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**This article is presented with the intention to raise awareness about ELEM's work.**

## **Some Youth resorts to Drugs and Alcohol**

**Evacuated youth, who experienced the horrors of Saturday, October 7th, are having trouble getting back to normal, they have lost faith, and some have started using drugs and alcohol. This was revealed in a joint session held by the Education Committee, the Committee for Children's Rights and the Committee for Public Inquiries at the Knesset, regarding educational services for children evacuated as a result of the Iron Swords War.**

Written by Tamar Trabelsy Hadad

Dr. Osnat Eyal, from the Center of Regional Councils, said that a national program for youth should be formulated. "There are many problems. We are witnessing drugs and alcohol consumption. I suggest that we hold a dedicated discussion for the entire issue of informal education in the evacuees' centers," she said.

The principal of "Alonim" school in Shaar HaNegev, Shlomzion Cohen, told the committee members that the children experience nightmares and that recently the network are showing pictures that were avoided in the first week, and the kids are affected by what they see. "Among the youth, this is reflected in loitering, smoking, and alcohol consumption," she said.

The Minister of Education, Yoav Kish, said that providing services to youth is one of the main challenges. "Youth who were evacuated from their homes were exposed to difficult events, some of them experienced the loss of a friend and/or family member, detachment from their

natural environment, and the interruption of familial and functional continuity," Kish said. "In light of this reality, the ministry is working to implement a program to strengthen resilience and restore functional continuity, with an emphasis on youth in the evacuees' centers.

In order to provide an initial response to the situation, volunteers from ELEM for youth at risk, are stationed in ten large centers where families from the Gaza Envelope are staying. They meet with the youth until the wee hours of the night, talk with them, and lend an ear. "Teenagers, even during normal times, consume alcohol and drugs. And what is happening now - the war, the trauma, the difficult situations to which they have been exposed to - increase consumption," explained ELEM-Israel COO Danny Levit. "They have coping issues, and they resort to mind altering substances. These are guys who were evacuated from the front line. They experienced terrorists entering their homes, the threat to their lives. There is not one of these teens who does not know people who were kidnapped or killed and are friends or family members. They tell terrible stories. Difficulty falling asleep at night, anxiety attacks. They lived in the south their whole lives, but now it's a much more significant trigger."