

Overview of the National Strategy for Ensuring the Right of Every Child to Grow Up in a Family Environment and Approaches to Its Implementation



The Government of Ukraine is Committed to Ensuring that Every Child Grows Up in a Safe, Nurturing Family Environment with the Necessary Opportunities for Healthy Development and Well-Being

On 26 November 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the Strategy for Ensuring the Right of Every Child

in Ukraine to Grow Up in a Family Environment, 2024–2028, and the Operational Action Plan for its Implementation for 2024 – 2026, making family-based care for all Ukrainian children the national priority. The Strategy was developed under the guidance of the Coordination Center for Family Upbringing and Child Care Development (hereinafter – the Coordination Center) in compliance with the Better Care Reform in Ukraine, with input from over 500 Ukrainian and 40 international experts.

The full text of the National Strategy and Operational Action Plan, providing further details about the reform can be seen [here](#).



Why this Strategy Matters

7.5 million children in Ukraine have been affected by war, including orphaned children and those deprived of parental care, children with disabilities, and those at risk of family separation.

As of the end of 2024, **around 21,000 children** lived in residential institutions deprived of the care crucial for healthy growth and development. Institutional care significantly harms children's health, development and future opportunities. Despite this, **85%** of them have living parents. However, their families often face financial struggles, and a lack of local support services, making it challenging to provide the necessary care for their child.

The Better Care Reform is essential for Ukraine to:

- Ensure the well-being of every child, uphold their rights, and prioritize their best interests
- Develop human capital
- Advance its integration into the EU

The ongoing war has made things worse, causing disruptions to education, healthcare and housing.

7,498 children were evacuated from institutions: 4,811 were moved abroad and 2,687 were displaced within Ukraine.

19,546 children have been forcibly transferred or deported by Russia, including **3,774 orphans** and children deprived of parental care*.

Many families are experiencing trauma and mental health challenges, increasing their risk of separating and children being placed in institutions.

The National Strategy Aims to Prevent and Address Difficult Life Circumstances, and Keep Families Together

Supporting Legal and Policy Framework

The right of a child to grow up in a family environment aligns with the Family Code of Ukraine, and the Law of Ukraine on the Protection of Childhood, and international regulations, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and multiple EU strategies.

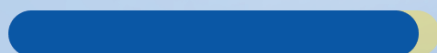
Objectives of the National Strategy

The National Strategy aims to ensure that every Ukrainian child grows up in a safe and caring family environment by building a holistic system of support for families, and prioritizing family-based care over institutions.

* The figures reflect statistics based on data as of 20 January 2024.

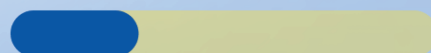
By 2028, the National Strategy aims for:

95%



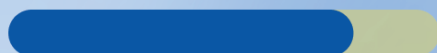
of orphans and children deprived of parental care to be placed in family-based care

30%



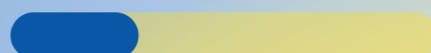
reduction in the number of children in institutional care facilities

80%



reduction in the number of children under the age of three in institutional care facilities

30%



increase in the number of children with disabilities and/or special education needs receiving social, medical and education services

To achieve this, there are six strategic objectives:



Objective 1: Strengthen the Capacity of Families with Children to Care for and Raise their Children

Focuses on providing families and children with essential services, like healthcare, social support, and education (including inclusive education for children with disabilities and special needs) so that each child can thrive within their family.

This includes but is not limited to:

- 1) providing financial, material and parental support to families
- 2) ensuring children with disabilities and special needs can fully participate in their community, alongside their peers
- 3) guaranteeing access to social services for those in difficult life circumstances
- 4) offering temporary family-based care for children without parental care, including children with disabilities.



Objective 2: Provide Children in Need with Family-Based Alternative Care

Ensures that children who cannot stay with their biological families have safe, nurturing family-based alternatives, instead of institutions. This includes expanding high-quality foster care, guardianship, and adoption, including specialised family-based alternatives for children with disabilities.

Aims to:

- 1) ensure children without parental care, including children with disabilities, grow up in a family
- 2) provide tailored support to children deprived of parental care and the families caring for them
- 3) promote adoption that takes into account the best interests of every child.



Objective 3: Create Conditions for the Return and Integration of Forcibly Transferred, Deported and Evacuated Children

Seeks to return children who were displaced from institutions and ensure their successful reintegration into communities and families. This includes providing necessary support to children returning, and the families that they return to.

Aims to:

- 1) ensure the safe return of children, based on their needs and best interests
- 2) provide reunification with birth parents or placement in alternative family-based care for orphaned children and those deprived of parental care
- 3) offer integrated trauma-informed support services to returned children and their families.



Objective 4: Transform the Institutional System of Child Care, Prioritizing Children at the Highest Risk of Harm

Provides for high-quality, individual assessments of children in institutions, to support their safe return to their families, placement in family-based alternative care, or adoption. This includes determining how and whether institutions can transform to create services to support children, families, and communities.

