

A home away from home



International handbook on how to set up and run an innovative model for after-school centers for children from multi-problem families

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INTRODUCTION

What you see before you is the result of a labor of love. The Nest Center is an innovative model for after-school centers for children from multi-problem families that was developed during decades of experimentation and hard work in several Eastern European countries. However, it was always felt that the model could be suitable for many more countries. Through the years, hundreds of staff and volunteers and thousands of children have all done their part to make the Nest Center the successful model we present to you in this handbook today. We wanted to make this model available and accessible to an international audience because we truly believe that it can offer an effective, cost-efficient, and yes, fun prevention alternative to expensive child protection services, which often tend to intervene when it is too late and damage (to children) is already done.

The Nest Center, in a nutshell, is a safe place where between 30 to 60 children from multi-problem families can come after school and in weekends to enjoy a range of activities aimed at strengthening their psychosocial well-being and healthy development. A small team of professionals supported by a bigger group of volunteers runs the Nest Center, using modern pedagogical tools to offer the best possible support to these children, with the aim of preventing them from developing serious psychological and social problems. An equally important aspect is that the children themselves are given a huge responsibility in running the centers and design of the activities, as well as in giving support to their peers.

This handbook offers clear guidance on how to set-up, run and maintain the Nest Center. Because every social setting of course will be different, we allow for flexibility in how these guidelines will be implemented. However, it is important that the main underlying assumptions, goals and methods of work remain the same, no matter the location. We have devised things in such a way that they hopefully - can be applied in a wide and diverse range of situations.

In addition to being a labor of love, this handbook is also very much a work in progress. We appreciate any comments, suggestions and advice that people who attempt to implement the model will have to offer. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time.

We sincerely hope that this handbook will contribute to the establishment of similar centers in other places around the world, because vulnerable children deserve care, attention, protection and support for their growth and development. The Nest Center offers an opportunity for children from multi-problem families to become healthy adults, good, responsible parents, and active and productive members of their communities.

Ilja van Haaren CEO Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland





1. OBJECTIVES OF THE NEST CENTER

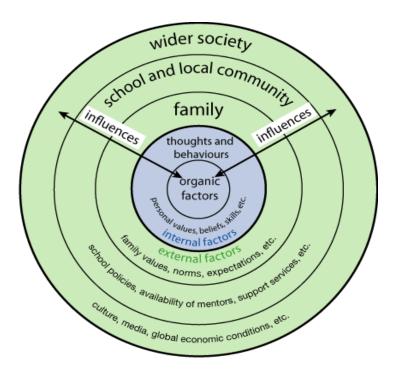


Underlying philosophy and theoretical background

The model for the Nest Center naturally did not pop up out of thin air. It is based on similar after-school facilities and programs that have been set up and are operational in many places around the world. For the presented methodology, which has been piloted in Bosnia & Herzegovina, the best parts/aspects of such centers were combined.

The Nest Center's foundations also incorporate current notions coming from different research disciplines like developmental psychology, neuropsychology and sociology. Nowadays it is understood that children's development needs to be looked at from an *ecological*, *systemic* perspective. Children are not born blank slates, and during their travels towards adulthood there is a constant interplay (or: transactions) between internal and external factors, shaping the child as a person. The Nest Center applies this ecological, systemic approach in the way it is set up and deals with children, their parents and communities. In other words: the Nest Center contributes to a healthy environment for children to grow up in.





Based on Bronfenbrenner¹

Another important underlying concept for the Nest Center is the notion of *resilience*². Most people, and children especially, have a great capacity to deal with and overcome problems they face. In fact, scientific evidence indicates that even children growing up in what can be considered risky environments will quite often develop into normal, healthy adults. This capacity to overcome problems and thrive is called resilience. Many factors play a role here and it is best to consider resilience as a process, not so much a fixed capability. Resilience will be influenced by the number and level of risks factors present in a child's life, and the presence and quality of so called protective factors that can counteract these risks and thus increase resilience. The Nest Center offers access to some extra, much needed protective factors (as depicted in the schedule below) for children that face (too) many risks at home, and whose parents and social environment, at least temporarily, cannot provide enough protection against those risks. The Nest Center thus contributes to building these children's resilience.

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¹ Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). The ecology of human development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

² To learn more about resilience, read for example: Werner, E.E. & Smith, R.S. (2001). Journeys from childhood to midlife: Risk, resiliency, and recovery. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Masten, A. S. (2001). "Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development". American Psychologist 56 (3): 227–238; Luthar, S. S. (2006). Resilience in development: A synthesis of research across five decades. In D. Cicchetti and D. J. Cohen (Eds.), Developmental Psychopathology (2nd ed.): Vol. 3 Risk, Disorder, and Adaptation (pp. 739-795). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons.



Risk factors	Protective factors
Difficult temperamentLow self esteemNegative thinking style	 Easy temperament Child Good social and emotional skills Optimistic coping style
 Family disharmony, instability or breakup Harsh or inconsistent discipline style Parent/s with mental illness or substance abuse 	 Family harmony and stability Supportive parenting Strong family values
Peer rejectionSchool failurePoor connection to school	school • Positive school climate that enhances belonging and connectedness
Difficult school transitionDeath of family memberEmotional trauma	life • Involvement with caring adult events • Support available at critical times
 Discrimination Isolation Socioeconomic disadvantage Lack of access to support services 	Participation in community networks Access to support services Economic security Strong cultural identity and pride

A model depicting how resilience is like a scale, with risk and protective factors influencing the balance³

The concept of children's **agency**⁴, their capacity to help shape the circumstances in which they live, is another important building block for the Nest Center. Children from multi-problem families may often experience a feeling of loss of control and can be overwhelmed by the challenges they face.

The Nest Center aims to *empower* children, by increasing their self-esteem and sense of control over their lives and destinies. Children play an active role in how the Nest Center is run and have a strong say in their own Individual Action Plans (IAPs) and the kinds of activities that take place in the center.

The single most important underlying notion and motivation for the Nest Center model is this: research has clearly shown that early intervention and prevention methods create the highest probability of good long term outcomes for children growing up in at risk situations⁵. The Nest Center essentially forms a *home away from home*. A place where children can find some respite and refuge from potentially harmful family conditions, without severing the ties to family members and set ups, and strengthening the resilience of these children so they (and hopefully their parents⁶ too) can get through the hard times. Adversity can cause children to divert from a healthy developmental pathway; the Nest Center is a way to keep kids on the "right" track.

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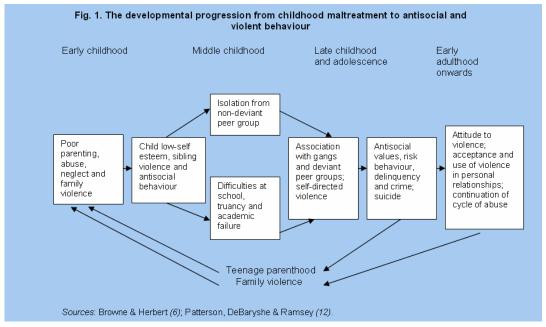
³ Image taken from www.kidsmatter.edu.au

⁴ For some summary info on agency see for example http://www.faqs.org/childhood/So-Th/Sociology-and-Anthropology-of-Childhood.html; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agency (sociology)

There is abundant literature on this, but see for example the World Health Organization (WHO) publication 'The cycles of violence: the relationship between childhood maltreatment and the risk of later becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence.' Available at http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/98783/E90619.pdf

⁶ In this manual when we say 'parents' we mean those who are the primary caregiver(s); besides biological parents this can mean grandparents, foster parents, adoptive parents, legal guardians, and possibly other locally occurring practices.





Model showing how abuse in childhood can lead to problematic behavior and an intergenerational cycle of violence

Target group and problems to be addressed

The primary target group for the Nest Center is **children aged 7-16 from multi-problem families**. Broadly speaking, 'multi-problem families' refers to those in which a combination of problems causes severe stress to its members. The age range of 7-16 years was chosen because it fits with the most commonly used school ages around the world. We also chose this age range to take into account children's evolving capacities. In the Nest Center children are expected to be able to take on certain responsibilities and to participate in decision making; for children younger than 7 this may be difficult. However, some flexibility - either by allowing for children younger or older than specified here - is possible depending on the context.

There are various definitions of a multi-problem family. For example, Bortolotti (1995⁷) argues that such a family presents multiple problems of different types, and that those problems affect both adults and children and are connected to each other. The members of these families may be in contact with several services and institutions, and often seek interventions for problems related to drug and alcohol addiction, or seek help for longer-term problem due to, for instance, loss of employment or loss of a relative. It is also often the case that people in multi-problem families do not initiate contact with social services, and instead withdraw into themselves. Moro (1995⁸) talks about families that face marginality due to poverty, unemployment, social mobility or deviance. In such families, relationships can be seriously impaired. In a recent study, the multi-problem family

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⁷ BORTOLOTTI, G. (1995). Il lavoro sociale professionale nei servizi territoriali. In E. BIANCHI AND F. VERNÒ (Eds.) Le famiglie multiproblematiche non hanno solo problemi (pp. 122-139). Padova: Fondazione Zancan.

⁸ MORO, A.C. (1995). Diffi coltà, bisogni e potenzialità nelle famiglie. In E. BIANCHI AND F. VERNÒ (Eds.) Le famiglie multiproblematiche non hanno solo problemi (pp. 16-39). Padova: Fondazione Zancan.



has been characterized by a set of specific features (Gioga & Pivetti, 2008⁹). The features listed incorporate strengths and potentialities along with a range of problems: several social and health problems; dependency on social services; inappropriate parenting; imbalance between resources and problems; lack of coping mechanisms; refusal or incapacity to recognize and face existing problems; "chronic" relationships with services and institutions.

"Typical" problems in a multi-problem family can include:

- Poverty
- Mental health problem of a parent
- Addiction problem of a parent
- Domestic violence
- Parent's divorce
- Health problems (of parents or other family members)

Children growing up in a multi-problem family may experience a range of difficulties and may display certain problematic behaviors, these can include:

- Concentration problems
- Sleeping difficulties
- Low self-esteem and negative self-image
- Aggressive behavior
- Depressive feelings
- Learning difficulties
- School truancy

It is important to note that the Nest Center aims to cater to the needs of those children that may experience or show some of the above mentioned problems and/or behaviors, but who are <u>not</u> (yet) severely problematic. A likely candidate for a Nest Center would be a child from a multi-problem family that the school identifies as becoming increasingly difficult or worrisome (for example, a child that shows more aggression towards others, or a child that is more frequently absent from school, or a child whose academic performance has suddenly dropped). In other words, the Nest Center can support those children whose behavioral or socio-emotional problems are (still) mild. The focus of the Nest Center is on prevention, not cure!

