

Families For Children

Program Newsletter

December 2007

UNFORGETTABLE IMPRESSIONS

On November 3-11, 2007 one more study tour to Eugene, Oregon, USA, took place. This time the participants were those Oblast and local leaders, who make decisions and influence the development of the child welfare system.

The visit's schedule was full. During one week the participants got an insight into best practices of work with vulnerable children and families. Getting familiarized with achievements of both governmental and non-governmental organizations working in the area of child welfare was invaluable.

While we are just beginning to talk about public-private partnerships in Ukraine, the study tour participants saw with their own eyes that such partnership of governmental and non-governmental sector, active involvement of volunteers and community makes a strong foundation for the development of efficient programs supporting families and children.

The participants' feedback proves that the study tour was a success, the participants learned a lot and will bring a lot of benefit to their regions.



Study tour participants in Eugene, US

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Babiy N. I., Director, Cherkassy Oblast Center for Social Services:

In our times of advanced informational technologies when mass media can transfer us to any part of the world it's hardly possible to surprise a person. But the trip to Eugene, Oregon, made me discover a different America, not the one we already know from books and Hollywood movies, but the one where real people live their real lives, work and take care of their families and children, and share a lot of their warmth and generosity with others.

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► “What was your biggest impression?”, my colleagues asked me today when we discussed my visit to the US. And indeed, what was it?

Maybe, it was that elderly woman we met at Relief Nursery when she came there to give children warm clothes she knitted with her own hands. “I have so much free time”, she said as if apologizing for her generosity.

Or maybe it was the story of the Holt family who having 6 birth children had strength and desire to become a family for 8 more children from Korea? It is truly a wonderful start for creating a humanitarian organization like Holt International!

This trip was absolutely useful from the professional standpoint.

During one week in Eugene we were exposed to the experience of 7 organizations working with children. A new thing that we learned was early intervention system designed to help children and families that we saw at Birth to Three and Relief Nursery. Making Parenting a Pleasure and Healthy Start programs were very interesting to our group because such models are very needed and can be made possible in Ukraine. It was very interesting to talk to Prof. Dan Close from Oregon University who found time for three meetings with us and introduced to us the concept of binary thinking and impact of traumatizing factors on young children. It gave us more profound understanding of those problems we see in children, and it is extremely important for teachers and social workers working with children to understand the nature of such problems.

Special thanks to the study tour organizers for the given opportunity to see the work of the Juvenile Court in the US. The issue of introducing juvenile justice in Ukraine has been discussed

for a long time already, and now we had a chance to see how important that is.

We have unforgettable impressions of visiting Holt International organization and of people’s hospitality.

Last day of our stay Eugene gave us a gift of a warm and sunny weather. It was a day-off and dozens of cars were heading to the ocean. And we longed to see that beautiful mountain road again that we were marveling at a week ago.

I guess if I come to the US again some day I’ll have other impressions too, however, the first and the brightest one will always be green forests and mountains of Oregon, neat houses of Eugene and wonderfully pleasant and kind people we were lucky to meet there.

Nikolayenko L. O., Director, Kyiv Oblast Center for Social Services:

The study tour to Eugene organized by Families for Children Program impressed me tremendously.

My preconceived ideas of the United States and American way of life crushed.

I saw picturesque land and met pleasant people who are always ready to help. Active involvement of community and broad participation of volunteers in social service delivery gave me several ideas about how to mobilize community in Kyiv Oblast. It was very interesting to see the models of work with families and children. Every day I was learning new approaches and forms of work that I didn’t know before.

Sometimes I felt like saying: “How simply and efficiently this or that or-

ganization runs! How come it never occurred to us to do the same!”

The main outcome of my trip is that now I’m convinced that it’s necessary to develop juvenile justice system in Ukraine, establish alternative social services including those provided by NGOs. That is why it is critical to develop the standards for social services provision.

Before I came to the USA I wasn’t taking seriously the importance of developmental activities for infants and young children. Now I have no doubts about it whatsoever. Professional terms like case management or case management plan acquired a new meaning for me.

I believe my task today is to promote and disseminate new ideas and approaches in social work: increase community involvement by engaging volunteers; initiate programs for young children, especially those under 5 ; train specialists to teach parenting skills classes to parents etc.

It is especially important to develop legislative initiatives in the child welfare domain so that the new social technologies become a reality.

They say “one picture is worth a thousand words”, and that is why I’m very grateful to Families for Children Program for granting me an opportunity to gain new experience, new impressions which will definitely help shaping up the strategy of social work with children and families in the Kyiv Oblast.

