



IREX/ASSISTANCE TO RUSSIAN ORPHANS (ARO) PROGRAM



Fairy Tale School Provides a Safe Place for Kids in Novosibirsk

Earlier this year, sisters Masha,* Yulia and Lena were heading down the wrong path and were not receiving proper care at home. They lived in a tiny one-room apartment in Iskitim, Novosibirsk with their mother, father, aunt and 15-year old brother. Neither parent had a steady income and their brother, Sasha, had been convicted of stealing. The girls did not see a problem with their brother's actions and Masha,

age 12, had also started to steal with the help of Yulia, age 8. Lena, age 7, would insult other children and try to take their money. Their mother often behaved aggressively, both physically and verbally, and the girls were not given any supervision. All the girls had emotional problems and difficulties interacting with other children.

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*All names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

Summary:

In August and September, IREX's main implementing partner for the USAIDfunded Assistance to Russian Orphans (ARO) program, the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC) conducted seminars and trainings as part of wrapping up ARO activities and working towards institutionalization of the services developed within ARO. In addition, NFPCC organized a child welfare conference in Moscow and co-organized one in Krasnovarsk. NFPCC and IREX continued to work towards the prevention of child abandonment by providing child welfare specialists and professionals with effective skills, knowledge and resources.



Program News and Activities • Program News and Activities • Program News and Activities

The sisters' luck started to change when they received an invitation to attend the Fairy Tale School at the local children's library. When Masha, Yulia and Lena first arrived at the library they were amazed at what they could do there, but did not know how to behave properly. They disrupted games, would not listen to the staff and had trouble getting along with the other kids. Masha and Yulia were hyperactive, rude, emotionally unstable and lacked self-control. Lena would cling to the adult staff and try to get more attention from them. Masha was the authority figure for the girls because their mother would punish her if Lena and Yulia did anything wrong. Masha exercised her authority through threats, blackmail, violence and insults. She also tried these tactics with the staff, but the staff responded calmly and she was unable to provoke them.

Although it took some time for the girls' behavior to improve, once it did, they were very eager to be involved in the school's activities and make new friends. Through reading stories about sharing and behaving properly, Yulia was able to show more empathy and, thus, was better able to interact with other students. Instead of being excluded from groups, the other kids wanted to play with her and be her friend. She even finished the school year with good grades. Masha also showed great improvement. After one month of going to the library, she signed an agreement with the staff that at the library she was not responsible for Yulia and Lena's behavior. This allowed her to resume her role as a 12-yearold, rather than being a mother. Masha became more active at school and won second place at her school's poetry reading competition. All three girls took a leading role in library activities and made new friends.

Even though the girls were showing tremendous progress, involving their family was more difficult. Library staff repeatedly invited the girls' mother to the library, but she always refused, claiming she was too busy. Then one day she came to the library in order to look at the girls' artwork. The mother realized that the library was providing a valuable service for her children;

the sisters were always excited to go to classes at the library and were very upset if they were unable to. They also constantly talked about what they were doing there, which sparked their mother's interest. When their mother arrived, Masha, Yulia and Lena happily showed off their work. They were excited to share this part of their lives with their mother.

Work with Masha, Yulia and Lena is ongoing. Each girl was given an individual summer reading list to help prepare them for the next school year. In addition, they will receive extra help and attention at school, including counseling sessions with a psychologist. The library will also continue to serve as a resource and will continue to try to increase parental involvement in the girls' activities. Thanks to the Fairy Tale School, Masha, Yulia and Lena now have a brighter future and a safe place to spend their afternoons and weekends.

The Fairy Tale School was originally funded by the **USAID-funded Assistance** to Russian Orphans 3 Program (ARO3), which is implemented by IREX, but is now receiving funding from the municipal government. It provides social and educational support to neglected children from families at risk of social abandonment through organized afterschool and weekend activities. The children benefiting from the school are generally between 8-12 vears old and come from low-income families. Their parents are often alcoholics and/or unemployed.





