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## Outline for Family Support Network

### **Who We Are**

The **Love for Israel Relief Fund** is a non-profit organization working in cooperation with Israeli leaders across the political and social spectrum to help Israelis in need.

### **What We Do**

We exist to build direct relations between Israeli leaders and supporters of Israel around the world to help at-risk Israeli children and their families.

### **About Our Chairman**

**R. David Weisskopf:** The State of Illinois removed me from home at a young age due to child abuse. Within the first three years, they placed me in 20 shelters, group homes, and orphanages before finding a foster home for me. As an adult, I vowed to help the next generation of at-risk youth. After university, I worked in several capacities within the child welfare system. While serving as a licensed foster parent, I helped the director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS) restructure the child welfare system to be less restrictive and more natural. The result – IDCFS went from ranking 48 of 50 states to #1 in the USA according to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services 2007 report. In 2005 I moved from Chicago to Jerusalem and am most proud of the work I do now in my homeland among my people. I welcome you to join us in this holy work!



### **The Need at Hand**

The state-run infrastructure has reached a boiling point after government-employed social workers went on strike in March and returned to work only to be dragged before the UN Human Rights Counsel on human rights violations which have been mounting against them for years. The Love for Israel Relief Fund decided to take immediate action after the Jerusalem Post reported on 2 June 2011 that a group of Israeli fathers appealed to the UN with allegations including, “institutionalized torture and denial of civil rights” against Israel’s Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Welfare. Israel placed 500% more families under closely supervised visitation than Illinois in 2004 when I served as a consultant with the IDCFS director. Since then, Israel’s supervised visitation has increased by 73% - with a devastating impact on ethnic minorities, immigrants and suicide rates. Today it is five times more deadly for a father to get divorced in Israel than to drink and drive in Illinois. This causes long-term psychological harm to at-risk children.

## Proposed Budget

When we first proposed launching a community-based network in September 2010, it was on the basis that the Ministry of Social Affairs & Social Services could restructure their state-run centers without needing to outsource. We could have established centers mostly with volunteer labor and laymen to subsidize their efforts. Licensed social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists would have served as consultants. In that scenario, the projected per-child cost was \$25 per month.

Since then, the state-run infrastructure has reached a boiling point. We see the only viable solution for the Ministry of Social Affairs & Social Welfare is to outsource most of its services to organizations committed to high levels of accountability and excellence. Therefore, our Jerusalem center will serve as a full-service prototype of what we can accomplish on the same budget as state-run facilities managed by certified social workers. The Jerusalem center is now equipped to serve 10 families. The budget below would expand the capacity to 100 families.

	<u>State-Run Facility</u>	<u>Out-Sourced Facility</u>
	Amounts in USD	Amounts in USD
Labor Cost	\$ 17,000.00	\$ 17,000.00
Supplimental Activities	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
Supplies/Maintenance	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00
Rent/Utilities**	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00
Number of Paid Workers	10	6
Service Hours	60	150
Capacity of Families Served	40	100
TOTAL MONTHLY COST	\$ 19,900.00	\$ 19,900.00
COST PER FAMILY	\$ 497.50	\$ 199.00
COST PER CHILD	\$ 124.38	\$ 49.75
COST PER SERVICE HOUR	\$ 331.67	\$ 132.67

\*\*Note: Fair market value of space allocated to state-run institutions for free. Actual cost varies and can sometimes be allocated for free.

In this scenario, the per-child cost for the Jerusalem center works out to almost \$50 per month, but is almost 1/3 the per-child cost at state-run facilities and 1/10 the cost of taking that child into state custody. While future centers in various locations can be established with volunteers and laymen, we are launching the Jerusalem center as a full-service prototype showing how much more out-sourced organizations can accomplish with the same resources allocated to state-run centers. The centers we sponsor are independent of Love for Israel Relief Fund. Each donor who sponsors one or more families for a year gets listed as a partner with us in all events, promotions and related materials.

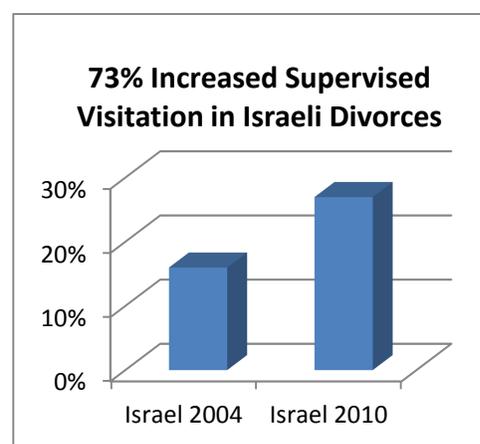
## Proposal for the Jerusalem Family Center

### **Introduction:**

“Family” has always been the central value of a healthy society. Currently, family values are under attack from every direction and as a result there is an unprecedented number of at-risk children and families in Jerusalem. While the American divorce rate has reached the 50% mark, Israel’s 25% divorce rate is staggering given its traditional and religious culture. Unfortunately, government budgets and as a result social services have not kept up with the ever increasing needs of this population, a population that represents a higher risk for suicide especially for single fathers and untold challenges for the thousands of children impacted by these changing family dynamics. Approximately 10,000 couples/families enter an already overburdened social welfare system annually. In 2010 the welfare ministry reported that there were 13 state-run family supervision centers in the Jerusalem area serving 513 families involving 979 children with hundreds more waiting for official written reports by social workers in the system to be submitted to the courts so their divorce proceedings, custodial and visitation arrangements could progress. In contentious divorces, which are the majority of cases, such reports are necessary before the judge renders a decision. The waiting period is often 6 months to a year which places an already stressed family unit into a situation of limbo at best and outright conflict in most cases. While we cannot solve all of the problems at once, we believe we must act to alleviate the pain and suffering of mother and fathers, and children of all ages in order to secure a healthy future for all those presently at risk.

