



State Comptroller of Israel | Local Government
Audit Report | July 2025

Social Audit

Treatment of At-Risk Youth by Social Services Departments



Treatment of At-Risk Youth by Social Services Departments

Background

The term "youth on the continuum of risk, danger, and disengagement" refers to a heterogeneous population of adolescents who experience a wide range of distress and risk situations¹. Responsibility for treating at-risk youth lies primarily with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs (the Ministry of Welfare), operating through the social services departments of local authorities (commonly referred to as "the departments"). This population is served in community-based and out-of-home placements, within the schools and through informal programs that operate at various times of day.

Although it is difficult to estimate the full scope of the phenomenon – due to the lack of a unified definition and up-to-date official data – in 2022, approximately 440,000 children and adolescents were known to the welfare services, representing about 14% of all minors in Israel. That year, approximately 60,000² new reports concerning minors were referred to social workers under the Youth Law (Care and Supervision), 1960³ (the Youth Law). The most common reasons for referral were physical abuse (20%), neglect (17%), and sexual abuse (11%)⁴.

- 1 For example, experiences of neglect, abuse, school dropout, antisocial behavior, and delinquency.
- 2 The exact number was 60,043, similar to the number of referrals received in 2021 (59,933 reports) representing an 8% increase in the number of reports compared to 2020.
- 3 This law is intended to protect the well-being of minors from birth to age 18 who are legally defined as "in need", that is, children and adolescents in situations of risk. The main authority conferred by the law on a social worker under the Youth Law is the power to petition the court on behalf of a minor in need, when a judicial decision is required for the minor's treatment and supervision. This includes requests for court orders necessary for the child's care, supervision, education, psychological rehabilitation, removal from custody, referral for psychological treatment, and placement under the supervision of a social worker in accordance with the Youth Law.
- 4 The National Council for the Child, **Statistical Yearbook "Children in Israel 2023"**, data on children during the "Swords of Iron" War (2024).



From 2020 to 2022, there was a marked increase in the number of reports concerning adolescents in situations of risk⁵:



1. There was an increase of approximately 24% in the number of reports to Youth Law social workers regarding sexual abuse.
2. The number of reports concerning behavioral problems among minors rose by approximately 53%.
3. Reports to Youth Law social workers about harm caused by a responsible person outside the family increased by approximately 31%.
4. Reports of youth involvement in criminal activity rose by about 77% (from 530 in 2020 to 938 in 2022).
5. The number of reports regarding children's visits to psychiatric emergency departments increased by approximately 19%⁶.
6. There was an increase of approximately 16% in the number of suicide attempts among minors⁷.
7. The number of files opened for sexual harassment offenses against minors increased by approximately 75%.
8. There was an increase of approximately 91.5% in the number of files opened against adults for sexual offenses against minors in educational institutions.

According to data and assessments from professionals in therapeutic fields, during the "Swords of Iron" war (Swords of Iron War), the number of at-risk youth continued to rise, and the risk situations just intensified, and became more varied and severe.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ In the years 2019–2022. In those years, the number of girls who visited psychiatric emergency departments increased by approximately 34%, while the number of boys rose by only approximately 4%.

⁷ In the years 2019–2022.



Key Figures

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The number of youth in Israel on the continuum of risk, endangerment, and disconnection is unknown. **16 years** have passed since the last official mapping of children and youth at risk (2009), and even that survey covered only approximately 70% of local authorities. It is estimated that **less than half** of at-risk youth are known to social services

14%

The percentage of children and youth, out of all children and youth in Israel, who were known to social services in 2022 (439,905 children and adolescents)

67%

of the heads of local authority social services departments who responded to the questionnaire prepared by the State Comptroller's Office, reported an increase in the number of at-risk youth during the Swords of Iron War

18.3%

of all adolescents in Ramla in 2024 were under the care of a truancy officer (representing the Ministry of Education) with 14.1% in **Arad**, 14.8% in **Kiryat Gat**, 10.7% in **Yafia**, and 8.7% in **Kiryat Motzkin**

Only
13%

of the budget allocated for welfare services for at-risk youth in the **Arad** Municipality was utilized. Across all the municipalities examined, community-based services provided by the Ministry of Welfare were rarely implemented

0
MIFTAN
frameworks⁸

In addition, there was a 52% decrease in the number of participants in the intensive community-based MIFTAN and MEITAR programs across all districts in the years 2016–2023

Only
50%

of the social worker positions designated for treating at-risk youth were filled in the local authorities examined – **Arad**, **Kiryat Gat**, and **Kiryat Motzkin**. In addition, approximately 10% of the Ministry of Welfare's supervisory positions over local social services departments remain unfilled

8 MIFTAN (an acronym for Mif'alei Ta'asuka LeNo'ar – Youth Employment Enterprises). A rehabilitative-educational framework for youth aged 13–18 who are on the risk continuum and have dropped out of educational settings.



