

The future begins in the family



Newsletter of the Project “Protecting children of Moldova from family separation, violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation”, implemented by Partnerships for every child in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family and the Ministry of Education



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Read page 8

Draft law on special protection of children has been presented to ministries for review

Read page 7

“Child’s helpline” – a trustful service

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Read page 10-11



Psycho-pedagogical assistance services in all raions

The Ministry of Education will create psycho-pedagogical assistance services within all raion educational departments. According to Valentin Crudu, head of General Department of preschool, primary, and secondary mainstream education, these services will employ psychologists, psycho-pedagogues, and other specialists, who will provide psychological consultation in schools where there are no psychologists. Up to the present, such services have been created in nine raions.

This information was communicated at the meeting of the Club of Investigation Journalists, discussing the issue “Equality of chances in education. How do we ensure it?”

The goal of the psycho-pedagogical assistance service is to ensure and provide the rights of children to development,

education, protection, community integration, and socialization. Another goal of the service is to develop, promote, and implement programs to prevent the children’s entry into difficulty, including residential care.

Psycho-pedagogical services will be provided to children facing developmental, cognitive, learning difficulty and their families. This type of services will also be addressed to the specialists working with children in difficulty, to educational institutions, local public authorities, health-care institutions, social services, etc.

It is planned that the specialists acting within this service provide a wide variety of support, counseling, and education services to persons who have children in care: parents, legal representatives, foster care-givers, parent-educators in family-

type homes, other persons. The service will be funded from the raion/municipal budget, donations, grants, etc.

In the context, Mr. Crudu pointed out that the inclusion education model is currently piloted in 20 raions of the country, covering over 1600 children from residential care who have been integrated into families and community schools. “We need to change our attitude to persons with disabilities, and give them a chance to develop. There is resilience, some parents don’t accept the idea of children with special needs study together with their own children. There are teachers who don’t manage to give enough attention to these children, because they need special approach”, mentioned Valentin Crudu.



Draft law on special protection of children has been presented to ministries for review

Draft law on special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents was presented to all ministries for review. The Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family is currently developing a set of amendments to the legislation that will be presented for approval along with the draft law.

According to Viorica Dumbraveanu, head of family protection and child's rights protection department of the Ministry, it is imperative that this document is adopted.

"There are very many children in residential care, as well as in family-type homes and in foster care, whose legal status is not yet determined. Regretfully, we have to admit that there are very many children who were forgotten by the authorities once they had been placed into these services. However, they need to be monitored, assessed, discussions with the parents need to be held, to see if these children's situation has changed in time. We have to admit here that we still have some drawbacks in the system", said Mrs. Dumbraveanu.

The law on special protection of the child will, first of all, provide uniformity of definitions. Thus, for the first time, terms like "children at risk", "children separated from parents", "situations of neglect", etc., will be defined, and forms of abuse will be described.

At the same time, the draft law very clearly identifies the roles of the guardianship authorities in child protection, sets the methods of identification, evidence, and assistance of children at risk.

If the document will be adopted, it will compel local and territorial guardianship authorities of various administrative territorial units to cooperate in child protection, by receiving and sharing information and documents necessary for the identification, evaluation, assistance, and determination of the child's status.

The projects intends to adjust policies and practices protecting children left without parental care, to the standards



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of the UN Guidelines for the alternative care of children – a document adopted by the UN General Assembly on the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of Children. The Republic of Moldova is among the first countries in the region that adhered to this international document.

The work group for the modification of the legislation includes specialists from the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, and representatives of the civil society, academic environment, and experts in legislation.

Experts of the Partnerships for Every Child consulted the opinion of central and local authorities and social assistance and family protection departments, and came up with proposals for the eliminations of drawbacks in this area.

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Evaluation of the National Strategy and actions Plan within the residential child care system reform was the main issue discussed at the meeting of the Residential child care system reform and inclusive education Steering Committee, held on 18th September.

Valentin Crudu, head of Ministry of Education's General Department of preschool, primary, and mainstream secondary education, talked about the priorities of state authorities in the process of extension of the residential child care system reform. Mr. Crudu said that in 2007, when the reform was launched, there were 67 residential institutions in the country, with 11500 children in care. By 31 May 2012 the Ministry of Education reduced the number of institutions under its subordination to 55, offering care to 5576 children. Within the recent five years, over 6400 young people left residential schools.

Mr. Crudu also mentioned that in these five years, capacities were built of about 4200 practitioners and decision-makers (local public authorities, teaching staff, social workers, foster parents, educators in family-type homes, etc.) in residential childcare system reform.

