



INSIGHT

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Apartment Life Students get Practice at Independent Living

This year the goal of the Jewish Institute for the Blind is to get students out of the dormitory and into apartments. In a wide-sweeping new program helping to prepare for independent living, the Institute is managing two preparatory flats, and students are living on their own, albeit under supervision.

"Under the Special Education Law students now are under our tutelage until the age of 21," explains Rachel Skrobish, Director of the Institute's Department of Education and Rehabilitation. "One of the most important skills we hope to impart to them is the ability to be independent members of society," she adds. The Institute can serve as a bridge from education to independent employment and living. At present there are two apartments with four females and four males in each in the Kiryat Moshe neighborhood, not too far from the Institute.

Skills for Life

Although moving into a preparatory flat is a step-by-step process for the students of the Institute, they are well prepared and supervised. Not only have the pupils worked for years in the home economics department which has helped them acquire skills in the kitchen, but a model apartment inside the Institute enables them to get accustomed to household tasks such as making beds, shopping, organizing closets, vacuuming, and ironing.



Mastering household tasks is essential for independent living

After years of practicing these or-

ganizational and living skills, students move to an observational apartment in the neighborhood with a counselor and their real-life experience continues. Every student is evaluated to see if they will be able to live independently. Often times these pupils are sheltered in their parents' homes, and living at the Institute's dormitory, they might not develop all of the skills they need for total independence.

"We learn to shop for our own food and prepare breakfast and dinners, and we also have to manage our own budget," explains Yoram, a pupil who enjoys the novelty of apartment living despite all the inconveniences one might find in cleaning, cooking and shopping. "Everyone has to pull their share," he says, "and I think it has made me more considerate of other people."

Yoram is one of the students who will be able to move out of the dormitory and into a preparatory flat next year, but as Skrobish explains the program is not for all of the Institute's pupils. "Only about 50% of our students will be able to function independently, as many have handicaps in addition to their blindness that would make independent living very difficult," she says. The program is very desirable, however, and the students compete to see who can be chosen for this individualized program. After the program is well established, the assistance of various government agencies will be necessary to help provide the flats for the qualifying graduates.



Checking for mail at the preparatory flat