Piesha I. V., Associate Professor, Chair of Social Pedagogics, Senior Lecturer, National Teachers’ University named after Dragomanov:

My impressions from the trip – opportunity to view America not from a ►►

► *TV screen in the news but as it is. Americans are friendly people ready to help a person in need. One can feel that helping those in need is not just a slogan for them but an intrinsic need, a part of their lifestyle. This is evidenced by volunteers getting engaged into NGO work, these people donate their free time and skills to help resolve social issues in their community.*

The experience of NGOs proves that having on staff people who are personally familiar with a certain problem is very worthwhile. In all the organizations that we visited we met people who experienced different difficulties - former drug users, individuals who went through family crisis in their lives, received help, and were able to overcome their problems; now they help other community members who got into similar life fix. In the be-

ginning they work as volunteers, and with time they receive professional training and become on-staff employees. Such people understand clients' needs not from theory and they themselves are a proof that positive changes are possible.

Speaking of unforgettable impressions it was a juvenile court hearing. You might hear a lot of the good things about it but seeing it work is a totally different thing. It was the most forcible argument for juvenile court to be introduced in Ukraine. On one hand we see efficacious legislation, and on the other – respect of a child's and parents' dignity.

Regarding families in crisis, the difference from Ukraine is that in Eugene both the Department of Human Services and NGOs see family preservation as their primary goal and aim

every effort at helping a child stay with his/her biological family.

All techniques demonstrated to us at various organizations are science-based which deserves praising. Science-based approach towards identification of social challenges and needs of specific categories of clients helps to justify the need for certain social programs as well as develop efficient mechanisms and implementation techniques.

On one hand such practices can be regarded as not very cost efficient because research requires funding. On the other hand it allows introducing efficient mechanisms of social support provision which in my opinion saves much more money than the Ukrainian practice of introducing unified templates of social work all over the country not considering specific needs of certain client groups. ❖

TO BE LEARNING IN ORDER TO BE FINDING FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN

Support to children and families affected by HIV/AIDS remains one of the FCP priority areas. Over the past few years a lot has been done in Ukraine to ensure the child's right to be raised in a family. Today, 281 family-type homes raising 1,786 children, and 1,293 foster families raising 2,024 children are functioning in Ukraine (as of October 1, 2007). Centers of Social Services run foster parent information-recruitment campaigns and offer training on a regular basis. Nevertheless, placing in families children with special needs including HIV remains a problem. The reason for that is overall lack of public awareness about the needs of HIV-positive children as well as the lack of proactive steps on behalf of the government to provide these kids with family-based care. The reality is that these very children need parental care and love the most. In

our previous issues we featured the FCP efforts of finding families placements for HIV-positive

children from Makiyivka Baby Home. Today, 13 of them are removed from the institution and



Work in small groups

TO BE LEARNING IN ORDER TO BE FINDING FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN

► placed in family care. Words can hardly describe the changes we saw in those children. They have thrived emotionally and physically, expression in their faces changed. We sincerely hope that the first foster families for HIV-positive children will serve as a model of kind and thoughtful care for children with special needs and will promote a change in people's attitude towards orphaned children and children deprived of parental care.

The training module on "Care and Support to Children with HIV" developed by Families for Children Program also contributed to the expansion of family-based service to include HIV positive children. The

training module was approved by the Order of the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport in July this year as mandatory training for those foster parents who will be taking in care children with HIV.

In December, Families for Children Program together with UNICEF and in collaboration with the State Social Service and the Ministry of Health Ukraine trained 20 multidisciplinary trainer teams to conduct on-site foster parents training. Each of the teams includes a professional from the Center of Social Services, a pediatrician from the AIDS Center and a representative from a local non-governmental HIV-servicing organization. For a lot of

the participants that was not only professional training opportunity but also a chance to meet one another and get to know what kind of work their colleagues from other public and non-governmental organizations are doing. Pediatricians and infectious disease specialists learned about child welfare services, social workers came to better understand the needs of children and families living with HIV, representatives of NGOs realized that there is a real possibility to join their efforts with those of public organizations. All 20 regional teams developed their future action plans to recruit and train parents for those children with HIV who currently do not have a family but are in need of one. ❖

RELIEF NURSERY MODEL IN UKRAINE

Our newsletter has already introduced our readers to the history of Relief Nursery model development. To remind our readers, this model of supporting families in crisis that has been successfully working in the US for 30 years is now being piloted in Ukraine. The FCP Child Welfare Task Force is observing and evaluating the first steps in the implementation of Relief Nursery services in Ukraine. The result of this effort will be the development of practical guidelines on the implementation of services for at risk/in crisis families with children 0-6 years of age. Besides, at the beginning of next year FCP will complete adaptation of Make Parenting a Pleasure training curriculum developed by Birth to Three, another organization based in Eugene, Oregon. This positive parenting curriculum has been successfully piloted in Ukraine, and will be offered both to parents served by Relief Nursery implementing agencies as well as all

other parents willing to improve their parenting skills.

