

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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Respite placement – supporting families that raise children with disabilities

Eight families raising children with disabilities, from Chisinau Municipality and Orhei raion, are benefiting for the first time in our country of respite foster care placement. This type of placement will allow the parents that raise children with disabilities, to have some time of respite, when they will be able to solve certain health or family problems they face.

According to Anna Palii, foster care expert at Partnerships for Every Child, respite placement can last up to 45 days per year. Respite foster care will be provided to children under 18 who have any type of disability.

It should be noted that the placement itself is preceded by a matching process between the child, his family, and the foster parents. Thus, the family where the child is to be placed will find out all the details referring to the child and his needs. Ann Palii says that one of the conditions is that the relation between the child and the birth family is maintained during the entire placement. During this time, the child is informed about the goal, duration, essence of the respite placement, and when he is going to return to his biological family.

The service is regulated the national level by the Foster Care Law that stipulates several types of placement, including respite. However, it has not been fully implemented in the Republic of Moldova up to the present.

The launching of the respite placement was preceded by two researches –international and in-country. In the first research, experts of Partnerships for Every Child intended to identify and analyse models that other states are developing to support families that raise children with disabilities. In the



second one, performed in Moldova, the intention was to estimate the real situation and problems faced by families that have children with disabilities. It was stated that these families' situation is critical. In all cases, one of the spouses cannot be employed because they have to take care of the child, and the other parent assumes the role of family bread-bringer. Often, parents can't even go to the doctor, because they have to stay permanently with the child.

The first respite placement beneficiaries were selected based on applications submitted by families that have children with disabilities. The foster care-givers were selected within a competition, when they were provided training to interact with a child with disabilities and different health-related problems.

A new training course was organized on 29th October-2nd November, for general and respite foster care applicants.

Authorities are developing a mechanism of social services procurement

Local partners and main decision-makers, international experts from Great Britain, Ukraine, Poland, and Bulgaria, participated in the workshop “Social Services Procurement”, organized by the National Participation Council, in partnership with the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family. The goal of the workshop was to present international positive practices in social services procurements and discuss step-by-step actions to develop a specific mechanism of social services procurement in the Republic of Moldova.

At the workshop, the concept of the social services procurement mechanism was presented, that is currently discussed at the technical work group of the MLSPP.

The Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family previously produced the social services Book– a normative act that groups into categories social services that can be provided at the national level within the social assistance system. The Social Services Book is new in the Republic of Moldova, and it will be used in the development process of social services system for all providers, both private and public. The Book defines the structure and contents of the service, in line with its minimum standards of activity.

At the same time, the social services Book is a first step for the mapping of social services, which means the inclusion of the names of the social services providers, their official address, types of services they provide, their beneficiaries and number of places available for other beneficiaries.

Apart from this, the Book ensures the unification of the social assistance terminology. Up to the present, very many social services of this type have been developed, but different names for them were used by different local public authorities. The Book is the first step to the systematization of social services, and it also includes approximate lists of staff currently employed in these services. In what follows, unified payrolls will be developed for social services, and the mechanism of social services procurement will be created.

Social services provide protection to persons in difficulty, who are not able to overcome their crisis independently. Social services are provided to prevent marginalization of these persons and their social exclusion.

Social services for families include foster care, family-type homes, day-care centers for children with disabilities and for children at risk, etc.

The Social Services Book was developed by an extended group of experts, including public officers from the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, representatives of social services providing NGOs, and development partners.



Cross-sector cooperation to eliminate violence against children

The role of educational institutions in the provision of child security and protection from any form of abuse and neglect, and the need to collaborate between all specialists in-charge with child protection was discussed at a work meeting at the Ministry of Education held on the 29th of October.

Heads of Education Departments, school headmasters, and schoolteachers were informed about methods of identification, reporting, and informing of the child protection authorities, and about emergency protection acts in case of imminent risk for the child's life and health.

Challenges like the lack of relevant specialists in schools (school psychologists, medical assistants, persons in-charge with the children's security), the need to organize extra-school activities, the lack of a mechanism of collaboration between law-enforcement agencies, social assistants, school authorities, medical assistants, were also discussed at the meeting.