However, for children that receive psychological or psychiatric treatment elsewhere, the Nest Center may be able to offer the additional stability needed to make that treatment successful. In such -rare - cases, good co-operation is essential between those responsible for the treatment of the child and the staff and volunteers of the Nest Center. Roles and tasks should be clearly defined, and it is of the utmost importance that the Nest Center is not made responsible for aspects of the treatment. It should also be closely monitored that children with more severe psychological problems do not

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⁹ GIOGA, G. AND PIVETTI, M. (2008). Personalized plans considering both the needs of the person and the family. Results from a research with 15 families with children, and with multiple-problems.In C. CANALI, T. VECCHIATO, J.K., WHITTAKER (Eds.) Assessing the "Evidence-base" of intervention for vulnerable children and their families (pp. 490-493). Padova: Fondazione Zancan.



require too much attention from staff and volunteers, and/or become a burden on the other children in the Nest Center.

The above also has implications for the kinds of problems that the Nest Center can address (which will furthermore depend on the expertise available in a certain Nest Center). Usually the work done by volunteers will concentrate on the teaching of concrete skills: computer, handicrafts, arts, sports or providing assistance with school homework and developing certain academic skills (e.g. writing, calculus). The professional staff will offer assistance to children in the psychosocial realm, for example by offering individual counseling, group work, or teaching life skills. If needed, and if available in the community, external expertise, for example on health matters, may also be sought and provided. The work of the Nest Center is particularly focused on helping individual children to overcome some psychosocial and/or cognitive "blockages", and to increase their self-esteem and sense of well-being. Or, as said before, the main aim is to strengthen their resilience.

Objectives of the Nest Center

The Nest Center is an open, close-to-home type of center, where a stable, fixed group of 30 to 60 children aged 7-16 from multi-problem families spend time before and/or after school, and in weekends and holidays.

The overall objective of the Nest Center is to provide children from multi-problem families with a safe space, where they can enjoy interaction with peers and adults in leisure and learning activities, to enhance their psychosocial well-being and strengthen their resilience.

For each child attending the Nest Center an Individual Action Plan (IAP) will be formulated, with clear, mutually agreed upon goals and activities (contributing to the afore mentioned overall objective). This IAP will be regularly monitored and adapted to give the best possible support to a child.

Building a trusting and warm relation with staff, volunteers and peers from the Nest Center is seen as one of the main ways to empower a child, and this aspect therefore receives special attention. It is an element underpinning all activities carried out in the Nest Center.

The Nest Center is the place where I spend the best hours of my day. Here we do different activities: sing, play board games, draw, play different instruments such as drums, guitar, piano, and, what's most important, we study. The staff and volunteers help us with this. This place is really full of joy and play, where my sister and I spend time in a happy and warm atmosphere!

13 year old boy



2. ESTABLISHING THE NEST CENTER



Pre-conditions

Situational criteria

In our experience the Nest Center model is best suited for small towns in rural settings. This because community support and embeddedness are important conditions for positive impact, and these are easier realized in such settings. Alternatively, the Nest Center model can also be applied in a neighborhood in a larger city, but only if the conditions of a certain degree of community cohesion and support are met. The Nest Center needs to have an open character, whilst at the same time there should not be a constant influx of a too large and ever changing group of children (the Nest Center is <u>not</u> a youth center!). It is therefore important that in a bigger urban area there are other facilities available that can cater to the needs of a high number of children (so as to prevent that the Nest Center becomes flooded with too many attendees).

It seems obvious, but it is of course important to choose a location for the Nest Center where there is a clear need. An area with high rates of poverty and unemployment will usually be more suited and make more sense than a location where the population is generally affluent. At the same time, the situation in terms of availability of education for kids should not be too dire. As the Nest Center is an after school program, and since one of its aims is contributing to children's well-being in school, it is important that education is available and accessible. The school enrolment ratio in the working area of the Nest Center should be at least 80%.

Before establishing a center it is very important to secure community support. This requires - if necessary - convincing community members such as parents, school directors, teachers, social workers and so forth (for example via community meetings). But also -and in our view this is in fact a critical prerequisite for success!-, it is necessary that logistical and financial support from local authorities is secured. It is likely that the Nest Center in a certain location will be first established



with financial support from an external - usually - foreign donor. In and of itself this need not be a problem, but to ensure long-term sustainability, (financial) commitment and support from local authorities are essential from the outset and throughout.

It is crucial to conduct thorough needs and situational assessments before deciding to establish the Nest Center. With this handbook we do not offer a fixed tool to do such assessments; there are sufficient tools that are freely available via the internet¹⁰, or via other sources.

Infrastructure

For the location of the Nest Center a place should be chosen that is close to the homes of the targeted children and easily and safely accessible to the children (so, for example, not across a road with heavy traffic). Depending on the climate certain parts can also take place in open air or under a big roof.

The building needs to be safe, disability friendly and preferably right in the heart of the community. If possible it is a building with an open, inviting character, light and spacious.

The exact size is not so important, but in addition to a bigger "living room", there should be some other rooms where separate activities can take place.

The building/place has to be accessible the whole year around, including during school holidays (this is one of the main reasons why a school building is usually not the best location for the Nest Center).

An open courtyard where children can do sports is preferable, but not a must.

There should be a small kitchen and a bathroom, preferably with separate toilets for boys and girls. Water and sanitation should be in good working order (at least on par with the average conditions in the community).

Preferably there is working electricity and possibilities for internet and television reception (but these are not essential requirements).

Of course some of the above listed prerequisites may not be already available beforehand. These should then be taken care of/given attention to in the process of establishing the center.

Establishing the Nest Center

Who

Local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are best suited to establish and manage the Nest Center, because they are often flexible, open to new approaches and are commonly less bureaucratic than other (governmental) agencies. A good NGO is also *community based*, and therefore will have the kind of support and embeddedness that is so crucial for success. A good NGO also has a strong commitment towards its constituency and beneficiary groups, and many are experienced in working with volunteers.

¹⁰ See for example: http://www.ovcsupport.net/s/library.php?ld=253; https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/assessment/community.cfm



Given that they are willing and able, it is our experience that local NGOs that operate youth centers are usually very well suited to establish and operate the Nest Center. On the other hand, local NGOs that previously have been involved in more, what one could call, mental health services, are in our view less suited to take on board the Nest Center model. It seems that organizations running youth centers more easily accept the participation of children in design and implementation of activities, and allow children to also simply enjoy their free time in a manner of their own choosing rather than constantly involving them in organized activities. This is, as said earlier, one of the important ways in which the Nest Center stimulates children's agency and sense of self-esteem. It is important to note, that youth centers often will need some time to adapt and conform to a more structured, goal-oriented way of working, with a stable group of children, as is required in the Nest Center model. However, when regular youth center activities also continue, the Nest Center should be organized in a separate part of the building to allow staff to concentrate on a fixed group of children. It is also common that a psychologist or social worker needs to be added to the staff team.

The Nest Center can only be established and become functional if the designated local NGO shows dedication to the idea and is able to secure community support, including in-kind or financial commitment from local authorities. The space for the center is one of the most common forms of support that local governments can provide (either by reducing or foregoing rent and utility costs to the NGO). In the long term the sustainability of these centers will depend on the extent to which local authorities are willing and able to provide financial support.

Criteria for the identification of a suitable NGO to set up and run the Nest Center

- An organization experienced in implementing center based projects for children at risk;
- An organization with experience and good cooperation with local institutions such as social work centers, schools, local authorities and other relevant community institutions;
- An organization that has clear community support and is locally embedded;
- An organization with good quality management, administrative and Human Resources systems in place, as well as with a strong, enthusiastic board.
- An organization that has the capacity to recruit and maintain community volunteers;
- An organization where professional staff members have the right qualifications (e.g. completed studies in social work, developmental psychology or pedagogy) and with relevant work experience.



Franchise requirements

In the end, who establishes and runs the Nest Center is something that will be decided locally and will differ from region to region, country to country. The Nest Center model is an 'open-source' resource, and can therefore be taken up by anybody. But since the organization Kinderpostzegels owns the copyright to the model, there are a few requirements that need to be met by anybody who wishes to apply the model.

These requirements are:

- 1. Organizations wishing to implement the Nest Center model will pledge (in writing) to adhere to the guidelines and methods of working as laid down in this handbook. A statement to this effect needs to be send to Kinderpostzegels before the Nest Center can be set up. Statements have to be send to Kinderpostzegels, Dept. Projects & Programs, Schipholweg 73/75, 2316 ZL Leiden, the Netherlands. E-mail: projects@kinderpostzegels.nl.
- 2. Organizations wishing to implement the Nest Center model will ensure that pertinent staff will follow at least the following required modules from the Training 'The Nest Center'. These modules can only be provided by the certified training organization International Child Development Initiatives (www.icdi.nl; info@icdi.nl) or for Bosnia and Herzegovina the IN foundation (www.infondacija.org).

Required training modules are:

- Child and youth development
- Child rights and participation
- Working with children from multi-problem families
- Working with parents
- Working with volunteers

In the Nest Center I like to spend time because of volunteers and staff, who help me with everything and who are willing to listen to me when I am in a rough situation and who give me useful advice.

15 year old girl



3. RUNNING AND MAINTAINING THE NEST CENTER



Organizational set-up

Ideally, the Nest Center has three professional staff members and between 5 to 20 volunteers. A certain minimum number of volunteers is necessary to be able to deliver the kinds of supporting activities that are vital for the quality of the Nest Center (so no compromise is possible in that respect!).

In the previous chapter we indicated a local NGO as the best possible entity to run the Nest Center. The NGO should have good quality management, administrative and HR systems in place. It is also important that there is a strong board that oversees all processes within the organization.

Staff

Experience has shown that the Nest Center needs both enthusiastic professionals as well as professional enthusiasts. For all involved the Nest Center has to be more than just a job. Creative people, who may not necessarily have the ideal professional background, can sometimes still offer a lot in terms of bringing interesting activities to the Nest Center, and thus can help children to get involved, express creativity, or ventilate their feelings. When selecting staff members (and volunteers) elements of 'enthusiasm', 'dedication', 'empathy', 'ideas', and so forth, should be given equal importance to just having the right qualifications (ideally of course staff members possess both!).

In terms of qualifications one can think of people with a background and education in social work, developmental psychology, pedagogy, or sociology. It is important staff have a clear affinity with children's issues.



