

The child as a victim or witness of crime in the justice system:

The Barnahus experience in the Republic of Moldova

Case studies



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BARNAHUS

National Center for Child Abuse Prevention (CNPAC)

A non-governmental organization in the Republic of Moldova, which since 1997 has been promoting children's right to protection from all forms of abuse. CNPAC focuses its efforts on informing, raising awareness, and motivating society to put an end to violence against children.

CNPAC's Mission

To protect children at risk and those who have become victims of all forms of violence through preventive measures and specialized services offered to children and their families.

CNPAC's Vision

A violence-free society where all children have equal opportunities to fully realize their potential.



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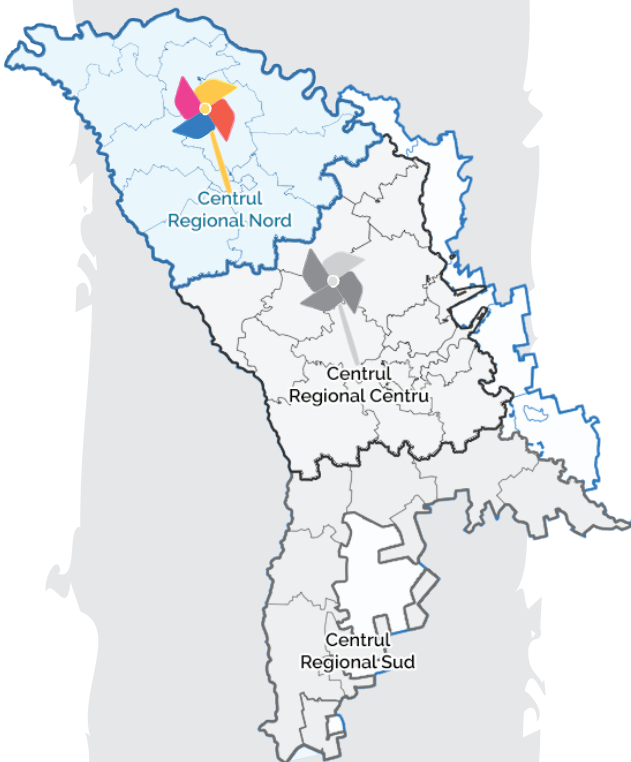
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PREFACE

Violence against children remains a pervasive global challenge, with profound and lasting impacts on their physical, emotional, and psychological development. Despite significant advancements in child protection frameworks, children continue to be vulnerable to abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Beyond the initial trauma, engagement with the justice system can itself become a source of further distress, particularly when children are subjected to multiple interviews or investigative procedures that fail to accommodate their emotional needs and developmental capacities.

In response to these challenges, the Barnahus model has been established as an international benchmark of best practices for the multidisciplinary support of child victims and witnesses of crime. Drawing inspiration from child-friendly justice systems pioneered in the Nordic countries, Barnahus offers an integrated, child-centered approach wherein professionals from justice, child protection, psychology, and medical fields collaborate to provide comprehensive protection and support tailored to each child's unique needs.



Distinctive Features of the Barnahus Model?

Barnahus mitigates the risk of secondary victimization by providing a safe, child-friendly environment where all essential procedures—including child-friendly forensic interviews, medico-legal examinations, psychological support, and legal assistance—are coordinated and delivered under one roof. Rather than being transferred between multiple agencies, the child receives holistic care from a multidisciplinary team trained to uphold the child's rights and prioritize their well-being. This coordinated approach significantly reduces emotional distress, enhances the integrity and reliability of evidence collected, and improves the prospects for effective judicial outcomes.

In the Republic of Moldova, the implementation of the Barnahus model is championed by the National Center for the Child Abuse Prevention (CNPAC), an organization with extensive expertise in advancing child-friendly services. CNPAC plays a pivotal role in fostering intersectoral collaboration and adapting the Barnahus framework to the national context, thereby strengthening the protection of child victims and witnesses of crime. Since 2022, CNPAC has operated the Northern Regional Center for Integrated Assistance to Child Victims of Crime, a Barnahus-type facility.

This publication delineates best practices derived from the operations of the Barnahus Center in the Republic of Moldova, providing invaluable guidance for professionals engaged in the care and support of child victims and witnesses. Its objective is to enhance interagency cooperation to ensure that every child receives the necessary assistance in a manner that respects their dignity, rights, and best interests.