Audit Actions

From August to December 2024, the State Comptroller's Office examined how local authorities' social services departments treated and intervened in the cases of youth on the continuum of risk, danger, and disconnection⁹. The audit was conducted in the social services departments of the municipalities of **Kiryat Gat, Kiryat Motzkin, Arad, and Ramla**, as well as in the local council of **Yafia**¹⁰. The audit also examined the unique ways in which this issue was being handled within the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, in the Arab, Druze, and Bedouin sectors, and in the LGBTQ + community (diverse populations)¹¹. In these cases, the audit was carried out in the authorities under review to the extent that they included these diverse populations. The audit also covered the Ministry of Welfare's headquarters and regional offices, as well as the SHALEM Administration (Hebrew acronym for Rehabilitation, Support and Prevention) within the Ministry¹². Complementary reviews were carried out in the Ministry of Welfare's Social and Personal Services Administration, the Ministry of Education's Division A for At-Risk Children and Youth, the education departments of the aforementioned local authorities, the Ministry of National Security, the National Authority for Community Safety, Israel Police, the National Headquarters for the Protection of Children Online, and the Prevention and Awareness Team within the Youth Division.

⁹ The State Comptroller attaches great importance to the issue of children and youth at risk. In recent years, the Comptroller has published several reports on related and complementary topics: see **State Comptroller Report – May 2023**, Placement of Children at Risk in Residential Institutions, Foster Care, and Adoption; **State Comptroller Report – May 2023**, The Government's Response to Inactivity Among Young Adults in the Arab Sector; Local Government Audit Report, Actions by Local Authorities to Identify School Dropouts, Prevent Dropout, and Provide Support (2022); **Local Government Audit Report**, Local Authorities' Handling of Drug and Alcohol Use Within Their Jurisdiction (2022); **Special Audit Report – Protection of Minors in the Online Space** (2022); **Annual Report 70B** (2020), Care for Youth at High Risk; **Annual Report 69B** (2019), Activities of Youth Villages; **Annual Report 67B** (2017), Children and Youth at Risk in Welfare Ministry Residential Institutions.

¹⁰ The selected local authorities were chosen based on their population size, with additional consideration given to factors such as geographic distribution, municipal status, socioeconomic cluster, level of peripherality, and sector. The selection was also guided by a mechanism that accounts for the audit workload in each authority and aims to sample a diverse range of local authorities.

¹¹ LGBTQ – the initials of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender individuals – is an umbrella term that encompasses a range of sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions.

¹² An entity responsible for providing care services to distressed populations at the far end of Israel's educational and therapeutic continuum. The administration is tasked with developing tailored interventions for all youth on the risk, danger, and disconnection continuum.



Key Findings



"The understanding is that when we talk about youth and at-risk youth, we are referring to the continuum of life spaces in which they exist. It's not that they are only at school, or only on the street, or only in a hostel and then sometimes go home on weekends and things happen within the municipality. This requires the municipality to take a holistic view, led by whoever is responsible within the municipality – be it welfare, education, or someone else. But at the end of the day there are very significant gaps between these two bodies in terms of their ability to sit at the same table and jointly lead something professional, and to look at what is happening in the municipality on a much broader scale."

(Quotes from a public participation survey, December 2024 – Head of Community Programs at an NGO supporting at-risk youth across Israel)



"There is no continuous and synchronized service array, nor is there a shared therapeutic language or a unified intervention approach. If, for example, one organization operates some kind of after-school club for children and another operates some kind of program for youth, then each one works separately, each intervening in their own way, and we end up missing the goal. The goal, ultimately, is to intervene effectively in the lives of youth. So, everyone truly needs to work in the same language, with the same intervention approach, in order for us to truly deliver coherent and continuous care."

(Quotes from a public participation survey conducted in December 2024 – Head of Youth and Young Adults Division at an NGO working to provide and improve access to services in Israel's northern periphery)



"There aren't many roundtables where all the relevant parties – both from education and from welfare – sit together, and I think that very often, that's where a lot of youth fall between the cracks."

(Quotes from a public participation survey conducted in December 2024 – Head of Community Programs at an NGO that assists at-risk youth throughout the country)



"To this day, in many local authorities, the work of the education department and the welfare department is very territorial, with each operating separately. These two bodies seriously lack a shared language."

