IREX/ASSISTANCE TO RUSSIAN ORPHANS (ARO) PROGRAM

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International Child Helpline Conference in Romania

On December 3-5, ARO Deputy Director Anna Danilina attended the International Child Helpline Conference held in Bucharest, Romania by Child Helpline International (CHI). Fifteen countries from Western and Eastern Europe were represented at the conference.

Anna Danilina presented a report on behalf of the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children on child helplines functioning on the territory of the Russian Federation. During the conference Anna Danilina also conducted negotiations with CHI and the Child Helpline of the Netherlands about possible joint projects.

Presenters at the CHI conference in Bucharest, Romania

Summary:

In the final month of 2007, ARO provided extensive technical assistance to government representatives, healthcare professionals, and child welfare experts throughout the Russian Federation. ARO consultants conducted educational seminars and study tours on intervention programs for families in the early stages of crisis and young children with developmental delays in Komsomol'sk-na-Amure, Novosibirsk, St. Petersburg, Khabarovsk, and the Tver Region. ARO experts led seminars on support services for foster families and how to evaluate the wellbeing of children living in foster care in Tambov and Novosibirsk. December also saw the first in a series of seminars for future case workers in Novosibirsk.

ARO Deputy Director Anna Danilina traveled to Bucharest, Romania in early December to represent Russia at the International Helpline Conference organized by Child Helpline International. The conference brought together helpline representatives from 15 countries.

ARO continued negotiations with local administrations in its priority regions regarding the implementation of innovative child welfare models and services developed in the framework of ARO.

Komsomol'sk-na-Amure Seminar on Early Family Intervention

ARO held a seminar in Komsomol'sk-na-Amur in the Russian Far East for school guidance counselors on techniques used to identify families at risk of child abandonment at the earliest stages possible and case management techniques on December 3-6. The participants gained practical skills in family-oriented approaches to working with families at risk of abandoning their children.

Study Tour for Tambov Baby Home Administrators

A group of five ARO expert consultants led a study tour to the Konakovsk baby home in the Tver Region for directors of Tambov baby homes on December 6-8. The participants had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the baby home's experience implementing early intervention services and a *Lekoteka,* which provides parents and specialists with games and toys used to stimulate the mental and emotional development of special-needs children.

The baby home directors also studied methods of diagnosing and evaluating the effectiveness of early intervention programs and created a plan to implement early intervention technologies at baby homes in the Tambov Region. At the close of the study tour the participants discussed a program for further training and created a group of specialists to take part in the training.

Study Tour to St. Petersburg Baby Homes

On December 10-14, ARO held a study tour for administrators of Krasnoyarsk Baby Home #3 and Sosnovobor Baby Home to Baby Homes #13 and #3 in St. Petersburg. Over the course of the study tour the participants studied how to successfully implement early intervention services and change the social environment within baby homes. They received consultations from speech therapists, physical therapists, art therapists, psychologists, and education specialists. The participants created a plan to implement early intervention services at Krasnoyarsk Baby Homes #3 and Sosnovobor Baby Home at the close of the study tour.

Family Intervention Seminar in Novosibirsk

Three ARO consultants conducted a seminar entitled "Planning and implementing a system of early detection of and assistance to families at risk of child abandonment" in the Leninskiy district of Novosibirsk on December 11-12. Thirty-three government officials, education experts, hospital administrators, and social welfare experts from the Leninsky district of Novosibirsk took part in the seminar, as the Leninsky district is one of the experimental sites where ARO-developed child abandonment prevention services will be tested.

The study tour participants in Novosibirsk studied the benefits of intervention programs for families in early stages of crisis and observed the operation of a case management system. With guidance from ARO experts, the participants developed a detailed model of family intervention and a preliminary work plan for the launch of the pilot model in Novosibirsk. The participants also agreed upon which institutions in the Leninsky district will be involved in this model.

Tambov Seminar on the Wellbeing of Foster Children

An ARO expert consultant conducted a seminar in Tambov on December 17-18 on how to properly evaluate the wellbeing of children living in foster families. Experts from guidance services for foster families and the *Radi Budushchego Center* (For the Sake of the Future) attended the seminar. The consultant introduced theory and practical skills used in the evaluation of foster children's living situations, including evaluation criteria and social adaptation standards by age group.

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