



MINISTRY OF LABOUR  
AND SOCIAL PROTECTION  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



NATIONAL CENTER  
FOR CHILD ABUSE  
PREVENTION



# Integrated Assistance for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime at the Barnahus **North** Regional Center

**2024** Annual Report  
(abridged version)







MINISTRY OF LABOUR  
AND SOCIAL PROTECTION  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



NATIONAL CENTER  
FOR CHILD ABUSE  
PREVENTION



# **Integrated Assistance for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime at the Barnahus **North** Regional Center**

**2024** Annual Report  
(abridged version)

On December 27, 2019, the Government of the Republic of Moldova adopted Decision No. 708, which formally established the Integrated Assistance Service for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime. This decision laid the legal foundation for the creation and operation of Regional Integrated Assistance Centers and defined the Minimum Quality Standards for the service—designed according to the internationally recognized **Barnahus model**, which promotes best practices in intersectoral cooperation in cases of child abuse.

The **Barnahus North Regional Integrated Assistance Center** was established in 2022 by the **Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova**.

The **National Center for Child Abuse Prevention (CNPAC)** is the first organization in Moldova accredited by the National Accreditation Council for Social Service Providers to deliver Barnahus services.



Ministry of Labour and Social Protection  
Chişinău Municipality, 2 Vasile Alecsandri Street  
secretariat@ms.gov.md  
022 26 88 18  
www.ms.gov.md



Barnahus North Regional Integrated Assistance Center  
Bălţi Municipality  
centrulbarnahus@cnpac.md  
(+373) 780 00 710  
www.barnahus.md



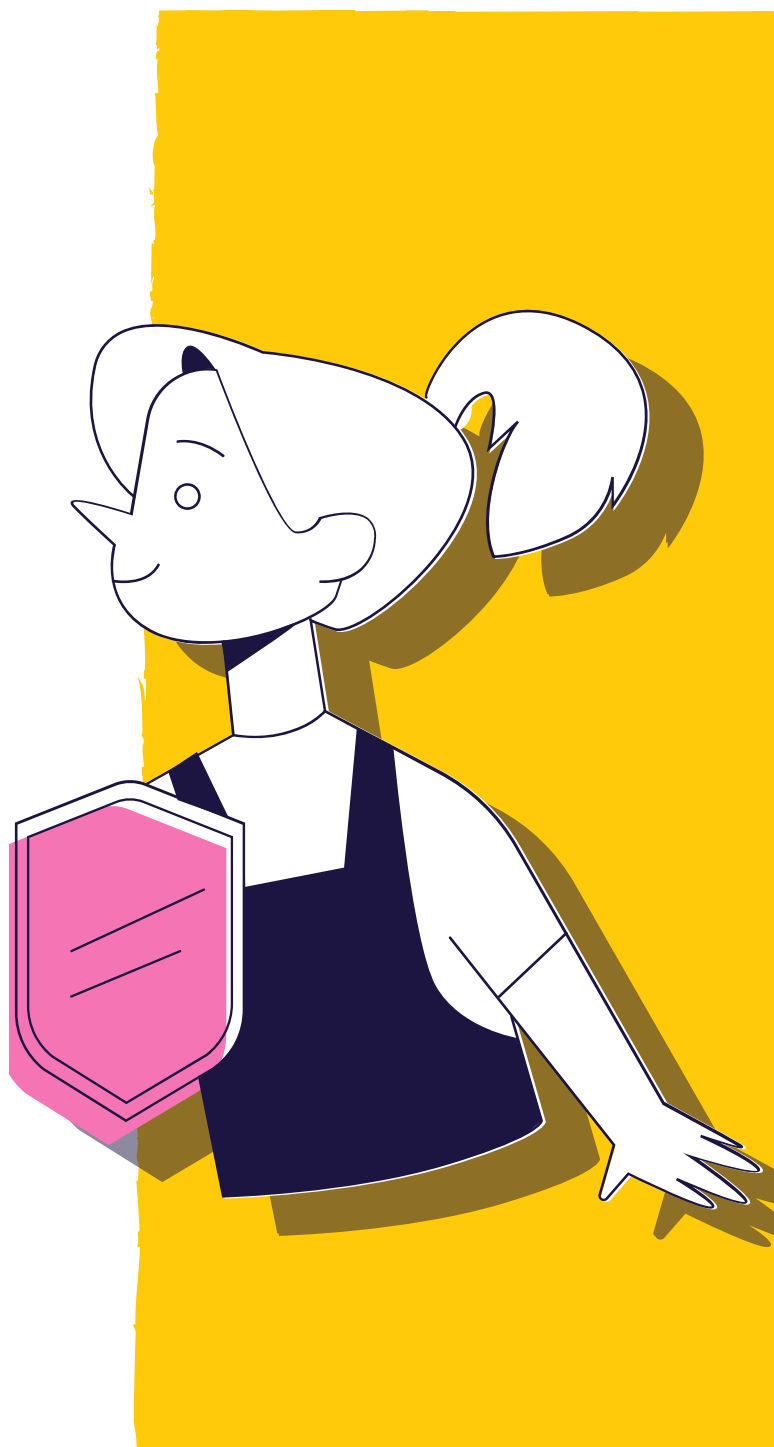
National Center for Child Abuse Prevention (CNPAC)  
office@cnpac.md  
(+373) 780 00 480  
www.cnpac.md

# FOREWORD

The National Center for Child Abuse Prevention (CNPAC) has been a dedicated and proactive advocate of the Barnahus model in the Republic of Moldova since 2016, aligning its work with European standards for the protection of children who are victims or witnesses of crime. CNPAC has consistently supported the institutionalization of this model nationally by piloting key best practices. These include the creation of child-friendly facilities for conducting interviews in special conditions, the development of initial and continuous training curricula for specialized interviewers, and the professional training of three cohorts of multidisciplinary practitioners.

