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Community-Based Social Services for People With Disabilities An International Review

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Abstract

Background

In recent decades, there has been a worldwide paradigm shift in policy on the regulation of social services for people with disabilities. It is increasingly recognized that community-based services have to be developed to promote the social inclusion of people with disabilities. In Israel, the Disabilities Administration at the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs has been acting to develop and improve social services that encourage full participation in society of people with disabilities and enhance their autonomy and personal independence. Seeking to continue and develop the services, the Disabilities Administration commissioned the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute to conduct an international review of the diverse community-based and personal independence and autonomy enhancing social services available for people with disabilities.

Goal

The goal of this review is to inform the Disabilities Administration about the community-based social services available in various countries for people with disabilities aged 18 and over in six areas: (1) personal assistance and support; (2) promotion of independence in activities of daily living (ADL) and in instrumental activities of daily living (IADL); (3) leisure activities; (4) assistive technology; (5) sexuality, couple relations, and parenting; (6) services for informal caregivers. The review presents information conducive to decision-making on the development and improvement of community-based social services for people with disabilities in Israel.

Method

1. **An international review** of open access academic papers and online publications of government ministries, local authorities, service providing organizations, and research institutes. The review focused on six countries – Australia, the United States, the UK, Denmark, Spain, and Canada – where advanced services are provided in at least one of the above-mentioned areas.
2. **Consultation** with academics, professionals in the field of disabilities, officials, and social activists who are familiar with the provision of community-based social services for people with disabilities.

Findings and Conclusions

- The ultimate goal of the social services for people with disabilities in the reviewed areas is to support their independent life in the community by promoting their autonomy and their full inclusion and participation in all spheres of life, in their familiar surroundings.
- Personal assistance and support services are core services, central to all other service areas and essentially including the development of a personal plan, care coordination, and personal guidance – this, in light of the person-centered service approach, which advocates the provision of services and solutions tailored to the wishes and needs of the individual and the participation of the individual in the development of the personal plan and in decision-making processes while allowing for flexibility in the use of the support services.
- The person-centered service approach supports the comprehensive promotion of goals in diverse areas of service. These services may thus be included in various personal plans with the aim of promoting various goals or incorporated in a single personal plan so as to meet several goals.
- Evaluation studies have indicated the high quality of the available social services and their contribution to the promotion of the autonomy and personal independence and the social inclusion of people with disabilities. However, there is still a need for improvement processes so as to further upgrade and expand the services and ensure the freedom of choice of people with disabilities in the selection and use of the services.