

## **The return to the "new normal"**

### **Non-formal education center Amaltea (Valencia)**

*After almost three months of quarantine, the Amaltea socio-educational center managed by the Itaka-escolapios Foundation in Valencia is organized to connect in person with the children and youth it serves. It may not be in the same way as before, but an effort must be made to give as much normality as possible to an already excluded population.*

Since the restrictions on being confined in the houses have been lifted, the Amaltea Day Center team is modifying its work to serve families and boys, girls and adolescents in a more face-to-face way, and not so telematically, as it was being done so far.

Since mid-March and until now, we have been organizing and adapting our work to the emerging needs of the families we work with. First, we begin by knowing in depth the reality of the moment in the more than 30 families we serve and each of our kids. This problem led us to organize weekly shifts for the distribution of food and hygiene items. Today we also offer to sustain the most deprived situations when families cannot receive aid, or those they receive are not enough to survive. We also organize these shifts to distribute educational material, distribution not only of homework and support tasks but also of school supplies, stationery, games, and crafts to make confinement more bearable.

During this time, we created a "virtual day center" to offer recreational alternatives for all of them. A way to also make ourselves present from what we like and we are good at doing, the educational: photographic challenges, various workshops, sports ... all to normalize an unusual situation.

We have served families to submit applications, to hear their fears, and to feel that they were not alone. We have been very attentive and attentive to the school needs of our children and adolescents. Calls, videoconferences, accompanying in their duties, mediating and coordinating with the schools ... The psychosocial care sessions started to have continued, yes, through a screen or a call. Our work tools have changed what has not prevented us from pursuing what we have been doing.

The days have passed, and the phases of lack of confidence also. From the "Conselleria d'Igualtat i Polítiques Inclusive" a "de-escalation plan" (return to normality) was proposed to us, which we adapted to our reality and which the General Directorate for Children and Adolescents validated.

"The whole team is looking forward to starting. We needed activity with the kids, seeing them and speaking personally, not through a mobile phone; time is used much more", highlights Marta, one of our educators.

Currently, our work is much more face-to-face. Families and their sons and daughters ask us to see each other, and we are trying to attend to them little by little, respecting safety regulations. The team maintains attention to families in the offices, in shifts of a maximum of four people.

"That way, you can work well! It is great to meet again with the children, both they and we are thrilled to see each other again, and direct contact is appreciated, "says Jesús, educator of one of the groups of medium-sized children.

We have begun to accompany two minors in face-to-face school tasks in small groups. We intend to increase the number of participants little by little so that we are facing this new situation

calmly, safely. At the moment, too, we continue with the “tele-homework” sessions with some people.

Antonio, 11, one of the minors who come to Amaltea in the afternoon, is precise: “I wanted to go back, at home all day it was very boring and more, with so many duties.” Martina, 5, also wanted to start again with Amaltea: “Also, we missed the friends here and the educators!” He says.

We continue to support families in their food, hygiene, and educational needs, which they cannot yet approach, and we try to add up little by little.

The forecast is to enjoy a summer full of activities, although organized in a very different way. If everything goes as we expect, the months of June and July we will already propose actions according to the temperature, with its beaches, swimming pools, workshops, excursions, and camping. Of course, whenever it is possible to comply with safety regulations!

We continue!