needs are examined, various activities are offered according to diverse predetermined areas (the youth participate in seven different activities on average), and the staff work as a multi-disciplinary team in partnership with the five ministries.
- ◆ The centers implement various principles of PYD although the directors acknowledged that they had been unaware at first that their work methods conformed with elements of the approach.
- ◆ The physical presence at the center of a permanent staff member responsible for a specific area (such as health promotion) added great depth to the work in that area and developed it. The fact that this person was a permanent member of staff had added value, unobtainable merely by implementing enrichment activity at the center or by instructing staff to enhance their knowledge and awareness in the given area.
- ◆ A decision was taken to construct a personal program for each adolescent. In the first period of the study, it was found that such a program had been built for 28% of the participants. A similar percentage (26%) was identified as needing an intensive response (as expected). Of the latter, personal programs were built for 42%.
- ◆ Some of the centers found it difficult to find various therapists.
- ◆ The youth expressed high satisfaction with activities at the center alongside reports by some of violent incidents.
- ◆ A common language and joint mode of work were established between members of the center staff who hailed from different disciplines, based on the unique advantages of the inter-ministerial partnership in the program. Nonetheless, the various parties involved were found to differ in their expectations and understanding of the common work modes.

Programmatic Directions

At the time of writing, the pilot stage ended. In 2014, the national steering committee put a lot of effort into making the program sustainable in the localities participating in the pilot, and into

examining the possibility of expanding it to additional localities. However, by the time the study ended, the ministries that were to fund the continuation of the project had not yet responded affirmatively.

Based on all the findings and the discussion of them with the members of the steering committee and directors of the centers, a number of programmatic directions were formulated for further development of the project, on two levels: (1) the implementation of the center and (2) the development of the program in general.

Implementation of the Center

The translation of a working model into the field makes it necessary to construct the work processes and different areas involved. During the study, the conceptualization of several areas was in fact observed, such as building a yearlong work program for the center and the workings of the multi-disciplinary staff; nonetheless, there is room for continuing to develop and construct the following areas:

- 1. Building a personal program for every adolescent at the center:*** It emerged from the interviews with the directors that it had been insufficiently clear whether a personal program was expected for every participant. This assessment was confirmed by the quantitative data collected indicating that personal programs were built for only some of the adolescents. These findings led the national steering committee to discuss the matter and decide on a personal program for every participant. Several steps must be taken to support this initiative: the ongoing use of a tool to map the characteristics and needs of the adolescents, including both difficulties and strengths, as a basis to identify those requiring a more intensive response; the structuring of the process of building a personal program; and the creation of a mechanism for follow-up of implementation and program updating as needed.
- 2. Deepening the knowledge of the PYD approach and consolidating the work accordingly:*** This approach is the basis of the program rationale and is meant to be one of the milestones on the road to implementing the program model. However, the professionals at various levels were not instructed on how to work according to PYD, apart from the guideline to center staff on "involving youth in decision making" – which is only one component of the approach. On the whole, it was implemented not with the intent of abiding by the approach, but in an attempt to employ methods considered effective for advancing adolescents. Some of these methods do match the principles of PYD, although the directors had been unaware of this fact. This revealed a need to better familiarize center staff and professionals on the national and local levels with the approach. In particular, attention should be paid to the fact that, despite the attempts made, center staff still find it hard to cause the youth to take initiative and make themselves heard. More opportunities should be created to plan activities that contribute to the community and involve the youth in these, as an additional component of the PYD approach.
- 3. Expanding the work with parents:*** Activity at the center includes working with the parents – both separately and together with the adolescent. According to staff reports in the second period, about half the parents of the youth participating in the first period are involved in some

activity at the center. Alongside implementing the pilot, there was a learning group of professionals of various levels. It is important to implement the group's learning products, to examine the quality of the responses offered today, to learn from the experience accumulated to date, to examine the satisfaction of the parents, and to find ways to deepen their involvement in the treatment of their adolescent children. These steps are designed to expand, deepen, and improve the work of the centers with the parents.