For all newly to be hired staff members (and volunteers) it is mandatory that references are extensively checked, especially in relation to any possible child right violations. Whenever possible, judicial checks need to be done (for example, a potential staff member or volunteer will be asked to show proof of no criminal record and/or will allow this to be checked with the authorities; any evasive or negative reply to such a request will be deemed an immediate reason not to employ that individual).

Additionally, it is important that the professional team is a good mix of older, more experienced as well as younger team members, so as to promote dynamics in which new ideas and (critical) self-reflection are more readily encouraged. Younger staff members (and younger volunteers) may also bring the added value of easier connecting with the children and can possibly function as more recognizable positive role models.

In the same vein, it is necessary to have, as much as possible, a good gender balance in the professional team and amongst the volunteers. Many of the children in the Nest Center grow up in situations where there is violence, and usually this violence will have a strong gender component (fathers hitting mothers, for example). The Nest Center aims to be a safe place for boys *and* girls! Staff and volunteers need to model how people from both sexes can work together harmoniously and with equality.

It is furthermore highly recommended that some of the staff members (and volunteers) are themselves (young) people with experiences growing up in multi-problem families, since they have first-hand know-how and can facilitate colleagues to better relate to the kids.

Although a NGO running the Nest Center will be usually quite small and non-hierarchical, certain clear task divisions and job responsibilities for the professional staff should be defined nonetheless. The text below offers a description of an ideal situation, which can be adapted to local needs and circumstances.

Staff costs will usually make up the main part of the budget of the Nest Center. In order to be able to realize financial sustainability, it is advisable to limit the number of staff to those positions that are really needed. As described earlier, this means three paid positions:

1. Nest Center Coordinator

Job description: Overall and end responsible (organizationally, financially and content wise) for the Nest Center. The coordinator reports to the board of the NGO.

Tasks include:

- Day-to-day management of the center, including financial administration
- Represents the center to the outside world, maintains local and regional network
- Responsible for center policies and ensures that these are implemented
- Develops strategic plans
- Develops and implements fundraising activities



2. Activities Manager

Job description: Coordinates the daily activities in the center. Reports to the Nest Center Coordinator.

Tasks include:

- Develops and implements weekly or monthly rosters of activities
- Ensures activities take place according to plan
- Monitors quality of the implemented activities
- If necessary, implements certain activities him/her self
- Organizes monthly meetings with children, volunteers and staff in which all issues related to the Nest Center are discussed. The main aim of this meeting is to actively involve children in decision making activities

3. Volunteers Manager

Job description: Responsible for all matters relating to volunteers. Reports to the Nest Center Coordinator.

Tasks include:

- Recruits and selects volunteers (in cooperation with Nest Center Coordinator and Activities Manager)
- Organizes and provides training and guidance for volunteers
- Organizes the work of volunteers, in co-operation with the activities manager
- Organizes regularly bi-lateral meetings with volunteers, to give them support, advice and to listen to any suggestions or problems individual volunteers may face. If deemed necessary/desirable, he/she can also organize Intervision Sessions with the volunteers as a group, or with volunteers and all staff members together

In addition to the tasks listed above, the professional staff members also have shared tasks. These include:

- Staff members must be able to replace each other. Due to long working hours, and the Nest Center being open in weekends and holidays, staff members will seldom all be present. Clear agreements on who replaces whom and how, need to be put in place.
- In the Nest Center each staff member is responsible for the Individual Action Plans (IAP) of 10 to 20 children. This so called Case Manager needs to coordinate all actions as formulated in the IAP, and will monitor and evaluate the implementation and follow-up. He/she also maintains contacts with the children's parents and school. By the time a child leaves the center, this staff member coordinates the exit strategy for the child. So in addition to their role as either Next Center Coordinator, Activities Manager or Volunteers Manager, the professional staff members are the assigned Case Manager for between 10 to 20 children.



- The professional team meets at least once a week in the *Management Team Meeting*. Here all pertinent organizational matters are to be discussed. The Nest Center Coordinator chairs this meeting, develops the agenda and coordinates follow-up actions.
- Once every month the professional team will have a so called *Intervision Session*, in which specific work problems are shared and discussed, with the aim of building team cohesion and finding common solutions.
- Other than this, the complete professional team meets with all the volunteers once every month to discuss any organizational matters and to inform volunteers on important developments. The Volunteers Manager is responsible for organizing and chairing this meeting.
- Depending on the size and possibilities of the NGO, financial and other administrative tasks may be either divided amongst the professional staff members, or a separate administrative support unit is (put) in place. The latter is advisable, but reality will dictate what is feasible.

Volunteers

Many of the things mentioned under 'professional staff' apply to the volunteers too. They need to be people that show commitment, interest and empathy for children. When recruiting new volunteers it is also important that they have certain 'pedagogical' qualities. While a volunteer does t not need to have a background in, for instance, teaching, it should be assessed whether a person has the necessary patience and skills to work with children. This is something that can be deduced from interviews, cv's and by thoroughly checking references (n.b. this always needs to be done!). Similar to professional staff, volunteers need to be able to prove that they have no judicial record, especially when it comes to child rights violations (for example, child abuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse of children, etc). It is also always important to assess to what extent a volunteer will be able and willing to function in a team, how he/she will deal with supervision and criticism, and to what degree he/she will be able to do activities in the Nest Center for a longer period of time (the latter is important to give the children a sense of stability).

It is recommended, and in our experience actually quite common, that former Nest Center pupils will become volunteers later on. There is a clear added value, as these volunteers will usually be able to easily connect and relate to children coming to the Center. When starting a new Nest Center, no former participants will be available yet. However, in the selection of volunteers priority should be given to a certain number of persons with similar backgrounds as those of the children.

One Nest Center only accepted staff and volunteers that grew up in multiproblem families themselves. As they said: "It is extremely difficult to understand a child in such conditions when you have not experienced it yourself." The team of staff and volunteers was mostly made up of former participants of the project. Some of them were assisted to follow studies to become professional child workers.



Typical tasks for volunteers in the Nest Center include:

- Providing home work assistance (with calculus, maths, reading, writing, but possibly also with history, literature, chemistry, geography, etc.)
- Organizing sports activities
- Offering computer lessons
- Facilitating creative workshops
- Giving life skills training
- Organizing community actions and activities
- Monitoring of the living room
- Maintaining technical equipment

Volunteers can implement their work individually, or in pairs or even in bigger teams.

Recruiting and keeping capable volunteers on board is a challenge in most settings. There is not one "golden" method for achieving this, but there are a few general **tips** that we can give:

- Experience shows that community volunteers may be motivated to become
 involved in the work of the Nest Center following presentations on the
 initiative in universities, high schools, local clubs, etc. Regular media messages
 on the work of the center are also a good way to attract interest from
 potential volunteers. One can also tap into formal and informal contacts with
 relevant stakeholders, such as involving a municipal unemployment bureau,
 other NGOs, local businesses, etc.
- It is important to give a volunteer clear tasks and goals. These need to be things he/she likes and is able to do well.
- It is important that the volunteer feels that he/she is monitored in his/her work, and that he/she receives support and praise (and criticism if necessary).
 A volunteer should feel that what he/she does is valued as much as, or even more so, a regular job.
- Do not hire a volunteer just because you feel sorry for him/her, or because of some social pressure (family, friends), or because you think you have too few volunteers. There is no use in having people hanging around in the Nest Center who do not really have anything to do, or who are not capable of doing good things. This can actually be very destructive!
- Make sure you have a *Volunteer Policy* in place, which is accessible and known to all volunteers, in which all obligations and regulations, including possible remunerations (for example, for travel costs) are included. This policy should also clearly state how appraisals and monitoring of volunteers take place, and which are the steps to take in case a volunteer is not functioning well.



- A new volunteer should always be clearly introduced to all the children (n.b. similarly, a new child always needs to be introduced to all those active in the Nest Center). This introduction can be done in a more formal way (shaking hand, stating names, etc), but we actually advise to do this in a more casual manner, for example by using certain 'name games' or some other creative way. One can also think of some kind of small "ceremony", which is conducted in the same way each time a new volunteer is welcomed.
- Children will become emotionally attached to volunteers! This is inevitable, and is actually a good thing. When a volunteer leaves the center forever, or for a longer time period, it is good to organize a small farewell party, as a way to thank the volunteer, but also to make it easier for the children to deal with this departure. Children can be given an active role in organizing such a farewell.

Policies

Below descriptions are provided on the policies that **at a minimum** any Nest Center should have in place. Of course more can be added, in line with what may be required in a given context.

In the Nest Center it is mandatory that all staff members and volunteers sign a *Child Protection Policy*. This policy should clearly state what is considered appropriate behavior and what are consequences in case of non-adherence to the stipulations in the policy. An example format for the Child Protection Policy can be found in the Annexes.

In the Nest Center there should always be a *Safety Protocol*, which clearly designates steps to be taken, roles and responsibilities in case of emergencies (for example: when there is a fire, or when a child gets injured). The Safety Protocol needs to adhere to, as a minimum, the requirements as laid down by law in a given country for such protocols (no standard format is therefore attached to this manual).

Each center needs to have its own *Nest Center Rules*. Here the behaviors and moral values of the center should be laid down. For example: rules on use of equipment, rules on how to deal with conflict, rules about how to keep the building clean and safe, rules about inviting others to the center, rules about respect and how people should talk and listen, etc. Zero tolerance towards bullying, gender discrimination and physical violence are requirements in any Nest Center Rules! The list does not need to be too long, but items should be clear. It is very important the Nest Center Rules are developed jointly by children, staff and volunteers. Only include issues on which there is consensus. In the early stages, for instance during the first year of existence of the Nest Center, this can be a "living" document, which is regularly adapted. The Nest Center Rules need to be placed somewhere, clearly visible to all.



One Nest Center had a children's court. Every half year three children were elected by the other children to form the court. A staff member functioned as secretary. In case of quarrels between children, conflicts between children and volunteers or staff, or where someone was seen not to respect the rules, the court listened to all parties and took decisions. In cases where children broke the rules, punishment was usually handed down in the form of temporary exclusion from the Nest Center, which was very effective. However, we do not know what happened with punishments for staff and volunteers!

Upkeep of the building

In terms of upkeep of the building we think it is important that staff, volunteers and the children themselves all play a part in keeping the place tidy and clean. Specific rosters assigning people to certain tasks is a way to accomplish this. It is important to be aware of gender issues here too: when male adults do not participate in cleaning, it will be extremely difficult to motivate boys to participate. As said earlier, gender equity and equality is considered of utmost importance, especially in role modeling towards the children.

