



State Comptroller and Ombudsman  
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Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and  
Social Services

# **Treatment of High- Risk Youth**

Abstract





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## Abstract

### Background

High-risk youth are 12 to 18 year-olds who have difficulty with personal and social functioning and undergo detachment processes to the point of deterioration to delinquency and social deviance. The state's treatment of these youths focuses on their rehabilitation in unique frameworks in the community or out-of-home settings for the purpose of returning them to normative social functioning. The Ministries of Education and Welfare and the local authorities are responsible for providing assistance to this population and for supporting and caring for it through a variety of solutions, some in the field of education, such as Technology Education Centers (TECs) and a basic education complementary studies program (Hila program), and some in the welfare sphere such as community day centers (Miftanim<sup>1</sup> and Meitars<sup>2</sup>) as well as locked or closed out-of-home dormitories, as detailed in this report.

### Key figures

110,000

The number of teens and young adults (aged 13-25) who lived in distress, severance and high risk in 2018

17,200

Number of teens in the Ministry of Education TECs and in community day centers of the Welfare Ministry - Miftanim and Meitars - in 2018

18

Number of street patrol vehicles for locating stray teenagers in 2018

9

Number of government dormitories

827

Number of places in Youth Protection Authority frameworks (hostels, boarding houses, detention alternatives) in 2019 versus 648 places in 2009

14

Number of Youth Protection Authority frameworks (hostels, boarding houses, detention alternatives) closed from 2017 to 2019, out of 48

195

The number of teens waiting to be placed in government dormitories in June 2019, sometimes about six months

16-fold

The ratio of the annual cost of a teenager's stay in an out-of-home setting in a government dormitory (about NIS 444,000) versus a community day center - Meitar (about NIS 26,700)

1 A rehabilitative-educational care day program designed for teens aged 13 to 18 and includes, among other things, food (hot meals), theoretical studies and employment spaces.

2 Multidisciplinary supporting day center - a center operating throughout the day designed for 12 to 18-year-olds who dropped out of school settings or have difficulty keeping up.

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## Audit Actions










From November 2018 to October 2019, the State Comptroller's Office examined the state care for high-risk youth who are detached or undergoing detachment processes from educational frameworks, including the system for their detection, the range of therapeutic responses intended for them in the community; and manner of their treatment in government dormitories. The examination was conducted at the Ministries of Welfare and Education, several local authorities and through consultation groups (focus groups) of boys and girls staying in Welfare Ministry frameworks.

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## The Situation Reflected in the Audit Findings








-  The Ministry of Welfare has no data on the number and location of high-risk youth, and the actions for locating them - in educational settings, in localities and in cyberspace - are lacking; the Ministry of Education does not have full information on the extent of de facto dropouts, except for data on students at risk of dropping out that have already been placed in dedicated educational centers it operates.
-  The Ministries of Education and Welfare did not regulate work processes between them pertaining to day centers for rehabilitation of high-risk youth. As a result, teens often “fall through the cracks” - they are not located and are not treated in time - and it is not possible for Ministries to pool resources and utilize them efficiently to benefit the youth and save in costs of setting up and maintaining these frameworks.
-  The response of the Ministry of Welfare of the Miftanim and Meitars types is minimal, and this is reflected in the southern district, especially for populations with special characteristics, such as ultra-Orthodox and Bedouin youth.
-  The number of teens waiting to be placed in government dormitories is still large, and in June 2019, approximately 200 teens were on the waiting list for placement, sometimes up to six months. This is despite the fact that since 2008, the number of people waiting has been reduced by about two-thirds, and despite the fact that in the past two years, the Ministry of Welfare has devoted considerable resources and attention to expanding dormitories occupancy capability.
-  The Ministry of Welfare did not conduct a needs survey to examine the characteristics of youth in government dormitories and their and their families' therapeutic needs in order to formulate their optimal care practices, including formulating programs or guidelines for the treatment of sexual abuse and sexual education, psychological treatment and counseling, and family therapy.
-  Government dormitory staffs using physical restraint measures for youth did not receive training and guidance as required, and the Ministry of Welfare did not establish a procedure governing this use, including its supervisory mechanism.
-  Deficiencies have been discovered in the operation of the government dormitory for girls “Mesila” for many years - including a lack of basic conditions, in both physical and therapeutic-mental aspects, lack of skilled personnel and managerial instability. The Ministry of Welfare has begun to work on the matter.



The Ministry of Welfare has engaged with an outside nonprofit organization operating patrol vehicles for it, reaching places where teenagers tend to spend the night in order to locate and assist teen boys and girls at risk. In 2018, the patrol vehicle crews met with about 10,000 youth.

