



State of Israel
State Comptroller and Ombudsman
Audit Reports on Municipalities 2020

The Municipality of Ramla – Prevention of Spousal Violence and Treating its Victims

Abstract

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Background

Domestic violence is a difficult social phenomenon having many different aspects. A large part of the violence occurs between spouses, and its victims are mainly women. A regional Center for Family Well-being, which also serves residents in adjacent local authorities, operates within the Department of Social Services in the city of Ramla.

Key figures

1,219

Calls by women from all over the country to the social emergency call center of the Ministry of Welfare in 2018

22,974

Cases of spousal violence handled by police throughout the country in 2018

8,398

Families treated at the centers for prevention of violence and handling of family violence throughout the country in 2018

NIS 85 million

Total welfare expenses of the municipality of Ramla in 2018

546

Applications to the Center for Family Well-being in Ramla in 2018. 442 of these reached the police, with only 32 coming from the victims themselves

114

Families were treated by the Center for Family Well-being in Ramla, including 72 women


21%

Of the applications to the Center for Family Well-being in Ramla in 2018 related to the immigrant population

18%







Of the applications to the Center for Family Well-being in Ramla in 2018 related to the Arab population

Audit Actions



 In the months of April through November 2019, the Office of the State Comptroller audited the social services of the municipality of Ramla, mainly as provided by the Center for Family Well-being, in terms of prevention of spousal violence and treatment of its victims. Supplementary examinations were performed in the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Services, the Ministry of public Security and the Israel Police.

Key findings



-  **Implementation of the recommendations of the National Professional Committee for Handling of Violence** – The recommendations to be implemented in the first year include broadening the services to various sectors, information systems and responses during emergency situations and times of danger. Implementation of the majority of these recommendations has begun but has not been completed.
-  **Filling job positions** – At the time of the audit, about one quarter of the positions on the teams handling individuals and families had not been filled. In the Center for Family Well-being, all positions had been filled, but the staffing tend to fluctuate. Gaps in the filling of social worker positions are a nationwide phenomenon.
-  **Work distribution and coordination in the welfare field** – Distribution of work and coordination between the Department of Social Services and the Center for Family Well-being is not completely regulated. For example, transfer and updating of information that will also determine set times for discussions about joint clients of the department and the center.
-  **Prevention and locating activities** – The Department of Social Services and the Center for Family Wellbeing in Ramla do not conduct orderly and methodical informational and locating activities to prevent family violence, also among unique sectors in the city. An analysis of the applications to the center found that the police made 81% of the applications to the Center for Family Well-being in 2018, 7.1% were applications from the Department of Social Services made 7.1% and only 5.9% of the applications to the center were from independent sources.
-  **Dropping out of treatment** – Even though the number of dropouts decreased by about 30% in 2018 relative to 2017, the scope of the dropouts from treatment is broad – 54 dropouts in 2017 and 38 in 2018.
-  **Treatment of special populations** – Has not yet been completed in the places needing it, including Ramla, the Implementation of the recommendations of the National Professional Committee on the Treatment of Special Populations concerning family





violence, both as related to expanding the professional staff treating these special populations and as related to adapting the treatment model to them.

-  **Delays in reporting and taking action** – It was found that in 14 out of 51 cases that were analyzed, the police had not transferred a report immediately to the Center for Family Well-being, as required by regulations, but on average only after two months. Additionally, In seven cases there was a delay of one week to three months or more from the day the police notification about the complaint of family violence was sent to the center until a clarification call was made by the center with the complainant. In seven cases there was a delay of several months from the time of receipt of the application until the beginning of treatment.
-  **Training and continuing education programs** – The Ministry of Welfare did not begin training professionals using the training program for handling special populations. This program provides tools and knowledge in the area of cultural sensitivity and cultural competence, alongside training for Arabic speaking social workers working in the Arab sector. As of the time of the audit, no social worker from the staff of the Center for Family Well-being in Ramla had taken the designated training courses for handling special sectors and, in particular, the Arab sector.



Provision of welfare services – The social workers handling the clients in the Center for Family Well-being do their work with dedication and diligence, despite the difficulties in hiring professional human resources, emotional difficulties and technical difficulties related to the location where the center operates.

Key recommendations

-  The Ministry of Welfare should promote implementation of the National Professional Committee for Handling of Violence's recommendations in line with the timetable that was set, including training the professionals working in this field.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Welfare formulate solutions to minimize the gaps in filling the positions of social workers in the municipality of Ramla and on the national level, including the issue of the conditions of their employment.
-  The municipality of Ramla must act to increase the cooperation and coordination between the Department of Social Services, the Center for Family Well-being and other professional factors (police, education and health factors), in order to improve the handling of victims of domestic violence.
-  The municipality must prepare and conduct programs and locating and identification activities as required, also among special populations, in order to prevent worsening of domestic violence situations, and reach the widest number of clients requiring help. Likewise, it is recommended to continue and examine the reasons for dropping out of treatment, in order to decrease its occurrence.

Summary

Domestic violence is a difficult social phenomenon and one of the main challenges of social services departments in local authorities. This reality is particularly stark in the Municipality of Ramla, because it is a mixed city. Accordingly, action must be taken on the national and local levels to develop tools that will enable the prevention, as much as possible, of this type of violence and to assist its victims.

The Office of the State Comptroller is aware of the challenges that this field presents to those dealing with it and commend there dedicated actions especially in light of the difficulties they face when they fulfil their role – limited budget, difficulties in recruiting professional human resources and emotional difficulties.

Nationwide data about handling of cases of domestic violence by the welfare services and the police, 2016 – 2018

**30**

Women were murdered by their husbands

**75**

Women were murdered because of family violence

**67,299**

Criminal cases of spousal violence opened by the police

**26,079**

Families were treated for issues involving violence at the centers for prevention of violence and treatment of family violence

**3,859**

Women facing violence called the Ministry of Welfare's 118 - social emergency call center

* According to the data from the Ministry of Welfare (access to the report by the law of freedom of information for 2018 and data from the statistical yearbook of the Israel Police for 2018).

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