

THE FIRST RUSSIAN-AMERICAN CHILD WELFARE FORUM

The Republic of Buryatia

August 1 – 7, 2011

RESOLUTION

1. Early identification and case management approaches to the provision of assistance to families where there are instances of child's rights violations are used successfully throughout the world in order to determine measures needed to protect the rights of the child. These approaches have been piloted with success in more than 10 Russian regions.

Forum participants recommend that the executive authorities of the regions of the Russian Federation:

- Study early identification and case management technologies at the Center of Excellence in the Republic of Buryatia
- Develop and implement a decision-making procedure in cases concerning children's issues for Child Protection Services (Guardianship and Trusteeship authorities)

2. The current shortage of preventive services for families and children in many cases leads to failure to prevent the escalation of family crisis and social abandonment.

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Forum participants recommend that the Ministry of Health and Social Development of the Russian Federation and executive authorities of the regions of the Russian Federation:

- Revise social service eligibility categories for families and children, prioritizing work with families in the early stages of crisis
- For families at the early stages of crisis, transition from removing children from the home for rehabilitative services to providing support through consultation, clubs and group-based assistance.

3. Effective coordination between child welfare agencies throughout regions of the Russian Federation remains problematic.

Forum participants recommend that the Government of the Russian Federation and the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation:

- Define at a federal level the legal status of Commissions on Minors and Protection of their Rights, the procedure for forming a Commission, and set down rules on Commission functions.

4. The Russian Federation is in the process of creating an institution of Children's Rights Commissioners, which have authority to ensure that violations against children's rights are



pursued and corrected, measures to protect children's rights are enforced and that the public is educated on legal aspects related to children's rights protection.

Forum participants recommend that government agencies and NGOs:

- Actively work to establish a system of cooperation with the offices of Children's Rights Commissioners to collaborate on the protection and defense of children's rights and to ensure that rights violations are addressed.

5. Civil society organizations are playing an ever-increasing role in solving the tasks of the child welfare system, which is evolving from being a state-run system to becoming a state-public partnership. Methods are being employed to involve and support socially-oriented NGOs and institutions specializing public accountability. NGOs can and should play an important role in providing services to families and children, as well as in developing innovative practices.

Forum participants recommend that the Government of the Russian Federation:

- Create an organizational and legal framework wherein NGOs are considered equal partners and service providers on par with state-run agencies. This will require optimization of the system of taxation of not-for-profit organizations and the improvement of methods of support for socially-oriented NGOs.

- Develop and legislate standards for child protection activities, which would accelerate the development of a market for social service providers for families and children, create competition, and thereby ensure higher-quality service delivery by NGOs.

6. A primary objective in child welfare system development is the creation of a competitive market for family and child services.

Forum participants recommend that executive authorities of the regions of the Russian Federation:

- Develop legal, organizational, and financial mechanisms that would allow a wide variety of government agencies, businesses and NGOs to develop child welfare services and enter the market as a service deliverer. These mechanisms include moving to the use of a fee-for-service budgetary model.

- Reinvest economic benefits from of child welfare system modernization into the system's further development.

7. Umbrella organizations, networks and professional associations are effective tools to increase the quality of child rights protection activities.

Forum participants recommend that executive authorities of the regions of the Russian Federation:

- Invite Russian professional associations and networks to take part in the development and/or implementation of child welfare service standards and participate in the retraining and continuing education of child welfare specialists.

8. Children's legal interests and their right to safety are insufficiently provided for during court hearings and other legal proceedings related to child abuse inquiries. In most cases the



secondary psychological trauma experienced by the child during the process and consideration for the family's situation and their right to confidentiality are not taken into account. It is important to establish cooperation between law enforcement agencies and services and organizations providing psychological and social support.

Forum participants recommend that executive authorities of the regions of the Russian Federation:

- Enact measures to ensure mandatory psycho-social and psycho-pedagogical assistance for maltreated children and their families, and make them eligible for social services.

9. Russia and the United States have accumulated significant experience in family placement for orphaned and abandoned children. Experts agree that foster and adoptive families require training and psycho-pedagogical and social support. When the child being placed is considered medically high-risk, these families need additional specialized medical assistance.

Keeping in mind the intended introduction of mandatory training for foster parent candidates in the Russian Federation, Forum participants recommend that the Ministry of Education and Sciences of the Russian Federation, executive authorities of the regions of the Russian Federation:

- Take all steps necessary to create a system for foster family training and support.

10. Training and continuing education of professionals are an integral part of the child welfare system. The lack of supervisory support for professionals working in children's rights protection in the Russian Federation significantly lowers the quality of service provision.

Decision-making in assisting children and protecting their rights requires an interdisciplinary approach incorporating the expertise of a wide variety of professionals, including healthcare workers, social workers, psychologists, teachers, and law enforcement agency employees.

Forum participants recommend that the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Health and Social Development of the Russian Federation, and executive authorities of the regions of the Russian Federation:

- Expand continuing education to include the training of interdisciplinary teams, with supervisory support during training and practice, and develop a standardized model for professional continuing education programs.
- Develop and implement a basic course for retraining professionals working in child protection services (guardian and trusteeship authorities), for Commissions on Minors and Protection of their Rights, in social institutions and specialized continuing education programs with the goal of increasing professional qualifications in specific areas;
- Develop professional standards for child welfare specialists.