In response to the growing interest in implementation and dissemination of this model on part of social services providers the FCP conducted a dissemination workshop. It took place in Uman on November 21, and was attended by Program partners from pilot regions who are either serving or planning to offer services to families and children in crisis. It is exactly such families and children that Uman center Peliustky Doviry (Petals of Trust) works with and this is where the workshop took place.

Peliustky Doviry Center was established at the beginning of this year by Uman City Center of Social Services at the premises of a local kindergarten under support from the FCP. Mission of the Center is providing comprehensive services aimed at strengthening high-risk families and keeping their vulnerable

young children safe and healthy. The package of services includes early intervention program for children at the Center, parenting skills training, and support to parents during home visits.

Following the overview of the original Relief Nursery model and review of its replication experience in Ukraine the participants of the workshop discussed practical ►►



Participants of the informational meeting were interested to see classes for children at Peliustky Doviry Center

- implementation steps in detail, namely: selection criteria for children and families to enroll in the program, physical set up and equipment needs, staffing, schedule for therapeutic classes for children, importance of home visits, group classes for parents.

In conclusion, participants representing both public agencies and non-governmental organizations were invited to participate in special-purpose grant competition “Developing Model of Services for Children and Families in Crisis”. FCP grant funding will allow initiate provision of comprehensive services and support service delivery at the start up stage. Six organizations submitted their grant applications and all of them were supported by the FCP Program Committee. Grant award and orientation meeting will take place in January 2008.



Communication by playing

Next year in addition to the grant support for new projects, the Families for Children Program will internship at the Relief Nursery in

the USA. A series of training will be also conducted in Ukraine for professionals who will be working with families and children. ❖

THE FOURTH OPEN FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN'S GRANT COMPETITION

In October-November 2007 Families for Children Program held a fourth open grant competition. **Goal of this competition was ensuring the child's right to be raised in a family through prevention of a child's separation from her/his family, development of family-based types of care for orphans, children deprived of parental care and children with special needs, vdeinstitutionalization of children and supporting their integration into the society.** The projects to be supported under the competition were supposed to be implemented in two Program pilot sites: Gorlivka, Donetsk Oblast, and Bilgorod-Dnistrovsky rayon, Odessa Oblast.

The target group included at risk or in crisis children and families, institutionalized orphans and children deprived of parental care, chil-

dren with special needs and their families, and also children affected by HIV/AIDS. The grant competition was aimed to meet specific needs of the two pilot sites, and support the implementation of the Local Action Plans in the area of comprehensive family-based care development. Both public agencies and non-governmental organizations serving children and families were invited to participate in the competition. The expected results included a decrease in the number of families at risk of child removal from parental care and decreased number of children removed or abandoned; decreased number of institutional placements; increased range of services for vulnerable children and families.

In response to the competition announcement, Families for Children Program received 17 grant applications. Upon the first phase of

the competition, proposal evaluation by the Program expert committee, seven proposals were selected and recommended to the Grant Committee for review as those that met the competition criteria.

The Grant Committee meeting to discuss the applications and make the award decision took place on December 7, 2007. After very participatory and detailed discussion of each grant application the Committee made a decision to support six projects. The Grant Committee members provided their comments and recommendations regarding the proposed activities under each project. All of them will discussed with the applicants during program and budget negotiations and will be incorporated in the grant agreements. The implementation of projects will start as soon as January 2008. ❖

TRAINING OF TRAINERS ON FOSTER CARE

On October 23 – 30, 2007 the training of trainers on foster care was held in Kyiv. This training was organized and conducted by FCP in collaboration with the State Institute of Family and Youth. This is the fifth in the series of trainings supported by Families for Children Program to promote professional development and strengthen the capacity of the partners in pilot sites. The training was attended by the staff of the Centers of Social Services, Departments of Children and a group of NGO professionals who are currently recruiting foster families for HIV-positive orphaned children and children deprived of parental care. All training participants received state certificates allowing them to conduct training of prospective foster parents.