During 2007-2012, 18 residential institutions were closed, and about 1200 children returned to their families or alternative family environment. Valentin Crudu also talked about the use of the assets of these residential institutions. Thus, in the former auxiliary school in Alexandru Ioan Cuza village, Cahul raion, the Community Health Center was opened, in the building of the former baby home in Cupcini village, Leova raion, a Maternal Center was created, Ungheni residential school for orphans and children left without parental care was transformed into an educational center, the auxiliary residential school of Sculeni village, Ungheni raion was re-

organized into temporary placement center for children at risk, while the building of the auxiliary residential school in Calarasi currently houses a kindergarten.

7 out of 18 residential institutions that had been closed, were transferred into state public property, and are subordinated to the Ministry of Education. Their transfer into the property of territorial administrative units was approved by their raion councils.

In 2012 six residential institutions were closed: 3 Residential schools for orphans and children without parental care – in Cupcini (Edinet raion), Napadova (Floresti raion), and in Cazanesti (Telenesti raion); 3 Residential auxiliary schools – in Marculesti (Floresti raion), Calarasi town, and in Sarata Noua (Leova raion). Another institution – baby home in Cernoleuca (Donduseni raion) is in the liquidation process.



At the same time, social services for orphans and children left without parental care were created at the raion and community levels.

On 23rd May the Government approved the Regulation of financial resources retargeting within the residential institutions reform.

The regulation foresees that the re-targeting of financial resources starts with a moratorium to new placements into the institutions, and with the reduction of the number of institutions beneficiaries, before the process of their liquidation starts. It also provides for the reduction of money transfers to the residential institution and increase of funds to social assistance, under the principle "money follows the beneficiary".

Before the regulation was approved, the resources budgeted for social services for children were mainly targeted to residential institutions. Overall cost per child in a residential institution may amount to 40 000 lei per year. However, direct costs per child in a residential institution are very modest, because enormous amounts of an institution's budget are consumed for the buildings running costs and salary payments.

According to an order of the Ministry of Education, approved in April 2012, 23 residential institutions, including 9 boarding schools for orphaned children and children left without parental care, 10 auxiliary boarding schools, 3 special boarding schools, and 1 health-resort boarding school will be closed between 2012 and 2015. Currently, four residential institutions are under reorganization.

The Moldovan Government's inclusive education development program places inclusive education among educational priorities for 2011-2020. This document intends to ensure inclusion conditions to children who were reintegrated from residential care, and to provide mainstream schooling to children with special educational needs.

The national strategy of the residential system reform started in 2007 and closes in 2012.



Research: only one out of five children with disabilities have access to school

Children with disabilities have very low participation in mainstream education. Last school year only 3 148 children out of total 15 321 children with disabilities were enrolled in school. The majority of the enrolled children attend special schools or receive home education, according to a research performed by the National Council for the Child's Rights Protection and UNICEF Moldova.

The law stipulates that if the child can't attend mainstream school, a teacher must visit him at home. However, according to the recently performed qualitative research, things are different in most cases. If the teacher comes home, it's not for long. In addition, teachers don't have necessary skills and methods to educate children with disabilities.

The lack of physical facilities (including in schools), of staff trained to provide inclusive education, and deficiencies of the methodology, equipment, and tools "compel" the parents of children with disabilities to choose a residential institution for education.

The results of the research show that a part of teachers consider that the integration of children with special educational needs means shifting the core of

attention, and, consequently, disadvantaging other children. Other teachers believe that the integration of children with special educational needs imposes budget constraints to educational institutions. There is a group of teachers who report marginalization and exclusion of children with disabilities who attend mainstream schools, while others speak about intolerant attitude of the population towards children with disabilities.

Despite this, teachers appreciate themselves as having low level of awareness regarding adequate pedagogical strategies for children with disabilities. Professionals consider that to include children with disabilities into mainstream education it will be necessary to achieve several goals: change the school program (differentiate and adapt); revise textbooks; train teachers; provide physical access facilities; modify the evaluation system.

Unlike teachers, children are more open to accepting their peers with disabilities (40% of children fully agree, 30% partially agree, and 28% fully disagree). Nevertheless, even in this case, the level of acceptance is for children with physical rather than with intellectual disabilities.

“Child’s helpline” –

Within six months since the launch of the “Child’s Helpline” service, it became a well known and useful service in Făleşti raion.

Not only children, but also adults call it each time when a case of violence or abuse of children is discovered or suspected. The Child’s Helpline is a child protection service with the mission to collect reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children, to provide telephone consultation, and to intervene in emergencies, involving a team of specialists.



Iraida BÎNZARI,
depute head of Făleşti raion:

“Providing the Child’s Helpline service, we want to reassure the children and adults of the fact that they are heard and listened to, and that there is somebody who can give them a solution of their problems. We truly believe that this service will become efficient, as it is a logical continuing of the activity of the Advisory Boards of Children, where the problems children face are identified by their peers.

