IREX/ASSISTANCE TO RUSSIAN ORPHANS (ARO) PROGRAM

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Early Intervention Study Tour

Administrators from the Tambov Oblast Baby Home visited the Konakovo Baby Home in the Tver Oblast on January 6-8 as part of an ARO study tour on early intervention for children aged 0-4 years old. The participants studied the rewards of early intervention, which involves a team approach to the evaluation of a child's development and the creation of individual treatment plans. ARO expert consultants introduced the participants to innovative diagnostic and program evaluation methods, and offered advice on implementing early intervention services at baby homes. Participants drew up a plan to introduce early intervention services at the Tambov Oblast Baby Home and discussed future workforce training programs in early intervention.

Study tour participants at the Konakovo Baby Home on January 6-8.

Summary:

In the first month of 2008, the ARO Program held several educational events, including a study tour for baby home administrators and seminars in Komsomol'sk-na-Amure, Krasnoyarsk, Novosibirsk, St. Petersburg, and Tomsk on topics ranging from HIV programs for at-risk youth to child psychiatry.

The Tomsk Department of Family and Children's Issues and the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC) announced a joint grant competition in January for social welfare services for at-risk groups of the population. Following the announcement, ARO held a grant writing workshop in Tomsk for interested applicants.

The NFPCC launched a new version of its website www.sirotstvo.ru in mid January. In addition to its extensive library of documents and news related to the child welfare system in the Russian Federation, the site has a new search feature and question and question and answer section.

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of after-school activity programs for at-risk children from troubled families and explained how to successfully organize and implement this service at local schools and community centers.

The seminar covered issues such as the psychological features of at-risk children, their academic performance, the social dynamics of at-risk families, and behavioral problems often exhibited by children from families in crisis. The participants considered which activities would be most useful and interesting to at-risk children and how to encourage regular attendance. At the close of the seminar, the participants drafted project plans and two new organizations agreed to open after-school activity services for children at risk of being abandoned in Novosibirsk.

Seminar on Services for Orphaned and Abandoned Children

On January 24-26, 14 social welfare experts attended a seminar in Novosibirsk on services intended to help children who have aged out of the orphanage system better integrate into their communities. An ARO expert consultant talked about the many challenges young adults face after leaving the sheltered environment of the orphanage and enter the real world, where they often fall victim to scams and are unable to find employment or support their families. The seminar participants learned how to organize and launch projects that provide valuable services such as psychological counseling and independent living courses for orphaned and abandoned children. The ARO consultant then introduced methods used to monitor and evaluate the success of social welfare projects using qualitative and quantitative data.

St. Petersburg HIV Prevention Seminar

On January 29, approximately 60 education experts attended a seminar organized by ARO on the organization of health council programs to prevent the spread of HIV among students at vocational schools in St. Petersburg. As part of the program, which is implemented in cooperation with NGO *Stellit*, dedicated teachers and students from local vocational schools receive extensive HIV prevention training and then work together in groups called health councils to conduct HIV prevention activities among high-risk students at their home schools.

At the seminar, an ARO expert consultant discussed the benefits of health council programs and administrators from seven St. Petersburg vocational schools shared their personal experiences launching such programs at their schools. Seminar participants also received informational materials created by previous health council program implementers on the organization of HIV prevention activities at the municipal level.

Participants at the St. Petersburg conference on HIV prevention on January 29, 2008

Upcoming Activities:

February 5-7 (Barnaul):
Seminar on early family intervention services.

February 12-24 (Novosibirsk):
Seminar on child abandonment prevention models.

February 12-16 (Novosibirsk): Seminar on emergency psychological assistance to at-risk children and families by telephone.

February 25-26 (Novosibirsk):
Seminar on early intervention for families in crisis and case management.

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