We trust that this publication will serve as an essential resource for all stakeholders in the child protection sector, empowering them to implement the most effective intervention strategies and contribute to the establishment of a truly child-friendly justice system.

Scan and watch:
[Justice for children — before and after Barnahus](#)



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[Services provided by the Barnahus Nord Center](#)



- **Perpetrator** – Her sister's husband
- **Type of abuse** – Sexual abuse
- **Sentence** – 11 years' imprisonment



Dorina, Age 11

Dorina, an 11-year-old girl, lived with her extended family: her parents, older sister, and the sister's husband. The latter had taken on the role of escorting Dorina to school, a responsibility he willingly assumed. Additionally, he often took Dorina for walks, consistently showing support both for her and the rest of the family.



How did Dorina come to Barnahus?

Dorina's mother did not hesitate; she believed her daughter and immediately contacted the police by calling emergency number 112. The police initiated a criminal investigation and detained the man. Simultaneously, they alerted the child protection authority, which contacted the Barnahus Center to coordinate the multidisciplinary assistance process for the child. On the same day, the Barnahus multidisciplinary team — including a social worker, psychologist, and legal expert — convened to establish and prioritize the intervention steps for this case.



Dorina had cognitive and learning difficulties and was enrolled in a specialized school program. Consequently, she required assistance with her learning process, and the help provided by the man appeared natural within a trusting and supportive family environment.

One day, while they were out for a walk, the man approached Dorina and, attempting to force her to remain still, put his hand inside her underwear. Dorina managed to push him away and run off.

Later, she found the courage to let her mother know about what had happened, as well as about previous similar incidents. Dorina disclosed to her mother that whenever they were alone, the man would speak to her in a way that made her uncomfortable, hold her tightly, and kiss her. At first, Dorina believed these gestures were simply signs of affection, but as the behavior became increasingly intimate, she decided to break her silence and seek help to protect herself.

What followed at Barnahus?

The initial intervention measure was a psychological crisis session, during which Dorina disclosed the psychologist that this was not the first time such things had happened. The psychologist observed that Dorina experienced profound shame and difficulty articulating her experiences.

Based on Dorina's disclosures, the multidisciplinary team urgently requested a medico-legal examination. The Barnahus legal expert contacted the criminal investigation officer assigned to the case and recommended that the child's medico-legal examination be conducted on-site at the Center. The officer issued the necessary authorization.

The Barnahus psychologist informed Dorina about the upcoming procedures and explained how the medical examination would be conducted. Dorina requested to be examined exclusively by a female physician, a request that was fully respected.

Following the medico-legal examination, Dorina was interviewed the same day within the Center, in a safe and child-friendly environment, by an interviewer she had already met and trusted. The interviewer was carefully selected considering Dorina's cognitive developmental needs; thus, a specialist with training in special educational needs was involved.

Both Dorina and her mother received psychological counseling. The psychologist worked with Dorina to mitigate the emotional impact of the abuse. The social worker provided psychoeducation, supporting the mother in learning appropriate ways to support her daughter within the family, while the legal expert offered primary legal counseling, explaining the stages of the criminal process.

At the prosecutor's request, a Psychological Evaluation Report was prepared, highlighting the presence of significant psychological trauma. The consequences manifested as feelings of shame, anxiety, avoidance of certain situations, hypervigilance, intrusive painful memories, post-traumatic stress, sadness, sleep disturbances, and enuresis. These symptoms reflected the intensity and depth of Dorina's experience, underscoring the need for ongoing support for her emotional recovery.





STANDARD 18

The child receives specialized assistance services at the Center based on a comprehensive needs assessment

- ✓ Immediate referral by the child protection authority ensured integrated, multidisciplinary support under one roof.



STANDARD 14

The Center shall coordinate forensic medical examinations and expert assessments in compliance with legal and medical standards

- ✓ The medico-legal examination was conducted without causing re-traumatization, by an expert of the same gender as the child, at the Center, eliminating the need for travel.



