

Joint taskforce established to examine state of early childhood day care ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Organizations running subsidized day care centers for children up to the age of three on Monday called an end to their ongoing dispute with the Economy Ministry.

Leading organizations such as the Women's International Zionist Organization, Na'amat, Emunah, Neot Margalit, and others – all of which run subsidized day care centers – announced that registration for the upcoming year would reopen on Tuesday.

The country's day care system was on the brink of collapse, due to a lack of funding, low salaries, lack of qualified teachers and caregivers, and numerous centers threatened to shut down as a result.

The organizations refused to open registration in April for the upcoming school year until their demands were met.

As part of an agreement reached between the Economy Ministry and the day care center organizations, a joint task force with representatives of the various organizations, the economy and the finance ministries was established to examine the state of day care centers and address their most pressing issues.

In addition, some NIS 60 million will be allocated as emergency funds towards the day care centers in 2016, while an additional NIS 50 million will be allocated in the coming year.

The day care organizations issued a joint statement that said: "We are happy that finally we can open registration for the day care centers.

We know that parents were under great stress recently with the uncertainty and we thank them for their support in our important struggle."

They added that they hope the joint task force will provide meaningful results that will lead to a change in the day care system.

The state has for years been publicly promoting the building of new day care centers that would enable more women to join the workforce.

In 2014 the government announced a plan to build 400 new day care centers within a two-year time frame, but only a handful of new centers have been established.

To date some 90,000 children up to the age of three, accounting for roughly a fourth of this age group, attend government supervised and subsidized day care centers. For the tens of thousands of parents whose children are accepted into the highly sought-after centers, the government provides yearly subsidies totaling some NIS 900 million.

Those children who are not accepted into subsidized day care are placed in family care or in private day care centers, which are not supervised by the government.

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