Aims to:

- 1) prepare children in institutional care and ensure they are safely reintegrated into families or family-based care alternatives with a provision of tailored support
- 2) redirect resources from institutional care facilities to support children, families and community needs.

At the first stage of the reform, priority is given to the deinstitutionalization of baby homes for young children and social care facilities for children and young people with complex and severe disabilities.



Objective 5: Ensure Socialization and Inclusion of Children with Experience of Institutional Care

Supports youth aged 14 – 23, including those with disabilities, who are in alternative care to live independently. Key areas of support include facilitating access to professional education, economic empowerment, peer-to-peer networks, and social inclusion initiatives.

Aims to:

- 1) prepare children and young adults in alternative care for independent living in their communities
- 2) support children and young adults with experience of alternative care (care leavers) in achieving self-sufficiency and realizing their full potential.



Objective 6: Establish Organizational and Legal Conditions for Ensuring the Implementation of the Strategy

Supports collaboration among all stakeholders to ensure children's rights and best interests are protected and that their voices are heard in decisions that affect their lives.

Aims to:

- 1) provide sufficient funding and personnel for child protection services
- 2) raise public awareness about the importance of family-based care
- 3) enhance digital tools to improve access to information, streamline the adoption process, support foster and adoptive families, and increase transparency and efficiency in the child welfare system.

Implementation of the Reform at the Regional and Local Levels

All regions of Ukraine are mandated to implement measures to realize the National Strategy at both regional and local levels. Specifically, regional, Kyiv, and Sevastopol city state administrations are required to:

Develop and approve regional action plans to implement the Strategy for 2024–2026 by February 26, 2025.

Ensure implementation within state and local budget expenditures and/or other legal funding sources.

Report annually on implementation progress to the State Service for Children by March 5.

Additionally, given the cost, complexity, and intersectoral nature of the reform, 10 demonstration regions were selected to pilot new reform models before national scaling. These regions—Chernivtsi, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Khmelnytskyi, Kyiv region, Lviv, Poltava, Volyn, Zakarpattia, Zhytomyr—were chosen for their readiness to drive transformative changes in child welfare. They receive support from UNICEF, SOS Children's Villages, Save the Children, Lumos, Hope and Homes for Children, Partnership for Every Child, and other international and national organizations.

The Role of Local Communities

Local communities (hromadas) play a key role in ensuring sustainable and effective implementation of the reform. While they are not required to develop separate programs for the Strategy implementation, it is strongly recommended. At a minimum, communities should:

Integrate key objectives and measures of the Strategy into local target programs, development strategies, and budget planning.

Prioritize the reform within their local policies to ensure long-term systemic change in child protection.

Strengthen local services to support family-based care and prevent institutionalization.

By embedding reform goals into their local planning and budgeting, communities help create a sustainable child protection system centered on family-based care and community support.

Ensuring Effective Reform Coordination

Successful implementation of the Better Care Reform requires a well-structured system that connects national, regional, and local levels. Three key platforms ensure effective coordination, planning, and monitoring:

The Coordination Center –

the advisory body under the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine that oversees the reform at the national level.

It identifies innovative projects, ensures international support, and aligns national and regional efforts. The Center also initiated the Council of Regions to bridge national and regional coordination.

The Council of Regions –

a strategic platform that facilitates planning, implementation, and monitoring of the reform across all levels. It brings together Deputy Ministers, Heads of central executive authorities, regional leaders, local government representatives, CSOs, and international partners to ensure a united approach. It also provides guidance and oversight for regional implementation.

Regional Working Groups –

operational bodies established within each regional state (military) administrations. These groups ensure on-the-ground implementation, coordinate efforts among local authorities, self-government bodies, and CSOs, and adapt reform measures to local needs.

Entities Responsible for the Implementation of the National Strategy:

- the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine
- the Ministry of Social Policy
- the Ministry of Education and Science
- the Ministry of Health
- the Ministry of Justice
- the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- the Ministry of Finance
- the State Children's Service
- the National Social Service
- regional, Kyiv and Sevastopol city state administrations (military administrations)
- village, settlement, city, district in cities (if established) counsels and their executive authorities, and other

This **three-tiered system** ensures a holistic, **well-coordinated approach**, making the transition to family-based care effective and sustainable across Ukraine.

Partner Engagement in Reform Implementation

The successful implementation of the Strategy at both the national and regional levels requires strong collaboration with partners. While the reform is funded through state and local budgets, its complexity and cost demand additional expert and technical support.

Partners are encouraged to contribute by providing technical guidance, advocating for sustainable funding, and supporting key initiatives such as expanding family-based care, strengthening inclusive education, and developing community-based child protection services. All partner initiatives and projects must align with the Better Care Reform. Investments in developing alternatives to institutions and strengthening families are crucial to ensuring long-term, systemic change in Ukraine's child protection system.

Additional Resources and Information

For more information and any questions:

State website on family-
based care in Ukraine



dity.gov.ua

LinkedIn



[linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com)

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Join us in Advancing Better Care Reform!



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