STANDARD 12

The Center shall provide quality primary legal assistance to the child's legal representative or trusted person, or directly to the child when appropriate

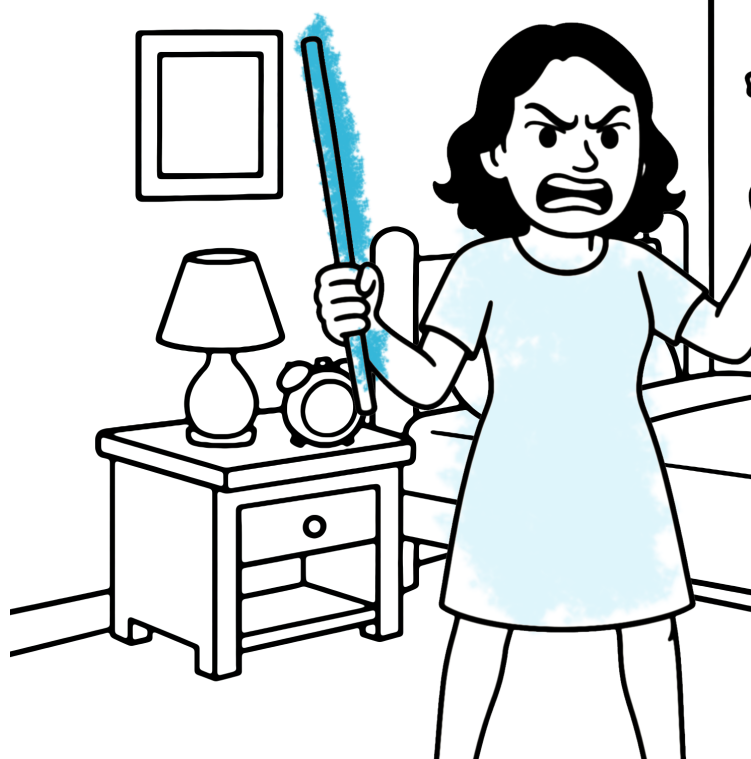
- ✓ Psychological and legal support provided to the parent contributed significantly to the child's overall well-being.



The perpetrator was sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment pursuant to Article 172, paragraph (3), letter a) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova.

Lonel, Age 10

- **Perpetrator**
His mother
- **Type of abuse**
Physical abuse
- **Sentence**
Unpaid community service



In a village in the northern part of the country, Lonel, 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. Lonel 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 Lonel, both with her hand and with a stick, causing unbearable pain all over his body. Fear and confusion overwhelmed Lonel, but he tried to stay calm and endure. Unfortunately, his mother's fury did not subside. In an uncontrolled act of violence, she tied Lonel 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.

How did Ionel 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, Ionel arrived at the Barnahus Center accompanied by his father. As a first step, Ionel 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, Ionel 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 Ionel be interviewed under child-friendly conditions at the Center—a process that was promptly arranged.

Meanwhile, Ionel'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 Ionel until the situation was

clarified. There was also close collaboration with the child protection authority to ensure that Ionel'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 Ionel'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, Ionel was referred to a local psychological counseling service, enabling him to continue his recovery process.





STANDARD 10:

For each registered case, the Center convenes at least one multidisciplinary case conference, engaging its own specialists and, as appropriate, members of the local multidisciplinary team and representatives from law enforcement bodies

- ✓ Effective collaboration among the local child protection authority, police office, and the Barnahus Center was instrumental in safeguarding children at risk.



STANDARD 15:

The case manager at the Center facilitates case management and ensures the timely exchange of relevant data and information with professionals and authorities responsible for implementing urgent protection measures

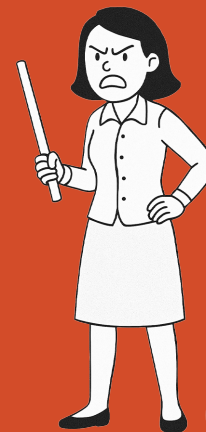
- ✓ Protective measures were implemented without delay, thereby ensuring a safe and secure environment for the child victim and their sibling.



STANDARD 19:

The child's individualized care plan at the Center is regularly reviewed and modified in accordance with any additional specialized support needs identified throughout the intervention process

- ✓ Multidisciplinary collaboration at various stages of case management ensured a comprehensive and coordinated intervention, with the active involvement of local social services.



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.

