



The Quality Assurance Tool for the Interministerial Model Early Childhood Centers Findings from the sixth round of evaluation

Merav Asulin Hilla Dolev

Editor: Ronit Cohen Ben Nun
English translation (Abstract): David Simmer
English editing: Suzanne Brown
Graphic design: Efrat Speaker

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Myers JDC Brookdale Institute

P.O.B. 3886, Jerusalem 9103702, Israel

Tel: 02-6557400

brookdale.jdc.org.il/en | brook@jdc.org

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Abstract

Background

The Inter-Ministerial Model Early Childhood Center (ECC) is a universal service offering a continuum of responses and services for children from birth to age six and their parents, with an emphasis on children and families in risk situations. As of the date of this report, 85 ECCs were operating in Israel under the inter-ministerial model.

The quality assurance tool developed for the ECCs (hereafter: the tool) consists of a digital questionnaire that evaluates the operation of the ECC in three areas of activity and according to fundamental principles and standards. The tool is completed by the ECC director together with the senior staff for the purpose of reflective examination on their activities and to gain insights. Since 2017, the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute has provided support for the use of this quality assurance tool as part of a broader quality assurance process among the ECCs.

In 2022, following the fifth round of evaluation, five fundamental principles were formulated that define the core of ECC service quality: data-driven management; a person-centered approach; skilled staff; a continuum of services; and partnership with parents. For each principle, required standards were defined, and unique standards were established for each area of activity. Ahead of the sixth evaluation, the tool was updated to reflect the defined principles and standards. This report presents the findings of the sixth round of evaluation.

Objectives

To evaluate the operation of the ECCs in 2023 according to the five fundamental principles and the required standards.

Methodology

A link to the quality assurance tool was distributed via email to 68 ECC directors at the beginning of March 2024, who were asked to complete it by mid-April 2024. Sixty-seven directors responded to most of the questions in the tool.

Main Findings and Conclusions

The findings show that for each of the fundamental principles examined there are areas in which the ECCs operated optimally in 2023 and other areas requiring improvement in order to align with the standards. It was also found that with respect to data-driven management, skilled staff, and a continuum of services, most ECCs operate according to the standards. However, with respect to the person-centered principle and partnership with parents, there is a need to strengthen ECC practices to ensure that staff are more attentive to parents' opinions and enable the parents to influence the services provided to them and their children, according to their needs and desires.