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Child and family protection strategy

The draft child and family protection strategy for the Republic of Moldova, 2012-2020 was finished. The document will be followed by an actions plan indicating the responsibilities of all authorities related to child’s rights protection.

According to Rodica Moraru Chilimar, the strategy will have three general objectives. The first objective focuses on the creation of necessary conditions for the raising and education of children in family environment, and includes the following tasks: to prevent the child's separation from family, to stop gradually the institutionalization of children under three, to continue the residential child care system reform, and to reduce the negative effects of the parents’ emigration on their children who remain in the country. The second objective of the strategy is to prevent and combat child abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and to promote non-violent practices in the children’s upbringing and education. The third objective ensures family consultation, securing the child’s harmonious growth and development.

The process of the strategy development included the consultation of parents, children, specialists and all interested citizens. The process is coordinated by the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family and monitored by the National Child’s Rights Protection Council, with the support of the Prime-Minister.

The strategy is a logical outcome of the residential child care system reform 2007-2011 that registered significant progress in the life of children. There are twice as fewer children in residential institutions than in the beginning of the reform. The children were helped to come back to their biological families or were placed into alternative family-type services: community homes, family-type homes, foster care.

The residential child care system reform will continue its activity to ensure sustainability and intensification of the alternative services development process and their diversification, in order to cover the entire spectrum of children’s special needs, and to implement a sustainable and flexible mechanism of inter-institutional cooperation at all administrative levels, between the systems of social protection, health, and education, aiming to ensure early intervention, prevention, assistance and integration of children in difficulty.
Another service to support family and child

This service is addressed to families with children, and its goal is to support families with children, in the context of children’s institutionalization prevention and taking institutionalized children out of residential care. The families covered by this service will receive government support for a given period of time, said Mrs. Rodica Moraru-Chilimar, MLSPF specialist.

“Family support is a complex service and it is necessary that it is developed at the level of the whole country. This service provides social and material support to families and children in difficulty (obtain necessary documents, find employment, etc.), it also informs and consults the parents helping them to become aware of the risks and consequences of child institutionalization”, mentioned Rodica Moraru Chilimar.

The regulation will be a normative act for local public authorities, covering the creation and development of this service nationally.

The family support and reintegration service is a form of protection that prevents child abandonment, ensuring the child’s up-bringing and development in a family, or returns the child from residential care into his birth or extended family.

The goal of the service is to maintain the child in the family, to prevent child abandonment and placement into residential care, to reintegrate the child from institution into a family, and to support his family reintegration, etc.
Psycho-pedagogical assistance services for children and parents

Local public authorities will create in the near future psycho-pedagogical services for children and parents. The funds for this service were included into 2013 state budget. The regulation of this service will be proposed to the Government for approval.

According to Eugenia Parlicov, consultant at the Ministry of Education, the goal of the service is to ensure and save-guard children's rights to development, education, protection, community integration and socialization. Psycho-pedagogical services will be provided both to children in difficulty – development, cognitive, learning, etc. – and to their families. This type of services will also address to specialists working with children in difficulty, to educational institutions, local public authorities, health-care institutions, social services, etc. The beneficiaries will have a broad range of support, consultation, educational services.

One of the goals of the service is to produce, promote, and implement programs preventing the children's entering into difficulty, situations leading to institutionalization.

At the national level, the republican psycho-pedagogical assistance service will be created, as a replacement of the republican medico-psychopedagogical commission.

The psycho-pedagogical assistance service will subordinate to raion departments of education, youth, and sport, and will have up to 10 staff-members.

Up to the present, psycho-pedagogical services were created in nine raions of the republic.
Project steering committees meetings

The latest meetings of the project’s steering committees in three pilot raions summed up the achievements made till present.

Members of steering committees and special guests participated in the meetings, discussing the project’s details, making certain conclusions and recommendations, based on the analysis of the situation compared to three years before, when the project had started.

The participants invited to the meetings – heads of raion social assistance departments and education departments listed the achievements in child and family social protection. Besides, the children’s family and community reintegration was discussed. A special issue was school inclusion of deinstitutionalized children, especially those with special educational needs.

Mariana LUPASCU, Projects Coordinator at ”Partnerships for Every Child”:

“Raion-level residential institutions were closed in all three raions. Three republican-level institutions continue their activity; Cornesti (Ungheni) Obstructive lung disease center for children, Falesti residential school, and Hirbovat (Calarasi) special residential school for children with hearing deficiencies. Significant progress was registered with Falesti institution – it was transferred by Government decision into the subordination of local public authorities.