Operating at the national level, CNPAC has also expanded its engagement internationally by becoming a founding member of the PROMISE European Network—a platform that brings together institutions and organizations committed to implementing the Barnahus model across Europe. This network promotes shared standards of multidisciplinary, child-centered intervention in cases of violence, abuse, and exploitation.

Since 2022, CNPAC has been an accredited provider of the integrated social assistance service under the Barnahus model, offering specialized support to children who are victims or witnesses of crime. Through this model, multidisciplinary services are coordinated “under one roof,” with the overarching goal of preventing the re-traumatization of children. The Center’s sustained efforts in developing and supporting the Barnahus model in Moldova have helped establish a professional and coherent framework in which the child is placed at the center of intervention, and institutional responses are adapted to the child’s actual needs—rather than requiring the child to adapt to the system.



# The First Barnahus-Type Centre in the Republic of Moldova

In 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova, in collaboration with the National Center for Child Abuse Prevention (CNPAC) and with the generous support of World Childhood Foundation, ERIKS Development Partner, SOROS Foundation, East-European Foundation, OAK Foundation, and the European Union, established the first Regional Integrated Assistance Centre for Child Victims/Witnesses of Crime in the municipality of Bălți. This centre serves 12 administrative-territorial units: Briceni, Ocnița, Soroca, Dondușeni, Edineț, Drochia, Rîșcani, Glodeni, Fălești, Sîngerei, Florești, and Bălți municipality.

According to the Child Protection Programme for 2022–2026, the establishment of two additional Barnahus-type centres is foreseen: one in the Central region (Chișinău) and one in the South (Cahul).

Until the full territorial coverage is achieved, the Barnahus North Centre provides integrated assistance services nationwide, adhering to the principle of accessibility.

## Services Offered by the Barnahus Centre

The Barnahus North Centre provides specialized, multidisciplinary assistance to children who are victims or witnesses of serious crimes, including but not limited to:



sexual abuse



child trafficking



domestic violence



crimes against life and physical integrity



Other offences that seriously threaten the physical or psychological well-being of the child

Depending on the specifics of each case, legal representatives or trusted persons may also benefit from the centre’s support services.

**The Barnahus model ensures a child-centred and multidisciplinary approach, offering:**



preliminary information regarding the child-friendly forensic interview (in special conditions)