The minister of Education, Maia Sandu, talked about the role of kindergarten/school in providing a secure and protective environment to the child. "Education institution is the place where the child spends the longest part of the day, and the things he learns there, and the way the child communicates there, the way he is treated there, should be an example for the child and other environments he interacts with. We will react to all signals and reports, and we will encourage teachers, children, parents, and generally, all citizens, by all possible means, to report all suspicious or confirmed cases of ill-treatment of children", added the minister.

The participants of the meeting discussed the cross-sector cooperation mechanism of assistance and monitoring children – victims and potential victims of abuse. The project was developed by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in collaboration with a number of international organization and NGOs. The authors of the document intend to ensure efficient cross-sector cooperation in the process of assistance and monitoring of children at risk and exposed to various forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and trafficking, in line with national and international legislation.



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**Maia SANDU,
the minister of Education**

Advisory Boards of Children evaluated the foster care service

Fostered children now feel much better than before their placement. Now they can attend school regularly, they are no longer exploited in hard work, not forced to beg, and are involved only into activities that help them learn life skills. Being in foster families, children enjoy respect, care, love, here they have better living conditions. Few of these children had hot meals, rooms of their own, or parental love, before they were placed into Foster Care.

Due to these conditions, children develop, have possibility to participate in various school and extra-school activities, to be appreciated, feel loved and protected. These are only some of the conclusions of monitoring and evaluation report of children in foster care, performed by the members of the Advisory Boards of Children (ABCs) in Falesti, Ungheeni, and Calarasi raions.

Members of ABC visited over 80 children in foster care families. The monitoring and evaluation process consisted of several stages. The children had a number of trainings in the beginning, where they learned what Foster Care is, what the principles of this service's organization are, had numerous meetings with specialists of Social Assistance Departments, in-charge with this service. The ABC members discussed in detail, how this service is provided, and how children get to be placed here. Later on, they had several trainings, to practice questioning skills in interviews with FC beneficiaries.

The conclusions of the research were systematized and presented to decision-making specialists at the raion level.

The recommendations given by the authors of the research include



the fact that the child, depending on his/her age, is announced about the foster care placement. Where possible, the child should also know the cause of the placement and its duration. According to the authors of the report, this information will give children more confidence about their future.

It was also underlined that the teachers, especially class head-teachers in the children's community schools should be informed and

trained to ensure more efficient integration. This will contribute to the prevention of abuse and discrimination of children placed into foster care.

Apart from this, the authors of the research consider that it is imperative that foster parents fully obey the child foster care placement procedure at the child's placement. The discussions with the children revealed that this procedure is not much respected.

All children from the Republic of Moldova should have equal chances in education

*Interview with Valentin CRUDU,
Head of General Department of preschool, primary,
and secondary mainstream education
of the Ministry of Education*

- Mr. Crudu, how do you appreciate the national inclusive education development program? How many children have already been integrated into schools due to this program? What are the objectives for the future?

- Inclusive education means that all children from the Republic of Moldova should have equal chances and access to mainstream education. There are still 21 specialized residential institutions, called auxiliary schools, where somewhat more than 3 thousand children with mental disabilities study. The inclusive education development program for years 2011-2020 appeared with the help of the non-governmental sector, of organizations supporting the Gov-

ernment of the Republic of Moldova to promote a new approach and give equal chances to all children in mainstream school. This program obliges us to take a different approach to persons with disabilities, and, first of all, to accept them and give them access to education, but also to create possibilities for them to obtain a profession, enabling them to support themselves. In this sense, the normative framework was developed, as there had been nonexistent. In present, the model of inclusive education is piloted in about 20 raions of the Republic of Moldova, covering 1604 children in 291 mainstream education institutions. Till recently these children attended various special institutions, and we are very glad that today they go to school in their own communities.



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- How are the teachers prepared to interact with children who have special educational needs and to contribute to their school and social integration?