Below is the feedback from the training participants.

Valentina Kharyshuk, Social work specialist, Uman rayon center for social services:

I started working as a specialist at Uman Rayon Center of Social Services not so long ago, thus, I felt I didn't have sufficient theoretical knowledge or profound understanding of the legislation in the area of foster care. I was happy to receive an invitation from Families for Children Program to participate in the training.

My expectations were met completely. The capital hosted a group of professional practicing in various areas of social work (psychologists, lawyers working at Social Services for Families, Children and Youth, professionals from Departments of Children, Centers of Psychosocial Support to Children) from Kyiv, Donetsk, Gorlivka, Bilgorod-Dnistrovsky, Cherkassy. This allowed reviewing the issue of foster care from different perspectives, exchanging experience, discussing ways of overcoming common challenges that social workers face regardless where they work. Communication between the training participants was

open and easy thanks to the highly qualified and experienced trainers who have in-depth knowledge in the area of foster care: N.M. Komarova and I.V. Piesha. The training topics covered various aspects of foster care services including requirements for prospective foster parents and the role of a social worker. I was deeply moved emotionally when we had role plays that are to be used for training prospective parents. This training form helped me to understand and feel what a child might be going through when placed into a "strangers" family where parents themselves might be inexperienced.

A new piece of knowledge for me was challenges of foster families caring for HIV-infected children as these children are in need of support and understanding on part of the society the most. Additional information from the colleagues having hands-on experience will allow apply various approaches to handling different life situations in future.

Participants of the training asked a lot of questions, and received complete and competent answers. A very important component was friendly day-to-day interaction between the participants, we made friends. The last day of the training became a starting point in building trainer teams who will be working together in future.

Olena Rubtsova, Child Specialist, Cherkassy Regional Branch of All-Ukrainian Network of PLWH:

I would like to share my impressions of the TOT.

Just imagine: grown-ups (managers, social workers, psychologists) got together and plunged down into the world of childhood, something forgotten so long ago. They recalled their childhood dreams, hopes, joys, and at the same time their insults and injuries, tears and disillusionment. It was both interesting and sad. It turned out that being so different we are

so much alike when we go back to the times when we were children. We all cherished the same dream of our parents being together, loving each other, understanding and never betraying us. We could feel what abandoned children feel. It was very painful, and it strengthened our desire to help those kids to find caring and loving parents even more. When writing these words I keep thinking of our Cherkassy Baby Home. These wonderful little angels lack love and care so much, they cling to you every time they see you and never want to let you go.

I am happy I am involved in the development of foster care, and I'm grateful for the knowledge and skills this training provided me with. I have heard many times that it would be good for birth parents not just for foster parents to attend such trainings too. I agree with that. When we were going through the topic of Disciplining a Child all of us who have children realized how many mistakes we are making, and we are now determined to correct them before it's too late.

I would also like to share my joy with you. Finally our foster mom, whom we helped through a lot of challenges on her way to get licensed as a foster family, brought home two girls from the Makeyevka Baby Home. Definitely, it's not an easy time for them, they still have to do a lot of paperwork, and bringing two more HIV-positive kids to Cherkassy might cause some people's resentment. But does it matter compared to what one could see in the children's eyes glittering with happiness! They have been taken out of the institution, they are needed, hugged and kissed every day, they have a mom!

Sometimes our work drains us out to the extent you just want to leave everything behind and start doing something totally different. But such moments like the happy children's eyes stop us from doing that. It is a powerful incentive, it is a reward. Such moments are the time when I truly feel myself a happy woman. ❖

PROGRAM PILOT SITES COORDINATION COUNCIL MEETING

On December 17, 2007 members of the Local Coordination Councils from the five original FCP pilot sites gathered in Kyiv. The main theme of the meeting was presenting and discussing recent legislative initiatives and steps outlined by the government of Ukraine in the area of child welfare. The main document presented at this meeting was the National Program of Reforming Institutions for orphans and children deprived of parental care approved by The Cabinet of Ministers Ukraine on October 17, 2007. This document clearly states goals,

funding and timelines for the reforms.

FCP program staff introduced the meeting participants to the best practices manual “Deinstitutionalization and Transformation of Services for Children” which provides a detailed description of 10 steps on the way to reforming institutions and developing an alternative system of services for children and families. This manual comprises experience of deinstitutionalization from Central and Eastern Europe and a lot of case studies illustrating both successes and failures.