child-friendly and specially equipped Interview rooms



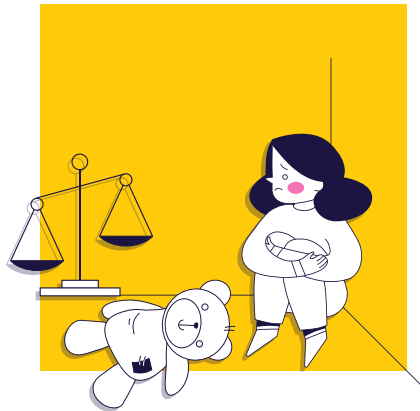
forensic medical examinations



psychological evaluations



child protection interventions in risk situations



crisis psychological support




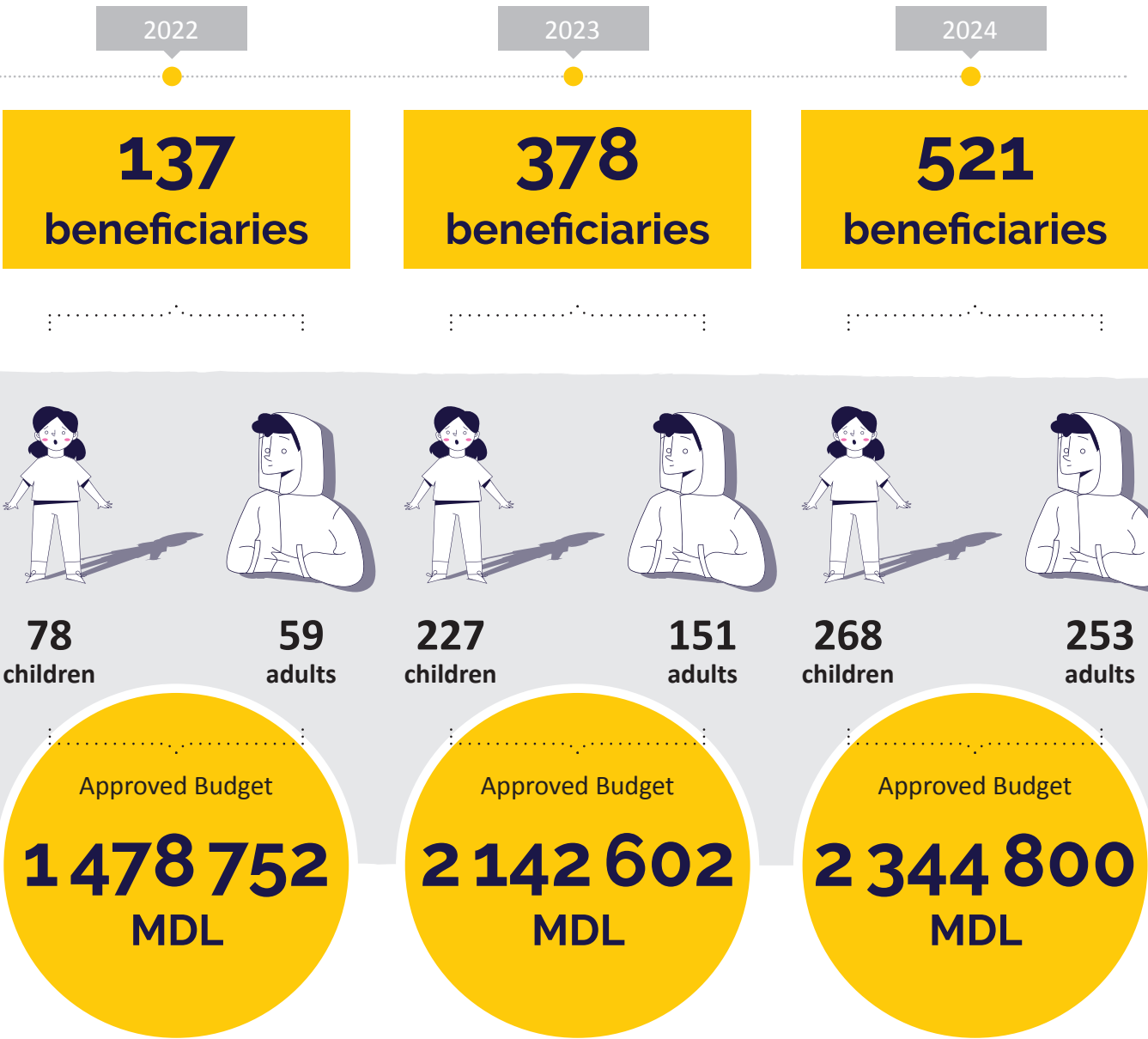
medical check-ups



legal assistance

The implementation and progressive expansion of this model in the Republic of Moldova mark a critical milestone in protecting child victims and witnesses of crime, by offering them a safe and welcoming environment where their rights are upheld and their emotional and legal needs are addressed with professionalism, empathy, and dignity.

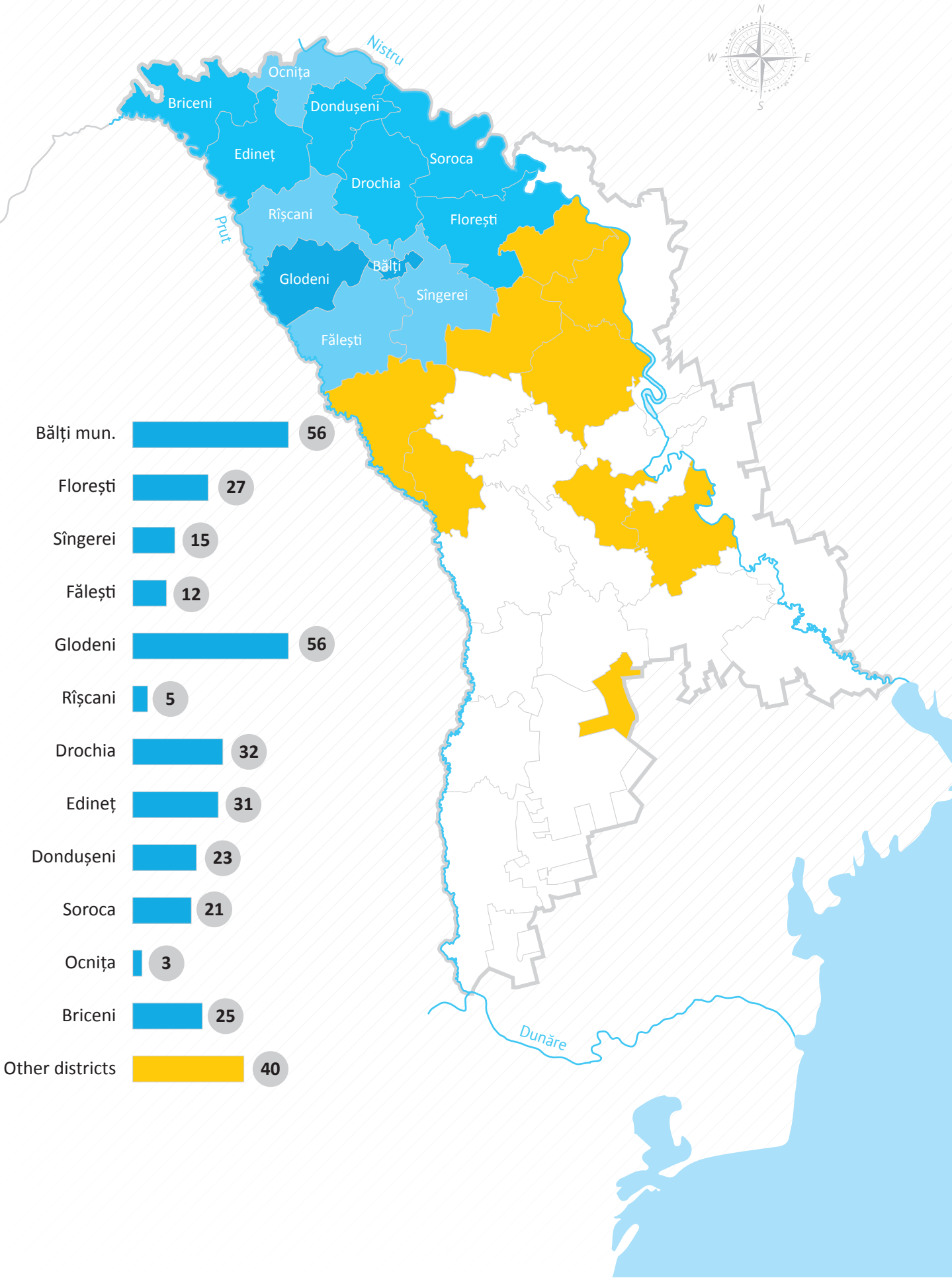
The year 2024 marked a substantial increase in the demand for specialized services provided by the Barnahus North Regional Center to child victims and witnesses of crime. The number of children assisted rose from 78 in 2022 to 292 in 2024. Likewise, the number of adults who accessed services at the Center increased significantly – from 59 in the first year of operation to 253 in 2024.



The highest number of assistance requests in 2024 originated from the municipality of Bălți and the districts of Glodeni, Drochia, and Edineț.