It should be kept in mind that children fulfill an active role in the Nest Center and therefore should also be given responsibilities in terms of housekeeping, such as cleaning, preparing drinks, etc. Children should not be passive recipients, but active contributors. This is all in line with our philosophy to empower kids. Children should become aware of their rights, but also should become aware that with rights come duties. Just like in a normal family, children should have such duties, but the kinds of tasks they can do will of course depend on their age and capabilities. It goes without saying that in no way children should be used by staff or volunteers as 'workers'. Chores for children should be simple, light, and there should not be too many of them. Children, volunteers and staff jointly take care of the Nest Center, each according to his/her ability.

For this reason, it is not advisable to employ cooks or cleaners. It goes without saying that sometimes repairs or other specific maintenance issues will require engaging outside services.

Once a month on Saturday morning everybody is present. All staff members, volunteers and children are there. Firstly all of them, male and female, boys and girls, small and big, do a thorough clean-up of the whole center. After that less pleasant job is done, they all sit together, enjoy a nice drink with some cake, and discuss activities, policies and problems of the, now nicely smelling, tidy, center.

A typical Saturday morning in one Nest Center



Creating financial sustainability

The long-term financial sustainability of the Nest Center has to be (at least partially) realized with local sources of income. Activities to realize stabile sources of income cannot wait till the end of funding by, what usually will be, a foreign donor. Therefore it is paramount that from the beginning activities are undertaken to involve local authorities (see also page 11 of this handbook). If not by giving money directly, authorities can often be persuaded to contribute "in kind", for example, by-offering a building free of rent, foregoing utility costs, or by making a nurse available once a week.

In order to convince authorities to support the Nest Center, it is useful to make them realize that letting a child take part in the Nest Center, in the long run, prevents such a child from being placed in an orphanage (or some other kind of facility). From research in many countries it is clear that most children in orphanages do have at least one parent and are from multi-problem families (so-called "social orphans"). A compelling argument to convince authorities to lend their support to the Nest Center concerns the finding that costs of prevention are much lower, both in social as well as economic terms. For example, in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, orphanage care is twice as expensive as the priciest alternative (namely, small group homes); three five times more expensive than foster care; and approximately eight times more costly than providing family and community support services to vulnerable families¹¹. In spite of all the clear psychosocial advantages of a child being able to stay in his/her own family as a result the support provided by the Nest Center, authorities are often most sensitive to the costs benefits. Therefore, the price comparison between the Nest Center and other existing facilities (such as orphanages) is often essential when trying to get authorities on board. In nearly every country, state orphanages do exist and their budgets and numbers are known. It is a simple calculation to find out the price per child per month or per year. The same can be done for the Nest Center. One can also explain that institutional care tends to last very long (it is common that children spend their whole childhoods there, i.e. until the age of 18), while attending the Nest Centre averages two years.

When convincing authorities it can also be useful to show how the Nest Center fits with strategic plans of governments. In many countries there will be policies regarding prevention of juvenile crime, alcoholism, substance abuse, mental health care, prevention of school dropout, child protection, and so forth.

Other potentially promising ways to achieve (financial) sustainability linked to government support are:

- Working towards a situation where the Nest Center becomes an extended service of an existing governmental social service.
- Working towards a situation where the Nest Center staff is on the payroll of a governmental service.
- Working towards a formal partnership between the NGO running the Nest Center and a governmental service.

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¹¹ See for example GLOBAL FACTS ABOUT ORPHANAGES Prepared by: Better Care Network Secretariat Last updated, August 2009, available via http://handstohearts.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Global-Fact-Sheet-on-Orphanages_BetterCareNetwork.pdf



To achieve financial sustainability with local sources of income, it is necessary from the very beginning to:

- Be visible in the community by informing and inviting media, having open days for neighbors, etc.
- Show your results by informing and inviting politicians of all political parties, school staff, professionals, civil servants, other NGOs, etc.
- Be open about finances and management, for example by publishing your annual report on the internet.
- Ask for sponsorships by the local business sector, for example small contributions in kind by local shops (and give them something in return, such as offering free publicity about the support you are getting from them)
- Co-operate with other NGOs, especially in advocacy. Together you are stronger. Advocacy should not only deal with improving the situation of your target group, but should also aim at getting funding for your center.

In most countries it is not realistic to expect that the Nest Center will be completely financed by government resources. Additional fundraising activities will be necessary. This requires creativity, saviness and knowledge of local possibilities and culture. Possible examples could be:

- Selling handicrafts made by children (with of course again the warning that the Nest Center is not supposed to be a place where children work!).
- Organizing a fund raising concert.
- Applying to multiple (international) donors.
- Seeking sponsorships from international, national and local companies, or from more wealthy families within the community.

Long-term financial sustainability is important for the Nest Center. Many of the children that come to the center will already harbor feelings of resentment and neglect. When - once again - support offered to them is interrupted or cancelled, there is a serious risk that they turn their back to society all together. It is not difficult to imagine what kinds of social problems that in turn may lead to.

One Nest Center is working in a very poor community with an unemployment rate of over 80%! There is hardly any business sector to speak of. But there is a local dairy firm and the staff have managed to get this firm to support the Nest Center with free milk for the children. Now the dairy firm also sometimes provides free school materials.



4. WORKING WITH CHILDREN



Overall approach

The overarching elements of the approach towards children in the Nest Center are what we call the '4 Ps':

1. Positive

The most important feature of the Nest Center model is that it is positive and strengths-based. We want to unlock and harness potential that is already present in children. The focus is therefore never on negative punishment, but always on positive re-enforcement. Children from multi-problem families may show negative acting out behavior, such as aggression or just being rude, or, on the opposite end of the behavior spectrum, they may be extremely withdrawn and aloof. Instead of focusing on these behaviors, the Nest Center staff and volunteers will always try and engage children in activities which bring positive feedback. In other words: the focus is not on what the children cannot do, it is on what they can do (and to build up from there). This requires a kind of mindset and attitude from staff and volunteers which does not necessarily come naturally (also because it may not be common in certain cultural settings). It will sometimes require quite a lot of restraint and self-control from staff and volunteers. They therefore need thorough training and ongoing support in achieving and maintaining the necessary mindset and skills. Negative punishment cannot at all times be avoided, but it should always be the last option. It is not only about being *Positive*, but also about being *Patient*.



2. Participatory

Children are not "clients" of the Nest Center. They are active participants and with staff and volunteers they run and maintain the center. They should be engaged in the design and implementation of all activities that concern them and the center.

3. Proper

Children in the Nest Center build up close relations with the staff, volunteers and with other children. In many ways the center acts as a substitute family. But it is essential that relationships do not become too close and improper. The Child Protection Policy and the house rules are there to instill awareness amongst all involved which are proper ways of engaging with each other, and management of the Nest Center needs to vigorously safeguard that certain boundaries are not crossed.

Proper also refers to the support and care in the Nest Center. Children (and their parents) need to be able to rely on the Nest Center to provide them with the proper care and support that suits their needs and wishes.

4. Prolonged

The Nest Center is not a short-term, temporary intervention. Meaningful, long-term relationships with children are built and seen as key to creating positive changes in children's lives. On average, a child will participate in center activities for two years. And after that many will continue to come to the Nest Center on a regular basis, to meet up with staff, volunteers and children as old friends.

Of course, some children will not always respect all rules and some will show non-acceptable behavior towards others. In cases were positive interventions fail, the so called *Time Out* measure can be used. It means that a child is temporarily taken out of the group situation and put in a small, separate room (contemplating his/her "sins", so to speak). Use of the Time Out option needs to be regulated by a clear policy on the when, how and how long. Prior permission given by parents to use the Time Out measure is also essential.

Selection

The two primary selection criteria are:

- 1. Age: a child needs to be between 7 to 16 years of age.
- 2. Multi-problems: a child needs to come from a family where there are several problems which pose considerable risks to the child's development.

It is very important to get the "right" children in the Nest Center. By "right" we mean those children that will stand to benefit most from attending the center. It is also very important to get the "right" mix of children, to be able to create an atmosphere in which all children can thrive. As stated earlier: the Nest Center can support those children whose behavioral or emotional problems are (still) mild. The focus of the Nest Center is on prevention, not cure!



Preferably there is a gender balance in the group of children. The Nest Center also needs to have an inclusive approach, allowing boys and girls with disabilities, and from different social and ethnic backgrounds, to take part in equal measure. Since the primary criterion is the 'multi-problem family' aspect, such a balance may sometimes prove a bit difficult to maintain. For example: there is a risk that mostly boys are referred to the Nest Center, since their problem behavior is more often of an externalizing nature (e.g. aggression, or criminal acts) and is therefore easy to identify by those around them. Girls from multi-problem families may show more internalizing problems, such as depression and withdrawal, which often causes less of a direct problem, and therefore they may not be referred to the Nest Center. It is important that staff is aware of these kinds of mechanisms and that they ensure that those children that could benefit from the center gain access to it, and not just those children whom others (social work, school, parents, etc) think could benefit from it.

Children will usually be referred to the Nest Center via social work centers, schools, other NGOs, as well as through informal channels (children from the same class, street, contacts in the local community, religious institutions, sports organizations etc.). Of course parents can also refer a child directly, or a child can even come to the center by him or herself.

When a child is referred to the Nest Center, it is necessary to assess if he/she is suitable. To this end a *Selection Criteria Checklist* has been developed, which should be used by every Nest Center. The full form can be found in the Annexes.

It looks like this (only first page shown):

Selection Criteria Checklist

The information used to score this checklist can be derived from: interviews with a child, parents, teachers or other relevant persons who know the family. It may also be based on records provided by certain institutions, like the Centers for Social Welfare. However, always double check the sources: never let the scoring of this checklist depend on just one information source!

I. Family situation The first set of questions of this checklist is on the situation of the parents and family of a child. The child has <u>at least one</u> parent/caregiver or, in case neither of the parents shows any clear sign of problematic behavior, <u>at least two</u> other important family member s(brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts living with them in the same house, etc.), with problems related to: (score I for 'yes'



In addition to this an *Assessment & Admission Form* will be filled in to gather further background information on the child and his/her situation. An example format for this can be found in the Annexes.

As soon as a child is welcomed into the Nest Center, one of the professional staff members is appointed as *Case Manager*. For the entire duration of the child's involvement in the center this professional staff member will be responsible for developing, monitoring and evaluating the Individual *Action Plan (IAP)*. The Case Manager will also, towards the end, be responsible for developing and implementing an exit strategy for that same child. The Case Manager is furthermore responsible for the administration of the child's *Personal File* and for maintaining contact with the school, parents, and any possible other stakeholders that may be involved.

