

RECONFIGURATION AND INTEGRATION OF THE SYSTEM OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

Partnerships for Every Child

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Context

- In the years 1998-2000, EveryChild charity brought to Moldova the idea and necessary competence for the development of Foster Care and Family Support Services, and the system of prevention of child separation from family, piloted in 5 regions.
- Approved regulations and plans for the budgeting of these services by the Raion Councils.
- The residential system reform launched in 2007 – an impulse for the development of alternative care services.
- Approved the social services Law in 2010 – brought clarity in the classification and division of services on administrative levels.
- UN Guidelines on alternative care of children produced in 2009 – focusing on reconfiguration of the child care system.
- Social services unevenly represented in different regions and on different levels of service provision.

Methodology approaches

- Building services around the child and the family.
- Reconfiguration of the child care system, through the introduction of prevention and early intervention services, reducing the ratio of residential services and increasing the representation of family support and alternative family-type care.
- Development of support systems for services.
- Ensuring family and child participation in the prevention and solution of problems they face.
- Inclusion of prevention into the work practices, and elimination of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Evaluation of services for children and families (2010):

- Primary needs of children (educational, social, health, security, social integration, prevention of abuse and domestic violence) covered at the minimum level;
- The support provided to the family, as quantity and quality, does not ensure a potential of resistance to difficulties and the family's capacity to survive;
- probleme de acces la servicii sociale pentru copii și familii din medii rurale, servicii insuficiente / inexistente, cerințe complicate pentru confirmarea eligibilității (în viziunea beneficiarilor);
- Difficulties with access to social services for children and families in rural environment, insufficient/inexistent;
- Insufficient information about social services, problems related to the identification and evidence of beneficiaries;
- Lack of a common framework of complex assessments of child's and family's needs, with coordinated planning and implementation of multidisciplinary interventions;
- Imperfect system of case revision and closure;
- Lack of inefficiency of inter-sector collaboration;
- Lack of prevention programs;
- Lack of policies on child participation in decision-making and on protection of children in different services.

Developing support strategies for regions:

- Developing, extending, and revising services, based on needs assessment results, focusing on prevention programs;
- Clear delimitation of relations between the community and regional levels;
- Attributing to the CSAS the role of the fundamental service for the community level and key agency in the referral mechanism;
- Incorporation of supervision, monitoring, and evaluation components into all social services;
- Child participation in decision-making: understood, accepted, and implemented at all stages of development and social and education services provision;
- Inter-sector collaboration: condition of effectiveness of the entire child protection service.

Services consolidation and development

Foster Care Service

- Support in the development of different forms of FC placement: emergency, respite, short-term, long-term;
- Consolidation of FC Service in the context of deinstitutionalization (involvement of CSA);
- Training program at the national level (all regions);
- Development of the Guide;
- Revision of the Regulation and minimum standards of quality;

Family Support Service:

- Development of the Regulation and minimum standards of quality;
- Consolidation of services in the context of prevention of child's separation from family and child's reintegration;
- National training program (in all regions);

CSAS:

- Consolidation of the service, mechanism of supervision;
- Consolidation of regional and local multidisciplinary teams in the context of deinstitutionalization.

Local Child's Helpline (Făleşti și Ungheni) – increasing the identification.

Sculeni temporary placement Centre

Results

- Reconfiguration and integration of the child care system, through the introduction of prevention and early intervention services, reduction of the ratio of residential services and increasing of the number of family-type services.
- Post-reintegration services to support children and families, family-type services, and prevention of child's separation from family.
- LPA with ownership for the development of social services and systems, ensuring their continuing and sustainable activity.
- LPA competent to strategically plan efficient care and protection of children, through the development of the integrated system of social services for children and families; making decisions based on the child's best interest, giving priority to family services.
- LPA aware of the fact that the quantitative development of the social services system should be a well-balanced process. Indicators of quality here are not the number of services, but the process of beneficiaries' receiving services.

Results

- Services developed based on the approved normative and methodological framework.
- Support systems to ensure the quality of provided services were developed:
 - Professional supervision, to achieve the growth of professional skills of the service providers;
 - Incorporation of child protection policies into the work methodology of child-oriented services, to protect children from any form of abuse and neglect;
 - Consolidation and use of Gate Keeping Commission as a tool to prevent child separation from family and child institutionalization;
 - Incorporation of inter-sector cooperation into the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of services for children;
 - Development of a common framework of book-keeping and monitoring;
- Impact indicators – i) fewer beneficiaries reach regional services; ii) the number of petitions reaching regional authorities reduced (from 10 petitions per week to several per year).

Lessons learned

- Successful implementation depends on the created partnerships: at the national and local levels.
- The restructuring of the child care system requires a shift in awareness and ownership.
- The integration of social services into a single system was made with the use of mechanisms: **complementary actions** (to intensify effects), **priority setting** based on levels of interventions (primary/specialized), forms of involvement (prevention/intervention), and **restructuring** (from residential to family-based services).
- Planning of services should base on the identification of the needs of groups of population, efficiency of existing services, identified goals, and necessary and existing resources.
- Quality of the developed services: ensured by the creation of support systems.
- The place and the role of the community social assistant in the process of child deinstitutionalization and reintegration (complex assessment of the family, family support, participation in the development of the IEP, post-reintegration monitoring) – important factors that contribute to the process of reintegration.
- The status of the service/process of the child's family reintegration is determined by their role in the child care system.

Recommendations

- Consolidation and improvement of the quality of family-type and family support services, focusing on the implementation of the methodology of service delivery, monitoring and evaluation.
- Development and implementation of family strengthening programs, to prevent separation of the child from the family, and to achieve the child's reintegration, focusing on prevention and early intervention.
- Identification of ways to stimulate the development of FCS in all regions of the Republic of Moldova.
- The implementation of the child care system reform in new regions should start with study visits, meetings, round table discussions with key persons.
- Local authorities should be aware of the fact that in the period of the child care system restructuring, the financial costs double, which may create difficulties and block the process of the services development.
- Involvement of mayors in the residential child care system reform.
- Support of the residential care system reform by national NGOs that will spur and monitor this process.
- Transfer of knowledge and competences in the development of social (FC) and educational services (inclusive education) from NGOs to government structures interested in the child care residential system reform.

**“We are responsible not only for what we do,
but also for what we do not do.”**

Moliere