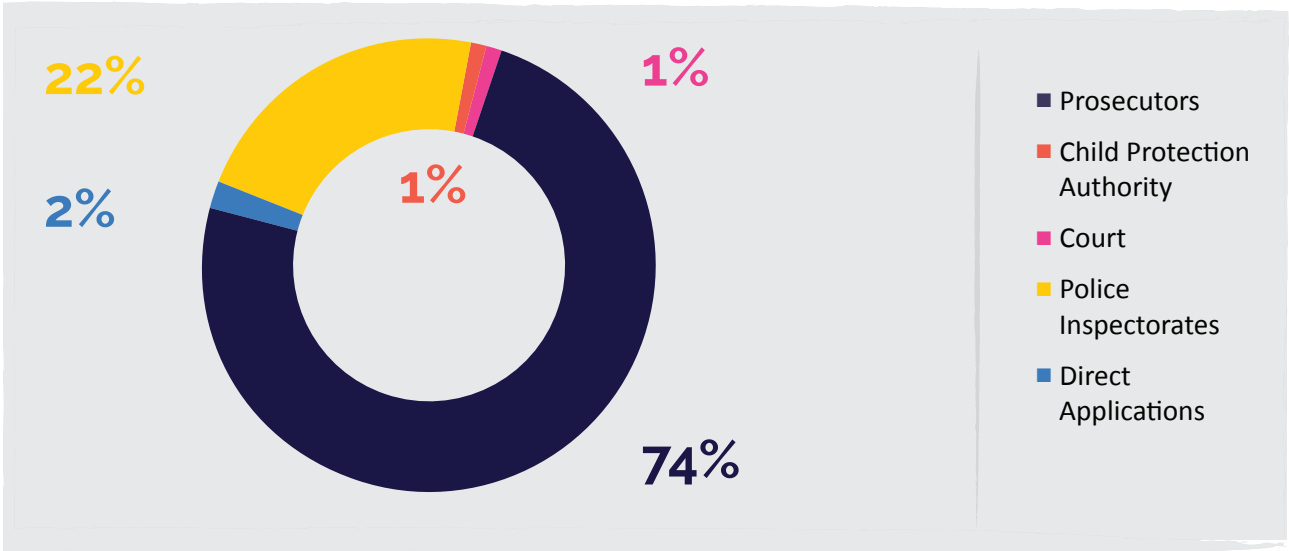


Given the absence of other Barnahus-type centers in the Republic of Moldova, Barnahus North one has increasingly received referrals from beyond the northern region. In 2024, the Center recorded **40 service requests for 37 children from the districts of Basarabeasca, Chişinău, Nisporeni, Orhei, Rezina, Şoldăneşti, Teleneşti, Ungheni, and Anenii Noi.**



# Types of Assistance and Sources of Referrals to the Center

Throughout the past year, the Barnahus North Center **received a total of 346 requests for assistance**. The majority of these referrals—256 cases (74%)—originated from the prosecution offices. Additionally, 75 requests (22%) came from police inspectorates, 7 requests (2%) were submitted directly by private individuals, while 4 cases each were referred by the courts and by local child protection authorities.



In 2024, a total of 268 case files were opened, each reflecting a situation in which a child was either a victim or a witness of a violent crime and required specialized assistance. Based on the individual needs identified, children benefited from the following types of support:

All					
268	163	264	162	46	21
children	children	forensic interviews	children	children	children
underwent a needs assessment to determine the appropriate type of support;	received psychological crisis intervention to help them cope with immediate emotional reactions following traumatic events;	were conducted under special conditions;	and/or their legal representatives received primary legal assistance;	underwent psychological evaluations for a deeper understanding of their emotional and behavioral condition;	victims of sexual abuse, were referred for forensic medical examinations.



## Special conditions interviews

In 2024, the Barnahus North Center conducted 264 interviews under special conditions, involving 198 children as victims and 66 as witnesses of criminal offenses. In each of these cases, the Center’s specialists provided pre-interview preparation, ensuring that the child was informed about the interview process, its purpose, and the significance of their testimony.

The interviews were carried out with the participation of designated professionals from **15 administrative-territorial units**, including **31 judges, 49 prosecutors, and 96 defense attorneys**.

Type of Offense	Total Children Interviewed	Gender	Victims	Witnesses
Sexual Offenses	150	Female	107	19
		Male	7	17
Domestic Violence	64	Female	25	6
		Male	29	4
Child Trafficking	1	Male	1	0
Other Offenses	49	Female	14	6
		Male	15	14



## Legal Assistance

In 2024, a total of **203 legal representatives** accompanying **162 children** to the Barnahus North Center received **primary legal assistance**.

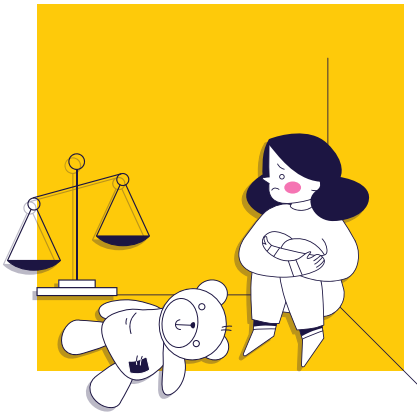
The majority of children for whom this type of support was requested were aged **15 to 18 years** (73 cases), followed by those aged **11 to 14 years** (64 cases), **7 to 10 years** (22 cases), and, to a lesser extent, children **up to 6 years old** (3 cases).



## Foresic Medical Examinations

Throughout 2024, **21 assisted children** were referred to the Barnahus North Center for **forensic medical examinations**, all in relation to cases of **sexual abuse**.

Category	Count				
Number of Children Referred for Forensic Medical Examination	21 children	Age			
		0-6 years	7-10 years	11-14 years	15-18 years
		-	4	10	7

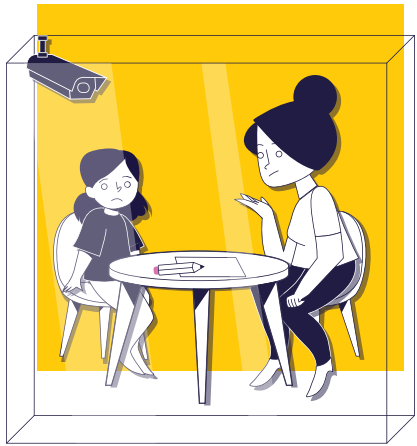


## Psychological Crisis Intervention

Psychological crisis intervention was provided to a significant number of children who were victims or witnesses of crimes, as well as to their trusted accompanying persons.