(Quotes from a public participation survey conducted in December 2024 – Head of Community Programs at an NGO that assists at-risk youth nationwide)



"Many programs fall through the cracks because there is no party that can cover the cost of renting a facility, and there is always an expectation that a volunteer entity will fund it."

(Quotes from a public participation survey conducted in December 2024 – Head of Community Programs at an NGO that assists at-risk youth nationwide)



Unified Definition of At-Risk Youth – There are significant disparities in the definition of "at-risk youth" among the various government ministries participating in the National 360° Program¹³; namely, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, and the Ministry of National Security, and in particular the Ministry of Welfare, whose areas of responsibility are the focus of this report. These ministries have not integrated into their activities the definition of at-risk youth as formulated by the 360° Program and approved by the government; instead, each continues to adhere to its own definitions. The absence of a unified definition of "at-risk youth" also filters down to the local authorities, which are responsible for serving this population. The five local authorities audited: **Arad, Kiryat Gat, Kiryat Motzkin, Ramla** and the local council of **Yafia**. each defines the term "at-risk youth" differently, for example in terms of the age range it covers.



Nationwide Periodic Data Mapping – In 2022, approximately 440,000 children and adolescents (approximately 14% of all minors in Israel) were known to the welfare services. However, the Ministry of Welfare and the National 360° Program have not conducted a nationwide mapping of children and youth at risk. The data on the condition and number of adolescents in Israel is based on a mapping conducted in 2009 and pertains only to children and adolescents living in approximately 70% of the local authorities. As of the end of the audit, February 2025, more than 15 years after the

13 The National 360° Program for Children and Youth at Risk is an inter-ministerial initiative jointly operated by the Ministries of Welfare and Social Affairs, Education, Health, Aliyah and Integration, and National Security. It has been active since 2007, with the goal of expanding and upgrading the scheme of community-based services for at-risk children and adolescents.



establishment of the 360° National Program, the program director still does not have complete information about at-risk children and adolescents nationwide.

🔴 Determining the Nature and Type of Mandatory Minimum Services in Local Authorities – The Ministry of Welfare has not issued guidelines regarding the nature and type of services that a local authority is expected to provide to adolescents in situations of danger and risk; among other things, it has not, specified the minimum services that should be provided by local authorities, nor established provisions to protect special populations who are susceptible to risk, or adolescents in heightened situations of risk and danger.

🔴 Integration Within the Local Authority and Convening of the Committee for the Advancement of the Status of the Child in the Examined Municipalities – In none of the five local authorities examined – **Arad, Kiryat Gat, Kiryat Motzkin, Ramla, and Yafia** – is there an official entity in charge of integrating activities across the various departments involved in the treatment of at-risk youth - primarily the welfare and education departments - managing the departments, coordinating between them and bringing relevant issues before the municipal committees on education, welfare, and the advancement of the status of the child. There is no formal framework in place to regulate interdepartmental cooperation or the sharing of information. Furthermore, the audit found that in three of the five municipalities – **Arad, Kiryat Gat, and Ramla** – the Committee for the Advancement of the Status of the Child failed to convene in two of the three years between 2021 and 2023, despite its being a mandatory committee in municipalities.

🔴 Information Management and the Creation of a Unified Database – The Ministry of Welfare lacks a unified database and a shared terminology necessary for meeting the needs of at-risk youth. These shortcomings contribute to disparities between different local authorities and reinforce them. The Ministry has not instructed local authorities to collect data on at-risk youth within their jurisdictions, resulting in the absence of consolidated information regarding the number and condition of such youth. The local authorities examined: **Arad, Kiryat Gat, Kiryat Motzkin, Ramla, and Yafia** do not independently collect information and data on the number of at-risk youth or the risk situations they face. This information is necessary for narrowing the gap between the number of such youth receiving treatment from social services departments and their actual number. It was also found that the SHALEM Administration within the Ministry of Welfare faces difficulties in identifying the at-risk youth population, and that neither its computerized system nor its internal operating procedures include a dedicated classification for this population. As a result, the only information available to the Ministry is that these individuals receive services from the administration, without any distinction



between youth¹⁴ who receive services due to family-related needs and those who receive services due to risk-related circumstances.

Policy Documents and Work Plans for the Treatment of At-Risk Youth in Local Authorities – None of the local authorities examined – **Arad, Kiryat Gat, Kiryat Motzkin, Ramla, and Yafia** – has a written policy or work plans for the treatment of at-risk youth within their jurisdictions. This includes both annual and long-term plans. The local social services departments have not set measurable annual or long-term goals, and their activities lack a planned, outcome-oriented systemic approach.

