



BRIEF SUMMARY

September, 2025

Findings and recommendations based on the review of state and regional training programs in the social sector



The information presented in this summary is based on a comprehensive Ukrainian-language report and is the result of a review and reflections of a working expert group (comprising representatives of UNICEF, Maestral International, and Ukrainian experts). The group reviewed the status of state and regional training programs for specialists and professionals in the Ministry of Social Policy, Family, and Unity of Ukraine, as provided by the National Social Service of Ukraine for analysis.

The timeliness and importance of this report are driven by the need to create an enabling basis for planning and implementing national strategies and reforms to strengthen the sector's human resources in line with international/European standards, which are priorities for the Ministry of Social Policy, Family, and Unity of Ukraine, including the National Social Service of Ukraine.

A significant step forward toward fulfilling Ukraine's commitment to enhancing the human capacity of social sector professionals was the adoption of the Strategy for Ensuring the Right of Every Child in Ukraine to Grow Up in a Family Environment for 2024–2028 (hereinafter, the "Strategy"). The Strategy emphasizes that resolving current issues in ensuring and protecting children's rights largely depends on the sector's human capacity. Specifically, the Strategy provides for "introducing a system of retraining and continuous professional development for employees of social service providers, ... implementing mechanisms for attracting new workers to the profession and retaining them."



According to Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 479 of June 1, 2020, "Certain Issues of the Activities of Social Service Centers," oblast social service centers (regional centers) provide methodological support for organizing social work and delivering social services. They also organize training on social work and service provision. The purpose of a regional center's activities is to provide methodological support for conducting social work in territorial communities; delivering social services, social assistance, and social support to individuals/families who belong to vulnerable population groups and/or are in difficult life circumstances; and organizing training activities on social work and social services delivery. The Regional Social Service Centers (OCSS) tasks include conducting training events for social service providers and for specialists from local self-government executive bodies who manage the social service system for families and children.

Given the above, a thorough analysis of all state and regional training programs to ensure their relevance and compliance with current requirements is important and timely. Particular attention was paid to assessing the programs' content and structure, recommended literature and other sources, and the clarity of defined goals and expected learning outcomes. Compliance with legal and regulatory acts governing child and family social protection policy and reflecting modern approaches to training social sector specialists was also assessed.

This review of training programs is not a full-fledged sociological study and does not meet all the associated design, sampling, and procedure requirements.



General Findings and Recommendations

FINDINGS ON STATE PROGRAMS

The Ministry of Social Policy, Family, and Unity sector remains insufficiently provided with the training and methodological resources necessary for social sector professionals to perform their duties effectively. Improving the efficiency of training activities requires systemic and structural changes, such as creating a comprehensive system of continuous professional development and introducing regular qualification upgrades (once every five years) and annual enhancement of professional competencies for sector employees.

The reviewed state training programs were mostly developed between 2007 and 2021 (two in 2007 and two in 2009). Some were approved by different ministries, including the Ministry of Family, Youth, and Sports of Ukraine (four programs) prior to 2011.

The analysis showed that the programs target various groups: social sector specialists, social service providers, trainers, prospective adoptive parents and family-based caregivers, foster carers, foster parents, parent-educators, and other social service recipients. While the topics remain broadly relevant, the structure, certain content, and information sources require review and updating.

Of the 13 active programs, only one does not require urgent changes (minor updates are possible). Three remain relevant but need minor adjustments. One program (the Ukrainian version of the PRIDE program) remains under discussion as it is considered popular in the regions. Four programs are relevant but require significant updates to the structure and content. Five programs have lost relevance or do not fully define objectives and tasks, and may therefore be canceled.

Key challenges and barriers to effective training activities, according to the competencies of the Regional Social Service Centers (OCSS), include the following:

✕ lack of adequately trained trainers for all state programs in many oblast social service centers (due to staff turnover);

✕ lack of a centralized database of trainers in the social sphere, resulting in limited information available to the OCSS about certified trainers in the regions who are not OCSS employees;

✕ lack of systematic professional development for trainers and facilitators, including regular planned training and supervision.