Upon selection further talks with the child are conducted, to help him/her to get acquainted with the center's activities and to clarify the way things are done at the center (including expectations and obligations of the child). Spending time at the center is voluntary, but children are expected to take part regularly. To stress that participation is serious, each child is asked to sign a consent form. See the Annexes for an example *Consent Form for Children*.

During this time the Case Manager also talks separately to the parents. If the parent(s) agree(s) that the child may start taking part in the center's activities, they should sign the **Consent Form for Parents** (see the Annexes for an example format).

In one Nest Center every new child gets a peer mentor. The peer mentor is an experienced participant of about the same age or a little older, and is responsible for introduction of the child to others, making the child aware of rules and duties, and helping him/her in any other way to find his way in the center.

Many Nest Centers organize a small ceremony in order to welcome a new child. Usually they use fun introduction games for such a ceremony. In some Nest Centers the picture of the new child is hung on a line between the pictures of the other children, volunteers and staff.

Personal File

For each child a *Personal File* needs to be created and maintained for the duration of the child's involvement in the Nest Center. The Case Manager is responsible for this. Besides the child's subsequent IAPs, the Personal File should include the Assessment & Admission Form, the Child Consent Form, and the Parent Consent Form. Minutes of meetings in which the child was discussed, internally or with outside stakeholders, also need to be kept here. Furthermore, any relevant notes or observations are to be put in this file. Creative works by the child can also be kept in the Personal File.



Clear regulations should be established on access to the Personal File as it contains private information. In principle, these files should be kept in a locked place. Those with access to the file must be aware that the information cannot be passed to others. National regulations on how to handle such a file should be followed. If no such regulations exist, a clear agreement should be made with the child and his/her parents on how they would like this file to be kept during and after the child exits the Nest Center (possibilities include, for example, the child takes the file with him/her, with a copy staying in the Nest Center for a certain period of time, after which the file will be destroyed; or the original file stays in the Nest Center indefinitely, but with clearly agreed upon rules for access).

Individual Action Plan

For each child in the Nest Center an *Individual Action Plan (IAP)* is developed. The first IAP will usually be drafted after the first three months. This initial IAP will be for a period of 6 months. Subsequent IAPs will usually be for a period of 12 months.

As said earlier, the child's Case Manager is responsible for developing, monitoring and evaluating the IAPs. It should be made very clear that this is never can be a solo effort. The Case Manager needs inputs from his/her colleagues, volunteers, parents, teachers and possibly others. First and foremost, however he/she will need to discuss the IAP with the child him or herself, whereby the case manager and child jointly decide on realistic goals and relevant activities, and jointly decide on the monitoring and evaluating of progress.

The IAPs are considered an essential tool to providing a child with the right kind of support from the Nest Center, i.e. the kind of support that will ensure that a child will most benefit from. IAPs are regularly revisited and updated. They need to be "living" documents and not, as too often is the case, be used and seen as administrative burdens. Staff members require training in proper and effective use of IAPs.

The IAPs are to be part of the Personal File, and the same kind of privacy regulations therefore apply to them. Information with regards to goals in the IAP can and should be shared with other staff and with volunteers, as they have to know what is the focus for a certain child, and what is expected from them in terms of giving support to achieving certain goals.

We have developed a simple IAP format, which can be easily adapted to local circumstances. Please see the Annexes.



It looks like this (only a fictitious first page is shown as an example):

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¹ Formulate as follows: By (date), (name of child) is (describe a clearly visible behavioral trait; for example: 'capable of initiating and maintaining friendships', or 'capable of asking for help', or 'happy, and with good self-esteem', etc. Whatever seems appropriate for the child in question. Maximum 3 goals.

Attendance regulations

Children are expected to come every day after school, or in certain contexts, before school (in some countries children go to school in shifts; if a child has the afternoon shift this may mean he/she comes to the Nest Center in the morning). The exact attendance hours can be decided by each individual Nest Center itself, but it is important that children will continue - as much as is possible regular family life as well (for example, children should not hang around the center until 11 o'clock in the evening!). It is common that during weekdays children spend up to 3 hours at the Nest Center. During weekends and holidays they may spend more time there.

The exact number of days per week that a child is expected to come to the center will differ and will depend on the goals as set in his/her IAP. In principle, however, children can come as often as they like. If a child comes fewer days than agreed upon, or shows very irregular attendance, this is an issue to discuss. Mutual expectations need to be expressed, and if needed, sanctions can be put in place (for example, if certain non-attendance behavior continues a child can be barred from the Nest Center, first for a certain period and, if there is no progress, at some point permanently).

² Here fill in the date and if the goal was achieved (A), partly achieved (PA), or not achieved (NO). In case of PA or NA this should be translated into new long term goals of the next individual action plan.



Another issue is the attendance of friends. Children can bring their friends to the Nest Center, but within clearly set and agreed upon boundaries. Not all activities can be attended by friends, since some may need a confidential atmosphere (for example, internal meetings with staff, volunteers and children should always remain internal!). Attendance by friends also needs time limitations. The possibility to bring friends is important in order to avoid stigmatization, but should be limited to once or twice per week.

Some Nest Centers welcome additional groups of children after school time, particularly those that live in rural areas and who have to wait for the school bus in order to bring them home. During these few hours they can use the living room, study room and the computers. Sometimes creative workshops or sports activities are organized in which they also participate.

Some Nest Centers are housed in regular youth centers, but have specially designated rooms. Rooms at the front of these youth centers are open to all youth, but in the back the rooms are only accessible for children enrolled in the Nest Center.

Staff and volunteers are expected to be in the Nest Center at those hours that are designated to them. Non-appearance (for whatever reason) always needs to be communicated in a timely manner and has to be well justified. In that sense there is no difference between staff and volunteers, although the former are expected to "lead by example". How to deal with attendance problems of staff and volunteers has to be laid down in a HR policy, known to all. Staff and volunteers are not permitted to bring friends and family to the center.

Activities

Although each child has an Individual Action Plan, most of the activities taking place in the center will usually be conducted in groups. But the IAP will prescribe which group activities a child will take part in (and within those group activities certain individual goals will be promoted). The overarching goal of the group activities is to create bonding and peer support between the children, and to generate supportive relations between the children with the adult staff members and volunteers. They also should have a clear fun and relaxation aim, as the Nest Center is very much a place where children from multi-problem families can take a breather from the stress at home.

Group activities can include:

- Psychosocial workshops
- Life-skills workshops
- Health education workshops
- Sexual education workshops (preferable in a broad sense, including physical development)
- Community volunteering



- Sports activities (with a certain psychosocial focus, for example team work, anger management, etc)
- Computer lessons
- Language classes (or on other topics)
- Creative workshops

Originally, sexual education was not part of the program, but it proved to be much needed as many of the children are adolescents and their families/schools often do not provide any information on this topic. A method was developed in Serbia and, in addition to the workshop format, is also available in the form of two books, one for boys and one for girls. These books can also be used for individual reading.

In addition to the group activities, children in the Nest Center can also take part in individual activities, designed to cater to specific needs. These activities usually have as a clear aim to increase certain skills or to alleviate possible psychosocial problems a child may experience.

Individual activities can include:

- Support in doing homework
- Individual psychological counseling
- Training in learning skills
- Basic medical care (nurse)

Creating a so-called *Life Book* can be a great tool to start and accompany individual counseling. Many children from multi-problem families do not have pictures or do not have an overview where and with whom they have lived in the past. In a Life Book such information is collected and cherished. Examples of how a Life Book could look like can be found on

www.ifapa.org/pdf_docs/LifebookPagesAll.pdf or suite101.com/article/creating-an-adoption-lifebook-a46959

Other than the activities mentioned above, there are also 'free' activities in the Nest Center. The Nest Center is in many ways a home away from home, therefore children need to be able to relax, socialize and do their own thing. In the Nest Center there is the 'Living Room'. This is the biggest and central room in the Nest Center. Here one can find comfortable chairs and sofas, bookshelves and, of course, a television. Children can just hang out in this room, read, or chat with others and watch tv. To make sure that the atmosphere is indeed good and comfortable, someone from the staff or volunteers needs to be present at all times to monitor and, if necessary, intervene. It should also be monitored that children in the Living Room are not there when they are expected to be doing other activities (for example, individual homework counseling).



Other free activities can include playing outside, computer games, internet, board games, and so forth. Again: although all these activities are free, they of course need to be monitored by staff and volunteers.

Please note that this handbook does not provide detailed guidelines on how individual or group activities are to be designed, which exact goals need to be strived for, or how activities need to be implemented. First of all: this would require many separate handbooks (which are available on internet in abundance). Secondly, the how and what of what is done in the Nest Center will need to be shaped locally, based on local available expertise, ideas, possibilities, needs and so forth. As long as these activities are in line with and contribute to the overall aims and philosophy of the Nest Center model, a lot is possible.

In one Nest Center too many children wanted to be on the internet, and the children also tended to stay too long at the computer and did not play outside enough. The staff discussed the problem with the children and a new rule was adopted: each child can now use the computer for a maximum of one hour a day, and for no longer than half an hour each turn. A kitchen timer at the computer acts as the referee!

Monitoring and evaluation

The main tool used in monitoring and evaluating a child's progress in the Nest Center is the Individual Action Plan (IAP). The emphasis here is on the word 'tool'; the IAP should never become something self-serving and has no right of existence if not really used for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation. It should also <u>never</u> be the only tool used for that purpose! Staff, volunteers and children themselves (and possibly others, such as parents and teachers) all need to be active monitors of children's well being and progress. The IAP serves as a support in this process, but other methods, which can be as simple as regularly sitting down and chatting with one another, or by observing how a child is doing in activities, etc., are just as essential. Informal and more formal ways of monitoring and evaluation need to complement each other. What is most important is that it happens! It is the Case Manager's responsibility to ensure that a child's well being and progress is regularly discussed with all who are involved.

Exit strategy

On average after a period of about 2 years (sometimes shorter, often longer) children are ready to leave the Nest Center. This sensitive process requires careful planning and monitoring, since it can cause considerable stress on a child (and his/her environment).

The basic elements of the exit strategy, for each individual child, need to take into account the following aspects:

- Resilience capacity of the child gained during his/her stay at the Nest Center, including an
 assessment of his/her knowledge, (coping) skills, interests, preferences, but also the level of
 self-confidence.
- Social support resources available to the child upon exiting the Nest Center.
- Motivation of the child (is he/she ready/willing to leave?).