Outreach and Identification of At-Risk Youth – Although fewer than half of the youth in danger and at risk receive treatment through the social services departments, the departments in **Arad, Kiryat Gat, Kiryat Motzkin, and Yafia** do not carry out outreach or identification efforts for at-risk youth.

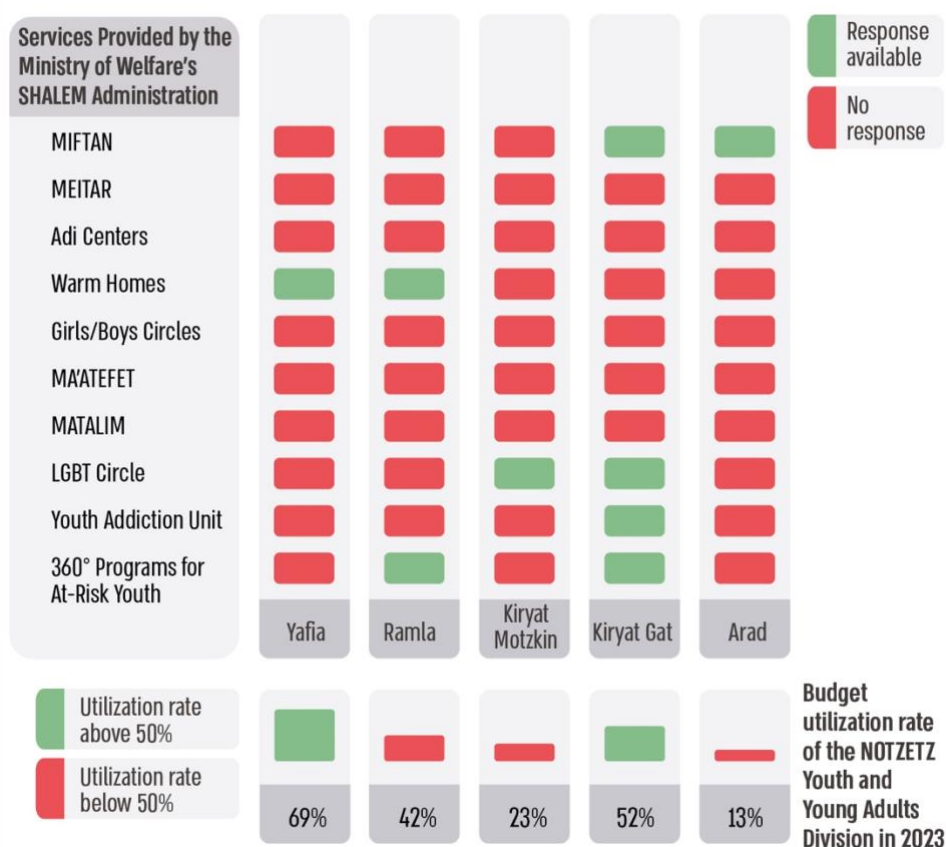
Intensive Services for Disconnected Youth (MIFTAN and MEITAR) – The majority of services for at-risk youth in the Jewish population are provided in the Tel Aviv and Central districts, while in the Arab population they are concentrated in the Haifa and Northern regions. In the southern region, no MIFTAN framework is available except in Har Hevron (an area which, according to Ministry of Welfare data, falls within the Jerusalem District). The number of youth in Israel receiving MIFTAN services decreased by approximately 52% between 2016 (1,022 youth) and 2023 (491 youth). Despite its declarations and the growing number of at-risk youth, the Ministry of Welfare has not developed an alternative response. In 2023, no services were provided to youth at the MIFTAN centers in Tel Aviv–Jaffa and Nazareth¹⁵, and in the Har Hevron MIFTAN, only 26 youth received services, even though it was the only available framework for this population in the Jerusalem area (and it too was closed in 2025).

¹⁴ The SHALEM Administration's data diverge from the data reported by the local authorities.

¹⁵ According to data from DATA.GOV.



The Extent of Services Delivered by the Local Authorities Examined, from the Array of Services Provided by the Ministry of Welfare in 2023



* According to Ministry of Welfare data for 2023, processed by the State Comptroller's Office.

