

**Toward the Second Decade of Implementing the Law of
the Rehabilitation in the Community of Persons with
Mental Disabilities: Risks, Challenges and Opportunity
for a Change in Mental Health Services in Israel**

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The objectives were to assess the risks, challenges and opportunities of the Israel Law for the Rehabilitation in the Community of Persons with Mental Disabilities (RMD) as it enters the second decade of its implementation, and to discuss initial evidence of its effects on the mental health service system in the country. By international standards, the RMD law represents progressive approaches to the treatment and care of persons with psychiatric disabilities.

The study focused on the critical elements of the mental health service system, namely, clients, financial resources, personnel as well as types of services, and the principles governing their allocation and movement within the system.

Findings indicated that as the number of psychiatrically disabled persons receiving rehabilitation services in the community grew, and the budget allocations for these services dramatically increased, a significant reduction in the number of psychiatric beds occurred. However, ambulatory services suffered a setback, and the long delay in approving and implementing the Insurance Reform in mental health, namely, transferring mental health services to general health-care providing organizations, adversely affected continuity of care and the rehabilitation services.

Factors that endanger the viability of the RMD law and its role in bringing about a major mental health reform in the country are reviewed, and issues related to the fact that the system of services has been completely privatized are discussed. Analysis showed that although some of the issues could be dealt with by the

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rehabilitation and the mental health services alone, many solutions depended upon the rehabilitation system's task environment. The paper concludes with comments on what may be necessary in order to protect the RMD law and to facilitate the required changes in the mental health system.