11. Child mortality from external causes is one of the most serious demographic problems facing the Russian Federation, and is an important challenge facing the child welfare system.

Forum participants recommend that executive authorities of the regions of the Russian Federation:



- Form regional and municipal commissions to monitor the reasons for death from external causes and coordinate measures that help create safe environments for children.

12. The Russian Federation is working actively to prevent and fight child abuse. To that end, a public informational campaign was launched and regional child helplines offering emergency psychological assistance to children and teenagers were united under a unified, nation-wide number. At the same time, major difficulties arise due to differing interpretations of what constitutes 'child abuse' in law enforcement agencies and other institutions responsible for the implementation of child welfare policy.

Forum participants recommend that the Government of the Russian Federation, the Federation Council of the Russian Federation:

- Establish a legal definition for child abuse in federal law

13. During the Forum, participants discussed the importance of establishing subject-subject relations with children.

Forum participants recommend that executive authorities of the regions of the Russian Federation:

- Actively develop and disseminate decision-making models involving children's participation in issues related to the protection of their rights and legal interests
- Actively educate helping professionals to take the child's voice and interests into account, as well as those of the parents
- Train and promote continuing education to increase the qualifications of professionals, using the latest developments in child psychology
- Give special attention to teaching methods emphasizing cooperation, subject-subject relations, and the development of reasoning and communication skills.

To prevent emotional harm to children both in and outside of school, Forum participants recommend that:

- The mastery of safe pedagogical approaches to be included in continuing education programs for educators.

14. Respecting national and cultural traditions is necessary in decision-making related to children's rights and determining family placement. The rich ethnic and cultural diversity of our countries requires that we study and take into account varying cultural views on the raising children, family life and life-style preferences.

Forum participants recommend that the executive authorities of the regions of the Russian Federation:

- Ensure that professionals at child welfare agencies, Commissions on Minors and Protection of their Rights, and social institutions are supplied with appropriate methodological manuals and materials.



15. Ensuring proper treatment for maltreated children and child victims of sexual exploitation is a continuing challenge for our countries.

Forum participants recommend that professionals working with maltreated children who have experienced violence, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation be guided by the following principles in their work:

- The safety of the child shall be a priority, as well as protecting them from repeat socially dangerous incursions
- Children should be protected from undergoing repeated psychological trauma throughout criminal legal proceedings
- Professional competence and special training for professionals working with the above-mentioned categories of children should be ensured and mechanisms should prevent professionals from acting outside of the boundaries of their professional competence
- An integrated approach should be implemented involving the provision of free legal, medical, psychological and social assistance and rehabilitation to child victims of crime with the assistance of experts who have undergone the appropriate training
- A systemic approach should be implemented to combat crimes against children, starting with early prevention and expanding to include social and medical rehabilitation and social reintegration for children who have been victims to crime
- The child's right to confidentiality and privacy should be respected; this includes with regards to reporting in the media

Forum participants recommend engaging trained teachers and psychologists in law enforcement proceedings involving children.

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16. The search for missing children in the Russian Federation is an acute problem.

Forum participants recommend that law enforcement and other state agencies:

- Maximize the potential of NGOs and other civil society organizations, business leaders, online communities, the media and the general population to assist in the search for missing children

17. The regions of the Russian Federation should pay special attention to crime-related problems in child welfare and their resolution.

Forum Participants recommend that executive and legislative authorities of the regions of the Russian Federation:

- Develop and adopt regional programs targeted at crime prevention against minors and the provision of assistance to child victims of crime and their families. This should involve sufficient financing and effective implementation in practice
- Create the informational, technical and logistical resources necessary to ensure that searches for missing children are conducted in a timely manner
- Provide access to free legal and social assistance to child victims of crime through funds set aside in regional budgets



- Support socially-oriented NGOs and regional media that have been useful in the search for missing children and assisting children who have been victims of crime
- Develop and implement educational programs for children, parents and teachers covering the basics of media literacy and the safe use of the Internet and cellular phone technologies

18. Professionals involved in the prevention, identification, uprooting and detection of physical or sexual crimes against children must be equipped with specialized training.

Forum participants recommend that law enforcement agencies:

- Develop special training courses for their employees
- Develop and implement special investigative methods for the crimes mentioned above with the awareness that they present a threat to society and result in serious harm children's health, their social adaptation and to their moral, psychological and spiritual development

19. The activities of the Child Protection Subgroup of Bilateral Presidential Commission's Civil Society Working Group (Obama-Medvedev) demonstrate its effectiveness as a platform for dialogue and cooperation on the current issues in child protection.

Forum participants recommend that the co-chairs of the Child Protection Subgroup of the Civil Society Working Group of the Bilateral Presidential Commission (Obama-Medvedev):

- Broaden the scope of the Subgroup's work to include a wider spectrum of issues pertaining to the protection of the rights and legal interests of children

20. More communication among Russian and American experts and professionals is needed to foster the exchange of experience and the discussion of approaches and methods in children's rights protection.

Forum participants believe it is necessary to create a lasting discussion platform for the issues raised at the Forum, and that regional and federal government representatives should be invited to participate in the discussion.