## Main Audit Recommendations

-  It is appropriate that the Ministry of Welfare work to consolidate data on the number and location of high-risk youth, undertake an in-depth examination of the need for appropriate day centers throughout the country, and formulate a plan for national deployment of these frameworks in coordination with the Ministry of Education and the local authorities. This program must also include solutions tailored to populations with special characteristics, such as Arab, ultra-Orthodox and Bedouin youth.
-  It is appropriate that the Ministry of Education conduct staff work to determine the format for detecting teens in the process of becoming de facto dropouts so that their detection can be performed as early as possible.
-  It is proposed that the Education and Welfare Ministries formulate a single, unified and inclusive vision to identify and treat high-risk youth, and accordingly, regulate their method of operation, including mechanisms for coordination, collaboration and resource pooling.
-  It is proposed that the Ministry of Welfare conduct staff work based on data and up-to-date research regarding the needs of youth in government dormitories and their best care practices, as well as set goals and treatment policies from which the guidelines for the dormitory managers and care providers will be derived, and in particular the guidelines for use of physical restraint measures. The Ministry must continue to work to increase the number of potential solutions for youth within government dormitories to reduce the waiting list.
-  The Ministry of Welfare must continue to work for the rehabilitation of the “Mesila” dormitory in all its aspects, including the completion of the renovation of the entire dormitory structure, the stabilization and retention of staff, the improvement of basic living conditions and the expansion of appropriate responses and possibilities, both therapeutic and emotional.



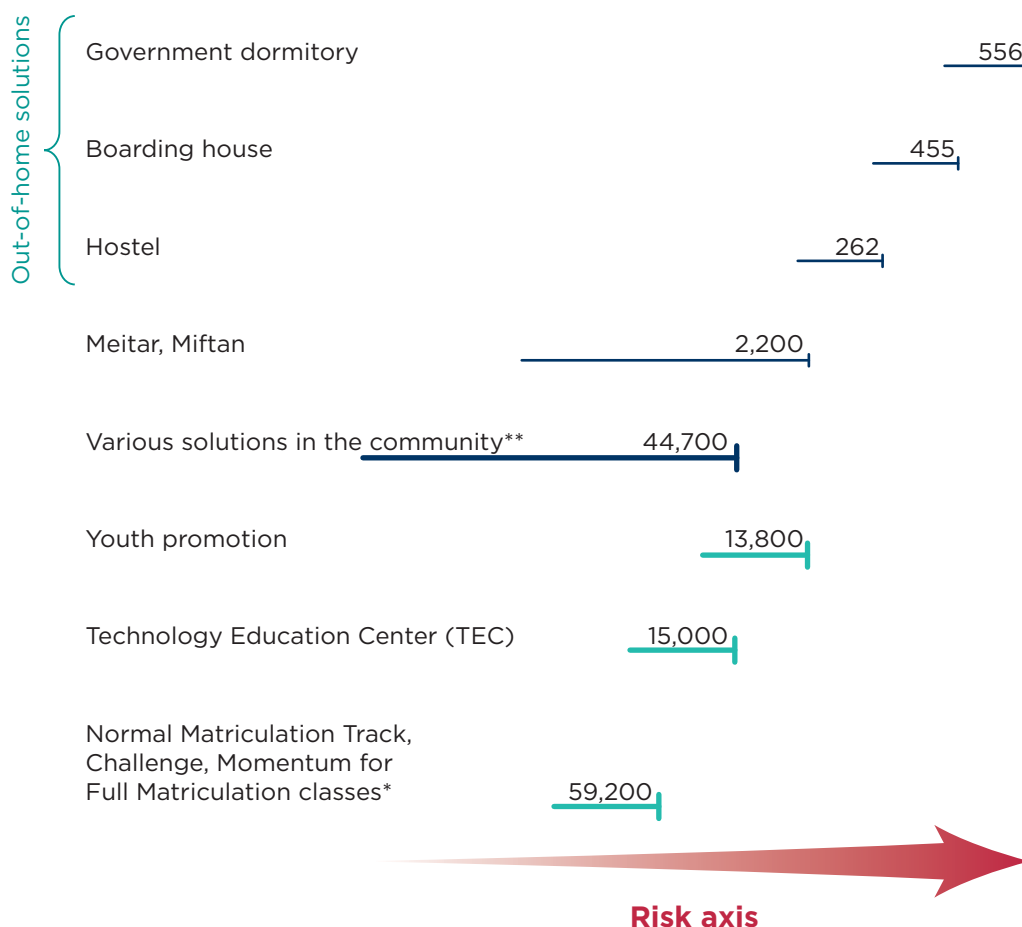
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## Summary

High-risk youth are one of the weakest and most vulnerable populations in society. The Ministries of Education and Welfare must formulate a single, unified and inclusive vision to fulfil their responsibilities, and to act - each in its own field, in cooperation and resource pooling in the appropriate cases - for the well-being and welfare of this population, starting with locating teens who need assistance as early as possible, through adapting their appropriate educational or community therapy response, and continuing with placement in high-quality out-of-home settings. Improving the response and services to these youths will increase their chances of integrating into society and maintaining a normative lifestyle later in their adult lives.

### Solutions for high-risk teens and the number of teens being treated in them, 2018



■ Solutions on behalf of Ministry of Social Affairs

■ Solutions on behalf of Ministry of Education

Risk axis - The degree of risk of youth at high risk, such as frequent school absences, covert dropout and overt dropout, use of hazardous substances, sexual exploitation, wandering to the point of breaking the law (axis tip).

Hila program - Can be given in the community and in out-of-home settings.

According to the data of the Ministries of Welfare and Education, processed by the State Comptroller's Office.

\* The data also includes the students of MLA - Another Learning Space.

\*\* In 2016.

