

Helping children with special needs

Imagine your child has a learning difficulty - and you can't afford the special care she needs to be helped and to thrive. An estimated 1,000 children in

Five years ago Malka (not her real name), now 13, began to have epileptic seizures as a result of her damaged brain; in time, they became dropping seizures,

pedagogical help, occupational therapy and speech therapy and the hiring of shadows to accompany them during the school day.

"The expense was very draining."



Montreal-area Jewish day schools are in just such a situation. They have speech and language disorders and they aren't receiving the help they need - public-sector services often have waiting lists of a year or longer - or if they are, it is an enormous financial drain on their parents. Private services are expensive.

The Mar-Kin Foundation is giving these children access to help they need and helping Montreal-area families like Malka's. Malka, one of five children, attends a religious girls' school. As a result of brain damage at birth, her fine motor and gross motor development are delayed as well as her learning. She has needed occupational therapy and speech therapy, which her parents have paid for. Both work within the Montreal school system and their insurance has underwritten the cost of most of these treatments.

which caused her to fall and, by last autumn, they had become frequent enough that Malka needed a shadow often during the school day. She needed the shadow when she was in her regular classroom and when she was walking to the resource room, where most of her learning takes place, and to recess. To cover the additional cost of a shadow, Malka's father sometimes had to borrow money.

"The money came out of our pockets," said Malka's mother. "The expense was very draining." It was with relief that they learned from the Jewish Family Services social worker assigned to Malka's school that a fund had been set up for children with needs like hers.

More than 50 children are now benefitting from additional assistance in such areas as specialized psycho-social and

The future of the special fund is not yet certain, though. And for each request JFS is able to meet, there is one the agency is unable to consider for lack of funds.

For information on how to contribute to a special needs fund, contact **Amanda Blatt, (514) 342-0000.**