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**Aleh Activity During the Covid-19 Period**

Aleh helps blind and visually impaired people in Israel of all ages, from early childhood to senior citizens. The focus of the organization, though not exclusively, is assistance in education and higher education, with an emphasis on students who have difficulty seeing. In response to the needs of the population we serve, Aleh has expanded its efforts greatly over the past years to address issues such as job promotion in the open market for visually impaired academics, creation and operation of work experience, assistance to the family of blind children and the children themselves, operation of transition programs for young adults leaving the parents' home and graduating from high school towards university, as well as assistance to our alumni who have established families, and so on.

The range of services we routinely offer includes: an audio library, welfare services and emotional support, tutoring and workshops for groups and individuals, social assistance and enrichment, lending computer aids, sports activities and much more.

During the Covid-19 period, we continued full operation, often changing the nature of the activity from face-to-face individual and group meetings to remote meetings with the help of the Zoom program. This pivot assured the safety of all as well as adhered to the guidelines of the Ministry of Health. A few examples of such efforts include:

1. Children with blindness and visual impairment - Utilizing experiential elements on the computer, the mentor remotely assisted his or her assigned child in educational and playful activities. In exceptional cases, based on emotional distress as a result of loneliness or financial distress, face-to-face meetings are held.
2. Students with blindness and visual impairment - As studies for higher education moved to remote learning, individual assistance, such as reading and tutoring, moved to remote as well. We loaned computer aids to students who did not previously have them to assure all students access to Zoom. In addition, we provided technological support as students adapted to using the software.

For individual learning – Two main issues that students faced during this time were the adjustment to new online programs, such as Zoom, in a short amount of time, and loneliness. We were easily able to find teachers and readers who could teach remotely and did not have to travel to the blind student’s home.

Regarding group learning - Advice we gave university teachers on how to teach remotely included reading of the study materials that were delivered to the students, notifying the students who have difficulty seeing about events that occur between the students and the teacher, record the lessons on zoom so that the blind students can review the lesson.

Individual and group learning at a distance created emotional distress for many students and as a result we increased mental health assistance services during this period as well as ran a hotline to address inquiries of people in distress.

1. Elderly - Because of the vulnerability of the population, we adhered to guidelines of working remotely. However, in many cases, the elderly who did not leave their homes suffered not only from lack of food and medicine, but from loneliness and mental distress as well. We raised funds and recruited volunteers who were willing to take a risk and go to the nursing home to assist the elderly with their needs. We also provided this group with auxiliary equipment, especially TMSs, in order to allow them to read independently.
2. Employees of the association - Some came to the various offices scattered throughout the country and provided services remotely and some went to individual’s homes to assist individuals in distress. The strict precautionary measures taken by the people with blindness as well as the workers and volunteers prevented any cases of Covid-19 amongst the people involved - allowing for continuous care throughout this time.
3. Audio library - We transferred audio books to an app on the mobile phone that is accessible to people with blindness.
4. Sports activity - Group activities were stopped. The team coaches continued to provide remote training for independent sports activities.

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