4. *Continuing professionalization of youth counselors:* It is suggested that the Youth Department of the local authority guide counselors professionally and, through them, offer the youth the basket of social activities supplied by the department, including social involvement and young leadership. This is already the case in some localities and should be expanded to the other localities as well.
5. *Adding an environmentalist to center staff:* The study findings indicate that appointing a staff member to take charge of a specific area greatly promoted the work in that area at the center and contributed to its development. The appointment thus has added value unobtainable from the mere transmission of enrichment activities or instructing staff in order to advance staff goals and awareness in that area. From this insight, the national steering committee and the Ministry for Environmental Protection decided in 2014 that some of the budget for environmental activities may be used to employ a counselor to take charge of this area at the center. At the time of writing, the decision has not yet been implemented, and it is recommended that it be so.
6. *Intensifying anti-violence measures:* 20% of the youth reported incidents of violence and vandalism at the center, and 14% noted that there are occasionally youth at the center who frighten them. The staff too reported violence. These data raise a need to treat the problem seriously and explore ways to contend with it.

Development of the Program in General

1. *Continuing to strengthen the inter-ministerial partnership for program sustainability:* Since the program rests on an inter-ministerial and interdisciplinary partnership, it is important to take steps to strengthen that partnership, especially in the following ways:
 - a. A formal position for a director to manage the program on the national level: Without a director to manage and lead the program, it will not be possible to continue implementing, developing and disseminating it.
 - b. Budgetary commitments for the future: The partner ministries allocated funds for implementing the pilot. To make the program sustainable and indeed expand it to additional localities in the future, there must be similar budgetary commitments for the coming years.
 - c. Professional involvement of the ministries of Health, Culture and Sports, and Environmental Protection: These three ministries are currently less involved than the ministries of Social Services, and Education. It is recommended that ways be found to deepen their professional contribution both at the head office level and on the ground.

2. *The voice of the directors:* The directors have accumulated a good deal of knowledge and experience. During the period of pilot implementation, there was no direct contact between the center directors and the head office of the program (the executive staff and the national steering committee) apart from contact with the program director. In view of this situation, the center directors expressed a wish to develop ongoing dialogue. It is suggested that a mechanism be created whereby they will be able to share their experience and knowledge directly with the head office, which would contribute to further professionalization of the centers' work and improve the service offered to youth.
3. *Thinking about the place of formal education at the center:* At the level of the head office, the partnership with the Ministry of Education was designed with the Division of Youth and Society Administration, which is responsible at the ministry for informal education. On the local level, the center staff were on the whole in contact with the schools attended by the youth participants about their functioning and needs. The national steering committee would like to add the formal education system to the program as active partners in order to strengthen the contact between the schools and the centers.
4. *Issues related to center budgets:* In general, satisfaction was expressed with the size of the budget allocated for employing various therapists and for activity highlights. Nevertheless, center directors raised several matters for further consideration:
 - a. Maintenance of building and equipment: The local authority is responsible for the maintenance of the building and equipment. In some local authorities, there were reports of center activities being held in rather unsuitable buildings (e.g., a shelter) or the lack of funds to repair and change worn-out equipment. There seems to be a need to address this issue with the local authorities.
 - b. Finding additional funding sources: Although some of the centers benefit from additional funding sources, such as donations, the directors said that they had received no training in fundraising nor had it been made clear to them that this was their task.
 - c. Transition to budgeting by allocations: At the end of the pilot, tariffs were set and the budgeting method moved to allocations (this means "opening a file" at the Department of Social Services) as is common practice at the MSAS. The tariff also includes the budgets of the ministries of Education, Health, and Environmental Protection. The study ended before this change took effect, and therefore was not included. In anticipation of the changeover to budgeting by allocations, center directors and members of the steering committee voiced the need to think through the new working arrangement and find suitable solutions to ensure that the centers remain free of labeling. The execution of the change should be followed up to examine how it was implemented and what effect it had.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the many people who helped us conduct the study.

A huge thanks to the youth who completed the questionnaires and thus shared with us how they felt about the centers.