### **Initial working premises:**

- Divorce is a highly stressful situation for partners as individuals and as parents as well as for children.
- Given the ever increasing divorce rate and lack of government resources, literally thousands of children and adults are not receiving any form of support during these trying times.
- Between 2004 and 2010 supervised visitation for a parent and their child(ren) has increased by 73% (based on data from the department of social welfare). This unnatural reality begs additional analysis and alternative solutions.
- Parents living through a divorce need a host of services and other things including but not limited to: emotional support, learning new parenting skills, role models, a safe place, person, vehicle for venting, positive reinforcement in their new single parent roles, a social network.



As a society that continues to promote “family values,” the time has come to seriously engage with divorced families and begin filling in the gaps of service to this fragile and oftentimes explosive population. It is not acceptable that divorcing families have to wait six months to a year for a professional report in order to finalize visitation and custodial arrangements; it is not acceptable that such fragile families are unable to receive support services which have the potential of reducing the need for supervised visitation and of decreasing the percentage of at risk youth emanating from this group.

We believe that the time has come to open the Family Center for divorcing families. Ultimately, this center will be a full service organization for parents and their children that will provide support services, parenting skills training, relevant resource information and recreational programming.

In its initial stage, the Family Center will serve as safe, supportive place where divorcing/divorced parents can vent, share, learn and grow as individuals and as parents. A stable and secure parent is the best form of support for a child living through a divorce.

### **The Family Center – Phase 1**

- 1) Outreach will be done to identify divorced/divorcing parents who are struggling as individuals and as parents. Individual social assessments/intakes will be conducted and support groups for fathers as well as for mothers will be formed. These groups will meet separately on a monthly basis.
- 2) Mentoring – In order to provide hope and role models, individuals who have divorced and have gone on to become emotionally stable and happy individuals with healthy relationships with their children will be invited to join the group sessions as deemed appropriate. Such mentors will also be assigned on an individual basis with newly divorcing parents to help them through the difficult times that can peak at any moment.
- 3) Special parenting seminars will be offered.

### **The Family Center – Phase 2**

- 1) As needs become identified in the support groups, additional professionals will be invited in for special seminars. Anticipated topics include: money management, food preparation and nutrition, communal resources etc.
- 2) Support services for children of divorce will be offered to similar peer groups. This will be modeled on the success of the parent support groups.
- 3) Recreational programs for children will be created. While supervised by a professional, the activities will be staffed by teenagers who have successfully worked through their own family's divorce. This will provide additional opportunities for informal discussion as well as positive role models. Simultaneously it will strengthen the teenagers' emerging adult identity.

### **Immediate plans:**

Once the Family Center is a full service center, it will require a full staff. To begin, however, we will need a certified professional for the intakes and to run the support groups. We believe these groups should be co-led by a male and female as this will assist participants in relating to people of both sexes in authority positions (often during divorce anger is generalized to the entire gender of one's ex). One group leader will serve as the "therapist" while the other will serve as a spiritual guide and mentor.

### **Executive Director:**

Sharon Spira, CSW, JFE (certified social worker and Jewish family educator): Sharon has a masters of social work with a specialization in group work (organizing and facilitating groups) from Yeshiva University Wurzweiler School of Social Work as well as a certificate in Jewish family education from the Board of Jewish Education of New York. In her work in Jewish communal services in New York, she served as the parenting center director in a Jewish

Community center and expanded programming from one site to three. She introduced parenting skills classes, led groups for parents, and developed recreational programs for parents and their young children. She also served as a teen director and developed and supervised communal events and hands on chesed projects for teens. Simultaneously, Sharon was subcontracted through a private agency to do Hebrew language intakes for children in public schools who were experiencing difficulties in learning. In Israel she has taught children and adults of all ages, served as a synagogue program director and continues to develop educational programs for students and communities around the world that connect these families and groups with various populations in Israel. In conjunction with local social service offices and grass-roots organizations, Sharon has worked with multi-disciplinary teams (social workers, ministers, teachers, etc.) to develop various programs for families and youth at risk. These included terror victims, victims of family abuse, divorce and juvenile delinquents. Many have overcome their difficult pasts and become youth leaders and community leaders.

### Getting Donations to Us

#### USA

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Washington, DC 20004



#### ISRAEL

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P. O. Box 33050  
Jerusalem 91036



#### ONLINE

Donate online at:

<http://www.love4israel.org/donate>



On behalf of the children . . .



# THANK YOU!