The number of sessions varied depending on the specific needs of each case, with most interventions taking place immediately after the interview conducted under special conditions, aiming to support the emotional stabilization of the beneficiaries.

Psychological Crisis Intervention				
Child Victims		Child Witnesses		Trusted Persons
1 session	2-3 sessions	1 session	2-3 sessions	1 session
133	6	30	1	32



## Psychological Evaluation

In 2024, the Barnahus North Center received **103 requests for psychological evaluations**, concerning **85 children**. The majority of these requests were related to cases where children were **victims of sexual offenses**.

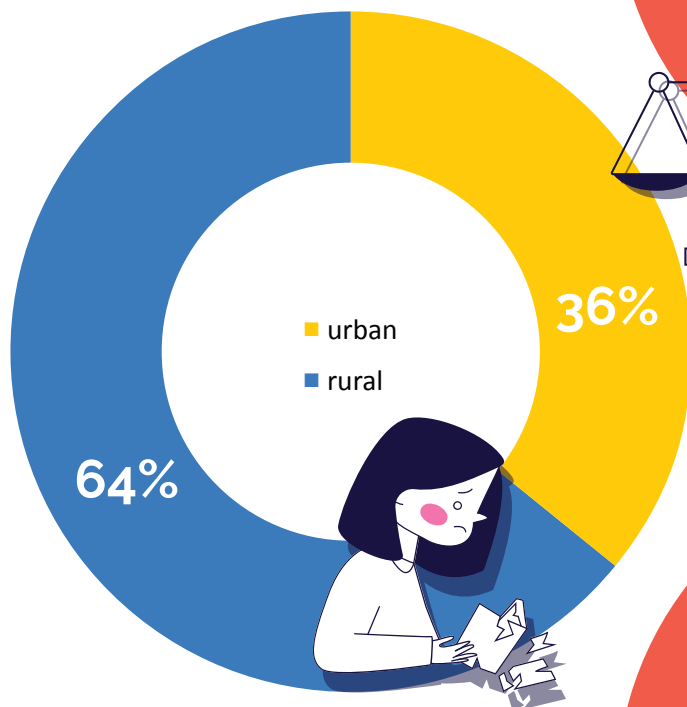
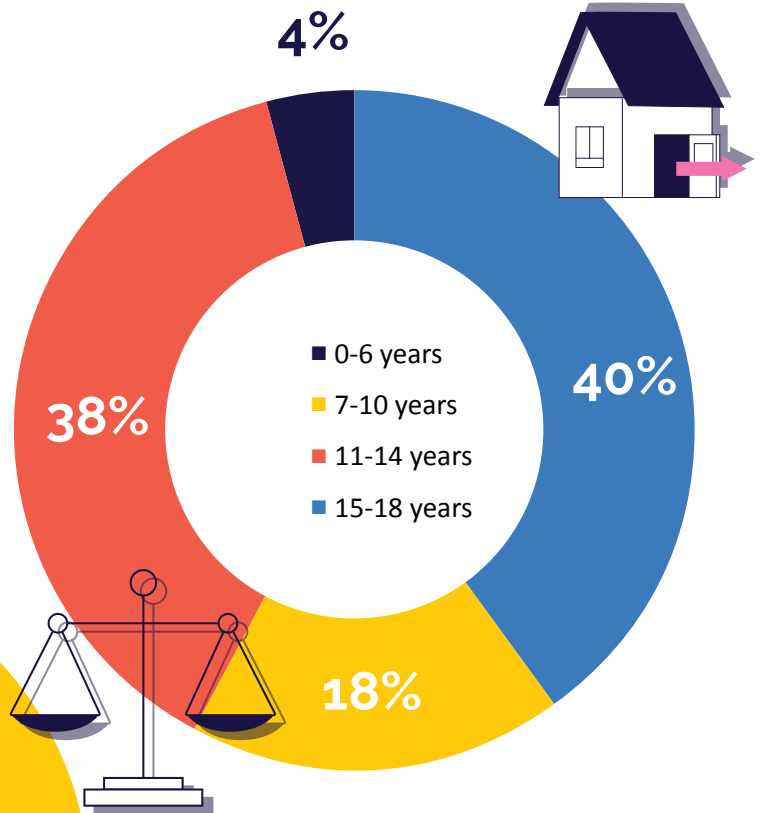
The evaluation reports were primarily requested by institutions involved in the investigation and resolution of child violence cases—including prosecutor’s offices, police inspectorates, and, in one case, the Territorial Specialized Assistance Service.

These institutions used the psychological evaluations to gain a better understanding of the child’s **emotional state** and to support decision-making processes related to intervention, protection, and criminal prosecution.