To make sure that people are informed about this service, during the previous school year, the local project coordinator visited all communities of the raion, organizing trainings for teachers and pupils. Such trainings were also organized in kindergartens, for educators, parents, and children.

Făleşti raion authorities consider that the main beneficiaries of this service are children from vulnerable families, and children left without parental care.

In present, there are over 500 children in Făleşti raion, whose both parents live and work abroad. Very often these children don’t know, whom to ask for help or advice, when they have a problem”.

Emilia CIOBANU,
*main specialist
in child’s rights protection:*

“When we talk about violence against children, we refer in most cases to physical violence. However, this phenomenon comprises a number of forms, including sexual, verbal violence, abandonment, emotional, medical neglect, etc.

According to a research performed in collaboration with Partnerships for every child organization, most professionals faced difficulties at estimating the dimension of the phenomenon of violence against children. Thus, most of them tend to reduce the dimension of the problem. In most cases, when talking about abuse and violence against children, doctors, school staff, and other specialists refer to physical abuse alone, and don’t know that abuse has often multiple forms.

The results of the research showed that domestic abuse is caused by external factors, such as socio-economical situation, and internal, such as dysfunction of the family, low level of education, lack of parental skills, inter-family relations, etc. Methods of child control and discipline pass from one generation to another. Thus, if a child is exposed to violence, they are likely to behave in the same way to their own children as adults.

Very often parents aren’t even aware that they admit a form of abuse and neglect related to their children. For example, they don’t give the child enough food, don’t buy clothes, don’t call the doctor when the child falls ill. Among most frequent causes of neglect is the



absence of living and education conditions. Many children have to live in cold, and their homes lack elementary living conditions.

When cases of abuse and violence are identified, the Prosecution office and the raion Police Commissariat are informed. They involve and investigate all the cases. The social assistance authority identifies such cases and evaluates the situation of the family and the children, so that the problem is solved and the children are provided the best form of protection”.

a trustful service



Elena MARDARI,
*Child's Helpline officer within
the organization
"Casa Sperantei" [Home of Hope]*

"The Child's Helpline service works since April 2012, and scores of adults and children have called since then. Most of these calls reported intentions of school abandonment and physical abuse. In some cases children needed psychological consultation. There are cases when we are asked help to prevent a suicide attempt. The center "Casa Sperantei" has resources to provide psychological support, children who face problems are supported by groups of specialists.

The project team is made of seven persons who attended training in Chisinau and participated in a study visit to Bacau, Romania.

All calls we received are registered. Most of them are made in the morning – between 9.00 and 10.00. Most frequent callers are adults who read about the Child's Helpline in the posters displayed in their communities, administrative buildings schools, and police offices. The social assistants distributed posters about this service to all families that have children. We also gave to people small calendars that contained information about the Helpline, including the phone number. We hope that in the future the number of calls will increase.

We react to all calls. If we see that psychological consultation is needed, we invite the child and the parent(s). If a problematic situation or abuse case is reported, we refer it to specialists of the social assistance and family protection department. The social assistants take over the cases and solve them in collaboration with the police, schools, local authorities.

We had cases when specialists called us to report abuse cases".

