

MICHAEL – CASE STUDY

Michael is 16 years old and comes from a family of Five. His father has been unemployed for many years, his mother works as a cleaning lady. Michael's parents have economical difficulties, as well as problems dealing with the demands and needs of their children.

A year and a half ago Michael was arrested for stealing cellular phones from people on Tel- Aviv beach.

As a result, Michael was appointed a youth care worker, was sentenced to house arrest. In addition, Michael denied every attempt to meet the youth care worker, who continued to show up at his doorstep week after week.

Gradually, after realizing that the youth care worker wasn't about to give up on him, he started to acknowledge her presence and even have short conversations with her. On the base of these conversations, he was given the opportunity (by the court's order) to leave his house for a couple of hours a day, in order to join the HILA Program.

Michael agreed to join the program not because he wanted to study, but because he was looking for an opportunity to leave the house (House arrest is often considered a much more difficult experience than juvenile jail because as time elapses, the arrestee's friends stop coming for visits and the teenager finds himself all alone).

Later on, Michael started learning Geography, a subject he really enjoyed. A close connection was built between Michael and the teacher, and with time, Michael was given the permission to spend more time outside his house. On the one hand, Michael was making great progress when he also started studying more subjects besides Geography, but on the other, he had experienced a serious fall back. He was arrested by the police because he had left the house to hang out with his friends (and not attend his classes). Consequently, he was sent to Abu - Cabir, which is considered a central prison in Israel that occupies difficult inmates. The youth care worker was the only one who went to visit him in jail – an act which had impressed Michael greatly. This became the turning point in Michael's

progress. He began to realize that the youth care worker was there for him and was always looking for his own good. As a result, he had completely changed his attitude toward his studies, completed some other professional courses, which eventually allowed him to complete 12 years of education, and above that he had taken his final exams.

Michael achievements were taken into consideration when he was tried in front of a judge. Later, he also started taking the required procedures of joining the military – something that was previously out of the question.

This story illustrates the common route of dropping out of school, joining a criminal sub-culture and living on the edge of society. With the massive help assistance and guidance of professionals (like the youth care worker, the teachers at HILA and others), Michael was able to return to a normal lifestyle and improve himself both personally and professionally.

The fact that all the professionals involved saw Michael as an individual, who possesses emotional and cognitive needs, has made this remarkable change possible.

Needless to say, joining the military in Israel is considered a common practiced phenomenon and by joining the military Michael was able to be a part of the consensus and get the final closure he had always wished for – from " EXCLUSION to INCLUSION "