Golden Key to the Child's Heart Gives At-Risk Kids a New Start

The Golden Key to the Child's Heart social hostel in Leninsky District in Novosibirsk provides a safe, comfortable place for kids from at-risk families to do homework, receive extra support and feel needed. The program is supported by the USAID-funded Assistance to Russian Orphans Program (ARO), which is implemented by IREX with the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC). Secondary School #66 ran the program for nine months in order to establish a new service for at-risk children in Novosibirsk. Eight boys and two girls from at-risk families were selected to participate in the pilot project. The children were selected because they had behavioral problems at school and some had had run-ins with the law. They also had poor grades and frequently skipped class. The specialists implementing the program attended training seminars with NFPCC experts on educational support programs for at-risk kids before implementing the project.

The specialists created a special room at the school where the students would feel comfortable, needed and safe. At the room, the children had special art classes, were tutored, both in groups and individually, and had individual counseling sessions. In addition, the group would take trips to the theater and go on other excursions.

The kids eagerly attended program events and their behavior started to improve. The students started to attend class more regularly and received better grades. At the end of this year, they all advanced to the next grade. Their relationships with both their other classmates and teachers improved.

The project not only provided the children with psychological and emotional support, but also gave them gave school supplies in order to encourage attendance and participation in school. Three siblings involved in the program often skipped school because they did not have the necessary supplies and were embarrassed. After receiving school supplies and gaining more confidence, the children become more involved in their classes.

Secondary School #66 will continue to provide additional psychological support to at-risk children based on the experience gained through the Golden Key to the Child's Heart program. The staff at the school are thankful for the opportunity to partner with IREX and NFPCC and have learned a great deal from the experience.



Natasha*, age 10, had started to slip through the cracks at school. She lived in an overcrowded apartment with six other people and was not given enough attention. Her house lacked indoor plumbing and she spent most of her free time unsupervised. She often skipped school and was failing some of her classes.

Then she started attending Golden Key to the Child's Heart activities. She became very active in the program and especially like the extra Russian classes. A teacher worked with Natasha individually to help bring out her writing talent. After a few months of the extra support, Natasha entered and won a district poetry competition. She also started to attend class regularly and her grades improved.

The poem below is one of Natasha's winning entries at the district poetry competition.

Spring

The sun sends its bright rays.
And the cheerful call of dripping water.
Spring! Exclaim the trees.
Blooms and smells every day!
Snowdrops bloom.
Spring and the sun sing.
Spring. What a wonderful word.
Spring-this time of year.



^{*}All names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

Early Detection Seminars Held in Tambov

The final stage of training trainers on introducing early detection technologies and case management took place in Tambov in September. The goal of the training was to create a set of tasks to continue development of the system for early detection and share the results of the development process at additional trainings. Through group discussions and brain storming, the participants created a list of necessary things for improving and analyzing trainers' competencies and the training programs. Participants learned how to use "training session notebooks" for planning goals, budgeting time and case management. They also discussed the need to ensure resources for methodological hubs, in order to create successful conditions for organizing and monitoring early detection activities.

NFPCC also organized the seminar "Planning the Development of an Early Detection and Case Management System in Tambov Oblast" for 27 representatives from guardianship bodies, and social protection and public health departments. The participants defined the strategy and developed an action plan for expanding an early detection and case management system throughout Tambov Oblast. Participants listened to presentations on early detection and case management models, discussed their elements and compared them with the system already in place. They also discussed plans for implementing technologies in different districts in Tambov. As a result of the seminar, the next steps in Tambov for expanding the early detection system are:

- Creating an Oblast Coordination Council to develop and introduce early detection and case management models for working with at-risk families
- Developing regulations and the necessary documents for early detection and case management models for at-risk families
- Developing an informational and educational plan for training early detection specialists
- Selecting and training case managers to work in the system and motivating them and
- Creating a system to monitor early detection and case management activities and adjust the practices as needed, ensuring their sustainability.

Family-Based Forms of Care Seminar in Khabarovsk Kray

On September 29-October 1 in Komsomolsk on Amur and Amursk, NFPCC experts led the training "Psychological and Educational Preparation of Foster Children" for 20 baby home workers and representatives of school administrations. The participants learned about preparing children for foster care, including interactive ways of working with kids, and creating family-based forms of care for orphans and abandoned children. The experience of the successful foster care program based at Zyryansky orphanage in Tomsk was used as an example. Since 2002, ARO implementing partner, the National Foundation for



Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC) has been working with Zyryansky orphanage to develop and institutionalize a model for foster family care, which is now being shared and replicated in other ARO regions. The model introduces new methods of developing and preparing foster families and expands the responsibilities of orphanage staff beyond working with the children.