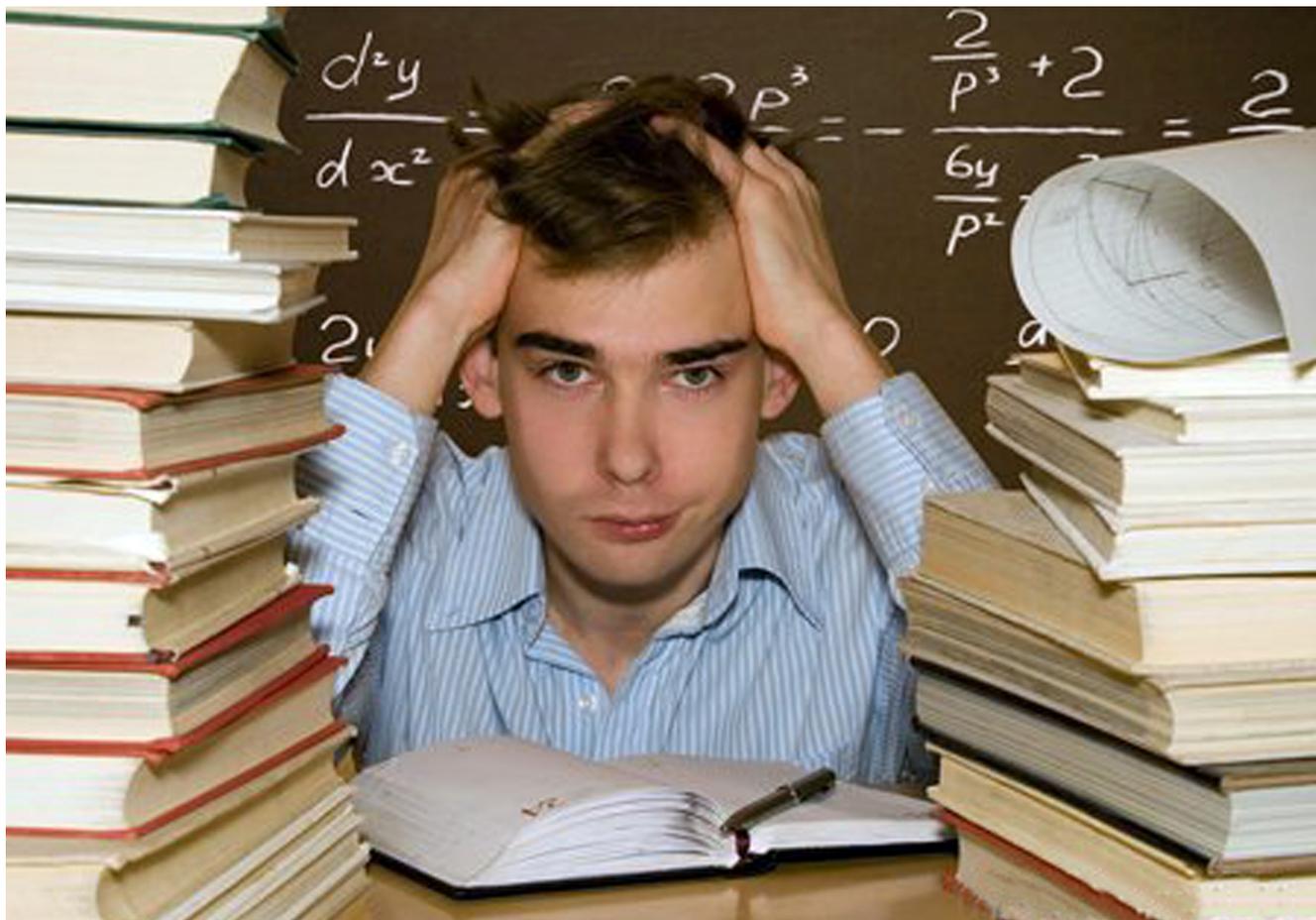
Lidia SEMENCIUC,
*mayor of Năvîrneț village,
Fălești raion:*



"Local public authorities collaborate with all institutions that act in the best interest of the child – we have meetings to discuss separate cases, or we organize consultations to solve problems of children and teenagers, to make sure that all cases are registered and tackled.

The Child's Helpline is a substantial support both for the authorities and for the families and children. This phone number is displayed in the mayoralty and in all public places in the village. We have serious discussions with the parents, and if they accept to have treatment, to stop consuming alcohol, then they may have a chance to restore their family. Children from families in difficulty are placed into centers in Glinjeni and Risipeni villages, and into other alternative services, at least for the time their parents need to solve their problems. We had a case when a mother accepted to follow alcoholism treatment, to have her child back into the family from foster care. She stayed in a medical center, received treatment there, and when she returned, she restored her family".





Life after boarding school

Every year, hundreds of 15-16 year-old young people finish residential schools where they were raised and educated. Even though they obtain their much-desired independence, many of them don't know how to use it.

According to statistical data, this category of young people is the most vulnerable to unemployment, discrimination, human trafficking, and other abuses. Most human rights researches show that these persons make the category who need long-term assistance and also long-term integration strategies. According to the Ministry of Education, 17% of total around 800 young people who finished residential institutions this year decided to come back home, while the others enrolled in lyceums and vocational schools.

Virgina Rusnac, expert from the Ministry of Education, says that young people who choose to continue their education in vocational or technical schools,

are supported by the Government and non-government organizations. Pupils who are orphans or are in guardianship, upon leaving residential school, are provided one-off payment of 5 000 lei. When finishing a vocational or technical school, or specialized secondary school, or higher education institution, they are provided additional payment of 10 000 lei. The latter is given only to orphans. Other residential school-leavers can't expect government support, although many of them come from very poor families.

Children with mental deficiencies from auxiliary residential schools can further study one year in a vocational class.

"Auxiliary institutions support the child's educational pathway, because if a child has a profession, he has better chances for social inclusion", said Virgina Rusnac.

The results of a research performed by UNICEF show that about 40% of residential school-leavers become unemployed, while the unemployment rate among the age group of 15-24 year-olds is 15,4%. Compared to young people who grow up in family environment, twice as many residential school-leavers choose to pursue education in vocational schools, but eight times less of them go to higher education. Simultaneously, as the study reveals, the risk to end up in trafficking for these young people is ten times bigger than in the case of their peers who live in families.

Within the recent five years, 6 500 young people finished a residential institution subordinated to the Ministry of Education.