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Emergency Community Support Service (Ad 120) Evaluation Study

Malka Korazim ♦ Shiri Nir

The service was implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services with the help of ESHEL and the Center for Research of Disabilities and Special Populations of JDC-Israel, and the support of JFNA – the Jewish Federations of North America – and of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston

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RESEARCH REPORT

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Related Publications

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Korazim, M.; Goren, T.; Niran, R. 2002. *Home Care Workers for the Elderly: Characteristics, Role Perception, and Patterns of Work and Employment*. RR-365-92.

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Executive Summary

The Emergency Community Support Service (Ad 120 – Up to 120 clients per worker) was introduced during Operation Cast Lead to help southern local authorities in the "emergency zone" defined by Israel's government. It aimed to create a support network for the elderly and persons with disabilities living in the community. It included ongoing contact with these populations in order to relieve stress and provide emotional support; identify needs emanating from the state of emergency, mediate with community services and refer clients to agencies addressing these needs. It was implemented in 27 municipal jurisdictions by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services (MSASS) with the assistance of ESHEL and the JDC-Israel Disabilities and Special Populations Unit, and the support of JFNA – the Jewish Federations of North America – and of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston.

Each local authority, according to size, was provided with a number of full-time community support workers. They were hired for one month though not all started working at the same time.

During the military operation, an MSASS interdisciplinary, inter-organizational committee monitored the service's implementation. Following the state of emergency, a number of questions arose about the use of this type of service in emergency situations in the future. Thus it was decided to conduct an evaluation study of the service to systematically examine its implementation, contribution and directions for development of the service in the future.

The study encompassed five local authorities: Be'er Sheva, Sderot, Qiryat Mal'akhi, and the Sha'ar Hanegev and Eshkol Regional Councils. Data were collected from 22 of the 25 professionals involved in implementing the service (directors and social workers at local Social-Service Departments, and social workers of various NGOs and organizations), and from 10 community support workers who provided the service in these local authorities. Data were collected through telephone interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire in June-November 2009. The data from the professionals were processed and published as an interim report. The information in the current report relates to the clientele referred to the service, the process of its implementation, its content and contributions.

A. Population Served and Manpower Employed in Implementing the Service

◆ Population referred to the service

- The list of clients referred to the service was received from various sources: municipal Social-Service Departments (4 local authorities used this source), the MSASS (2 authorities), the National Insurance Institute (NII – 2), the Foundation for the Benefit of Holocaust Victims in Israel (2), and a local emergency team (1).
- In three of the five local authorities studied, more than one source of information was used; in the other two, only one source was used.

- The lists obtained from the Holocaust Foundation and the local emergency team were believed to be up-to-date as opposed to those obtained from the NII and MSASS. Regarding Social-Service Departments, only two local authorities had up-to-date lists.
- The number of referrals ranged from 200 to 5,500.
- In four local authorities, most referrals consisted of elderly people (66%–90%). The proportion of elderly referred to the service among all persons aged 65+ in these local authorities ranged from 13%-50%.
- In three local authorities, most or almost all of those referred were known to the Social-Service Departments; in one local authority, this was true of 40% of the referrals.
- Assessments of the number of people that support workers reached by telephone or home visits at least once during the state of emergency showed that in three local authorities, all or nearly all those referred were reached and, in two others, the rates of coverage were lower (59% versus 72%).

◆ **Manpower Employed in Implementing the Service**

The local authorities differed in the number of professionals and in the type and role of the organization involved in implementing the service.

- In all the local authorities, the local Social-Service Department was involved in implementing the service, along with an additional agency.
- Most of the people involved in implementing the service were professionals who worked with the elderly (11 people); fewer worked with people with disabilities (5 people).

The local authorities differed in the number of community support workers and the way that their work was organized:

- The number of full-time positions provided ranged from 2 to 18. In one local authority, additional community support workers were brought in, beyond the number allocated by the program.
- In two local authorities, the community support workers were assigned to work either with the elderly or with people with disabilities. In three local authorities, every community support worker dealt with both populations (the elderly and people with disabilities).
- The number of clients per full-time community support worker ranged from 80-317.

B. The Content of the Service Provided by Community Support Workers

- ◆ Community support workers provided mainly emotional support (i.e. exerting a calming effect, relieving loneliness, offering a sense of care and concern) and information on emergency and defense/protective measures. They were less involved in help with daily personal needs (e.g., fetching medication, providing food, assisting with house repairs or problems with homecare workers).

- ◆ Most of the professional staff (19) and community support workers (8) said that some of the material and personal needs that they had encountered were unrelated to the state of emergency and they found it difficult to cope with these.
- ◆ There were differences among professionals in their perception of the extent of similar needs among the elderly clients and clients with disabilities.

C. Satisfaction with the Service, its Contribution, and Recommendations for the Future

- ◆ Professionals and community support workers judged the contribution of the service to be great. Two-thirds of the contributions cited by professionals related to the client level, especially to emotional help. About one third related to the system level, especially the assistance in identifying populations and needs, and in relieving the burden on social workers. Community support workers cited similar contributions on both the client and system levels.
- ◆ Most of the professionals (20) were satisfied with the community support workers hired (most were known to the social-service system and had either worked or volunteered with the target populations.) The majority expressed satisfaction with the community support workers' level of knowledge, attitude toward clients and standard of work. Professionals were less satisfied with the physical working conditions provided these workers and the training they had received, primarily because of lack of time for training due to the urgency of providing the service.
- ◆ Unlike the professionals, most of the community support workers (8) were satisfied with their training and physical working conditions. When asked about the main difficulties they had encountered in providing the service, they cited bureaucracy and paperwork, problems in locating clients and language impediments. Moreover, in their opinion, the service of the emergency community support worker raised client expectations that were difficult to meet especially in the area of basic needs, emotional assistance, and continuing the relationship with the support worker after the service was terminated.
- ◆ Almost all the professionals (19) and all the community support workers believed that the service should be made available in future emergency situations, albeit with modifications regarding the timely preparation of infrastructure needed for the service, improvement of the manner of implementation and the organization of manpower.
- ◆ Among both professionals and community support workers, there were different opinions as to the need for separate support workers for the elderly and people with disabilities.
- ◆ All the professionals and community support workers believed that the service is suitable for non-emergency situations.

D. Conclusion and Issues for Discussion

The findings emerging from the professionals and community support workers in the five local authorities show that the Emergency Community Support Service during Operation Cast Lead

offered an important response for the elderly and persons with disabilities. The service reached a relatively large population and on the whole provided emotional and emergency assistance. In addition, it was perceived as an important service in the overall social-service network in that it facilitated contact with clients, the identification of their needs, and mediation between clients and community services. The perception is that the service is important in non-emergency situations as well, and that it should be implemented in regular times and reinforced in times of emergency.

Alongside these achievements, however, the findings raised a number of issues that should be addressed in developing this service in the future:

- ◆ Who is the target population of the service?
- ◆ What are the types of assistance that should be provided by the service?
- ◆ What is the desirable number of clients to be served by a community support worker?
- ◆ What infrastructure should be developed to implement the service in times of emergency?
- ◆ What is the place of this type of service in non-emergency times?

The study findings and issues raised were presented to the committee established to carry out a pilot of a community-support service in regular times at a number of local authorities in southern Israel.

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