

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM CARE LEAVERS' EXPERIENCE IN MOLDOVA?

Peer to peer study among 56 care leavers during Sep – Dec 2024

Study objectives:

understand the **strengths, needs, challenges and aspirations** of care leavers in Moldova and identify ways how Y&E – a care leavers network – **can support and engage care leavers** in advocacy and peer support activities

Relevant related topics explored in the study:

The transition process to independent living that care leavers go through

The role of social workers and other specialists in the care system as seen by care leavers

Challenges in the provision of **social services for children**, including placements

Gaps in Moldova' legal framework applicable to care leavers

For the full report, see the Romanian version on bettercarenetwork.org

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Main findings

1. Transition to independent living

Upon leaving the care system, 77% of care leavers felt either partially prepared or unprepared for independent living. The most common challenges were: lack of a stable place to live, financial difficulties, limited access to education and health services, lack of emotional support and vocational counseling.

2. Support received

Only a third of young people mentioned that they benefited from support programs upon leaving the care system. 63% of young people mentioned that they were not informed about the rights and benefits to which they had access. Peer support was perceived as valuable and effective.

3. The role of social workers

The relationship care leavers have with social workers was essential, but often perceived as superficial or absent. Young people desire more involvement, empathy and continuity in the support provided.

4. Types of placement

Family-based placements were preferred, but only if they are of good quality and offer emotional support. Residential institutions were perceived as impersonal, but sometimes better equipped.

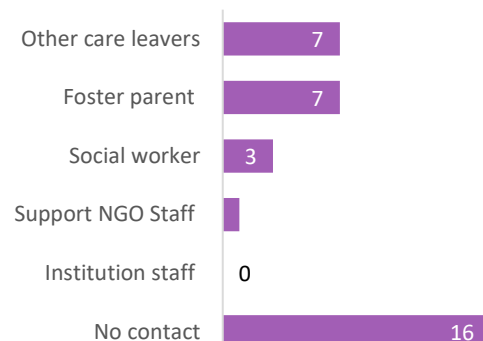
5. Well-being and basic needs

Young people reported a moderate level of well-being after exiting the care system, with lower scores than children reintegrated into families. The biggest difficulties were feeling isolated, lack of community support and stigmatization. Housing was a major challenge – many live in dormitories or unstable rentals.

6. Participation and association

Young people want to be involved in support networks but said they need trust, confidentiality and clarity about the purpose of such networks. The Y&E care leavers network was seen as an opportunity to share experiences and influence public policies. Care leavers expressed a desire to be involved in decision-making processes that concern them and to contribute to the reform of the care system.

16 out of 30 care leavers keep contact with someone they met while being in care, especially noting no contact with staff they met in institutions, showing how such placements inhibit loving and secure attachments.



Yes, this year will be harder for me, because it's my last year in the system and it will be harder for me to find a job. But if you put your mind to it and if you have the desire, you can achieve anything.

Care leaver, focus group 1

Care Leavers Strengths

Care leavers developed adaptive skills, resilience, motivation for success and a desire to help others, as well as sensitivity and receptivity. They were aware of their own strengths and are very focused on the need to ensure their existence.

Conclusions

Care leavers perceived the quality of placement through the lens of **attachment**: if they felt care, respect, attention and individual support, have managed to form a positive attachment with at least one specialist in the care system, then they considered that “the rest is solved”. Focusing services and support on the interests of children and young people, and creating the safest and most nurturing environment during their time in care, directly enhances their ability to integrate into society as adults and achieve success.