

Health & Wellness | Chaim V'Chessed

Every Step of the Way

Chaim V'Chessed guides English speaking parents through the maze of special education placement, children's therapies, and intervention options, offering invaluable guidance and support at every stage.

Problem: Special education and therapy for your children is something you can't risk getting wrong, but your family, friends and neighbors don't have the knowhow to guide you—and you don't always want to talk about it with them, either.

Solution: Chaim V'Chessed's Special Education & Children's Therapies department is here to advise, guide and help you through every step of the way.

For most parents, the world of special education and therapy is new, uncharted territory. The system is complicated regardless of the level of intervention the child needs—whether it's speech therapy, language development, remedial assistance or a full-immersion special education setting. And besides struggling with all the details involved in accessing the best possible care for them, parents are also continuously dealing with their special needs children at home, which is often a source of stress in and of itself. Parents need accurate and practical guidance as well as constant support.

HOW CHAIM V'CHESSED CAN HELP

At the Special Education & Children's Therapies department of Chaim V'Chessed, experts help parents navigate all challenges relating to children with special needs of any kind. That includes finding an appropriate preschool setting, applying for special education through the multi-layered application process, accessing therapy through the *kupat cholim*, arranging transportation and deciding on appropriate intervention plans. Parents are empowered with practical guidance and with the knowledge that they have someone to turn to at every step of the way—from initial evaluations to placement meetings (*vaad-*

ot hasamah) and even the appeal process in the case of undesirable results.

WHO'S BEHIND IT?

The department's experts are Mrs. D'vora Grossbaum, M.A. CCC-SLP, and Mrs. Faigie Gugenheim, B.Sc. Both have extensive experience in the field of special education and are intimately familiar with the relevant government systems. Mrs. Rachel Morgenstern, Chaim V'Chessed's governmental liaison, is involved in a number of cases relating to government rights and benefits. Mental Health adviser Mrs. Chanita Cassel, MSW, is involved in cases concerning emotional and mental health.

ONGOING SUPPORT

More than any other department in Chaim V'Chessed, the Special Education & Children's Therapies department is all about follow up. Some inquiries are short and

ABOUT CHAIM V'CHESSED

Chaim V'Chessed is a non-profit organization that helps English speakers navigate all areas of crisis or difficulty in Israel. Areas of service include medical logistics, hospital advocacy, mental health referrals and bureaucratic guidance. The organization's phone hotline operates 9-5, Sunday through Thursday, with an emergency notification system that operates 24/6. Learn more at www.chaimvchessed.com.

Chaim V'Chessed can be reached at 072-CHESSSED (243-7733), by email at support@chaimvchessed.com, or online at www.chaimvchessed.com/contact-us.

technical, but others can take months to resolve—and the advisers are more than happy to offer continuous assistance and support. Because the whole process is so new to most parents, it gets overwhelming. "We don't just tell people to do something," says Mrs. Gugenheim. "We have to help them!" She follows up with the majority of parents who call the department.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Chaim V'Chessed has forged connections with key players in the administration of Child Development Centers (*Hitpachut Hayered*), the Ministry of Education, and the special education departments in various municipalities. "We made these connections slowly, and we keep forging more," says Mrs. Gugenheim. "We have had good experiences with most of these offices and now they even refer people to us." She relates how recently, an English speaker entered a certain office where the officials advised that she call Chaim V'Chessed for support. She answered, "How do you think I got here to begin with?" Chaim V'Chessed staff members utilize their critical connections whenever necessary.

LANGUAGE OPTIONS

When it comes to choosing English vs. Hebrew intervention, Mrs. Gugenheim says "there are definitely therapies available in English. There are experienced therapists practicing privately and through *kupot cholim*, but most special education schools and *ganim* are in Hebrew." There's a reason it's set up this way: to help children integrate into the Israeli system. While there are very good services provided in English, parents have to consider, with the input of a professional practitioner, which option is most beneficial for their child.

WORD FROM THE WISE

"The bureaucracy is overwhelming, but it is well worth the effort to get your child the help they need," emphasizes Mrs. Gugenheim, "especially at a young age." Developmental and cognitive delays are usually detected by caretakers, teachers and parents. The earlier they are detected, the more efficiently they can be rectified, so be proactive about checking out concerns. The good news? There's no need to feel lost, bewildered or alone. Chaim V'Chessed is here to help.