



Footsteps Theory of Change

PURPOSE: To support, affirm, and advocate for individuals and families who have left, or are contemplating leaving, ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities in their quest to lead self-determined lives; and to create conditions that further their agency and independence

ISSUES, NEEDS, & CONTEXT

Those who seek to leave an ultra-Orthodox community face complex social, emotional, economic, and legal obstacles

Many of them have minimal English literacy and are unfamiliar with the basics of twenty-first century life

Their needs include mental health, community, housing, employment, and education

For parents, the risks are profoundly deepened by the likelihood of legal battles and the threat that they will lose their children

Footsteps provides essential services as well as access to resources and networks for these constituencies, for whom the challenges and sense of isolation are great and the resources scarce

FOOTSTEPS STRATEGIES

1. Identity development (clinical services)
2. Economic empowerment (educational support, career services, housing stability, crisis funding)
3. Family justice and legal counseling
4. Community building, network weaving, and leadership development
5. Public awareness and communications
6. Partnerships for change and field building

TARGET CONSTITUENCY

Exiters (people leaving, considering leaving, or have left) from ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities in metro NY and across North America

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

1. Members develop a stronger, authentic, and more integrated sense of self
2. Members gain tools for independence and financial stability, including employment and education, to reduce likelihood of poverty or housing insecurity
3. Members establish new relationships and peer support
4. Court cases of members seeking child custody advance to fair, compassionate resolutions
5. Some exiters take on leadership, advocacy, and creative roles in the broader community.

COMMUNICATIONS OUTCOMES

1. Potential members learn about services and programs and gain a sense of hope
2. Increased public conversation, nuanced understanding, and acceptance of those leaving ultra-Orthodoxy
3. Informed discourse about the clash of modernity and fundamentalism
4. More individuals express support for Footsteps and contribute financially
5. State and local officials have a better understanding of issues affecting members' struggles for self-sufficiency

SYSTEMS OUTCOMES

(through partnerships with others)

1. Ignite incremental change within ultra-Orthodox communities to make circumstances better for those who remain as well as those who choose to leave
2. Reform laws, policies, and social/cultural norms to reduce obstacles for those who leave (e.g., family court, schools, sexual abuse)
3. Increase public funding and support for people as they exit ultra-Orthodox communities

VALUES: Respect, inclusive community, integrity, self-determination, continuous improvement

ULTIMATE IMPACT: A world in which all who choose to leave insular religious communities can live self-determined lives, have the resources to flourish and thrive within them, and are fully supported in achieving the educational and cultural acclimation and skills necessary for a richly integrated life