The participants also discussed psychological and educational difficulties that may arise during the foster care process and how best to monitor the system. As a result of the seminar, the baby home workers and school administrators improved their competencies in psychological and educational preparation and monitoring of foster children.

ARO Models Continued in Khabarovsk

The city of Khabarovsk is a leader in preventing social abandonment thanks to its effective interagency cooperation. There are already 20 social hostels in schools and 13 social clubs at libraries in the city working with at-risk families, and the government is planning to continue these programs after ARO3 ends.

In 2008, children from 94 families that visited the social hostels and clubs and improved their relationships with their parents, 54 children returned to school and 112 kids received medical help. The hostels and clubs also helped parents; 19 parents quit drinking, jobs were found for 53 parents and parental rights were preserved in 19 families.

To continue child welfare activities after ARO3 ends, the Khabarovsk city government developed the program "All Kids Belong to Someone," incorporating ARO models and community involvement. The city will hold grant competitions for civil initiatives supporting child abandonment prevention, recognize the work of social clubs and hostels, and create groups for working with families individually. The program will also provide partial reimbursement for transportation costs to summer camps for kids in foster families. "All Kids Belong to Someone" will last from 2010 until 2012 and will have a budget of about 45 million rubles.

Training of Trainers for the Association for the Modernization of Baby Homes

On September 9-12 in St. Petersburg, NFPCC held the training of trainers "Expert Evaluation of the Psychological State of Children Living in Baby Homes: Creating a Unified Professional Approach for Association Trainers."



Seventeen professionals, including doctors, teachers, psychologists and child welfare specialists, from six Russian regions improved their skills and knowledge at the event. The purpose of the training was to create a group of skilled professionals with common goals and the ability to effect positive changes at baby homes, thus improving the lives of children.



Participants presented different models for improving work in baby homes, improved their communication and negotiation skills, determined baby homes' primary needs, and created a strategy for communicating with baby home administrations and staff. In working groups, the professionals developed criteria for successful baby homes and helped prepare necessary documents to evaluate baby homes. One of the major documents drafted at the training was the "Criteria for Evaluating Baby Homes," which included medical, psychological and educational perspectives. The training also gave the professionals a chance to come together, share their experiences and determine what skills they need to strengthen. This training was only the first step for the participants and they know that they must attend more trainings and increase their knowledge before leading trainings on their own.

Training of trainers is important because with the increase in the number of baby homes in the Association, NFPCC needs a greater capacity to follow up the innovative activities at each baby home. NFPCC, therefore, decided to create a team of trainers who share the Association's mission and have a common approach to baby home evaluation, support and supervision. The goal of the Association for the Modernization of Baby Homes is to bring together baby homes that have taken initiatives to improve the care of institutionalized children.

Association for the Modernization of Baby Homes works to Expand Membership

In September members of the Association for the Modernization of Baby Homes met to discuss how to further expand Association membership. They decided to prepare a message to be sent to head doctors of baby homes across Russia about the goals and mission of the Association and invite them to start the membership process to join the Association. The messages will be sent in October.

As part of efforts to expand membership in the Association for the Modernization of Baby Homes, NFPCC's coordinator for the Association had a meeting with the director of the Coordination Center for Baby Homes, part of the St. Petersburg Department of Public Health. They discussed supporting Association activities in St. Petersburg and the goals and mission of the Association. As a result of the meeting, the Coordination Center is ready to help support the Association's development and participate in its activities.

Rehabilitative Play to be Institutionalized in Tomsk and Expanded in Novosibirsk

During September, ARO work in Tomsk continued on institutionalizing services developed within the program framework. As part of these efforts, a meeting on institutionalizing rehabilitative play services in Molchanovsk District was held. Meeting participants determined that rehabilitative play is especially useful in rural locations because the method is easily accessible and they would like to have a seminar on rehabilitative play in Molchanovsk District.

NFPCC experts also conducted the final ARO seminar on implementing rehabilitative play in schools Leninsky District of Novosibirsk City and Kuibyshev District of Novosibirsk Oblast, ARO pilot regions in Novosibirsk, for 30 school officials from the regions. The seminar was held to look for ways to reorganize educational and developmental activities at schools in order to improve their social abandonment prevention efforts.