An exit strategy (in the form of an IAP) should be developed, in close cooperation with the child and his environment, at least 6 months before the expected exit (but it can be developed as early as 12 months in advance, or, in some cases, as late as 3 months prior to the expected departure).

In the Exit IAP a clear 'phasing out' is important. Activities and attendance of the child in the Nest Center should be gradually decreased, so as to ensure the change is not too sudden.

Activities in the Exit IAP should also be focused on just a few essential skills that the child still needs to develop or strengthen. These could be straightforward things like intensive teaching of certain academic skills, but it could also involve a more thorough practicing of certain social skills. Here it is important that just one or two aspects are chosen: things deemed essential for a child's (future) well-being and progress once he/she no longer takes part in regular activities in the Nest Center.

The Exit IAP should also contain a clear plan on the kinds of activities in the community a child should take part in *after* leaving the center. Preferably already during the period prior to the exit the child would start engaging in those activities (such as sports, arts, volunteer work and so forth).

Furthermore a (renewed) analysis needs to be made of a child's potential support structure. Who can he/she turn and rely one in the near future? Are there certain adults who can provide the child with help and guidance? If available, the child may need to be coached in how to approach and maintain these relations. If these are not available, attempts should be made to create alternative support, for example by involving a trusted teacher or a sports coach. Here it is critical that a child is given the opportunity and is able to identify possible sources of positive support him/herself, and has sufficient self-confidence to turn to such people when needed (this can be of course an important aspect to focus on, not just during the period before exit, but all throughout a child's stay in the Nest Center).

The overarching emphasis in the Exit IAP needs to be on:

- (final) Strengthening of a child's resilience
- Saying goodbye in a proper way: not rushing things, but being clear about end dates and reminding a child of what is coming
- Allowing for a child to have mixed s feelings (and giving space for expression of those emotions)
- Allowing the child a strong say in how the exit process takes shape

The Nest Center always keeps its doors open for a child. After children leave the Nest Center they can come back for occasional visits. Former participants can also stay involved on a voluntary base, some may even become professional child care workers later on.

If necessary, 'youth clubs' can be established for those children who are leaving or have already left, so that they can still come to the Nest Center once or twice per month. Through the club activities they may receive additional support, guidance, advice or simply spend their free time in a better way than they might do otherwise.



At the very end, for smaller groups of children who are leaving the Nest Center at the same time, it is good to prepare a leaving ceremony in which they are awarded certain recognitions, e.g. certificates of mastered life skills, pictures from the Nest Center, or a folder with their creative works from the past years. Also the Life Book (see page 31) is handed over to the child and he/she is encouraged to continue using it in the future. All this could be done during a small party, thus showing the other kids that one day also their stay in the Nest Center will come to an end and that that is, in fact, not a negative thing but an achievement!

The transition from primary to secondary school is a stressful period for many children. New schoolmates, new teachers, more travelling, more duties and so forth, bear a serious risk for early school dropout, even more so for children from multi-problem families. Therefore this transition should not be combined with leaving the Nest Center. In such cases it is better to extent the participation in the center with a few months.



5. WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY



Working with parents

An important aspect in the work of the Nest Center is building up a relation with the parents. This is by no means an easy feat, as very often parents are the major cause of the problems children experience (such as domestic violence, divorce, psychological problems of parents, and so forth). But at all times it should be kept in mind (by staff and volunteers) that parents/caregivers retain primary responsibility for their children, therefore their role is of the utmost importance. Staff and volunteers need to realize that parents initially may not feel comfortable about their children going to the Nest Center: there may be distrust, feelings of guilt, feelings of failure, and so forth. These feelings should not be denied or dismissed by staff and volunteers, but empathy and respect towards parents should be shown (even if this may sometimes be difficult).

From the very beginning, it is important to familiarize the parents about what the center offers to children, clearly explaining the goals and activities, introducing personnel and volunteers involved, inquiring into parents' expectations, needs, wishes etc. It is also important that during initial meetings the expectations of the Nest Center towards the parents are clearly stated and explained.

Establishing a trusting relationship may also be difficult because parents often will have had negative experiences with agencies and may feel rejected by society. A listening ear, referring them to the right organization for their problems and making appointments for them, assisting when completing a form, allowing them to use the phone or copy machine, and so forth, are all small, simple things that can help to gain parent's trust. However, it is very important to realize, for all involved, that the Nest Center's interventions are primarily focused on the children, not on their parents. In other words, other agencies are or should be responsible for supporting the parents in dealing with issues



they may face. The Nest Center should never assume the role of a 'social work' agency for the parents! This is just one of the expectations that should be clearly communicated from the beginning and, if needed, repeated. There is a strong responsibility of staff and volunteers in the Nest Center in this respect: they have to safeguard their own boundaries, should be clear and consistent in their dealings with parents, and should avoid being dragged into providing psychosocial support to parents (helping with debts, material support, and so forth). Of course, if the issue is directly related to the child, such support may be necessary (for example, referring the parents to the appropriate agency). But in all other cases requests for help should be -politely - declined.

Meetings with parents

Parents are usually part of the problem and are therefore also usually part of the solution. What can Nest Center staff (and in some cases volunteers) do with parents which will have - potentially - positive effects? Here is an overview:

Individual meetings with parents (or meetings with parents and their child together)

The Case Manager regularly invites parents for meetings in which progress of the child is discussed. These can include meetings with the parents separately, or with the parents and the child together. Important is that these meetings focus on the child's IAPs, and which role parents can play in contributing to the goals set for the child.

If these are meetings in which the child is not present, some room should be give for parents to ventilate news, concerns, problems, successes etc., things going on in their lives, which gives more insights for working with the child.

When a child is present during the meeting, staff should be very careful as to the issues that can and what cannot be addressed, as one wants to avoid a situation where the parents are directly negative towards the child (and vice versa), as that is damaging for the safety and trust a child needs to feel within the Nest Center.

There should always be the possibility for parents to initiate such meetings themselves, but staff members have to be in charge of how things proceed.

If deemed feasible, appropriate and acceptable, certain relevant other stakeholders may also be invited to take part (for example, the social worker, a family counselor, other family members, a teacher and so forth).

Minutes of these meetings should be made and afterwards be shared with parents and signed by them for agreement. These minutes need to be kept in the Personal File of the child.

Meetings for groups of parents

The Nest Center can organize regular meetings for groups of parents. One can think of kinds of information evenings, in which a staff member or a volunteer, or some external expert, provides parents with relevant information. When guest speakers are invited, take care that they have the right attitude towards parents and will address them with empathy and respect. Topics such as 'hygiene', 'dieting', 'positive parenting', 'child development', etc., could be addressed. During these meetings there should be ample room for parents to ask questions, raise concerns, but also, and this



may even be the most important aspect, there should be a lot of space for parents to talk with each other, to share experiences, to learn from one another and to give each other support.

Past practice has shown that this kind of activity should only start once the Nest Center has managed to build a trusting relationship with the parents.

Home visits

Although not standard practice, and depending on what is culturally appropriate and locally feasible, home visits may be considered by the Nest Center staff as a way to get better insights into a child's situation and to build the relations between the center, the child, and the parents. Again: it is very important to be clear about the purpose and expectations towards each other in case of such home visits.

Parents as volunteers

In rare cases (at least this is the experience so far), it may be possible to engage parents as volunteers. This of course requires a careful approach, as situations in which 'favoritism' or lack of safety are possible. Very clear agreements will need to be made with a parent before he/she can get involved as a volunteer.

For more "one-off" activities, such as a theatre play or a sports tournament, it may be easier to involve parents as contributors, although an extra eye on how things are going is also needed then.

If there are special celebrations or events it is always good to invite parents (as spectators), so they can share in the positive things that are happening with and for their children.

In addition to interactions such as those sketched above, staff and volunteers of course will often meet and talk with parents informally, either in or outside the Nest Center. Although it is important to keep a certain professional "distance", and although it is very important that during these informal meetings no confidential or sensitive matters are discussed, it is also very important that one does not react "stand-offish" in such situations. You represent the Nest Center at all times, not just during working hours.

The coordinator of one of the Nest Centers used to be a teacher in the local school, and knew most of the parents as they, as children, had been in her classes. She therefore easily established a positive contact with the parents, and noticed that many of them had no clue how to raise a child. It was because of her observations that we introduced, separately, a program for positive parenting.

Potential difficulties in working with parents

Establishing good cooperation and communication with parents is not always an easy task. Potential problems can include:



Parents have unrealistic expectations

Parents expect you to very quickly address some of the problems that their child has, such as school performance, certain behavior that is seen as difficult or inappropriate and so forth. We reiterate that it is very important to clearly state expectations and possibilities from the beginning, and refer back to these should parents come to you with complaints or unrealistic demands. Another potentially effective way to avoid these kinds of situations is by keeping the parents regularly informed on what is happening with their child.

• Parents spend their free time at the Nest Center, demanding attention for their problems

It sometimes happens that parents start spending too much time at the Nest Center, demanding attention from staff and volunteers for their problems. It is very important that the Nest Center staff deal with this swiftly. Again, by referring back to the rules of the center and the expectations and possibilities as discussed during initial meetings, these problems can usually be "nipped in the bud". Pointing out to parents that there are regular meetings (see above) in which issues can be discussed may also help. If a parent is oblivious to these arguments and continues his/her behavior, more stringent measures may need to be considered. One always has to keep in mind that the Nest Center is foremost a safe place for the children, not for their parents.

 Parents come to the Nest Center under the influence of alcohol and/or other intoxicating substances

Sadly, given that these are parents with multiple problems, this situation may present itself regularly. Even more than with the previous problem mentioned, immediate and swift action is required here (the parent should be shown the door, and, if needed, be removed). In this case 'zero tolerance' is in order. One breach of this nature should be considered a reason to bar the parent from coming to the center.

 Parents are uninterested in cooperating and seem not to make the necessary effort to ensure that their child comes to the Nest Center on a regular basis

Often parents will show little to no interest in what their children are up to. It will often seem parents/caregivers do not care whether their child shows up at the Nest Center or not. In some cases parents may even prevent the child from going, for example because the child is required to work. This may be one of the most difficult problems to address when trying to work with parents. There definitely is not one "golden" tip here. For staff and volunteers it is, first of all, important to be realistic in their expectations with regard to parents (basically: do not expect too much!). Furthermore, patience and continuously making an effort are important. Sometimes parents may not show interest because they have been disappointed in support services before and have grown cynical, or they may feel a lack of confidence and therefore act distant. For staff and volunteers an important credo therefore must be: persevere! Do not give up on parents too quickly, even if you feel they are being a "pain in the ass". Try to find an "entrance" through which you may be able to reach the parent. Sometimes some pressure from other agencies, such as social work or school, might also help to persuade parents to become more involved. But, and then we are back to your own expectations again, do not let it get to you if you do not succeed. You cannot win them all!