- **Perpetrator** – His father
- **Type of abuse** – Domestic violence
- **Sentence** – No sentence was issued



Maria, Age 12

Maria lived in an environment where fear governed every day and night. Although the family appeared united on the surface, behind closed doors, constant conflict and domestic violence were hidden. For many years, Maria and her four-year-old twin brothers had witnessed acts of violence, which had become a painful routine for them.



How did Maria come to Barnahus?

The police immediately registered the case and responded to the scene to document the situation. An emergency restraining order was issued against the father, and local authorities were notified. Observing Maria's emotional state, one of the officers suggested that her mother seek support from the Barnahus Center, where trained psychologists could offer specialized assistance. He provided a contact number, and the next day, after speaking with Barnahus staff, Maria and her mother traveled to Bălți to receive the help they so desperately needed.



Whenever conflicts erupted suddenly and her father's shouting echoed throughout the house, Maria would search for refuge. She would hide in a closet, gently closing the door behind her, believing that only in that cramped, dark space could she escape the chaos that was breaking her heart.

One night, when her father's violence reached a terrifying peak, Maria once again felt her heart pounding in her chest. She heard the blows and screams and realized that this time she could no longer stay hidden. She sensed that her younger

brothers needed her protection, and despite her fear, she acted instinctively. She opened the closet door, rushed out, and quickly locked her brothers in a room to shield them from the violence. Then she went to the room where her parents were fighting. Maria saw her mother's face covered in blood and, with tears in her eyes, intervened, yelling and begging them to stop.

Her father stormed out of the house, leaving behind a fearful silence. Realizing she could no longer endure the abuse, Maria's mother called the police. In that moment, Maria felt that someone would finally hear their pain.

What followed at Barnahus?

At the Barnahus Center, both Maria and her mother were listened to with empathy and care by the team of specialists. They received psychological counseling and legal support tailored to their needs.

During the initial assessment, it became evident that Maria was burdened by feelings of guilt over her father's absence from the family. Her younger brothers' questions and concerns about their father's absence further intensified Maria's sadness and anxiety. Nonetheless, the psychologist managed to restore her sense of security and self-worth, helping her understand that she was not to blame for what had happened and that she had the right to feel safe. Her mother also received counseling and was able to regain the emotional strength needed to continue protecting her family.

Meanwhile, the Barnahus social worker contacted the local guardianship authority, and together they coordinated the necessary protective measures for the child. The mother was supported in accessing the services of the Territorial Office for State-Guaranteed Legal Aid, where she was assigned a defense attorney to represent her in the criminal proceedings. She was also assisted in filing a request for a protection order before the court.

Shortly thereafter, the prosecutor requested that Maria be interviewed at the Center as a witness to domestic violence. Maria was informed about the interview procedure, her rights, including that her statements would contribute to protecting her mother and the entire family. The child agreed to provide testimony, although it visibly caused her distress.

The psychologist advised the prosecutor on the necessity of conducting a psychological evaluation to determine the extent of the trauma the child had experienced. In this case, the Psychological Evaluation Report was a crucial component in documenting Maria's psychological suffering.

Maria was not merely a witness to domestic violence, but also a victim of the abusive and fear-driven environment. Even though the physical aggression had not been directed at her personally, its emotional and psychological impact was profound. This approach enabled the team to intervene not only from a legal perspective but also in a personalized and child-centered manner, responding to the girl's individual needs.





STANDARD 15:

The Center shall facilitate the implementation of urgent protective measures in cases where the child's life or health is at imminent risk

- ✓ The Barnahus Center provided support in implementing urgent protection measures, offering crisis psychological assistance both to the child witness of domestic violence and to the mother, who was also a victim of domestic violence.



STANDARD 17:

The child's psychological evaluation is tailored to the individual characteristics of the child, including age, developmental stage, linguistic, cognitive, and social level, cultural context, and emotional state

- ✓ The Psychological Evaluation Report confirmed the advanced level of the child's trauma. Although no sentence has been issued in the case, the perpetrator has been separated from the victims.



The case is still under monitoring, with the proceedings referred to the court. However, **no sentence has been pronounced to date.** The father does not live with the family, although he resides in the same locality. The mother receives support from a specialized center for victims of domestic violence, where she obtains counseling and assistance.

