



Youth Futures -
Shared Responsibility
for a Shared Future



Established in 2006, Youth Futures is a collaborative project of The Jewish Agency for Israel, local authorities, government offices, Jewish Federations, and private Israeli donors from the business sector. It is a groundbreaking program that embraces the vision of providing a solution for youth at risk in the State of Israel.


The program's goal is to instill each child with the belief that he or she possesses distinctive strengths and abilities that can be developed in order to secure a brighter future. Youth Futures works to develop each child's unique set of skills through the assistance of a meaningful adult figure, access to the social services at each child's disposal, and encouraging family involvement and a supportive educational environment. **By believing in their abilities to dream and to achieve their goals, Youth Futures motivates its participants to become independent individuals and to break out of the cycle of poverty and risk – benefitting not only the child and his or her family, but Israeli society as a whole.**

In addition, the Mentors themselves, usually adults in their 20's and 30's, are enriched with the understanding that today's young Israelis are inextricably connected to one another, and bear responsibility for securing a thriving future for their generation.

Background Information

Children and Youth At Risk. Children and youth represent Israel's future. The way in which they grow up and develop will influence their personalities as adults, as well as the fabric of Israeli society. Today, there are over 2.4 million children in Israel – of whom 36% live below the poverty line and are disenfranchised from the optimal tools for their development. In recent years, as a result of widening social gaps, the number of children exhibiting signs of at-risk behavior rose greatly. Nearly 330,000 children and youth in Israel live today in dangerous conditions that cripple their abilities to exercise their basic rights to security, protection, dignity and independence. This trend has been exacerbated over the last three decades, over which the number of children living in poverty has increased 4.5 times over (from 8.1% in 1980 to 36.3% in 2009).





Children and youth at risk and disadvantaged

Family living in poverty

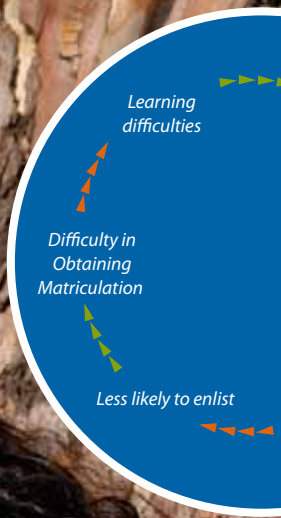
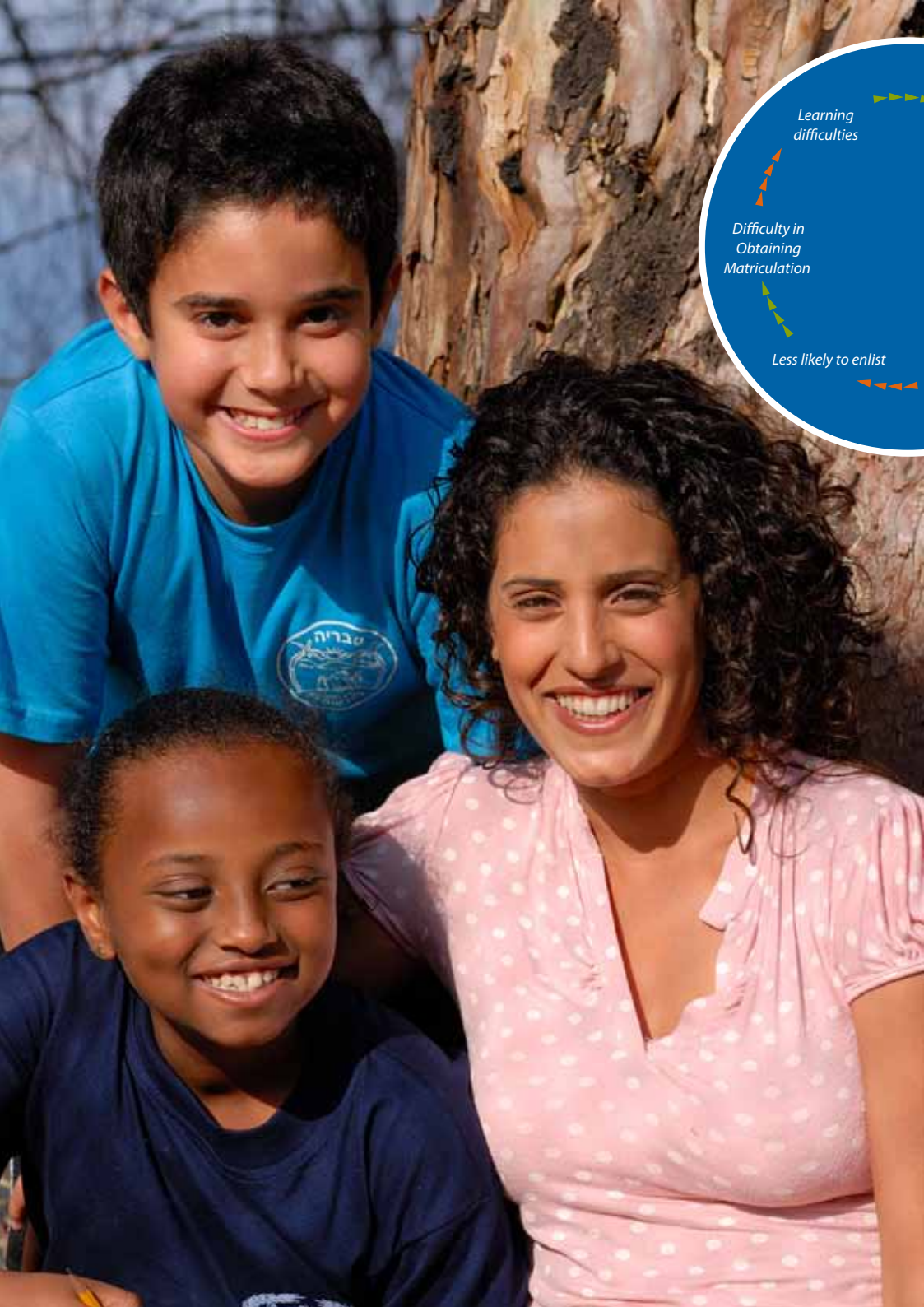
Difficulty making a living