Working with schools

In earlier sections we discussed the importance of working closely with other local stakeholders, so as to strongly embed the Nest Center and to increase effectiveness and sustainability of interventions. Local schools are undoubtedly amongst the most important local institutions with which the Nest Center needs to build a close working relationship.

When establishing the Nest Center, key persons from the local educational institutions (school director, teachers) should be invited to share their ideas on the where, how and what. This will help avoid schools perceive the Nest Center as a potential threat or as a nuisance, but instead as a strong additional component of services for children. Similar to work with parents, it is important to clarify mutual expectations. Sometimes schools may start to regard the Nest Center as the place to "dump" difficult children. This is of course not the idea! The Nest Center can provide additional support, for example via homework assistance to children, but the school needs to do its part too. Relevant school staff needs to be willing to listen to suggestions by staff from the Nest Center with regard to 'effective' approaches towards certain children, need to, if necessary, spend extra time with a pupil, and need to come to regular meetings to discuss progress of a child. These kinds of expectations and obligations can be laid down in a *Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)* between the school and the Nest Center. Non- compliance by either party with this MoU may (eventually) be a reason to cease cooperation (in which case that particular school will not be able to refer children to the Nest Center anymore).

Very often, at least that has been our experience to date, schools are the main referring agency. This also requires some clear agreements and guidelines on how this process takes shape (these could be laid down in the MoU or could be spelled out in a separate document). Most important elements here are confidentiality and consent: a child should never be referred without his/her and the parents' prior knowledge and agreement, and this referral should never be done publicly (to give a clear example: a teacher should not state in the front of the whole class that he/she is planning to refer a certain pupil to the Nest Center!).

School grades provide a very objective and easy accessible measurement of the impact of participation of a child in the Nest Center. Access to official school grades should be arranged in the MoU, including permission to use them (in a collective way) for advocacy.

Not unlike with parents, building a trusting, open relationship with a school takes time and continuous effort. Inviting school staff to meetings, regularly updating teachers on developments, involving teachers as volunteers, inviting school staff to events and so forth, are all important and potentially effective methods to achieve this. However, the most important way to get a school to "buy in" to the Nest Center program is by showing results. In research conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina teachers revealed that pupils attending the Nest Center showed clear improvements in their academic performances; this was reported as one of the most visible positive impacts that the Nest Center had on children's behavior¹². Those are valuable results and as a Nest Center you should not be modest in pointing out this kind of impact to school staff (and others!).

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¹² The full research report is downloadable via this link: http://www.bettercarenetwork.nl/content/17382/download/clnt/32323_ResearchReportFinal14April2011.pdf



In several Nest Centers teachers work as volunteers. They really enjoy this, since it gives them the opportunity to work individually or with small groups of children, trying out innovative teaching methods and being able to build up better contact with the children. In the regular schools they often face roadblocks for their pedagogic initiatives, because of colleagues and directors who are not open to innovation, lack of time and overcrowded classes.

Working with local authorities and services

In earlier parts we have explained how local authorities need to be involved from the start, as institutional supporters of the Nest Center program. The exact extent of this support will of course depend on local possibilities and limitations, but it is always necessary, as a kind of minimal requirement, to get some kind of official support from local authorities, even if it is just a written statement.

Very often the most relevant local service dealing with children will be a kind of Social Work agency. Although it again differs very much per context, in most places around the world such Social Work services exist, either as Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), or as government run agencies, or they co-exist next to each other. Since such institutions are often responsible for handling child protection cases, they are another important set of local stakeholders with whom the Nest Center has to build up a good working relationship.

Like with schools, an MoU can be drafted between the Social Work agency (or agencies) and the Nest Center, in which communication lines, mutual expectations and obligations should be clearly defined. Rules surrounding referral also here are important to be established.

To improve the care for vulnerable children the Nest Center can think of initiating multi-agency cooperation in the community. By setting up regular meetings between relevant stakeholders (for example: Social Work, school, police and Nest Center), in which certain cases are discussed and joint interventions are developed, better support for children at risk can be ensured. For this kind of cooperation to be successful it is of course very important that all parties involved are really dedicated and ready to do their bit.



One of the Nest Centers regularly invited a police officer to explain the work of the police to the children. A positive side-effect of his presence in the Nest Center was that he got to know the children there and the children got to know him. Children started to look at the police as a friend.

Another Nest Center was located close to the local fire brigade, and the firemen turned out to be excellent volunteers for technical workshops and sports activities. Often they had a lot of time to spare for volunteering. Naturally, you could never be sure the fire alarm would not suddenly go off and they would be storming out of the center.





ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Mathijs is a child psychologist and director of International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI), a Dutch based international organization focusing on child and youth issues in developing countries (for more info please see www.icdi.nl). He has over 17 years of experience in management of psychosocial and child protection projects and programs in an international context. From 2008 to 2011 he was closely involved as trainer, researcher and adviser in developing Nest Centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Marian is a social worker and project officer at Kinderpostzegels, a Dutch donor organization that is active in the Netherlands and in 10 developing countries. She has worked as youth worker with disadvantaged groups, and has over 21 years of experience in grant-making to projects in the social field in Central and Eastern Europe, Surinam and South-Africa. In 2007 she took the initiative to make information on day care centers in Poland and Romania accessible to a broader public, and to introduce such activities to key persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From 2008 to 2011 she was the international coordinator of the project "Today's children are tomorrow's parents", through which six Nest centers were realized in Bosnia & Herzegovina, as well as one in Serbia and one in Montenegro.

Branka Ivanović

Branka is a psychologist who lives in Bosnia and Herzegovina and works as executive director of the In Foundation, a foundation for the social inclusion of children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) (www.infondacija.org). Branka has extensive experience in organizational development and working with children through projects of different international organizations. As of 2008 she was engaged as technical expert, trainer, researcher and adviser in developing the Nest Center model in the B&H context. She was closely involved in the work with the staff of centers by providing expertise, professional guidance and support.

Elvira Živanović

Elvira is an electrical engineer and manager/consultant at Citizens Association for Local Development Initiatives (TALDi), a NGO in Bosnia and Herzegovina which searches for the best options and directly contributes to the overall social and economic development in Bosnia-Herzegovina and beyond (for more info please see www.taldi.ba). She has over 16 years of experience in managing socio-economic programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkan region. From 2008 to 2011 she was fulltime involved as National Program Manager and trainer/consultant in developing Nest Centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



ABOUT KINDERPOSTZEGELS

Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland raises and allocates funds for the benefit of vulnerable children in the Netherlands and other selected countries.

Many children in the world do not live in a safe and secure environment. This means they need extra help and protection. At Kinderpostzegels we devote our efforts to children who need support in order to develop as individuals, a right that is laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Kinderpostzegels is independent, that is to say it is not tied to governmental, political or religious movements. Kinderpostzegels supports projects from local organizations. The focus of attention is always directed towards the best interest of children.

Kinderpostzegels works according to a programmatic approach. Programs abroad are focusing on:

- Child labor and access to education
- Girls' Rights
- Alternative care for children without adequate parental care
- Children and violence

These multi-year programs are subject to geographical and thematic limitations.

More information is available at www.kinderpostzegels.nl .



ANNEX 1: CHILD PROTECTION POLICY 13

Introduction

States Parties shall protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Article 19). The Nest Center staff, volunteers and board members share a commitment to the prevention of child abuse and the protection of children. This policy sets out common values, principles, and beliefs and describes the steps that will be taken in meeting our commitment to protect children.

Our commitment to protect children

Our values, principles and beliefs

- All child abuse involves the abuse of children's rights.
- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.
- The situation of all children must be improved through promotion of their rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes the right to freedom from abuse and exploitation.
- Child abuse is never acceptable.
- We have a commitment to protecting children with/ for whom we work.

What we will do

We will meet our commitment to protect children from abuse through the following means:

Awareness: we will ensure that all staff and others are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children.

Prevention: we will ensure, through awareness and good practice, that staff and others minimize the risks to children.

¹³ This policy is based on the Save the Children Alliance Child Protection Policy.

Reporting: we will ensure that staff and others are clear what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children.

Responding: we will ensure that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

In order that the above standards of reporting and responding are met, staff, board members and volunteers of the Nest Center will also ensure that they:

- take seriously any concerns raised
- take positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns
- support children, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns
- act appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation
- are guided through the child protection process by the principle of 'best interests of the child'
- listen to and takes seriously the views and wishes of children
- work in partnership with parents/carers and/or other professionals to ensure the protection of children.

How we will ensure our commitments above are met

- All Nest Center staff, volunteers and board members will sign up to and abide by the attached code of conduct.
- All staff and volunteers will have access to a copy of the child protection policy.
- Recruitment procedures will include checks on suitability for working with children.
- Introduction will include briefing on child protection issues.
- Training, learning opportunities and support will be provided by the Nest Center to ensure commitments are met.

Code of Conduct

All Nest Center staff, volunteers and board members must sign up to and abide by the following Code of Conduct.



Staff , volunteers and board members must never:

- hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children.
- develop physical/sexual relationships with children.
- develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.
- use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative.
- have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised.
- sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working.
- do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves.
- condone, or participate in, behavior of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
- discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favor particular children to the exclusion of others.
- This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list.

The principle is that staff should avoid actions or behavior which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behavior.

It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to:

- be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these.
- plan and organize the work and the workplace so as to minimize risks.
- as far as possible, be visible in working with children.
- ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed.
- ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff, volunteers and board

members so that poor practice or potentially abusive behavior does not go unchallenged.

• talk to children about their contact with staff

or others and encourage them to raise any concerns.

• empower children - discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

In general it is inappropriate to:

- spend excessive time alone with children away from others.
- take children to your home, especially where they will be alone with you.

I understand and will oblige to all the above.

Name and signature:

Place & date:



ANNEX 2: ASSESSMENT & ADMISSION FORM

Assessment & Admission Form¹⁴

Name and address of Nest Center:	Date:
Interviewer's name + position:	
Name of the child:	
Name(s) of child's parents/guardians:	
Mother	
Father	
Child's main living address:	
Street + number:	
Village/town:	
Telephone number:	
Email parent(s):	
Place and date of birth:	
Reason for admission/problem description	
History of development (have there been any spec	
child's development so far, such as problems during	ng pregnancy of mother, birth, early childhood,
middle childhood, adolescence)	
Are there any specific issues? (such as adoption, (r	mental) disability problems with the parents letc)
Are there any specific issues: (such as adoption, (i	nentary disability, problems with the parents, etc.,
Which are the main problems the child is facing no	ow? (such as problems in the home, at school, with
friends, health, etc.)	· · · · ·

¹⁴ This form can be freely adapted to suit local Nest Center needs and requirements.