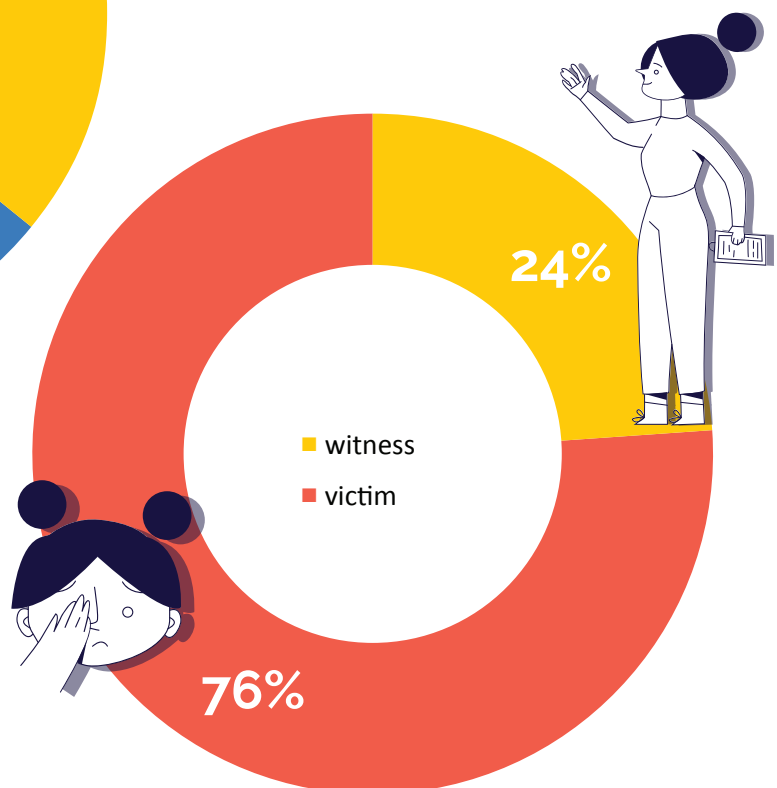
# Who Are the Beneficiaries of the Barnahus North Center's Services?

In 2024, the Barnahus North Center provided services to 268 children.

Of these, 181 were girls (68%) and 87 were boys (32%).



The majority of beneficiaries—56%—came from rural areas, and 76% of the referred children were direct victims of the crimes under investigation.



# What Types of Cases Were Handled at the Barnahus Center?



An analysis of cases referred to the Barnahus North Center in 2024 reveals that the majority involved sexual abuse.

**6 out of 10 children**  
assisted were victims of sexual abuse  
(157 cases).

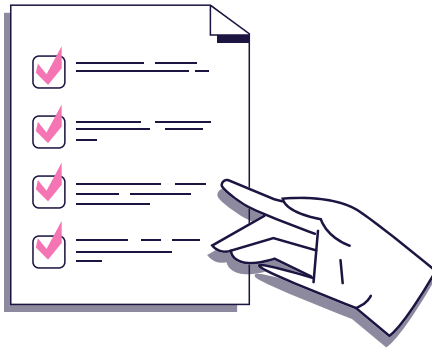
This is followed by **domestic violence**, accounting for **24% (65 cases)**, while the remaining **17% (46 cases)** involved **various offenses** where intervention was necessary to protect the child's best interests or support the justice process.

Regarding the **context in which abuse occurred**, data shows that in **more than half of the cases** (specifically, **140 situations or 52%**), the abuse was committed **within the community**—by neighbors, acquaintances, or other individuals in the child's close environment.

Nearly **4 in 10 children** (99 cases, **37%**) were victims of violence **within their own families**, highlighting increased vulnerability in the very space meant to offer them safety.



In about **1 in 10 cases (29 situations, 11%)**, the abuse took place in institutional settings—such as schools, residential centers, or other forms of collective care.

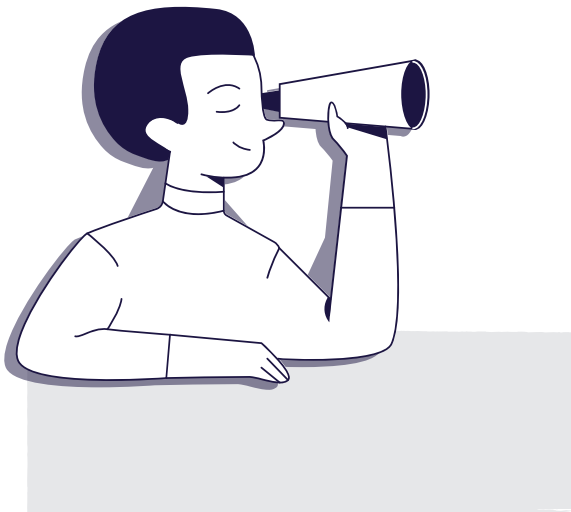


## Profile of Abusers

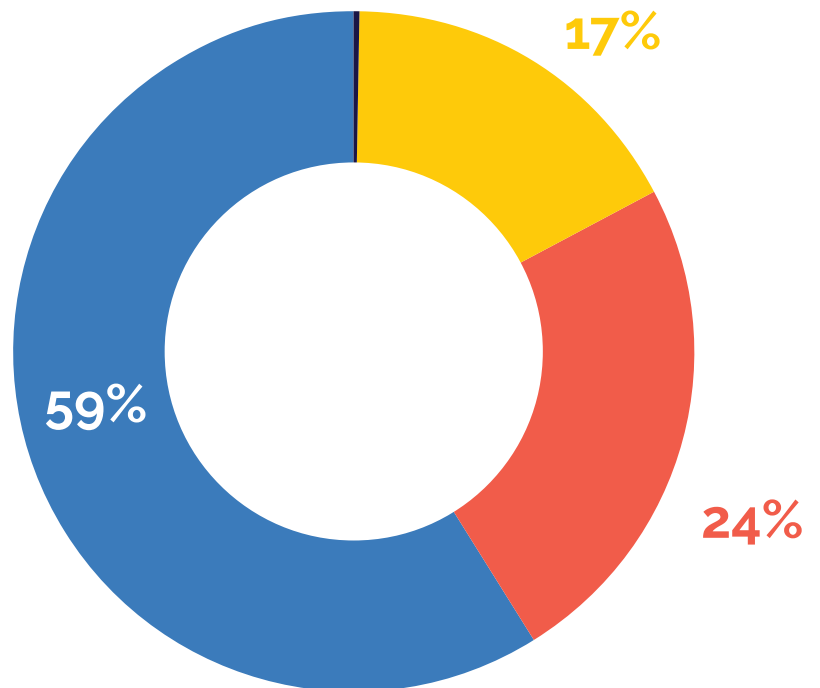
Referring to the **profile of the abuser**, in **52% of cases (142 situations)**, the perpetrator was an **adult from the community** who had **no close family connection** to the child. In **32% of cases (88 situations)**, the abuse was committed by a **parent**. In **11% (29 situations)**, it was committed by **other minors**, and in **5% (13 cases)** by a **close relative**. In **five situations**, the abuse was committed **by a group**, involving both **an adult and a minor**, and in **one case**, the **perpetrator was not identified**.