Gaps between the center and the periphery. Over the last 20 years, growing gaps have been identified between Israel's geographic and social periphery and its wealthier center. These gaps have wide-reaching implications on general Israeli society and on its children and youth of all sectors, including Arab, Ethiopian, Haredi, Druze, and others. Empowering these sectors is a positive step toward advancement of Israeli society to one of strong, positive, synergetic community.

Paradox of social services. In spite of the rising figure of youth at risk, the breadth of social services offered to these children and their families is not a sufficient response to their greater needs. **Half of all children at risk do not receive any social services at all.** Others receive services that only respond to some of their needs. As the circumstances for children and youth at risk are increasingly difficult, they are in greater need of frameworks for assistance. Paradoxically, **in as much as these children and their families are in need of support, they have little ability to access these services and realize their rights.**

They are relatively unfamiliar with the existing network of social services; many times, they lack the personal and social connections required in order to access the services they need. Moreover, the existing services are spread out among different circles – in schools, welfare offices, third-sector organizations. There is a need for mediated intervention on behalf of the children and family in order to expose them to the various possibilities for assistance, and to make services accessible to answer their needs.

We break the cycle of disadvantage.



Youth Futures – Paving the Way Toward a New Future

Established in 2006, Youth Futures is a **collaborative project of The Jewish Agency for Israel, local authorities, government offices, Jewish Federations, and private Israeli donors from the business world.** Its uniqueness allowed the program to quickly become a success story for children, families and communities. It involves over 10,000 children and their family members who take part in realizing a vision for social change.

Participation in the program ranges from three to five years. In order to create sustainable social change, young men and women who have successfully completed the program remain involved with the program in order to create a foundation of support until their army service. This creates the additional advantage of "graduate" beneficiaries being available as successful role models for their younger peers.

Who is the target audience for the program?

1 Children and youth at risk: From elementary school-age through middle school, the children are identified through educational and welfare services in each community where the program runs.

2 Parents and families: The extended family, especially each child's parents, take an active role in the program and in building a personal plan and network of support for the child.

3 **Peer group:** The children at school and in each child's environment benefit from the positive effects of the program, and from the changes that begin with each participant.

4 **Professionals in the community:** school counselors, employees of the department of welfare, and social workers.

5 **The greater community:** The program has a holistic effect over the entire community through a positive, symbiotic relationship. The program invites the community as a full partner in its children's success, and thus empowers the community as a whole.



Guiding principles – What Distinguishes Youth Futures?

The Mentor – available everywhere, all the time. This unique program establishes a new paradigm for personal involvement that educates and supports: the Mentor (formerly referred to as a "Trustee"). The Mentor is an innovative figure and crucial social connection whose position has developed through Youth Futures and is a factor in the success of children and parents. The Mentor is a "meaningful adult" present in each child's life – a leader, a role model, a sounding board, and an aide who supports. By maintaining close personal connections, the Mentor allows the children and their families to obtain and refine their life skills, to be helped, and to take advantage of the appropriate social services that are available to them as they begin new lives.



The Mentor works with each child and family in a number of different realms: the individual, the group, and the systemic.