** In Arad, there is no MIFTAN facility, but local youth attended a MIFTAN program in a neighboring municipality.

The fact that the local authorities neither utilized the intensive and complementary interventions nor developed alternative responses may suggest that they gave up relatively early on the possibility of keeping disconnected youth within the community. It is possible that they opted for out-of-home placements without first trying all the available community-based alternatives intended to better support these youth. This suggests an insufficient implementation of the "community-oriented" policy.



Shortage of Human Resources – In the municipalities of **Arad** and **Kiryat Motzkin**, nearly half of the allocated social worker positions for treating at-risk youth are unfilled. In the municipalities of **Kiryat Motzkin**, **Ramla**, and **Yafia**, there are fewer than two social worker positions designated for at-risk youth. In the municipalities of **Kiryat Motzkin**, **Ramla** and **Yafia** there is no designated social worker to serve as the director of the Youth and Young Adults Division (NOTZETZ). Without a NOTZETZ social worker, community-based programs cannot be implemented.

Shortage of Facilities – A lack of facilities and physical infrastructure hinders the ability of the municipalities of **Kiryat Gat**, **Ramla**, and **Yafia** to provide services for at-risk youth. For example, in **Kiryat Gat**, serious safety issues were found in the building housing the “Warm Home” program in 2020, leading to its closure. Since then, the municipality has not succeeded in reopening it.


Implementation of National Program 360° Initiatives for At-Risk Youth – In the years 2021–2024, the **Arad** Municipality operated only one program under the National Program 360° for at-risk youth: the “Paths to Parenting” program, which focuses on family relationships and parental functioning. The **Yafia** Local Council failed to operate any 360° programs for at-risk youth during that period.

Work Procedures of the Planning, Treatment, and Evaluation Committees – Deficiencies were found in the committees’ operations, with considerable variation in their work procedures and in the documentation of their discussions; most notably, the lack of detailed treatment plans including specific goals and tasks for the youth, as well as the absence of assured ongoing follow-up. For example, in the committee discussions examined in **Kiryat Motzkin**, a general, generic plan was formulated for the vast majority of the youth: “treatment and supervision, improvement of emotional, academic, and social functioning, and strengthening the relationship with the parents,” with no further elaboration on specific goals and tasks and no assignment of responsible parties for the plan’s implementation. In general, the local authorities examined do not conduct sufficient preparation for the discussions, and there are gaps in information and expectations that undermine the meetings. It was found that in many discussions, no optimal treatment plan was guaranteed, and that in decisions involving out-of-home placements, goals and tasks were not documented, and community-based treatment plans lacked detail. It was also found that in the committee discussions in three of the five local authorities examined, no supportive family therapy was ensured alongside the treatment of the youth, and insufficient emphasis was placed on strengthening sibling relationships. Additionally, it was generally found that for at-risk youth receiving treatment in the community, there was no attention to multidisciplinary aspects – particularly medical ones.




Treatment of At-Risk Youth from Diverse Population Groups


- **Ultra-orthodox (Haredi) Jewish community** – The social services department in the **Arad** municipality does not provide services for the Haredi community, even though approximately 60% of the city's children and adolescents belong to the Hassidic Gur community. The municipality has not submitted a request for funding from the Ministry of Welfare for treating at-risk Haredi youth. It carries out no prevention, outreach, or treatment activities, except in particularly rare and extreme cases. Needless to say, the municipality does not act on the matter despite the large number of Haredi youth under its jurisdiction (approximately 4,500 Haredi children and adolescents). By contrast, the **Ramla** municipality operates the NOCHAM program for disconnected Haredi youth, serving 49 boys and girls. The **Ramla** Municipality utilized only 27% (approximately NIS 121,000 out of NIS 440,000) of its allocated budget for this purpose. Although the **Kiryat Gat** municipality received funding for handling disconnected Haredi youth, it made no use of the budget allocated to it (0% utilization of a budget totaling approximately NIS 450,000).
- **Arab society** – Although there is a general tendency in Arab society to address at-risk youth within the community, it appears that education-related budgets for the Arab sector are lower than those for the Jewish sector.
- **Druze society** – Only four of the 19 Druze local authorities – **Mughar** municipality and the local councils of **Bayt Jan, Yanuh-Jatt, and Yirka** – made use of Ministry of Welfare budgets for the treatment of at-risk youth.
- **Bedouin society** – No Bedouin local authority in the northern region made direct use of the Ministry of Welfare's at-risk youth budget.
- **At-risk LGBT youth** – In the municipalities of **Arad** and **Ramla**, and in the local council of **Yafia**, no initiative was taken to assess the treatment needs of LGBT youth; therefore, no designated LGBT social worker was active in these authorities.


