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Child welfare groups to launch program for prevention of baby shaking

Haruv Institute implemented national program to train doctors to identify and treat child abuse

• By LIDAR GRAVÉ-LAZI

The Haruv Institute, in collaboration with the Schusterman Foundation and the National Council for the Child, will launch a program in the coming months educating parents on the harmful effects of baby shaking, *The Jerusalem Post* learned on Thursday.

The issue of baby shaking and child abuse gained media attention the past few years after a father was accused of shaking his four-month-old twins, killing one and injuring the other.

Following a massive public debate in which doctors and medical experts offered differing opinions on the injuries to the babies, he was sentenced to five years in prison on Thursday.

"Shaking babies is something that happens. Parents are frustrated and tired from the incessant crying of children, they do not know how to relax or what to do, [and] then develop deep frustration and anger and shake the babies," said Dr. Yoram Ben-Yehuda, director of the doctors program and the program for the prevention of the shaking of babies at the Haruv Institute.

"Baby shaking causes severe harm. According to US statistics, 30 babies out of every 100,000 births suffer from shaking, with a death rate of 40 percent and 90% disability in those that remain alive," he said.

"The National Council for the Child began a plan for prevention on the issue five years ago called Tiltula, and in cooperation with the Haruv Institute and the Schusterman Foundation we will start a plan teaching parents about crying, what is the meaning of crying babies and what to do when we cannot identify the cause of crying, and in addition explain the harmful effects of shaking," added Ben-Yehuda.

The program will be called "The Period of Purple Crying," based on a model operating internationally comprised of three steps: In the hospital every new mother will view an instructional video, will complete a training session with a certified nurse, and will receive informative brochures to take home on how to cope with a crying baby, he explained.

According to the institute, there is a serious lack of doctors qualified to identify and treat abuse in children of all ages in Israel. Furthermore, many of the children already identified do not receive adequate holistic treatment for trauma and recovery due to the lack of resources and trained professionals.

As such, the institute has in recent years launched a number of programs aimed at training medical and welfare professionals in identifying and treating child abuse and neglect. Most notably, the institute has launched a national program to train doctors in every hospital in the country to identify and treat abuse in children.

"Many times parents bring in children for treatment from different accidents, whereby, with proper training, neglect or continued abuse can be identified. Early detection among hospital staff can bring about prevention and essentially save the child," said Prof. Asher Ben-Arieh, director of the institute.

According to statistics presented by the institute, some 15% of the total child population in Israel, accounting for approximately 370,000 children, is subject to risk of abuse.

These figures were derived only from reported cases of abuse, and professionals estimate that for every case

reported there are between three to 10 cases that remain unreported. As such, the real extent of the phenomenon of child abuse in Israel remains largely unknown.

Furthermore, according to statistics presented by a 2013 Central Bureau of Statistics report, the majority of abused children are found to have been abused by their parents – 27.3% by both parents, 22.5% by the mother alone, 20.1% by the father alone and only 7.5% by a stranger.

Last week, the institute successfully completed a doctor training program in Poriya Hospital near Tiberias, where the cases of child neglect are over double the national average – 74% compared to a national average of 34.5%.



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