The role of the Mentor is:

- In the individual realm:

- Ongoing, personal work with the child at risk
- Empowerment of the child and strengthening self-confidence
- Personal relationship with the family members and the therapy and education staff working with them
- Building a personal work program for the child and his or her family

- In the group realm:

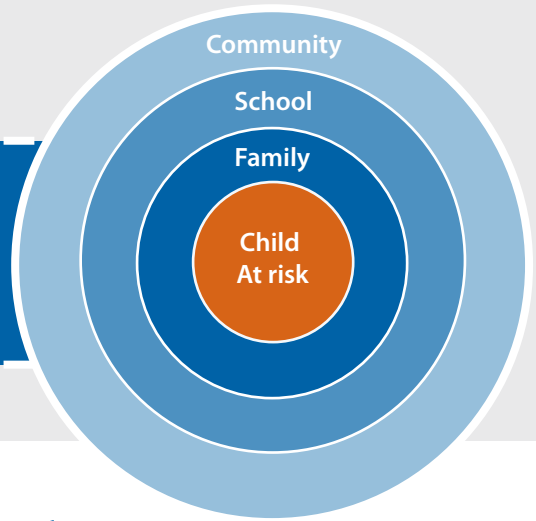
- Development of social skills
- Achieving targets as a group
- Learning solutions to conflicts and providing the tools for dealing with violence
- Group activity on behalf of the community

- In the systemic realm:

- Identifying resources and services to which the child and family are entitled, or need.
- Making social services and support accessible to the child
- Bridging the disparate realms in which the Mentor comes in contact with the child.

Close to 350 Mentors – social pioneers – are deeply aware that their work has the value of effecting positive social change, and bring this understanding back to their own lives. They are educated professionals, many of whom work in the same communities in which they grew up. Each Mentor undergoes unique training for the position, and is employed full-time by Youth Futures.





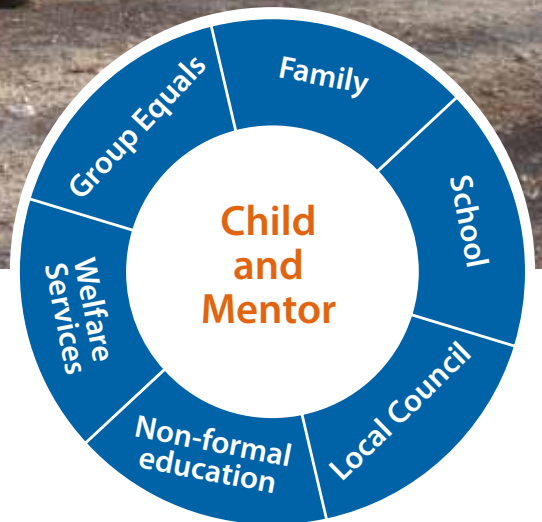
Empowerment Basket

Through the Youth Futures model, each child receives funds for individual empowerment, designated for individual meetings with his or her Mentor, group activities, and enrichment programs. This amount is designed to assist in fulfilling the individual work program by responding to three key needs:

- 1** **Imbuing positive habits** with the goal of developing the ability to identify needs and act on the initiative to seek out the existing community services.
- 2** **Advancement and strengthening of life skills** and expanding them through participation in elective activities or enrichment.
- 3** **Strengthening the connection between the Mentor and the child** by paying specific attention to events, such as birthdays and holidays.

Multi-dimensional.

Youth Futures operates with the understanding that we can never do enough for children to enact change in their respective situations. There is also an urgent need to support their parents and the members of the family. It is the job of the Mentor to stay in constant contact with the different educational frameworks, community services, and even the local authorities – **in order to create a multi-dimensional envelope of support that responds to the variety of needs of the children and their families.**



Expanding the Model: Family Futures

“Family Futures” is a unique element of the program, established to provide focused intervention for families of children and youth in Youth Futures. The emphasis on the realm of the family stems from the understanding that it is in the parents hands to create a supportive environment for their children. Research findings indicate that the work with children is not enough to effect true social change. It is imperative to also work with and support their parents, in order to provide an environment, and the solutions, for proper development. Working with family, in addition to working with the child, contributes to sustainable advancement. This element of the program began in 2012 in 10 locations.



The goal of Family Futures is to create a base of meaningful support among the parents of their children; to create a social support network for participating families; and to assist the adults in realizing their own potentials as parents.

How Does It Work?

In addition to the focused work of the Youth Futures Mentor, parents work for 18 months with a Family Futures Mentor. Together, they are able to integrate the needs of the family as a point of focus and involvement for the needs of the child. The families are chosen for the program by the program staff in collaboration with the Welfare Office. The Family Futures Mentor provides instruction as to the role of the parent, and sets family conditions that encourage the positive development of the child and the empowerment of the parent. Strong emphasis is placed on the inspiring aspects of parenting, and on creating a family budget. Additionally, the program encourages the parents to take part in the group enrichment activities, with their children, such as trips, parties, and collaborative workshops. A Family Plan is drafted in cooperation with the parents, similar to the personal plan for each child. The Mentor and the parents test the implementation together, with regard to achieving targets, twice during the program – at the end of the first year, and toward the end of the partnership.