When strategically planning training activities, it is important to consider the regions' views of on state programs. Regional centers prioritize developing state training programs by type of social service, which are standardized at the national level, as well as preparing trainers for basic services. In contrast, developing programs for specific categories of service recipients is not currently considered a primary priority by the regions.



FINDINGS ON REGIONAL PROGRAMS

The regional training programs have diverse and largely relevant thematic focuses. The largest share of programs focuses on the organization of social work and the provision of social services (one in five). The second most common topic is supporting family-based care, including developing parenting skills for foster parents, guardians, and caregivers. Other frequent themes include providing social services in wartime, supporting veterans and their families, and building resilience. Programs are also available on preventing domestic violence, providing social support for inclusive education, and preventing professional burnout.

Only about seven percent of programs cover narrower topics, such as training for therapists, newly appointed social work specialists, mediation, and supported living.

The primary target group of most programs is social-sector workers and service providers. About one-third of the materials target service recipients, and one in five programs focuses on interdisciplinary teams, including civil society representatives. No programs are designed to train local self-government officials or child protection service staff.

Overall, regions note a lack of training materials for working with older persons and in the field of care. Stress management, resilience building, and burnout prevention are also identified as important themes relevant to all social sector professionals.

Program titles vary significantly, even within a single center. Regional programs are often presented in a free form, with differences in structure and duration. Many consist only of general information and the agenda of a one-day event, lacking detailed content. This reflects the absence of uniform requirements for program development.

Methodological support is usually limited to PowerPoint presentations and handouts. In only a few cases were participant guides, demonstration cards, action algorithms, or trainer manuals developed.

Due to the lack of requirements and methodological guidelines for developing regional training programs, oblast social service centers often remain passive and rarely take the initiative to create comprehensive, well-structured training packages.

One exception is the attempt to develop and implement such programs in partnership with higher education institutions, regional professional development centers (e.g., Mykolaiv OCSS, Zaporizhzhia OCSS, Khmelnytskyi OCSS), or institutes of postgraduate pedagogical education. In these cases, the institutions created program content and had their academic councils approve it, effectively making OCSS programs the methodological products of other organizations. However, these materials can and should be considered when developing state programs.



In general, all submitted regional programs can be implemented at the community and regional levels, but they must undergo additional content development, refinement, and unification of requirements.

Recommendations on State Programs to the National Social Service of Ukraine

1 / UPDATING AND MODERNIZING PROGRAMS

- When planning training topics for professionals working with families with children, orphans, and children deprived or left without parental care, align the content with the operational goals and objectives of the **Strategy for Ensuring the Right of Every Child to Grow Up in a Family Environment (2024–2028)**, as well as with international best practices and findings from workforce studies in Ukraine.
- Review the thematic focus of state programs **at least every 2–3 years**, or more frequently when legislative changes occur.
- Conduct **regular monitoring of program effectiveness** through feedback from beneficiaries and trainers/facilitators.
- Consider continued use of the **program analysis tools** (cards, questionnaires) developed during this review to monitor training and methodological activities.

2 / DEFINING CORE PROGRAMS

- Develop a list of approximately ten core **state training programs** that are mandatory for all social sector professionals.
- These programs should cover the following areas:
 - development of basic professional competencies,
 - case management and service delivery algorithms,
 - assessment of individual/family needs,
 - preparation and implementation of social support plans,
 - compliance with state social service standards,
 - ensuring the best interests of the child,
 - supervision, etc.
- Involve **key NGOs and experienced partners** in developing these core programs to ensure they are practical and evidence-based.

3 / STANDARDIZATION AND METHODOLOGICAL SUPPORT

- Define the **structure** and content requirements **of a model state training program**, including:
 - introduction (relevance, objectives, tasks, target group, list of competencies, expected learning outcomes, assessment criteria),
 - thematic plan (modules, topics, duration),
 - detailed module and topic content,
 - list of normative/legal sources,
 - annexes (tests and questionnaires for knowledge and skills assessment).

