

Developing Short-break Foster Care for Disabled Children in Moldova**Duration:** 01.02.2011 - 10.12.2012**Countries:**
Moldova**Total budget:** € 219 634**Website(s):** p4ec.md/en/projects/developing_short-break_foster_care/default.aspx**Project description:**

The project was developed in the context when there are 15 000 children with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova, who live with their biological or extended families, and around 50% out of total 5000 children placed into residential institutions are considered to have disabilities. While children with special needs and their families are becoming more visible, public attitudes and persisting mentalities of shame around disability result in continued extreme isolation and stigma. The goal of the project is to increase the ability of the social protection system of Moldova to address the rights of children with disabilities to quality family based social care, by developing a model of Short Break Foster Care for children with disabilities in 2 regions of the country (Orhei and Chisinau), and by piloting and integrating this model into the local child welfare system and national policies.

Expected results:

The research carried out by P4EC within the project has found that families raising a disabled child are more likely to experience psychological, financial and medical problems. Few young children receive early intervention services, specialized kindergarten education, and many children with disabilities never go to school at all. Unfortunately, to this day many parents and professionals perpetuate the idea that institutions are the only option for care, rehabilitation and education of children with special needs, believing this to be in the best interest of the child. In a country beleaguered by an economic crisis, the majority of parents have resigned themselves to providing minimal care for their disabled children because they lack support and cannot provide for them. It takes incredible courage and strength to stand up to the societal stigmas that persist.

The development of the respite placement into foster care has the goal to prevent the separation of children with disabilities from their families, to alleviate the psychologically heavy atmosphere in the biological family, giving the parents an opportunity to have some rest and interact more efficiently with their other children.

No less important is that this type of placement provides the child with disabilities with a positive social experience, with an opportunity to socialize, interact with the community, and grow up with stimulating experiences in the community.

Partnerships for Every Child held the National Conference promoting Short Break Foster Care. Professionals from the