Measuring Success

Youth Futures has evolved from its trial period into a proven, long-term initiative. The program operates with **more than 200 schools** and with dozens of professional staffs. **We are able to measure our achievements** in a variety of ways – specifically in four spheres of influence: the academic, the social, the family, and the personal. Through external academic evaluation, the results in each sphere of activity are clearly positive.



**The model of
the Mentor:**
A concept by
Youth Futures

Youth Futures benefits from internal assessment through advanced knowledge management (CRM) software that was subject to review by Digma Applied Evaluation, which works in partnership with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Beginning in the fall of 2011, each location receives individual evaluation to check the various measures.

The following parameters provide useful measures to demonstrate the program's success: (Digma Applied Evaluation)

- The high-school drop-out rate during the first 1-3 years after successful completion of Youth Futures Program: 0%. (Compared to the national average of 8%; the rate is much higher among the at-risk demographic.)
- 90% of parents felt that Youth Futures contributed positively to their children in a significant or extremely significant way. Youth Futures proved to be a formative experience in terms of healthy, positive life choices: 73% of program participants felt it was essential to help others, 65% said that it was important to them to spend their time more wisely, and 66% said that they were sure to keep away from a "bad crowd."
- 71% of Youth Futures families reported significant or extremely significant improvement in the parent-child relationship.
- The large majority of Youth Futures' local partners in small communities think that the program contributes very significantly to their local educational systems. Most notably, 72% of program partners mentioned a high increase in awareness among teachers and parents of the signs of high risk behavior among kids, and the special needs usually indicated in these cases.





Areas of Operation

Ofakim - Merhavim - Yeruham - Netivot - Sedot Negev - Beer Sheva
Kiryat Gat - Bet Shean - Dimona - Tiberias - Hazor - Rosh Pina - Akko
- Tzfat (Haredi) - Yokneam - Meggido - Migdal Ha'emek - Mateh Asher-
Maalot - Horfeish- Lod - Eilat - Sderot - Emek Ha'maayanot - Jerusalem
-Nazareth Illit - Arad - Zefat - Maaleh Asher - Afula - Kiryat Shmona -
Bnei Brak (NEW) - Abu Basma (NEW)

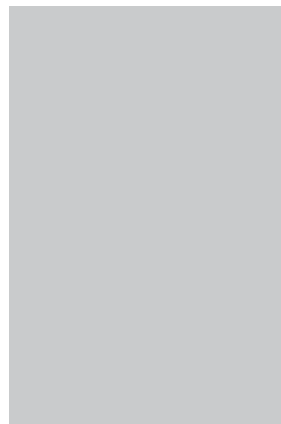


Five-Year Plan

There is an urgent need to strengthen and expand the Youth Futures program. In order to deal with future societal changes in Israel, we are requesting additional partnerships and division of labor at the levels of state and municipality. We are attempting to integrate private Israeli philanthropy as a full-partner going forward.

The five-year plan for Youth Futures in 2011—2015 includes:

- **Expanding the program to new localities:** Adding localities to reach 52 areas.
- **Developing current locations further:** Adding greater depth and quality of service to current localities in a meaningful way, growing the number of Mentors in each locality and the number of participating schools.
- **Copying and distributing the model:** Establishing a national training center dedicated to individual education and comprehensive support for children and families at risk, in accordance with Youth Futures' rationale. The training center will be used as a facility to train both professionals and volunteers who work with the population at risk through NGOs, local authorities, and related groups.
- **Formalizing the Mentor model:** Making a Mentor a professional position on the national level.
- **Making Youth Futures a national program:** Expanding partnership with government offices and local authorities, in order to secure government sponsorship of the program. Youth Futures as a national program run by The Jewish Agency and funded by the government of Israel.



Coalition of Partners

Youth Futures provides a unique value-added component that works to enact real social change among children and youth-at-risk in Israel. Joining the program allows for influencing the future of Israel's society. Each contribution will be doubled, or even tripled – each shekel donated will be matched by 2 additional shekels from our partners.

From its inception, the program has been funded as follows:



*The Israeli third includes funders from the first sector (government offices, welfare, education and local authorities); the second sector (the business world and private donors); and the third sector.

In light of our plan to establish Youth Futures nationally, the program is working to expand its operational and fiscal cooperation with the Israeli government.

Youth Futures, by the Numbers:

- **33**: Number of localities in which the program currently functions
- **200**: Number of schools that participate successfully in the program
- **350**: Number of Mentors who work to change the lives of children and families at risk
- **2006**: Year of the program's establishment
- **30,000**: Number of at-risk children and youth, and their families, who have already been helped by Youth Futures' services.

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