## Profile of Offenses



- Child Trafficking
- Other cases (Justice or child protection interest)
- Domestic violence
- Sexual offenses





## IRINA | AGE 16 | SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The story of Irina, a 16-year-old teenager who benefited from the services of Barnahus Nord Center



Irina, aged 16, grew up in an environment full of hardship and deprivation. Since the age of five, she had been living with her grandparents, as her parents had lost their parental rights. The grandparents provided what they could, but living on the edge of poverty, they had little choice but to accept any job offers that came their way.

When the Ionescu couple offered Irina a job at an apple orchard, promising her a salary, she was hopeful and eager for the opportunity. Her grandparents, hoping she could help support the family and earn some money, agreed—even though they didn't know much about the couple. They knew that several locals worked as day laborers in the orchard and were paid for their work. At least, that's how it seemed.

Irina left home at the beginning of June, and for two and a half months, there was no news of her. She worked 10 to 12 hours a day.

She was housed in a dirty shed, sleeping on an old, filthy bed. She had no decent place to rest. The space was infested with insects and damp, and the food was insufficient. Despite her hard work, Irina was never paid.

One day, Irina tried to use the phone of one of the couple, but this proved to be a trap. They accused her of deleting an important message, which allegedly caused material damage. This pretext was used to threaten and coerce her into providing sexual services. Irina was constantly threatened and forced to have sexual relations with multiple men.

Eventually, Irina managed to escape. Upon returning home, she told her grandparents everything that had happened, and they immediately reported it to the authorities.



# How did Irina come to Barnahus?

At the time the case was referred to the Center, the criminal investigation was already underway. Irina had undergone a forensic medical examination, and other procedural actions were in progress. The case was referred to the Barnahus Center by the investigating officer, who recognized that Irina needed professional psychological support.

## Scan and read the brochure

“The child as a victim or witness of crime in the justice system: The Barnahus experience in the Republic of Moldova. Case studies”



# What followed at Barnahus?

As soon as Irina’s case was registered at the Barnahus Center, the social worker immediately contacted the local child protection authority. Irina and her grandmother did not have the financial means to travel to the Center, which caused delays in intervention. In this situation, the local mayor, acting as the local child protection authority, arranged transportation for Irina whenever necessary to the Barnahus Center, located 78 kilometers away.

Following the initial assessment, it was determined that Irina required crisis psychological assistance, as she was overwhelmed by fear, confusion, and guilt.

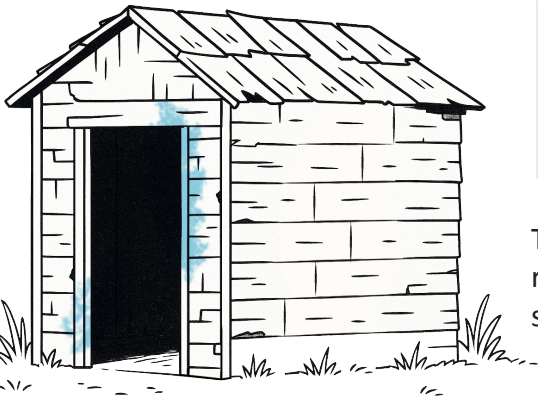
Meanwhile, the Barnahus Center’s legal advisor maintained contact with the prosecutor and investigating officers, ensuring that the Ionescu couple would have no access to Irina and could not influence her.

Just one week after the referral, Irina was interviewed at the Center. To ensure the interview took place under special conditions, a legal representative from the territorial child protection authority was appointed. This measure was taken to minimize the risk of compromising the procedure due to Irina’s feelings of shame.

The psychologist at the Center highlighted this risk, noting that if Irina’s grandmother had attended the interview as her legal representative, there was a high likelihood that Irina would hide or downplay the most painful details out of concern for her grandmother and a desire not to cause her additional suffering.

**Irina was included in a psychological evaluation program and, over the following months, attended six sessions with the psychologist. Each session ended with validating Irina’s emotions, reassuring her that everything she felt was normal and that none of what happened was her fault.**

The psychological evaluation report, along with recommendations for identifying a rehabilitation program, was sent to the child protection authority and the prosecutor.



## IONEL | AGE 10 | PHYSICAL ABUSE

The story of Ionel, a child of only 10 years old who benefited from the services of Barnahus Nord Center



In a village in the northern part of the country, Ionel, a 10-year-old boy, lived a reality difficult to imagine. His mother, frequently under the influence of alcohol, was often absent from home, leaving her children—him and his older sister—to fend for themselves. Ionel had become accustomed to preparing his own meals and managing on his own, but nothing had prepared him for the cruelty he would face within his own home.

One evening, while heavily intoxicated, his mother suddenly exploded in a fit of rage. She began repeatedly hitting Ionel, both with her hand and with a stick, causing unbearable pain all over his body. Fear and confusion overwhelmed Ionel, but he tried to stay calm and endure. Unfortunately, his mother's fury did not subside. In an uncontrolled act of violence, she tied Ionel to a table leg using adhesive tape, leaving him captive in his own suffering and humiliation.

Ionel managed to free himself, trembling, jumped out the window, and ran to a neighbor's house. He told her that his mother often punished him by hitting him, throwing objects

at him, and tying him to furniture to keep him captive in their home. The neighbor was horrified by the boy's condition.

She immediately contacted Ionel's father, who lived in the same locality but was unaware of what was happening to his child. Without hesitation, the father alerted the authorities.

That evening, Ionel was taken to stay at his father's house, with plans to visit a doctor the following day. The neighbor, who turned out to be a community social worker, took initiative and referred the case to the Barnahus Center.