- Develop **methodological guidelines or a writing standard** for designing and implementing programs.
- Make **training and methodological materials** (trainer manuals, participant resources) a prerequisite for program approval.
- Define the **periodicity of training** for OCSS staff under state programs.

4 / ORGANIZATIONAL AND EXPERT MECHANISMS

- Facilitate the **rapid development of new programs** according to a unified structure.
- Apply **diverse training formats** (including blended learning).
- Involve **academics and practitioners**—including experts from higher education institutions and NGOs—in program development.
- Establish an **advisory body or agency** within the National Social Service to monitor, analyze, approve, update, and supplement programs (including reviewing and approving regional programs and best practices).
- Ensure the **participation of multidisciplinary experts** (academics and practitioners) in this advisory body.

5 / CREATING A UNIFIED INFORMATION SPACE

- Create an **official online repository** of state training programs with open access for OCSS and national trainers.
- Develop an **online platform** (drawing on the experience of dity.gov.ua for family-based care) to host additional information, courses, sources, and best practices for each state program. This will enable trainers/facilitators to respond promptly to legislative changes, new resources, and innovations.

6 / DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRAINER COMMUNITY

- Develop a **procedure for trainer preparation** under state programs.
- Establish a **registry of training providers** and criteria for monitoring their activities.
- Promote the **prestige of national trainers** and support their continuous professional growth.
- Encourage the development of a **professional trainer community** in the social sector through regulatory and organizational mechanisms.

Recommendations on Regional Programs to the National Social Service of Ukraine

1 / UNIFICATION OF REQUIREMENTS

- Establish **uniform requirements for program titles** that clearly distinguish professional development programs from one-day training events.
- Define **standards for program duration and volume**, including the calculation of ECTS credits.
- Set a **minimum number of hours/credits** for social sector specialists to participate in training activities under regional programs or programs developed by other training providers aimed at improving professional competence.
- Standardize the **structure of regional programs** to align with the recommended components of state training programs.

2 / METHODOLOGICAL SUPPORT AND COLLABORATION

- Develop **methodological guidelines for OCSS** on preparing regional programs and the procedure for their approval by the National Social Service.
- Take into account the materials from programs created by higher education institutions, and **involve their authors in consultations** when revising or developing regional programs.
- Consider the **continued use of regional program assessment tools** (evaluation cards, questionnaires) to monitor training activities. In future reviews, identify missing topics critical to OCSS work guided by regional requests and needs.

3 / ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS

- Standardize the **issuance of confirming documents** (certificates, statements) after completing training at the regional level.
- Define mechanisms for **registering and consolidating information** about employees who have completed regional-level training to enable effective capacity-building and continuous professional development planning.



Recommendations for Regional Social Service Centers

1. REVIEW AND STRUCTURING OF PROGRAMS

- **Review the titles of existing programs** to make them more specific and descriptive.
- Clearly **differentiate full training programs** from one-off training events or short-term activities.
- **Expand the introductory section** of each program to include relevance, target audience, evaluation criteria, and specific learning objectives and descriptions.
- Until unified state requirements are adopted, **agree on a common “style”** for program structure and formatting at the OCSS level.

2. MONITORING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Introduce a **system for monitoring learning outcomes** that includes entry and exit questionnaires and knowledge/skills tests.
- Include in program bibliographies only **sources published within the last five years** to ensure up-to-date content.
- Develop a clear **algorithm and criteria for internal methodological review** of programs to determine if they should be updated or discontinued.

3. METHODOLOGICAL SUPPORT

- Provide **trainer and participant materials** for every program to ensure that trainers have methodological guidance and participants have supporting resources.
- **Regularly review and update programs** to reflect legislative changes, modern approaches, and sectoral trends.
- Involve **independent experts and partner organizations** in the review and updating of regional programs.