- **Perpetrators** – Two individuals from the village
- **Type of abuse** – Sexual exploitation
- **Sentence** – 25 years' imprisonment



Irina, Age 16

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

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.



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.

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.





STANDARD 11:

The child is interviewed at the Center without being retraumatized, ensuring the quality of the evidence collected

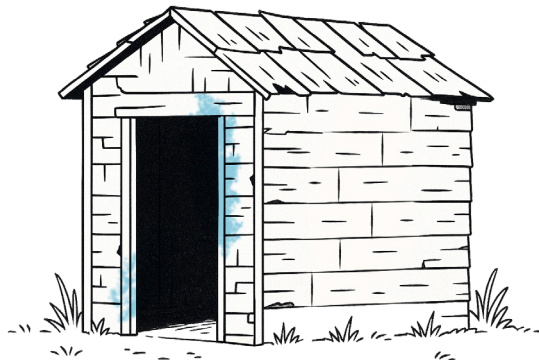
- ✓ The decision to replace the legal representative during the interview not only provided the girl with a safe and emotionally pressure-free environment but also benefited the investigation. Irina recounted the events openly and without reservation. As a result, valuable information was obtained, necessary for individualizing criminal responsibility and strengthening the evidence.



STANDARD 16:

The Center shall provide crisis psychological support to the child and, where applicable, to their legal representative or trusted person

- ✓ The local mayor, acting as the local child protection authority, took on their role and directly contributed to the child's rehabilitation.



The Ionescu couple was sentenced to **25 years' imprisonment**, under Article 206, paragraph (3), letter b1) of the Penal Code.

The girl, who endured a traumatic experience of exploitation, received the necessary support to regain her emotional balance. At the Barnahus Center, she was not only heard, understood, and supported but also encouraged to look toward the future with hope.

Andrei, Age 16

- **Perpetrator**
The local police officer
- **Type of abuse**
Labor exploitation
- **Sentence**
20 years' imprisonment



At just 16 years old, Andrew never had the chance to truly live his childhood. Burdened by hardships, he was forced to grow up too fast. He lived with his family in a modest house in a small village in the north of the country. His father worked day labor wherever he could find a job, but most often, he earned a living working for a local policewoman — a respected but authoritarian woman. Unfortunately, Andrew's father had a habit that made him vulnerable: sometimes, after work, he drank alcohol, which made him easy to manipulate.



How did Andrew come to Barnahus?

In 2023, the case was taken over by a new prosecutor who recognized the importance of expediting the investigation and, above all, the necessity of protecting the child. The first step was to request that Andrew be interviewed under special conditions, in a safe and child-friendly environment such as the Barnahus Center.

When his father could no longer keep up with the work, the policewoman would call Andrew instead. The boy had no choice, because the policewoman threatened that if he refused, his father would be arrested for frequently driving under the influence. This fear kept him captive for years.

Since the age of 12, Andrew worked tirelessly. He spent his days digging soil, feeding animals, carrying heavy sacks, and doing whatever was asked of him. Promises of payment always turned into empty words or sums so small he could barely buy anything. Despite this, the boy was afraid to refuse because, in his mind, that would mean losing his father. He was trapped in a situation where abuse was hidden behind authority.

At one point, Andrew's homeroom teacher began to wonder why he was frequently absent from school. Concerned, she spoke with his mother, who shared the difficult situation the family was facing. Aware of the seriousness of the problem, the teacher decided to contact the child protection authority. Soon after, the case was reported to the police and an investigation was launched.

Although the events took place in 2022, the case remained forgotten in a drawer for a long time, with no concrete steps taken to uncover the truth. The investigation stalled, and the lack of action sent a clear message: either the case was not a priority, or there was an attempt to cover it up. The victim and his family waited for months without answers, without progress, fearing that justice would never be served.

What followed at Barnahus?

The Barnahus Center immediately took over the case, focusing on assessing Andrew's support needs and ensuring his safety and well-being. The Center's specialists invited Andrew and his mother to inform them about the types of support available to them.

The multidisciplinary team prepared Andrew for the planned interventions. Each stage was tailored to his needs to reduce anxiety and facilitate cooperation during subsequent procedures.