Invited speaker Galina Postoluk, Executive Director of “Hope and Homes for Children” Charitable Foundation, presented the practical experience of her organization in Makarivskiy rayon, Kyiv Oblast, in reforming services including launching new services and closing down a mixed-type children home.

During the meeting the Coordination Council members received a lot of new information and went home to start drafting their own local plans to reform the institutions and expand alternative services. ❖

HOLT BRINGS JOY

It is the fourth year that Holt International successfully works in Ukraine implementing a USAID Families for Children Program. Holt International 50 year experience in the area of developing family-based care is being applied both on a national level and in the Program pilot sites. Working in Ukraine Holt International also intends to help concrete children and their specific needs. Holt is raising funds through its sponsorship program to support the most vulnerable groups of children: orphans and children deprived of parental care or those who are at risk

of being removed from the family due to their parents’ inability to take care of them. Holt provides necessary support for these children as well as gives them love and care.

Each winter right before the New Year’s Holt brings children a gift of joy: a kid’s party, fun games, an interesting trip, a visit to the circus etc. This year Holt gave a New Year party for children from “Nadiya” (Hope) orphanage, village of Mokrets, Brovary district, Kyiv Oblast. We hope that the children will have pleasant memories and enjoy the presents, delicious food

and a fascinating movie at a huge movie-theater.

“Nadiya” orphanage works with Families for Children Program on the deinstitutionalization project. The orphanage staff have been trained by the FCP and now possess skills in comprehensive child assessment and permanency plan development. Within the last 6 months, 9 children were placed in family-based environment, 27 more orphaned children and children deprived of parental care remain in the institution yet. ❖

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM CONTINUES

In November the FCP continued its series of professional development and capacity building trainings for specialists working in child welfare in new pilot sites. The objective of the training that took place on November 27 – 28 was improvement of basic social work practical skills, namely: child and family assessment, determining risks for a child, developing case management plans, documentation etc. The participants of the training were representatives of Centers of Social Services and Shelters from Bilgorod-Dnistrovskiy rayon, Odes-

sa Oblast, Gorlivka, Donetsk Oblast and Novomoskovskiy rayon, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. To conduct this training Ms. Angie Wharfield, Director of Social Services Program for Eastern Europe and Asia, Holt International, came to Ukraine. Angie has extensive experience of practical social work because for a long time she was working as a social worker at the State Department of Child Welfare and subsequently at a non-governmental organization that was providing social services to vulnerable groups of children and families. The training proved



When training Angie Wharfield uses role play

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM CONTINUES

► to be very interactive, very often the issues tackled yielded interesting discussion. The training participants mastered such techniques of working with families as ecomaps and genograms as well as developing individual strengths-based family intervention plans.

Thus, the goal of the training was not only to master practical skills of social work but initiating change in attitude towards interventions with vulnerable children and families. The main focus was family support, preservation and prevention of child's removal from his/her family.

For Angie Wharfield it was her first visit to Ukraine:

It's interesting to me how I was the person who traveled to Ukraine to "train" staff on social work and yet each time I travel, it's such a signifi-

cant training and learning experience for me, both professionally and personally. As I reflect on this trip, what stands out to me the most, is really no matter how far you travel, no matter how different the culture, language, political or other system is, at our core, we all have the same human needs, for belonging, identity, love, and acceptance. While I was so fortunate to have such a rich experience, with many of those needs so graciously provided by the people I was visiting, the contrast for me is all the people, and mostly children who don't get these basic needs met. It's because of the gratefulness I feel for being fortunate to have so much simply because I was blessed to have a family and a community. I was impressed by the people I met in the training. Their motivation, dedication, and desire to do their part in making a difference in the lives of children and families in their communities. ❖



Angie Wharfield together with the participants to the training «Basic Practical Skills of Social Work»

Activities Planned for January – March 2008

JANUARY

January 15 –
Pre-Award Orientation and Grant Award Ceremony, Kyiv

January 16 –
Training on practical issues of *Relief Nursery* model implementation, Kyiv

LOCAL COORDINATING COUNCILS MEETINGS:

January 22 –
Horlivka, Donetsk Oblast

January 23 –
Bilgorod-Dnistrovskiyi Rayon, Odessa Oblast

January 26 – 28
Training for prospective adoptive parents *Parents in Process*, Kyiv

FEBRUARY

February 15 –
Workshop for local administrations in Program pilot sites *Reform of Institutions for Orphans and Children Deprived of Parental Care*, Kyiv

MARCH

TOT on adoption *Parents in Process*, Date TBD

TOT on Services for Families in Difficult Life Circumstances, Date TBD

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