Observations by interviewer on
Psychosocial well-being of the child (does the child seem sad, depressed, anxious, stressed, aggressive, etc.)
Ability of the child to thrive within the Nest Center
(is the child likely to benefit from center activities? Can he/she easily take part in group activities? Will he/she be able to accept rules and guidance? Etc.)
Which sources of information were used to fill in this form, besides the info provided by the child (if possible with contact details)? Examples of these can be a teacher, school director, police, parents,
etc. Of course a child and his/her parents have to have given permission to access these sources.
Any particular relevant medical info (for example: does the child take a certain medicine? Contact details of specialist/family doctor. Etc.)
Emergency contact details (who to contact in case of an emergency)
Sociogram (draw sociogram here: child in the center and then most important figures in the child's life
surrounding him/her, with numbers to indicate level of importance to the child)
Any other issues worth mentioning:



ANNEX 3: SELECTION CRITERIA CHECKLIST

Selection Criteria Checklist

The information used to score this checklist can be derived from: interviews with a child, parents, teachers or other relevant persons who know the family. It may also be based on records provided by certain institutions, like the Centers for Social Welfare. However, always double check the sources: never let the scoring of this checklist depend on just one information source!

I. Family situation

The first set of questions of this checklist is on the situation of the parents and family of a child.

The child has <u>at least one</u> parent/caregiver or, in case neither of the parents shows any clear sign of problematic behavior, <u>at least two</u> other important family member s(brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts living with them in the same house, etc.), with problems related to:

(score I for 'yes' and 0 for 'no')

1.	Alcohol/drug abuse. It needs to be clear that this is a consistent problematic behavior pattern of one or two of the parents, or of other important family members.	
2.	Criminal behavior (for example: one parent is in prison or convicted of crimes). It needs to be again assessed if this is a 'pattern'. A one-of criminal act by a parent in the past, depending on the nature of that act of course, may not be sufficient to score this item.	
3.	Violent behavior (towards spouse, children or others in the community). This needs to be a regular occurring problem.	
4.	Sexual abuse. There is a history of sexual abuse in the family of the child (not necessarily meaning that the child has been sexually abused him/her self).	
5.	Psychiatric disorders (for example: a parent has been diagnosed with schizophrenia, depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or some other psychiatric problem; it has be assessed when the problem started to manifest itself —at which age the child was when the parent/caregiver/sibling first started signs of the illness- and if it persists; in other words: to what extent the problem is a source of daily stress for the family)	
6.	Mental disability (again: it should be assessed to what extent the mental disability of a parent affects the daily life of a certain child: does it lead to a chaotic household? Is the child overstretched because he/she has to basically take care of the parent? Only if it is clear that this situation has a negative impact on the child's life should it be scored)	
7.	Severe, chronic illness (a parent, caregiver or family member suffers from a chronic	



	illness that is clearly affecting everybody in the household)	
8.	The parents/caregivers have a history of having their children placed in and out of orphanages/ institutions or foster families, because they could not take care of them at times (or because some other family members caused the situation in the house to be such that it was not possible or safe for the child to stay at home). It should be assessed to what degree this problem still persists, and if there is a risk of reoccurrence of this situation (if risk is low, score 0).	
9.	The family in which the child grows up in lives in very poor socio-economic circumstances (unemployed parents, bad housing, little food, bad cloths, lack of hygiene, etc.) .	
10.	The parent(s) of the child are displaced persons, refugees or belong to an ethnic minority that faces regular discrimination by the majority population.	
11.	Teenage motherhood (with no family support), single parenthood or a situation with no parents, where the child lives with grandparents or other extended family (please note that in these situations it should be assessed to what extent this poses a problem in the daily life of a child; many teenage mothers, single parents, or grandparents are capable of providing a good, stable family life for their children).	
12.	Any other specific family situation not mentioned in one the boxes above. In maximum two sentences describe this situation here. Please keep in mind that it has to be something in the family that affects the child, but not a characteristic or problem relating to the child him/herself.	
Total so	ore:	

For a child to be selected for a center, the total score on the above ten questions should be <u>at least</u> <u>2</u>. If the score is lower than 2 a child should <u>not</u> be selected for the center. If the score is higher than 6 great caution should be given: the problems a child faces may be too severe for the center alone to be of any real use. In such a case close cooperation with other service providers and school becomes even more important than it already is.



II. Child characteristics

The following questions relate to characteristics of the child itself.

The child has:

(score I for 'yes' and 0 for 'no')

Total s	core:	
6.	Psychiatric illness (e.g. schizophrenia, depression, psychosis, etc. Again: diagnosis by qualified specialist necessary). Please note that with 'depression' meant here is a full blown, clinical depression, which is very rare in children. A child that is withdrawn, timid, or otherwise shows signs of not being happy is not to be excluded from a center!	
5.	Other developmental disorders (e.g. learning disability ¹⁵ , autism, PDD-NOS, etc.; needs to have been diagnosed by some qualified specialist)	
4.	A mental disability (as diagnosed by a psychiatrist or psychologist)	
3.	A clear, repeating pattern of excessive alcohol or drug abuse (please distinguish between excessive behavior and more normal, acceptable use of substances, like drinking every now and again with friends in the weekend, for example)	
2.	Criminal tendencies (steals, vice crimes, etc.; child has been convicted of a crime, or at least such criminal behavior has been reported by a teacher, caregiver, etc.)	
1.	Severe behavioral problems (aggressive, cannot control anger, violent to other children and/or adults; non-compliant to teacher/adults instructions; abusive of animals; uses abusive language, etc.)	

In case a child scores <u>1 or more</u> on the above six questions, he/she should <u>not</u> be selected for the center, no matter what the score was on section I of this checklist. It goes without saying that in such cases staff of the center should do their utmost to arrange referral to an appropriate service provider for the child.

¹⁵ Please be careful in distinguishing a 'learning disability' from 'problems in learning'. A child, possibly as a result of stress, can show decreased school performance or interest in school work. This is not a 'learning disability'! A 'learning disability' is a disorder, that is consistent over time, that manifests itself as a weakness of a child in a certain aspect of learning (for example, dyslexia). Please also note that a 'learning disability' is not the same as a 'mental disability'. The latter implies that a child has a low general IQ, meaning that it will lack capacity on a lot of cognitive tasks. A child with a 'learning disability' is not mentally handicapped! If a child shows lower school performance than can be expected, or a decrease in school performance due to stress, this is not a contra-indication to be accepted in a center. Quite the contrary: these are exactly some of the problems of children you would like to address in a center.



III. Administration

Information sources used to fill in this checklist (where possible indicate dates and where the sources are located/filed; if it is, for example, an interview report with a child, mention when this report was drafted, by whom and where it is stored, either digitally and/or in hard copy):
Checklist filled in by (always two of the center staff need to sign off on this checklist; one of these two needs to be the director):
(name, position, date)
(name, position, date)

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Always file this checklist in a safe storage place and observe complete confidentiality. Information contained in this checklist can only be used for internal center purposes. Information can only be given to the outside world if the client (the child and/or his parents/caregivers) has given permission to do so.



ANNEX 4: CONSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN

Name and address of Nest Center:	Date:			
Name:	Name:			
(block capitals)				
Interviewer's name + position:				
The child:				
By signing this form I agree to:				
 actively take part in activities in the Nest Center adhere to the rules of the Nest Center be respectful to other children, volunteers and staff in the Nest Center contribute to the maintenance and cleanliness of the Nest Center I accept that, if my behavior is considered (by staff) to be too disruptive, I can be temporarily placed in a so-called 'Time Out' room (a room which I have previously seen). This should never last longer than 10 minutes maximum, and cannot happen more than twice during any given day. The Nest Center will inform my parents of these incidences on a regular basis, should they occur. 				
The Nest Center representative:				
By signing this form the Nest Center (staff and volunt	teers) agrees to:			
 treat the child with respect and dignity at all times, in line with the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and in line with the Nest Center Child Protection Policy (which has been signed by every staff member and volunteer; a copy of this policy will be provided to each child and his/her parent(s) support the child to the best of the Nest Center's abilities, within the realm of what is possible and can reasonably be expected 				
Signature of the child:				
Signature of representative of the Nest Center:				



ANNEX 5. CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

Name and address of Nest Center	Date:		
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) name(s):			
Child/children's name(s):			
(block capitals)			
Interviewer's name + position:			
The parent:			
 Nest Center can always contact me if support reference to my child/children. I accept that, if the behavior of my child/child disruptive, that he/she/they can be tempora room which I have previously seen). This sho maximum, and cannot happen more than twinform me on a regular basis, should such inc. I agree that pictures of my child/children's maximum. 	Nest Center on a regular basis. The staff of the t, advice or information is needed with dren is considered (by staff) to be too rily placed in a so-called 'Time Out' room (a uld never last longer than 10 minutes ice in any given day. Nest Center staff will cidences occur.		
The Nest Center representative:			
By signing this form the Nest Center (staff and volunt	eers) agrees to:		
 treat children with respect and dignity at all times, in line with the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and in line with the Nest Center Child Protection Policy (which has been signed by every staff member and volunteer; a copy of this policy will be provided to each child and his/her parent(s). support the child to the best of the Nest Center's abilities, within the realm of what is possible and can reasonably be expected. 			
Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian(s):			
Signature of representative of the Nest Center:			



ANNEX 6: INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLAN

Name child:	
Case manager:	
Center:	
Start date:	
Long term goal(s) (to be achieved after one year of commencement of action plan) ¹⁶ :	
1.	17
2.	
3.	

Sub goals (to contribute to overall goal(s)).

Sub-goals	How (methods to achieve this sub-goal)	When	Who responsible	Result
1.				
2.				
3.				

¹⁶ Formulate as follows: By (date), (name of child) is (describe a clearly visible behavioral trait; for example: 'capable of initiating and maintaining friendships', or 'capable of asking for help', or 'happy, and with good self-esteem', etc. Whatever seems appropriate for the child in question. Maximum 3 goals.

¹⁷ Here fill in the date and if the goal was achieved (A), partly achieved (PA), or not achieved (NO). In case of PA or NA this should be translated into new long term goals of the next individual action plan.