

MAMA+: Assistance to HIV-affected Families with Young Children

HIV/AIDS epidemic in St. Petersburg reflects the all-country tendencies, oftentimes leaving them behind. The number of HIV-positive women, including pregnant women, and children born to them is growing fast. As of the end of 2008, 2,984 children were born to HIV-positive mothers in St Petersburg. HIV-positive women constitute the group of high risk of child abandonment. The reasons for this include low socio-economic status, use of drugs, HIV status, family conflicts, lack of housing and registration, and thus problems accessing social and medical services. In order to provide her child with care, an HIV-positive mother needs assistance in resolving housing and family problems, regaining documents, registering for welfare support, accessing treatment, and getting employed.



In 2004, based on the experience and methodology of the global human rights organization HealthRight International, Doctors to Children and HealthRight Representative Office in Russia developed the MAMA+ Project to provide comprehensive services to HIV-affected families with young children and prevent child abandonment. In 2006, Doctors to Children in partnership with the City Children's Infectious Diseases Hospital #3 established the Center of comprehensive services for HIV-positive mothers with babies and young children with a daycare facility for children. In 2007, Doctors to Children and HealthRight in partnership with the Kalininsky District Administration established the Halfway House for HIV-positive Women with Young Children. It is designed to accommodate 6 mothers with children under 3 years old at a time.



family members.

Project Goal: retain family support for children born to HIV-positive women.

Project Activities:

- Early identification of HIV-positive women at-risk of abandoning their children;
- Active patronage, including home visits to provide services and training to HIV-positive mothers and their family members;
- MAMA+ Comprehensive Counseling and Daycare Center;
- Halfway House for HIV-positive Women with Children;
- Group of peer volunteers from among former project clients, providing assistance to HIV-positive mothers and their family members;
- School of palliative care for volunteers and family members of HIV-positive women;
- Peer support groups for HIV-positive women and their

Social Assistance:

- Restoration of lost documents;
- Paperwork to register for documents and benefits in connection with birth of child;
- Assistance in resolution of guardianship issues;
- Assistance in child enrolment in a pre-school educational institution;
- Assistance in training and employment;
- Material assistance (food, baby formulas, child care supplies, medication for mothers and children)- in crisis situations.



Psychological Assistance:

- Individual counseling for women and their family members;
- Counseling on HIV/AIDS issues;
- Vocational guidance;
- Training for mothers on conducting child development sessions;
- Provision of information and consultations to guardians and foster parents;
- Peer support groups for family members of HIV-positive women with children and volunteers.

Medical Assistance:

- Referrals for lab tests and functional diagnostics;
- Escorts to the AIDS center and other health care institutions.

MAMA+ Daycare Center



- Counseling with a psychologist specializing in the development of children 0 to 3 years old:
 - child development assessment,
 - child development sessions and games,
 - counseling on child raising and development issues for mothers;
- Daycare services for children;
- Training sessions on health-improving massage for children;
- Peer support groups for mothers and their family members;
- HIV-tests for children.

Halfway House for HIV-positive Women with Children

- Provision of safe temporary residence;
- Social and legal assistance;
- Psychological assistance;
- Counseling on child development issues, training on engaging children in developmental games, and adjustment of mother-child interactions.

Volunteer Services

- Provision of information to volunteers and involvement of volunteers to the project;
- Peer counseling (diagnosis acceptancy, ARV therapy, adherence to treatment);
- Assistance to HIV-positive women with children and their families through home visits and at the MAMA+ Center;
- Follow-up services.

Project Results (2004- 2010):

- Family support was retained for 510 children born to HIV-positive women MAMA+ in Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Region;
- 425 HIV+ women and 500 of their families' members has received psychosocial services;
- 32 women with children became residents of the MAMA+ Halfway House



Project stories:

Nadezhda K.