### Scand and read the brochure

"The child as a victim or witness of crime in the justice system: The Barnahus experience in the Republic of Moldova. Case studies"



## How did lonel come to Barnahus?

The community social worker initiated the procedure for an initial assessment and referred the case to Barnahus, providing a detailed description of the child's dramatic situation. *"He is a child who does not know how to express his pain,"* said the social worker, *"but he needs help, a place where he can feel safe and confront his fear of being hurt again. Perhaps at Barnahus, he will find the support he so desperately needs."*

**The Barnahus case manager maintained close collaboration with the local social worker.**

Together, they participated in a multidisciplinary team meeting where urgent protection measures were decided upon, considering the child's situation was assessed as one of imminent danger.



## What followed at Barnahus?

**The case was registered immediately**, and the very next day after the incident, **lonel arrived at the Barnahus Center** accompanied by his father. As a first step, lonel was examined by a physician and received the necessary medical care, while the police officer issued a 10-day **restraining order against the perpetrator**.

In the days that followed, lonel benefited from an intensive psychological crisis intervention program, and after just five sessions, his emotional state began to visibly improve.

A criminal case was also initiated for domestic violence (Article 2011 of the Criminal Code), and the prosecutor requested that lonel be interviewed under child-friendly conditions at the Center—a process that was promptly arranged.

Meanwhile, lonel's father received primary legal counseling and support in filing for a protection order for his son in court. This order prohibited the mother from approaching lonel until the situation was clarified. There was also close collaboration with the child protection authority to ensure that lonel's sister was not exposed to similar risks. The children were removed from the family home, without terminating parental rights, and placed in a safe environment—their father's residence.

After lonel's interview, a psychological assessment was initiated to determine the impact of the abuse on his development. The psychological evaluation report, submitted to the child protection authorities, highlighted a high degree of trauma and the need for a comprehensive psychosocial rehabilitation process. Based on this evaluation, lonel was referred to a local psychological counseling service, enabling him to continue his recovery process.

**The mother was sentenced to 150 hours of unpaid community service after being found guilty of the offense stipulated under Article 2011, paragraph (1), letter a) of the Criminal Code.**

The boy's father filed a petition with the court to establish the child's residence with him. As a result, the boy began living with his father in a calmer and more protective environment, where he could benefit from stability and safety.


# Expanding Best Practices of the Barnahus North Center to Specialists in Southern Moldova

In 2024, the **Barnahus North Center** played an active role in the project *“Strengthening Services for Children, Parents, and Adolescent Girls in Contact with the Justice System,”* implemented by the **National Center for Child Abuse Prevention (CNPAC)** in partnership with **UNICEF Moldova**, with financial support from the **Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany**, through the **German Development Bank (KfW)**.


As part of the project, a **training curriculum for Barnahus specialists** was developed, and **multidisciplinary team trainings** were conducted in the southern region of the country. These sessions involved **over 200 professionals** from the fields of **social protection, healthcare, public order, and justice**.

In addition, **study visits** were organized for professionals from **Leova, Cimișlia, Basarabeasca, Cantemir, Comrat, Ceadîr-Lunga, Taraclia, and Vulcănești** to the Barnahus North Center. These visits enabled valuable **experience exchange** and peer learning.

## Reflections from Participants



**I understood how important this service is and how we must work for the child’s best interest**





**This center is truly needed, and we were impressed by the professionalism and care of the staff**





**We saw how the team works and were inspired to do better for children in our communities too**







In November 2024, training sessions were also organized to strengthen the competencies of forensic specialists, aiming to improve responses in cases of child sexual abuse. These sessions were attended by **50 professionals**—including forensic doctors, proctologists, and gynecologists from northern Moldova—who had the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of specific methods and sensitive approaches required for such delicate cases.

At the end of 2024, the **National Center for Child Abuse Prevention (CNPAC)** organized a **study visit to Riga, Latvia**, for a group of **14 professionals** from various child protection sectors. During this visit, participants toured the Barnahus Center in Riga, the Police Department, the Prosecutor's Office, and the Child Rights Directorate of Riga.



These initiatives reflect the Barnahus North Center's ongoing commitment to service development and the promotion of interregional cooperation in protecting the rights of children who are victims or witnesses of crime.



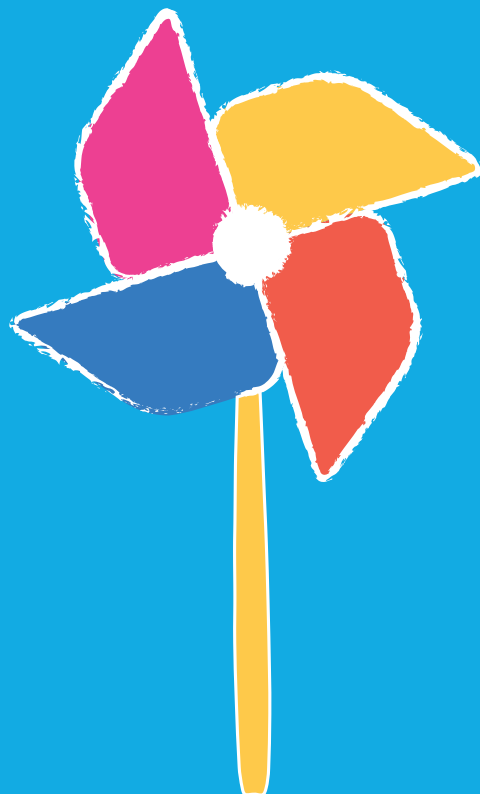
The full version of the  
2024 Annual Report can be  
accessed here



Scan and read the 2024 report of the  
Barnahus Nord Centre – the short  
version - in English







MINISTRY OF LABOUR  
AND SOCIAL PROTECTION  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



NATIONAL CENTER  
FOR CHILD ABUSE  
PREVENTION

The preparation of the 2024 report was carried out with financial support from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova.



[www.cnpac.md](http://www.cnpac.md)



[www.barnahus.md](http://www.barnahus.md)