



Ivanivka, Chernihivska region, Ukraine. Inesa Antonenko, head of the local Children's Service in the village of Ivanivka, in Ukraine's Chernihivska region, is standing near her workplace building.
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BRIEF

Key Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities of the Social Sector Workforce and Existing Gaps

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Key Messages

65.9%

Need training

Recent findings from an online survey of 2,448 respondents from four oblasts revealed that social sector workers possess the **foundational knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill their mandated roles. However, they also recognize their knowledge and skill gaps and demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning.** Notable, 65.9% of respondents stated that additional training would enhance their performance and contribute to achieving the goals outlined in the *Strategy for Ensuring Every Child's Right to Grow Up in a Family Environment (2024–2028)*.



There are gaps in practical and specialized skills across all professions and regions. Although survey respondents are well-educated and have received training, they consistently report gaps in knowledge and skills related to key topics reflected in the *Strategy*, including early identification and intervention, disability support, preparation for independent living, responding to violence, and digital case management. These needs were echoed across all oblasts and all professional categories.



Targeted, standardized, practice-oriented training is urgently required to improve service quality and delivery and ensure the attainment of the *Strategy* goals.

Background

As part of the broader Study of the Workforce Capacity of the Dnipro, Kharkiv, Lviv, and Volyn Oblasts, an online survey and a series of focus group discussions were conducted to support the implementation of the Strategy on Ensuring the Right of Every Child in Ukraine to Grow Up in a Family Environment (hereinafter, “the Strategy”). The survey received 2,448 responses through an online questionnaire distributed via the National Social Service. To complement the online survey, qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions. The respondents represented a wide range of social sector workers, including specialists from children’s affairs, social protection departments, municipal, hromada-level, and NGO social service providers, across four oblasts. The data collection tools explored these workers’ education, training, and professional development, including the types of specialized and ongoing training received; their self-assessments of knowledge, skills, and abilities related to core child protection and family support functions; and their self-perceived readiness to implement the Strategy’s goals.




2,448
responses



Key Findings



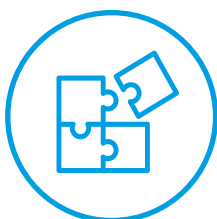
1 / SOCIAL SECTOR WORKERS IN UKRAINE HAVE EXISTING KNOWLEDGE BASE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

supported by topic-specific training. However, the training topics and delivery modes are neither standardized nor comprehensive. Regional comparisons and a national online survey demonstrate that Ukraine's social sector workforce has a solid foundation of practical knowledge and is strongly committed to professional learning. Across regions and occupational groups (i.e., child affairs and social protection specialists and social service providers), social sector workers participate in regular training delivered by the regional-level social service and child affairs centers, UNICEF, and other UN agencies and NGOs. Topics are listed below by social sector workforce category.

Social service workers most frequently reported receiving training in parenting, case management, positive parenting, trauma care, resilience, violence prevention, and alternative care.

Children's affairs workers highlighted experience in reintegration, adoption, patronage care, parenting, stress management, and interagency coordination.

Social protection workers completed courses in case management, burnout prevention, resilience, domestic violence, parenting, inclusion, and monitoring. Participants valued opportunities that included supervision and interagency collaboration.



2 / DESPITE HAVING ACCESS TO A WIDE RANGE OF TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES, WORKERS ACROSS ALL REGIONS AND CATEGORIES IDENTIFIED CONSISTENT GAPS IN THEIR SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICAL SKILLS

These gaps are highlighted below and disaggregated by the specific category of the social sector workforce.

Social service workers need practical training in the early identification, parental capacity, disabilities, independent living, cases of violence, military families, and digital systems.

Child affairs workers want applied training in early detection, adoption and legal aspects, child participation, independent living, and lived-experience testimonies.

Social protection workers require training in early intervention, service monitoring and evaluation, disability care, digital case management, and managing aggressive or traumatized families.

August 21, 2023, Irpin, Ukraine
Regina De Dominicis, UNICEF
Regional Director for Europe and
Central Asia, Murat Şahin, UNICEF
Representative in Ukraine and
other members of the delegation
during their visit to «Lisova
Pisnya» - one of the kindergarten,
supported by UNICEF.
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Recommendations for MOSP and NSS

✓ PRIORITIZE STANDARDIZED, PRACTICAL TRAINING ACROSS ALL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

Findings show that social service, child affairs, and social protection workers need hands-on, practice-based training in early identification and intervention, disability support, and independent living.

✓ INTEGRATE DIGITAL CASE MANAGEMENT MODULES INTO ALL TRAINING

Workers in every oblast cited the need for improved digital literacy, e-case management, and service monitoring. The Ministry and NSS should ensure that training includes the use of electronic systems, digital record-keeping, and basic data analysis to strengthen accountability and reporting.

✓ EXPAND SPECIALIZED MODULES ON DISABILITY AND INCLUSION

Staff repeatedly requested training on assessing and supporting children with disabilities and special educational needs. These topics should be prioritized as foundational competencies for all workers.

✓ STRENGTHEN CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO VIOLENCE AND CRISIS SITUATIONS.

Respondents said they need more information on how to respond to violence in military families, cases of gender-based violence, and crisis response. National and regional training curricula should include these topics, as well as training on violence against children and child protection.

✓ ENSURE CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL WORKER CATEGORIES.

Although workers reported regular access to training, they also emphasized the need for ongoing, structured professional development, including mentoring and support in dealing with challenging cases.