

IREX/ASSISTANCE TO RUSSIAN ORPHANS (ARO) PROGRAM



HIV Training in Magnitogorsk

Marina Akulova and Anna Zagaynova from the Irkutsk Branch of the Red Cross conducted a training of trainers entitled "Conducting seminars for employees of kindergartens in Magnitogorsk on HIV issues and the integration of children affected by HIV in school" in the industrial city of Magnitogorsk on June 4-8. Fourteen employees of the "Civil Initiative" Charity Foundation successfully completed the training and will use the knowledge they attained to lessen the stigma against children affected by HIV by training preschool and kindergarten teachers on HIV-related issues throughout Magnitogorsk.

Child Welfare Study Tour to Anchorage, Alaska

On June 8-15, seven ARO and Russian government representatives, including Head of the Tambov Oblast Department of Education and Science Natalya Astafeva, Head of the Tomsk Department of Family and Children Services Lyudmila Eftimovich, and Deputy President of the Jewish Autonomous Okrug Maria Zhirdetskaya, traveled to Alaska to study the child welfare system in the 49th State. Due to its many similarities to the Russian Far East and Siberia in terms of terrain and social issues, Alaska is ideal for showcasing effective social welfare services in the US.

The study tour began in Fairbanks with an introduction to the Child Protection System by the Fairbanks Office of Children's Services (OCS). The OCS staff explained their functions and how their system is able to work in an immense area with few resources to their Russian colleagues. The group then had the unique opportunity to visit three villages in rural Alaska two Alaskan Native villages, and one "road" system with a large population of Russian immigrants. The study tour participants interacted with the locals and were able to learn more about the services provided in rural communities.

Summary:

ARO organized multiple educational activities in June, including study tours to Velikiy Novgorod, Valday, and Alaska. ARO consultants conducted training seminars on child abandonment prevention services in Iskitim and Khabarovsk.

The Child Helpline Program continues to expand rapidly and released its first hotline directory. The Child Helpline Program also completed a series of training seminars for hotline consultants in Reutovo and organized an interregional conference for hotline experts in Novosibirsk.

The HIV/AIDS program component of ARO continued to conduct HIV prevention training for students and teachers at vocational schools in St. Petersburg. Likewise, ARO provided training for social workers working with families and children affected by HIV.

In June, the ARO Grant Department traveled to Khabarovsk and Tomsk to provide grant management training to recent grant recipient organizations intended to function as training centers in the future.



As the week drew to a close, the participants visited Hope Community Resources, an organization based in Anchorage dedicated to working for persons with developmental disabilities throughout Alaska. The group was able to visit housing facilities provided for people with special needs that allow them to remain in the community and live full lives. Extremely impressed and touched by what they saw, the participants expressed how much they hope similar services will someday be available to disabled persons in Russia. The study tour and the exchange of experience involved proved extremely insightful for all participants, both Russian and American.



Deputy President of the Jewish Autonomous Okrug Maria Zhirdetskaya holding a child during the visit to the Minto Alaskan Native Village

Child Abandonment Prevention Project Seminars in Iskitim

On June 13-15, ARO Consultant Dmitry Grigor'ev conducted two project seminars on effectively planning innovative child abandonment prevention services in the city of Iskitim in the Novosibirsk Oblast. At the first seminar, Grigor'ev discussed case management and the family intervention technique, which identifies families at risk of child abandonment and begins work with them at early stages of crisis. Eighteen members of a city work group created to establish an effective child abandonment system in Iskitim attended the seminar.

The second seminar covered how to identify children in crisis in schools and properly organize after-school activity programs to cater to their needs, and was attended by 29 people, including social workers, teachers, and psychologists. In addition to leading group discussions and answering participants' questions, Grigor'ev presented methods for effectively planning and implementing innovative, ARO-developed child abandonment prevention services.

Recent Grant Recipients Begin Work

The winners of the "Best Practices in Child Abandonment Prevention" tender announced by USAID in cooperation with IREX and the NFPCC officially began work on June 15. Of the 21 applications received, IREX selected 14 (seven in the Far Eastern city of Khabarovsk and seven in the Siberian city of Tomsk) to create training centers based at organizations that have successfully developed and implemented child abandonment prevention models in the framework of ARO1 and ARO2. The organizations will spread their child abandonment prevention models to new regions of the Russian Federation by training experts in best-practice technologies developed under the auspices of ARO. On June 20, the ARO Grant Department conducted a training seminar on grant management for the grant recipients in Khabarovsk, and a similar seminar was held for the grant recipients in Tomsk on June 22.

Child Hotline Directory Released

IREX's key implementing partner the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC) released its first Child Hotline Directory on June 18. The directory contains contact information and descriptions for 85 hotline services providing emergency psychological support to children and adolescents in 75 points across the Russian Federation. These hotlines cooperate with the NFPCC in the framework of its Child Helpline Program, which seeks to improve the quality of assistance provided to youth in crisis by national hotline services. The NFPCC will update the directory annually.

Those interested in adding or correcting information about hotline services can contact NFPCC Child Helpline Program Coordinator Marina Raskladkina by email at mraskladkina@aro.ru or by telephone at (495) 956-14-00.



The areas in pink indicate regions in which the NFPCC currently cooperates with local hotline services in the Russian Federation as part of its Child Helpline Program.



