

IREX/ASSISTANCE TO RUSSIAN ORPHANS (ARO) PROGRAM



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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.



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.

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.



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