- Before 2011 there were discussions in the Republic of Moldova only about the need of support teaching staff for children with disabilities. There are in present over 100 educators in schools with inclusive education practices, who work to help children cover the material within their own intellectual and physical potential. We went even more ahead, and we developed the Individual Education Plan. It provides mainstream educational program for children with special needs, where the teacher can adapt curriculum, based on every child's physical and intellectual development. In 2012, the first 39 children with special educa-



tional needs finished secondary school based on individual tests.

Beginning with 2012, the pedagogical universities already introduced the module of inclusive education into the program of future teachers' initial training, so that every person who intends to work in the educational system knows certain techniques and methods of inclusive teaching. We are talking about equal and fair approach to each child.

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- *The ministry previously announced the educational environment about the existing opportunity to create psycho-pedagogical services aimed at supporting children with special needs in their integration into school and community. How many raions have such structures, and when will we have them working on the entire territory of the country?*

- Psycho-pedagogical services will be created within all raion education departments. Psychologists, psycho-pedagogues, other relevant specialists will be employed, to provide psychological consultation in schools that do not have their own psychologists. Up to present, psycho-pedagogical services have been created in nine raions. They are provided to children who have development, cognitive, learning, and other types of difficulties, and to their families. This service will also be addressed to specialists who work with children in difficulty, educational institutions, local public authorities, health institutions, social services, etc. It is planned that the specialists working in this service provide a wide variety of support, consultation, education services to persons who have children in care: parents, legal representatives, foster care-givers, parent-educators of family-type homes, other persons.



Advisory Board of Children representatives participate at an international event

Representatives of Advisory Boards of Children from Calarasi and Falesti raions participated at an international event "Training of children and young people from alternative care", on October 18-24, 2012.

The event held in Sofia, Bulgaria, gathered young people from the Netherlands, Malta, Great Britain, Finland, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, and Kenya.

Natalia Semeniuc, expert in child participation, said that during four days, young people from alternative care learned to become trainers, enabling them to promote in the future ri-

ghts of children who are in placement. The participants had the goal to create an international platform and establish sustainable partnerships at the international level.

During the following days, 20 young people – the first "disciples" of the young trainers – joined the event. Thus, the information learned during the training was implemented in practice.



Foto-simbol

Lenuta regained her childhood

Until recently, Lenuta, a five-year-old girl with blond hair and blue eyes, didn't know what it means to live at home. She didn't know how it is to have loving parents, toys, nice clothes, and tasty food every day. Ever since she remembers, she has been living in a residential institution, and the notion of home was as distant from her, as the planet Mars.

In the home of Mrs. Maria Volosciuc, foster parent, the girl regained her childhood and started it all over again, enjoying every day simple, but extremely important things that could have left a true enigma for her, should she have stayed in residential care.

Twice a month Lenuta and her foster mother go to see the girl's two elder brothers, who are still in the residential school. Mrs. Volosciuc told us that she insisted that Lenuta maintained relations with her biological brothers, so that they continue to be a family. The children's father died and their mother has incurable disease.

Encouraged by her new family, Lenuta makes significant progress every day, and the foster parents are happy with every new invention of the child.

"She sings, dances, shows puppet theatre to us. In a word, we are never bored since she came to our home. Now we are learning letters and figures. I'm very glad that she's so smart and gets very quickly all new information", says Maria.

Mrs. Volosciuc has the profession of accountant, and she decided to become foster care shortly after her biological children went abroad to work and study. Having left home alone, the spouses felt the need to bring back to the house

a child's voice. Very soon they applied to the Municipal Child's Rights Department, and after several trainings and monitoring visits they saw their dream true. They virtually fell in love with Lenuta, from the very first moment they saw her. Although the girl adapted with difficulty, the foster parents' love and patience made them all attached to each other, and now they only regret that they haven't been together all that time.

In the courtyard smoothed in green plants and flowers and in her bedroom, Lenuta feels like in a true kingdom of childhood where she doesn't lack anything: she has a swing, and a bicycle, and toys, and friends – several playful kittens.

The family replaced the girl's parents. The foster care-givers are doing their best to make the child happy. The girl has everything she needs, but what is most important – she feels love and care that her new parents give her unconditionally.