As for Cornesti institution, we will insist on stopping children’s entry into the institution and on improving conditions for the children remaining eligible for placement. Ideally, even if the children cannot stay with their parents, they could possible be placed into foster care. As facilitator of the residential child care system reform, we tried to organize a meeting between the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, and the Ministry of Health. The goal of this meeting is to identify solutions of the children placed into this institution.

In order to identify the best solutions, the representatives of our organization visited the children’s birth communities, to study the family situations and reintegration possibilities. We will try to reintegrate the children into their biological or extended families when this is possible. In other cases we will find alternative solutions for children.

I also want to mention that together with the Ministry of Education, we are currently identifying solutions for the reform of Hirbovat (Calarasi) school for children with hearing deficiencies. The goal of these transformations is to provide the best training and development conditions to all children from this institution, so that upon leaving it, the children can easily reintegrate into the society."
The future begins in the family
Inclusive education is successful in Calarasi schools

The process of school inclusion of children with special educational needs started this school year at the raion level. Initially it covered 71 children taken from residential care and integrated into mainstream education and family care.

101 children from various special educational needs – sensor deficiencies, severe physical challenges – study in Calarasi institutions currently.

According to Elena Gonta, head of raion department of education, the children currently study at school under modified curriculum. Individual educational plans have been developed for children with special needs, following an order of the education department.

"The monitoring of mainstream educational institutions revealed that the children’s teams were consolidated, under the guidance of school teachers, and the children with special needs managed to integrate. All children attend school", said Elena Gonta.

This year, 13 who are following individual school curriculum will finish secondary school: 2 of them will not sit exams, 5 will be examined according to IEP, and 6 – according to mainstream curriculum.

"School inclusion ensures the pupils’ progress, offers satisfaction to the parents, and is a pedagogical success. In order to secure efficient inclusive education and provide equal development and education chances, the process needs to be monitored and facilitated", mentioned Elena Gonta.

Inclusive education is part of the National Education Program 2011-2020, developed and implemented by the Government to secure equal chances of all children to child-friendly education.

According to the inclusive education development program, all children, regardless of material and family situation, residence environment, ethnicity, native language, gender, age, religious belief, health condition, learning skills, criminal record, have the right to equal conditions of qualitative education.

There are at least 16 000 children with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova, according to national statistics. This includes about 3 500 children under 7. The disability ratio increased from 17.9 per 1000 children in 2008 to 19.1 per 1000 children in 2009.

The number of children with various degrees of psycho-physical incapacity, aged under 16, increased from 12 000 in 1995 to 12 500 in 2008.
Falesti residential school becomes history

Falesti residential school was transferred from central to raion authorities by Government decision. In the coming weeks a special commission will work on technical issues of the institution’s closing down. Individual care plans have been developed for the children who are currently placed into this residential school.

Mariana Lupascu, project coordinator at Partnerships for Every Child, said that there are 32 children in the institution currently – 7 of them are from Falesti raion, and 25 come from other raions. Their reintegration into biological or extended family was not possible.

Falesti guardianship authority evaluated the reintegration possibility of the children coming from other raions, and gave official status to the children who remained without parental care. Thus, 13 children remained without parental care after their parents were deprived of parental rights; 5 children are orphans, 2 were abandoned by their parents, and 13 come from vulnerable families.

All 32 children were included into pre-university education in Falesti. According to individual care plans, some of the children will return to their biological families (and receive family support), others will be placed into foster care or family-type homes.

The children coming from other raions will be provided assistance within social services in Falesti raion, until the guardianship authorities from their home raions are able to include them into their services. It should be mentioned that there are 7 community centers in Falesti raion that can provide temporary placement.

In 2011 Partnerships for Every Child provided technical support in social assistance to Falesti authorities, reorganizing residential institutions. One of the implemented projects’ component was the reintegration of children into biological and extended families, with direct support of beneficiaries to prepare the families in the reintegration process. The cases were discussed by the Commission for the Protection of the Child in Difficulty (Gate-Keeping Commission).
Children’s helpline

The Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family will launch a helpline for children in difficulty

The children’s helpline will be launched this year and will be available to all children in difficulty or in risk situations. The line will be operated by specialists who, if necessary, will help the children to report information to competent authorities, for solution.

According to Mrs. Rodica Moraru-Chilimar, representative of the Ministry, quality standards of the services have already been developed. This is the service’s work methodology that regulates the reception of calls, primary evaluation of the situation, collection of statistics, provision of information and telephone consultation, creation of support groups.

The standards are currently submitted for review. The helpline will be a free service, open to all children and parents, care-givers, other persons who identify children in risk situations.