Bethany Trueblood: Israel 2017 - Day 3

6/26/2017

Today we learned about child welfare in Ultra-Orthodox communities in Jerusalem. We visited an emergency child center in an Ultra-Orthodox neighborhood and heard from a social worker about the cultural complexities of treating a child who has been traumatized while respecting the religious beliefs of the child’s family. While there can be many dividing factors between parents and the workers due to religious or political beliefs, the social worker said she tells parents they need to have the perspective that they are on the same side, working together to come up with what is best for the child. “It’s us for [your child],” she said.

We also visited Ramat Shlomo, the Social Services Department for Ultra-Orthodox, where we heard about some of the challenges their workers face when helping Ultra-Orthodox (“Haredi”) families. One unique characteristic that both the emergency center and the social services department described was that the Haredis look to their Rabbi to dictate what is right and what is wrong. When it comes to getting mental health treatment, Haredis are much more willing to go if their Rabbi tells them they should go. This makes it important for social workers at these services to build good relationships with the Rabbis that can be mediators between the social workers and the communities they seek to serve.

Not all of the social workers at these services are Haredi, but they work diligently to honor and respect the people they help. This was an important take-away for me as I was shown the impact social workers can have when they are willing to set aside their own beliefs and biases to help find the best solutions for their clients.
- Bethany Trueblood, MSW Student