





## IREX/ASSISTANCE TO RUSSIAN ORPHANS (ARO) PROGRAM



# Foster Family Services in Krasnoyarsk

As part of its ongoing effort to aid Russia as its child welfare system introduces family-based care for orphaned and abandoned children, ARO held a seminar on support services for foster families in Krasnoyarsk on June 3-6. Thirteen specialists from social rehabilitation centers, orphanages, and boarding schools in the cities of Bratsk, Novokuznetsk, Sayanogorsk, and Shelekhov participated in the seminar.



Head of the ARO Expert Committee Antonina Shepina (standing) and participants at the Krasnoyarsk seminar on foster family support services

### **Summary:**

In June, ARO continued to educate and train Russian child welfare specialists and administrators at seminars on after-school activity programs for at-risk children, case management, early intervention for special-needs children, family intervention for at-risk families, and foster family services in Altai Krai, Khabarovsk Krai, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Novosibirsk Oblast, and Tomsk Oblast.

ARO continued to promote HIV prevention programs for high-risk youth and social services for families affected by HIV in St. Petersburg, with a series of seminars on the unique features of HIV-positive clients and on developing prevention programs for vocational school students.

ARO's key implementing partner, the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, was awarded a federal grant of \$87,000 to conduct a project competition and all-Russia conference on family-based care for orphaned and abandoned children.



Activities • Activities

The participants learned how to locate families interested in becoming foster families and properly interview potential families during the screening process. ARO experts also introduced techniques used to train foster families before they take a child into their home.

The seminar explained how to introduce orphaned and abandoned children to their foster families and organize a smooth transition into a home environment. ARO experts discussed problems foster families often encounter and presented counseling techniques to address them. Finally, the participants examined the differences between foster family support services based in urban and rural settings.

### Comprehensive Support to Families Affected by HIV in St. Petersburg

On June 3, 17, and 24, ARO held a series of seminars and trainings in St. Petersburg on HIV-related topics. In the Krasnogvardeysky District of St. Petersburg, ARO experts provided training for social workers as part of the "S krasnoy strochki" project, which seeks to create a system of psychological and social support to families affected by HIV. The social workers were presented with the practical skills needed for working with HIV positive people and organized activities for patients, such as support groups, parent-child clubs, and HIV prevention training for parents. On June 26, ARO provided supervision for the specialists to identify areas for improvement.

Throughout June, ARO consultants led weekly trainings for employees of the Public Social Support Center in the Kalininsky District of St. Petersburg on the psychological aspects of HIV. The experts discussed the AIDS epidemic in Russia, how the disease develops, and the psychological consequences of the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS. The training participants learned how to better work with HIV-positive clients, and organized a class for HIV-positive mothers on how to care for their child, adhere to treatment, and maintain stable family relations. ARO provided supervision for specialists from regional family support services for people affected by HIV.

### HIV Prevention at St. Petersburg Vocational Schools

On June 5-6 and 19-20, employees from local vocational schools and the Methodological Center of the St. Petersburg Education Committee participated in seminars on HIV prevention programs for high-risk youth studying at vocational schools. The participants learned how to organize and implement programs aimed at preventing HIV infection for students using peer counselors. The Methodological Center is currently in the process of organizing a point on its premises where people can come for methodological training in HIV prevention.

# Family Intervention and Case Management in Novosibirsk

Twenty-four administrators and specialists from ARO pilot sites in the Leninsky District of Novosibirsk City and the Iskitimsky and Kuybyshevsky Regions of the Novosibirsk Oblast participated in a seminar on crisis intervention for families at risk and case management on June 6-10 in Novosibirsk. The seminar was the last in a series of educational events intended to provide methodological support to rehabilitative services for at-risk families.



ARO expert consultants conducting a seminar on family intervention in Novosibirsk



ARO experts strengthened participants' professional communication, evaluation, and case management skills. They also reexamined casework techniques covered in previous seminars and discussed how to avoid professional burnout. ARO experts acquainted the participants with monitoring techniques and explained how to close a case. The specialists will use this knowledge as they implement projects to identify at-risk families at the earliest stages possible and begin working with them.

On June 1, 2008, two such social welfare projects are scheduled to launch in the Novosibirsk Oblast: the "Authorized Family Service" project (Leninsky District of Novosibirsk City) and the "Road to the Future: Early crisis intervention and case management" project (Iskitimsky Region of the Novosibirsk Oblast).

# Foster Family Services in Komsomol'sk-na-Amure

On June 16-18, an ARO expert led an educational seminar on support services for foster families at the municipal and village level. Sixteen specialists from Komosol'sk-na-Amure Boarding School #2, Komosol'sk-na-Amure Orphanage #1, and Amursk Orphanage #1 attended the seminar. The participants studied the unique features of children who have experienced trauma to develop practical skills for working with them. The ARO expert then discussed specialized support programs designed specifically for traumatized children living in foster families. These programs are incorporated into the general system of support services for foster families, and help keep foster families together by working to solve misunderstandings and conflicts before they escalate. In 2007, 6,000 families returned the orphaned and abandoned children placed in their care, highlighting the importance of comprehensive support for foster families.

