

## TITLE

Two-year-transition period for young people with autism

Israel: Avnei Derech Mechina – preparatory college

## PROJECT SUMMARY

Avnei Derech Mechina (“Milestones for Life”) is a NGO that provides a two-year transition programme from high school to the open labour market for young adults with autism. During this time the programme offers a setting in which these young people experience many aspects of life, including employment, social activity, and community, studies, home/family, and leisure time. Most vocation and volunteer experience are temporary, but contribute greatly to future careers. Begun in April 2014 with four participants, by mid-2016 it has grown to 19 – 5 of whom have just graduated.

## FACTS & FIGURES

- Jobs created in 2014: 9
- Jobs created in 2015: 11
- Jobs created in 2016 (to date): 3

## PROBLEMS TARGETED

Israeli children with High Function Autism Spectrum Disorder (HF-ASD) do not fit into a clearly defined educational framework. Upon graduation from high school, most of these teens are ill equipped for moving on to the next stage of life and are not provided with a training ground to gain skills and experience. Existing Israeli programmes for young adults on the Autism spectrum provide a social environment and supported housing, but do not offer a choice of services to advance towards independent living and employment.

## SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

Participants in the “Milestones for Life” initiative leave their parent’s home for the first time and live an experiential, independent setting, inhabiting a small apartment on their own. An individualized plan is developed for each participant as she/he takes the lead in determining her/his personal path in life. The programme focuses on acquiring skills to get a job and to develop a career; and all participants are helped to find part-time employment such as a cashier or packer in a supermarket, assembly-line worker, or storekeeper, whereby they earn at least the minimum wage. Students experience how to maintain a job while studying and they enjoy living in their own apartment and taking on other responsibilities just like their peers. Moreover, the programme includes a module of pre-vocational training in academic and professional courses similar to those taken in a college.

## OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

The programme, which is a joint venture with the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services, has a total cost of US\$400,000 per year, and starting in March 2017 the government intends to finance the programme entirely. Currently, the programme is dependent on complementary funding from participation fees, grants, and donations, which cover up to 55 per cent of the total cost.

## QUOTE

“Placing our son in the capable, caring, professional hands of the Avnei Derech staff has allowed us to be passively supportive from afar, and has allowed Eli the space to experiment and experience in a supportive environment.”

— Mike & Shari, parents of an Avnei Derech Mechina participant

## CONTACT

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## REFERENCES

<https://youtu.be/1oz98TJk4PY>

<http://www.ijiet.org/vol7/859-P01.pdf>