(The names of clients and their children have been changed for confidentiality reasons)

Nadezhda (Nadya) and her seven-month-old son Yegor are MAMA+ clients. Nadya's parents abandoned her right after her birth, and the girl lived in an orphanage together with her eight brothers and sisters. Grown up, she was only in contact with one of her brothers.

After graduation from the orphanage, Nadya and her brother were provided with rooms in a communal apartment, but in a while they became victims of fraud and lost their housing. Nadya and her brother found themselves on the street, sometimes staying with their friends. Street-involved, they became addicted to alcohol. Shortly after that, Nadya's brother died of meningitis. Nadya contracted HIV from one of her partners.

Nadya was 27 when she got pregnant. Her partner died before she gave birth to their son.



When she was seven months pregnant, Nadya was placed in a substance abuse rehabilitation center where she stayed for around six months. However, as a fire happened in this facility, she got back to the street together with her newborn child.

Enrolling in the MAMA+ Project, Nadya did not have any documents either for herself or for her little son Danya. Presently, the girl and her child are residing in the MAMA+ Halfway House.

As Nadya has no documents, she cannot register for children's benefits; she needs clothes, diapers, a carriage, a crib, as well as medication and other things for her child. HIV-positive, Nadya cannot nurse her baby, and she has no money for specialized baby formulas.

Nadya cannot come to work, as she has a little son who is often sick.

Presently, MAMA+ staff are providing Nadezhda with psychological support and parenting skills training. At the same time, the project staff are also working to collect documents for Nadya and Danya. You can also help this family by supporting the MAMA+ project.

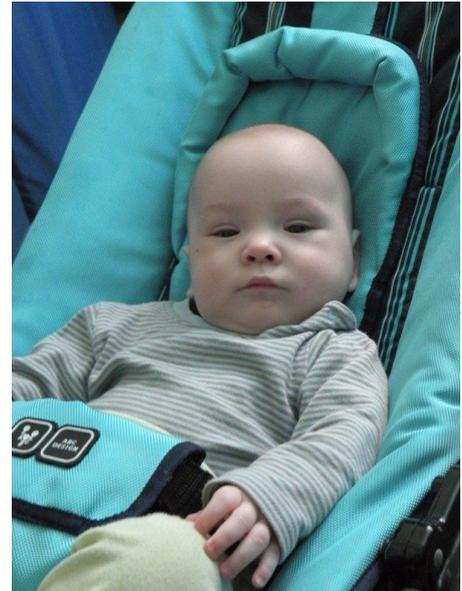
Sofia K.

(The names of clients and their children have been changed for confidentiality reasons)

Sofia enrolled in the MAMA+ Halfway House, as she was exposed to physical violence on the part of her drug-using domestic partner who was keeping her away from home. The woman was five months pregnant.

Sofia is a native of Kushva, a small Russian town. On attaining 18 years of age, she came to St. Petersburg to find employment. Her parents died. The house they left was almost completely destroyed.

In St. Petersburg, Sofia was hired as a saleswoman in a shop. When she got pregnant, her boss fired her out. Sofia found herself with neither livelihood nor housing. Besides, she was shocked when she learned about her HIV-positive status.



When the woman enrolled in the MAMA+ Halfway House, she was registered with the AIDS Center and was receiving the therapy. After six and a half months of pregnancy, Sofia gave premature birth to her son. It was a complicated delivery, and the child was placed in an intensive care unit for over a month. On the boy's discharge, he needed continuous medical monitoring, costly medication and functional tests.

A resident of the Halfway House, Sofia received psychological support and consultations on child development issues. Due to assistance of the staff, the girl was able to obtain documents and register her son at her former partner's place of residence.

However, as her child's health status is unstable, and the boy is often hospitalized and needs numerous medical procedures, Sofia cannot come to work. Her son Kolya has a lot of medical problems and needs continuous and costly medical treatment, tests and appropriate nutrition. To prevent HIV transmission to her child, Sofia will have to use specially adapted formulas. Sofia and Kolya are in need of your support in purchasing infant formulas and other goods!

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