# Family Intervention in Komsomol'sk-na-Amure

On June 16-19, two ARO experts conducted an educational seminar for 24 specialists from social welfare institutions and custody departments of the Central and Leninsky districts of Komso-

mol'sk-na-Amure in the Russian Far East. The seminar introduced participants to techniques used to identify troubled families and work with them at the earliest stages possible in order to prevent child abandonment. ARO experts explained the fundamental principles of case management and how specialists should work with at-risk families to set personal goals and achieve them.

# Social Hostel Seminar in Tomsk

On June 17-19, 12 winners of a grant competition to develop and implement standards of practice for social services held by IREX, in cooperation with the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC) and the Tomsk Department of Family and Children's Issues, participated in an educational seminar in Tomsk. The participants studied standards of practice for "social hostels" (after-school programs for children at risk of being abandoned), which they will implement in five districts of Tomsk.

# Early Intervention Seminar in Barnaul

Due to the immense progress that can be made in a child's development between the ages of 0-4 years old, ARO regularly conducts seminars on early intervention for children with disabilities. On June 17-20, 18 specialists working with families with special-needs children in the Altai Krai took part in an ARO seminar in Barnaul on problems faced by young children with disabilities and the skills that professional caregivers need to effectively work with such children and their families.



Participants at the early intervention seminar in Barnaul



The seminar provided pertinent information about the physical and mental development of children with various disabilities, including hearing, motor, speech, and vision impairments. ARO experts discussed common issues families face as they adapt to caring for a special-needs child and ways to help them through this process. Likewise, the seminar covered training and supervision of early intervention experts. Special attention was paid to the diagnosis of children's disabilities and the process of setting realistic goals for each child based on his or her developmental potential.

Seminar participants will use this knowledge as they implement early intervention at hospitals and baby homes in the Altai Krai. Early intervention, which involves a team approach to the creation of individualized development programs, has proven highly effective in helping special-needs children achieve self-sufficiency and integrate into society.

#### **Upcoming Activities:**

#### July 1-4 (Tambov):

Seminar on early family intervention and case management.

#### July 22-24 (Novosibirsk):

Second international forum of social workers of Siberia and the Far East.

#### July 28 (Tomsk):

Seminar on family forms of care for orphaned and abandoned children.







ARO updates designed courtesy of Elena Vaitkiene: elena.vaitkiene@gmail.com

#### NFPCC secures federal contracts to develop family-based forms of care in Russia

As rates of child abandonment steadily rise, the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC), co-implementer of the USAID-supported Assistance to Russian Orphans (ARO) Program, continues to spearhead innovative child welfare models in the Russian Federation. In recent years, government officials have started utilizing third-sector organizations and experts to find cost-efficient and effective models of abandonment prevention and family-based care (foster and guardian families) for the estimated 742,000 orphaned and abandoned children currently living in Russia. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation and the Federal Agency of Education selected the NFPCC in 2007, and again in 2008, to conduct an all-Russia competition and conference on family-based forms of care for orphaned and abandoned children as part of the federal "Children of Russia" Program (2007-2010), which seeks to improve children's quality of life and health.

In 2007, the NFPCC received 1,497,000 rubles (~\$63,000) in federal contracts to organize the first all-Russia grant competition for innovative models of family-based care for orphaned and abandoned children. The first of its kind in Russia, the NFPCC-administered competition received 83 applications from media outlets, NGOs, orphanages, and regional administrations in 36 regions of the Russian Federation; 14 models were ultimately selected as the most effective and awarded prizes. The competition winners presented their models at the all-Russia conference on family-based forms of care held in Petrozavodsk in November 2007 and participated in an ARO study tour to The Children's Aid Society in New York City in May 2008, where they learned about the US foster care system and forged new partnerships.

NFPCC experts analyzed the applications and project materials received in the framework of the 2007 competition and conference to produce a comprehensive picture of Russia's experience implementing family-based forms of care for children living in state institutions. Based on this information, the NFPCC drafted an analytical report for regional departments of custody and education with recommendations on how to prevent child abandonment and successfully launch systems of foster care for orphaned and abandoned children.

In 2008, the Federal Agency of Education awarded the NFPCC another federal contract totaling 2,050,000 rubles (~\$87,000). The NFPCC will have the distinct honor of conducting the second all-Russia competition for innovative models of family forms of care and the all-Russia conference. This year's competition, to be held in July 2008, seeks to develop systems of family-based care for orphaned and abandoned children at the regional level, with a focus on support services for foster families and the creation of a legal foundation for family-based care. The winning project proposals will be unveiled at the second all-Russia conference in the Moscow Region in November 2008. As the projects are implemented, the NFPCC will provide ongoing consultation and technical assistance to regional authorities to ensure that the quality and effectiveness of the family care services are maintained.

The NFPCC firmly believes that every child has the right to live in a loving family free of abuse and neglect, and its ongoing cooperation with all levels of the Russian government to extend this right to the thousands of children currently living in state institutions is a heartwarming sign that positive change in Russia's child welfare system is underway.