We are indebted to the center directors for their openness, efforts, and fruitful cooperation throughout the study: Amatz Levitan, Kiryat Arba; Mira Golding, Arad; Jadir Margia, Yafia (formerly); Tal Dayan, Tel Aviv; Tami Nobochov (director) and Gali Nahimov (substitute director), Be'er Sheva.

Center staff members deserve our gratitude for completing the questionnaires on the youth and, in Arad and Yafia, thanks go to members of the local steering committees for agreeing to be interviewed.

We would like to express our appreciation to our partners on the national steering committee – Naomi Abutbul, national supervisor of adolescent clubs and programs, Youth and Child Service, MSAS; Gili Dana, national supervisor, Youth and Society Administration, Ministry of Education; Zivit Lindar, director of the Division of Education and Community; Meira Halper, division deputy director; Manbaro Shimon, (former) division director of programs, Ministry for Environmental Protection; Shlomit Nir-Tur, national supervisor, Department of Women's and Popular Sports, Ministry of Culture and Sports; Ruth Weinstein, director, Department of Education and Health Promotion, Ministry of Health; Shlomi Cohen, head of the youth department, and Efri Bart, program director at Ashalim; Eli Bosquila, director of the program, and Michal Shavit, director of pedagogic development, the Society for Advancement of Education.

Lastly, thanks to our colleagues at the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute for their help at various stages of the study: Miriam Navot, director, Engelberg Center for Children and Youth, for her valuable comments on the report; Michael Pilipov, researcher, Engelberg Center for Children and Youth, for his help with data analysis; Ben Shlomi, Fieldwork Unit, for coordinating the collection of quantitative data; Yonatan Almog, director, Unit of Planning-Oriented Outcomes and Collaborative Measurement, for his professional support in constructing the logical model of the program. Thanks to Ronit Bin-Nun for editing the report, Evelyn Abel for translation, and Leslie Klineman for Print Design and Production.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Description of Program	2
3. Evaluation Study	6
3.1 Study Goals and Questions	6
3.2 Population and Study Design	7
3.3 Analytical Method	10
4. Characteristics of Youth Attending the Centers	10
4.1 Socioeconomic Characteristics	11
4.2 Pursuits and Learning Characteristics of Youth	12
4.3 The Strengths of the Youth	12
4.4 Contact with Parents and Parental Functioning	13
4.5 Risk-Heightening Situations and Involvement in Risk Behaviors	14
4.6 Differences by Sex and Age	15
5. Attendance Patterns of Youth at the Centers	15
5.1 Number of Youth Participating	15
5.2 Ways of Reaching the Center	15
5.3 Reasons for Attendance	16
5.4 Length of Time and Persistence at the Center	17
5.5 Frequency of, and Uninterrupted, Attendance	18
5.6 Differences by Sex and Age	19
6. Patterns of Implementation of the Centers	19
6.1 Yearlong Working Program	20
6.2 Staff at Center	20
6.3 Types of Activity and Extent of Participation	22
6.4 Planning Interventions for Individual Youth	23
6.5 Parental Participation at the Centers	25
6.6 Working by the Approach of Positive Youth Development	27
6.7 Issues Preoccupying the Youth	31
7. Assessment of Center by Youth and Staff	33
7.1 Assessment of Youth-Staff Relations	33
7.2 Assessment of Youth Functioning at the Center	34
7.3 Assessment of Accessibility and Physical Conditions of the Center	35
7.4 Differences by Sex and Age	36
8. Perceived Contribution of the Center to Youth	36
9. Organizational Partnerships in the Program	38

9.1 Partnerships on the National Level	39
9.2 Partnerships on the Level of the Localities	40
10. Programmatic Directions	41
Bibliography	44
Appendix I: Tables by Sex and Age	48
Appendix II: Detailed Risk Behaviors in which the Youth are Involved	56
Appendix III: Extent of Authorized Working Hours of Staff Members	57
Appendix IV: Salient Findings at each Center	58
Appendix V: Logistic Model of the Program	67