The seminar participants improved their knowledge and practical skills on the following topics: forms of rehabilitative activities at schools; possibilities for including rehabilitative play activities as part of school development; analysis of effective and ineffective ways of preventing social abandonment at schools; and successful examples of organizing rehabilitative play at schools. A supervisory visit is planned for November to monitor the progress in implementing the program in the pilot regions.





ARO works to Institutionalize Services in Novosibirsk and Improve Early Intervention

NFPCC held a meeting with the Novosibirsk Oblast Administration on institutionalizing developed services for preventing social abandonment. Thirty seven agency representatives, including from educational, social protection and public heath agencies, specialists from Kuibyshev and Iskitim Districts and Leninsky District in Novosibirsk City, the Oblast's pilot regions, as well as the deputy governor and administration department leaders all participated in the meeting. The participants analyzed and evaluated the results of the innovative activities for preventing social abandonment in the pilot regions; defined the strategy for further developing and institutionalizing the system in the Oblast; and determined their action plan for further steps.

NFPCC experts also conducted the final ARO seminar on Early Intervention Methods and Technologies for 23 specialists working in early intervention in Novosibirsk. Participants improved their communication skills, including the development of early communication and alternative methods of communication. They also learned about implemented early intervention activities, such as play sessions at lekotekas and early intervention services, and mastered the practical skills needed for implementing the early intervention methods and technologies. A supervisory visit is planned for October to monitor how the specialists are using the methods and technologies.

Center in Krasnoyarsk Improves Children's Development



Kolya* was born into a loving family, but had developmental problems. His mother suspected something was not right, so when he was around a year old she took him to the Krasnoyarsk Kray Center for Psychological, Medical and Social Support, where specialists had been trained on early intervention through the USAID-funded ARO

program. At the center, specialists noticed that he did not react when spoken to, rarely made eye contact with people, did not have much control over his behavior and did not fully engage when playing with toys. The specialists determined that his level of development did not correspond to his age.

In order to improve his development, Kolya attended one group lesson per week at the center and also had individual sessions focusing on communication and learning.

After 12 individual sessions and meeting regularly with the group, Kolya started to show signs of improvement. He now says hi and bye to people, plays more creatively, and interacts with adults by repeating words and finishing nursery rhymes.

*All names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

News From Our Partner

NFPCC held a Child Welfare Conference in Moscow

On September 15-16 in Moscow, NFPCC organized the interregional conference "The Russian Child Protection System: Key Problems, Experiences and the Future" as part of the "To Hear a Child" program, which is funded by the National Charity Fund. The conference attracted 230 participants, including child welfare specialists, government officials and NGO representatives from over 35 regions of Russia. The participants shared experiences in organizing early detection of at-risk families, worked on developing preventative services for families and children, and discussed proposals to improve federal and regional legislation for early detection and child welfare.



Aleksei Golovan, Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights, presenting at the conference in Moscow.



Upcoming Activities:

Altay Kray

October 20

ARO Concluding Meeting

Khabarovsk Kray

October 21-22

Seminar on Family-Based Forms of Care

Novosibirsk Oblast

October 21-23

Seminar and Supervision on Family-Based Forms of Care

October 21

Presentation on Technologies for Monitoring Children at Schools

October 25-27

Seminar on Adaptation of Children who have Aged Out of Orphanages

October TBD

ARO Concluding Meeting

Tambov Oblast

October 5-6

Seminar on Family-Based Forms of Care

October 6-8

Supervision of Family-Based Forms of Care

Tomsk Oblast

October 15-16

Seminar for Social Hostel Methodological Hubs

October 22-23

Supervision of Tomsk Foster Family Services

News From Our Partner

NFPCC Co-Organized an Early Intervention Conference in Krasnoyarsk

NFPCC organized the conference "Early Intervention for Families and Children with Special Needs" in Krasnoyarsk on September 22-23 with the Siberian Civic Initiatives Support Center and support from the Krasnoyarsk Kray Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Health. Over 160 child welfare specialists and government officials from nine Russian regions participated in the conference. At the conference, the participants became familiar with early intervention models, approaches and technologies for working children with special needs that have been implemented in Krasnoyarsk and other Russian regions. NFPCC's experience implementing the ARO program in various Russian regions was highlighted.



Participants at the conference in Krasnoyarsk

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