

Service User Involvement in the Regulation of Social Services: Mechanisms, Challenges and Best Practice Principles International Review

Hilla Dolev Aluma Levi-Zohar

The review was commissioned by the Division for Research, Planning
and Training at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and Services
and funded with its assistance

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Jerusalem | April 2020

Abstract

Background

Over the past thirty years, there has been a growing trend in many countries, including Israel, to involve service users in system-wide processes in the social services – in shaping policy and in the planning and provision of services. Involvement in regulation is included in this trend, but while much has been written about user involvement in social services, the literature has little on the subject of regulation.

Goal

The Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute was commissioned by the Division for Research, Planning and Training at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and Services to conduct an international review in order to examine trends and applied strategies used by inspectorates to involve service users in social-service regulation tasks. This, with the goal of contributing to the shaping of Ministry policy to improve the quality of the services, in particular regarding regulation policy.

Study Method

The review was based on a variety of local and international sources of information including the most recent academic literature, policy reports and policy papers, and communication with representatives of inspection organizations. We used this wide variety of sources since this is a new and relatively unexplored area of research and we wished to gain a comprehensive picture of the mechanisms employed to involve service users.

Findings and Conclusions

The review reveals that along with common lines for all processes of involvement wherever they may be, processes of involvement in regulation also have their own particular characteristics in regard to the nature and goals of regulation. Each of the mechanisms has its own goals, advantages and disadvantages and must therefore be used judiciously. The choice of a mechanism solely for the purpose of involvement, without identifying the need or setting the goal, is liable to be detrimental to optimum implementation and the possibility of creating added value to regulatory tasks. Furthermore, for the ground to be well prepared for optimum utilization of channels of involvement in regulation, it is first necessary to adopt and consolidate the principles of involvement.