 **Development of Policy and Implementation of Tools for Identifying At-Risk Youth in the Online Sphere** – Despite recommendations by the OECD and the United Nations, as well as a government resolution¹⁶ highlighting the need for a comprehensive national policy on protecting children and youth in the online sphere, the steering committee headed by the Director General of the Ministry of National Security has yet to formulate such a policy. The Ministry of Welfare and the local authorities examined do not use online tools for identifying and reaching out to youth in situations of risk, danger, or disconnection; identification efforts remain focused primarily on the physical sphere – in educational settings, on the streets, and in public parks.

¹⁶ Government Resolution No. 1006, "Establishment of a System for the Prevention of Violence and Crime Against Children and Youth Online (MAOR System)" (January 17, 2016).



 **Establishing an Information-Sharing System Between Agencies** – Despite the recommendations of the 2010 Winter Committee Report¹⁷ regarding the need to establish a computerized system for sharing information among agencies involved in the care of children – including social workers and therapeutic staff in welfare settings, truancy officers and counselors in the Ministry of Education, and health and mental health professionals – such a system has not yet been established. The relevant agencies have yet to overcome various barriers, including extensive inter-organizational and interdisciplinary coordination challenges, as well as legal concerns regarding privacy violations, the reliability of digital tools, biases, and weaknesses or breaches in information security. The issue of information-sharing has also become prominent since the outbreak of the Swords of Iron War, in relation to youth who were evacuated from their homes.

 **Regional Supervision by the Ministry of Welfare over Community-Based Services for At-Risk Youth** – Approximately 10% of the supervisory positions for community services remain unfilled (13 vacancies). Despite the limited number, and even absence, of welfare interventions for at-risk youth in the local authorities examined, no documentation was found indicating that supervisory officials had held meetings with the department or municipal leadership to raise concerns regarding the lack of such services.

 **Swords of Iron War** – It was found that despite reports of increased tension, anxiety stemming from exposure to disturbing online content related to the Swords of Iron War, fears and difficulties linked to the war, and exposure to nationalist and antisemitic discourse in its wake, the welfare service system does not ensure continuity of care for at-risk populations during emergencies.



Social Services Department Staff in Local Authorities – The audit team acknowledges the dedication and strong sense of public mission demonstrated by the staff they met with, who strive to fulfill their role and provide the best possible care for at-risk youth and their families.

Educational Activity in the Area of Dropout and Persistence – The State Comptroller commends the educational efforts in the local council of **Yafia** and the **Kiryat Motzkin** municipality, as reflected in their dropout and persistence rates. In the **Yafia Local Council**, the dropout rate stands at 0.8% and the persistence rate at 90.7%; in the **Kiryat Motzkin Municipality**, the dropout rate is 0.3% and the

¹⁷ The Winter Committee is an inter-ministerial committee established in 2009 in response to a surge in cases of children being murdered by family members. In 2010, the committee published a report whose main recommendations focused on the need to promote cooperation and information sharing among government ministries, local authorities, and various professional bodies.



persistence rate 85.2%. These are favorable figures compared to the national averages of 1.1% dropout and 81.4% persistence.

Care and Evaluation Planning Committees – The State Comptroller commends the committee in the local council of **Yafia** for its attention to sibling relationships among at-risk youth, and for taking the opportunity to facilitate meetings between siblings placed in out-of-home care who rarely meet. He also commends the care and evaluation planning committees in **Kiryat Gat** and **Yafia** for documenting their discussions in a manner that can serve as a model for the other local authorities. Their meeting summaries are detailed and comprehensive, covering the full range of required aspects, in alignment with the guidelines of the Ministry of Welfare's headquarters.

Key Recommendations

- 💡 It is recommended that the Ministry of Welfare and the government ministries participating in the National 360° Program conduct an updated national mapping of at-risk youth and work regularly to remove the barriers to its execution.
- 💡 It is recommended that the Ministry of Welfare revise and update the Social Work Regulations (TAAS), both in terms of wording and definitions, so that they align with one another as well as with the definitions set forth by the National 360° Program. The Ministry should also examine the need for multiple definitions of "at-risk youth" based on context and their relevance to the present day, while taking into account the characteristics and unique needs of this heterogeneous population. This should be done in a manner that enables distinguishing between children, youth, and young adults and defining age ranges accordingly. Additionally, the Ministry should provide guidance on this matter to all local social services departments (MASHACH). This would allow for the collection of unified data, enable mapping, and support the provision of optimal care to this population.
- 💡 It is recommended that the municipalities of **Arad**, **Kiryat Gat**, and **Ramla** increase their preventive efforts in addressing at-risk youth by investing resources and efforts in the education system, in order to reduce levels of violence and youth involvement in criminal activity within their jurisdictions.
- 💡 It is also recommended that the social services departments in the local authorities of **Arad**, **Kiryat Gat**, **Kiryat Motzkin**, and **Yafia** plan and implement proactive measures designed to identify at-risk youth. These local authorities should engage in early detection activity, operate in an integrated manner, and make full use of the information available to them, subject to privacy protection laws and restrictions on interdepartmental data sharing, in order to identify youth at early stages of distress and