After-School Activity Seminar in Khabarovsk

The National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Khabarovsk City Administration organized a series of seminars entitled "Problems of Children from Troubled Families (child abuse)" for specialists from after-school activity programs for at-risk youth in Khabarovsk. Twenty-seven specialists took part in the first seminar conducted by ARO Expert Consultants Irina Alekseeva and Ilya Novosel'skiy on June 18-20, while 32 people participated in the second seminar held on June 21-23. The seminars provided regional experts with effective methods for dealing with bad behavior among atrisk youth acting out in schools in the format of speciallydesigned after-school activity programs based in city libraries.

Hotline Seminar in Novosibirsk

The Novosibirsk Oblast Department of Children and Youth and the Novosibirsk City Committee of Children and Youth, with support from ARO, held a seminar entitled "Hotlines: Russian Experience Providing Emergency Psychological Aid to Children and Adolescents in the Child Welfare Field" on June 20-21 in Novosibirsk. Over 80 people from 40 cities and villages across the Russian Federation attended the seminar, including hotline consultants, psychologists, and teachers.

The seminar participants not only attended master classes and lectures on best-practice techniques for the provision of emergency psychological aid to children and adolescents by phone, but also participated in roundtables and discussion groups where they exchanged personal experience and opinions on issues such as interdepartmental cooperation in helping children in crisis, ensuring the anonymity of callers, HIV/AIDS prevention, and unique aspects of providing psychological support in rural areas of Russia.



A scene from one of the master classes held at the hotline seminar in Novosibirsk

The seminar also explored challenges facing the hotline community, such as the recent trend of eliminating tollfree calls to hotlines, which has understandably discouraged some children in need from using helpline services.

At the close of the seminar, the hotline specialists agreed to create a unified system to collect statistics regarding the calls made to child hotlines. These statistics will be used to create a more accurate picture of the target audience of child hotlines in Russia and the issues facing youth in crisis. The seminar participants also reaffirmed their interest in joining the Association of Child Hotlines being organized in the framework of the National Foundation of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's (NFPCC) Child Helpline Program, which currently works with 85 hotline services in 40 regions of the Russian Federation.

Early Intervention Study Tour for Krasnoyarsk Experts

On June 20-22, nine managers from the Krasnoyarsk Center for Psychological, Medical, and Social Support and its affiliates participated in a study tour to Velikiy Novgorod and Valday organized by IREX's key implementing partner the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC). The study tour introduced the methods and benefits of the early intervention technique, which involves a team approach to the creation of individualized development programs for children with disabilities between the ages of 0-3 years old.

The participants visited municipal schools for special needs children and witnessed firsthand the dramatic progress made by children who undergo early intervention therapy. ARO Expert Consultants Lyudmila Blokhina, Valentina Kholopova, Larissa Samarina, Tatyana Sivukhina, and Valentina Yampolskaya provided a detailed overview of the early intervention technique, including the principles of such therapy and the process of implementing early intervention program models. In addition, the study tour participants attended individual and group therapy sessions for children with disabilities, where they learned more about the equipment used in early intervention treatment.

Following the study tour, the Krasnoyarsk Center for Psychological, Medical, and Social Support and its affiliates decided to include 0-1 year-old children with special needs in their target groups and reorganize their early intervention services to utilize the team approach method presented by the ARO expert consultants and specialists in Velikiy Novgorod and Valday.

First International Society for Child Indicators Conference

On June 28, IREX Educational Consultant Dr. Eileen Lally attended the First International Society for Child Indicators



Conference held in Chicago, Illinois. Researchers and practitioners from around the world met to present their work in documenting the state of children's health, wellbeing, and safety. Dr. Lally made many contacts at the conference that should prove beneficial to ARO's work in the future.

Child Hotline Training Series in Reutovo Completed

A team of 13 hotline consultants in the Moscow Oblast city of Reutovo successfully completed a series of training sessions conducted by ARO Regional Coordinator Marina Betretdinova and ARO Expert Consultant Svetlana Yablonskaya on June 30. The training explored the unique issues children and adolescents in crisis face and the appropriate methods of providing emergency psychological assistance to them and their families by telephone. The team of consultants will open their hotline in Reutovo on September 1, 2007, at which point the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to children will provide them with methodological support and consulting as part of its Child Helpline Program.



Reutovo hotline consultants participating in a role-play activity during the final child hotline training session on June 30.

Upcoming Activities:

July 10 (Tambov):

Informational seminar on early intervention. Conducted by Yarygin and Zelinskaya.

June 10 (Angarsk): Seminar for doctors and nurses at maternity clinics on HIV. Conducted by Lugovaya.

June 11(Angarsk): Seminar for doctors and nurses from maternity clinic and children's hospital #28 on HIV. Conducted by Lugovaya.

July 15 (Komsomol'sk-na-Amure): Project seminar on providing support to surrogate families and developing such services. Conducted by Arkhangelskaya, Novak, and Shepina.

June 20 (Angarsk): Seminar for doctors and nurses from maternity clinic and children's hospital #4 on HIV. Conducted by Lugovaya.

July 25 (Khabarovsk):

Seminar on physical therapy for young children with cerebral palsy for doctors providing early intervention services and neurologists. Conducted by Arkhangelskaya, Novak, and Shepina.

June 28 (Komsomol'sk-na-Amure): Seminar on grant management conducted by Lisitsyn.