prevent deterioration of their situation. Additionally, it is recommended that the Municipality of Ramla expand its outreach and identification programs for at-risk youth.



It is recommended that the bodies in charge of setting policy in the areas of identifying and treating at-risk youth – the National 360° Program and the Ministry of Welfare, the Government Coordination Unit for the Rights of Children and Youth, the National Authority for Community Safety, Unit 105 (the National Child Online Protection Bureau - within the Israel Police at the Ministry of National Security), the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health – establish, in consultation and coordination with the National Digital Agency, a computerized information system for data sharing among the entities involved in caring for children and youth at risk. It is further recommended that these bodies develop a policy regarding the use of computerized and online systems - their importance, implementation methods, and integration strategies. They should also allocate budgets for the development of digital and online systems, including tools based on artificial intelligence, across all levels of intervention (prevention, identification, and treatment), while promoting digital literacy within the government agencies operating in the fields of at-risk youth care.



It is recommended that the Ministry of Welfare promote the implementation of a policy favoring community-based solutions within intensive interventions, rather than out-of-home placements. At the same time, it is recommended that the local authorities examined – **Kiryat Motzkin, Ramla, and Yafia**, which did not use the intensive interventions at all, and the municipalities of **Arad** and **Kiryat Gat**, which used them only partially – integrate at-risk youth into community-based programs and intensive interventions before resorting to out-of-home placements.



It is recommended that the SHALEM Administration (acronym for Rehabilitation, Support, and Prevention) at the Ministry of Welfare ensure that local authorities implement the interventions for at-risk youth under its purview. The local authorities examined – **Arad, Kiryat Gat, Kiryat Motzkin, Ramla, and Yafia** – should implement the interventions offered by the Ministry of Welfare. They should examine ways to overcome barriers such as staffing shortages, limited operating hours, and the provision of lunch, in order to meet the needs of at-risk youth within their jurisdictions.



It is recommended that the local authorities of **Ramla** and **Yafia** complete the missing workforce and ensure that a "Warm Home" response is provided for all at-risk youth in need. It is also recommended that the municipalities of **Arad, Kiryat Gat, and Kiryat Motzkin** assess the need to establish a "Warm Home" intended for all at-risk youth who require it. The local authorities of **Arad** and **Kiryat Motzkin** are advised to fill unstaffed social worker positions for youth.



The Ministry of Welfare should examine the difficulties faced by local authorities in staffing youth social worker positions. In addition, it should consider how to assist local authorities in filling these positions, including by promoting flexible employment



arrangements, while also increasing the number of approved positions and taking appropriate action. The Ministry is also advised to review the incentives offered to employees in the local authorities' social services departments, including an examination of salary conditions and related employment terms.



It is recommended that the Minister of Welfare oversee the issue of at-risk youth and act immediately to rectify the deficiencies and reduce the gaps identified in this report. It is further recommended that the heads of the local authorities examined – **Arad, Kiryat Gat, Kiryat Motzkin, Ramla, and Yafia** – also act without delay to fulfill their responsibility to provide appropriate community-based responses for youth on the risk, danger, and disconnection continuum, and ensure that concern for the well-being of youth in their jurisdictions is placed high on their priority list.

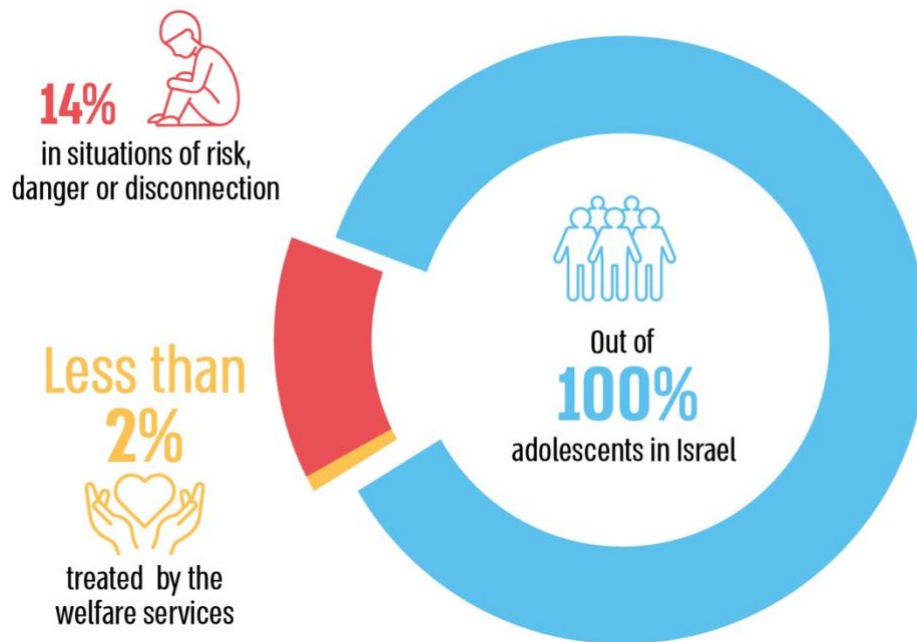
Data on Youth in the Municipality Compared to Youth Receiving Welfare Services

	Arad	Kiryat Gat	Kiryat Motzkin	Ramla	Yafia	All Local Authorities
All youth	2,604	6,207	3,935	9,468	2,519	1,098,747
Number of Youth Receiving Welfare Services (According to Local Authority Data)	83	167	33	94	250	The information does not exist
Number of Youth Receiving Welfare Services (According to SHALEM Administration Data)	30	108	40	93	21	19,044

The table shows that in all the local authorities examined, and indeed across all local authorities in Israel, fewer than 2% of youth are known to and treated by the municipal welfare and social services departments: 19,044 out of 1,098,747 youth in Israel. This is despite data from the National Council for the Child indicating that, as of 2022, approximately 14% of youth are identified as being in situations of risk.



Data on the Percentage of Youth in Situations of Risk, Danger, and Disconnection Compared to the Percentage of Youth Treated by the Welfare Departments



According to data from the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs for 2024, the National Council for the Child for 2022, and the Central Bureau of Statistics for 2022 covering all local authorities, as processed by the State Comptroller's Office.



Summary

This report presents data indicating a steady increase in the number of at-risk youth in recent years and a deterioration in their situation, especially since the outbreak of the Swords of Iron War. The findings point to a clear need to provide this population with a broad and coordinated systemic response to address the range of challenges and needs they face, as well as the changes occurring in this field. The rise in the number of youth in situations of risk, danger, and disconnection does not align with the budget allocated for at-risk youth, as only part of that budget is actually used to provide services and responses within the community.

The Ministry of Welfare and the local authorities are struggling to provide the necessary response; namely, to ensure the safety of youth in situations of risk, danger, and disconnection, and to reduce the extent and severity of such situations. The growing needs within the framework of treating at-risk youth, contrasted with the shortage of necessary resources – which are dwindling due to the war – raise serious doubts as to the ability of the Social Services Department to provide a comprehensive network of services for at-risk youth.

The report highlights substantial gaps between the needs associated with treating youth in situations of risk, danger, and disconnection, and the actual services provided to them. It presents resounding warning bells regarding the treatment of this population. Although over 14% of youth are classified as at risk, only 2%–3%, those in the most acute and extreme circumstances, receive treatment from social services.

The findings of the report underscore the need for coordinated and synchronized action, both among central government agencies and between them and local authorities, in all matters relating to the provision of services that align with ministerial policy. Equally important is ensuring that these services meet the needs and preferences of at-risk youth themselves. The delivery of services must be grounded in the setting of goals, clear standards, measurement, appropriate budgeting and oversight of its allocation and service implementation.

Local authorities must make sure to integrate efforts aimed at identifying at-risk youth, preventing risk behaviors within this population, and addressing their needs across all relevant dimensions. They should hold regular discussions on the matter in coordination with the various care providers. It is unacceptable that many youth on the risk continuum – and in some municipalities, even the majority – are not known at all to the local authorities. The Ministry of Welfare and the local authorities cannot accept this situation. They must plan and initiate outreach activities to identify at-risk youth, both in the physical sphere and in the virtual realm. In addition, they must collect and map data on identified youth and broaden the range of available interventions, tailoring them to the youths' individual needs, characteristics, and evolving risk factors, while also promoting youth participation in shaping these responses to the greatest extent possible.