From the very first interaction, the team faced a challenge: Andrew categorically refused to interact with a female interviewer. The trauma he had experienced had left deep scars, and the mere presence of a woman triggered feelings of fear and discomfort. The specialists adapted the process by appointing a male interviewer, thus respecting the child's preferences and emotional boundaries.

The interview itself was a difficult and demanding process for both Andrew and the interviewer. Besides the emotional barrier, Andrew struggled to recall details of the events. Some aspects escaped him completely, while others seemed confusing and hard to organize into a clear chronological order. Multiple breaks, additional explanations, and a great deal of patience were necessary for Andrew to piece together the sequence of events. The interviewer tactfully intervened, providing emotional support and reassurance so that the process would not become overwhelming for Andrew.

Subsequently, Andrew received five crisis counseling sessions aimed at helping him manage his emotions and reduce the impact of the traumatic memories evoked during the interview. The prosecutor decided to waive the request for a psychological evaluation, thereby protecting the child from possible revictimization. He concluded that the evidence gathered during the interview was sufficient and forwarded the case to court.





STANDARD 8:

The Center shall implement measures to prevent retraumatization and revictimization of the child at every stage of specialized assistance services

- ✓ The multidisciplinary team's special interventions were essential in preventing the boy's retraumatization and ensuring an empathetic environment.



STANDARD 10:

The service provider has qualified staff for specialized psychological, legal, medical, and social interventions from a multidisciplinary perspective

- ✓ The professionalism of the prosecutor, who acted with the child's best interests in mind, was crucial in protecting the child from potential retraumatization.



In 2024, the policewoman was sentenced to **20 years' imprisonment**. After two years of uncertainty and inner struggle, Andrew finally felt protected. However, even though the trial concluded, his emotional wounds have not fully healed.

With the support of specialists and his family, he is rebuilding his life step by step. He enrolled in a vocational school and, for the first time in a long while, looks to the future with hope. He is learning, discovering new passions, and gradually regaining trust in others and in his own abilities.

Daniel, Age 12

- **Perpetrator**
The priest
- **Type of abuse**
Sexual abuse
- **Sentence**
11 years' imprisonment



Daniel lived with his father and his older brother, aged 15. Their mother worked abroad, and in her absence, the two brothers were primarily dependent on their father.

One Sunday, Daniel was invited to a picnic by the village priest. Given the close-knit nature of rural communities, where people know and trust each other, Daniel had no reason to suspect any harm and accepted the invitation without hesitation. Thus, that Sunday, the boy spent time in the company of the priest and individuals familiar to his family.

In the evening, as rain began and considering they were several kilometers from home, the priest offered to drive everyone present back by car. When only Daniel and the priest remained in the vehicle, the priest began encouraging Daniel to visit the church more frequently and, during the conversation, inappropriately touched him on the legs near the genital area.



Daniel was confused and remained silent; his sole thought was to get home as quickly as possible. The priest then stopped the car in front of his house and told Daniel to get out. Although frightened, Daniel complied, believing the priest might need assistance. In the yard, another boy whom Daniel knew and had previously worked with was present, which reassured him that no harm would come to him. Once behind the house, the priest instructed Daniel to follow him, then forcibly pulled down Daniel's pants and underwear and began sexually abusing him by touching his genitals.

After some time, someone honked at the gate, prompting the priest to tell Daniel to wait while he went to see who it was. Seizing the opportunity, Daniel fled around the back of the house and hurried to his uncle, to whom he disclosed what had happened to him. The uncle immediately contacted Daniel's father, who without delay reported the incident to the authorities.



How did Daniel come to Barnahus?

At the police station, Daniel found it difficult to recount the abuse, overwhelmed by fear and shame. The police responded swiftly: they detained the suspect and informed the prosecutor. The prosecutor subsequently contacted the Barnahus Center, requesting the organization of a child-friendly forensic interview within the following days. Consequently, the case was transferred to Barnahus specialists for comprehensive management.



What followed at Barnahus?

The day after the incident, Daniel and his father arrived at the Barnahus Center for the first time. Overwhelmed by emotion, Daniel initially received a crisis intervention session with a clinical psychologist, who provided reassurance that he was not to blame and had nothing to be ashamed of. The psychologist emphasized the importance of open communication and trusting the adults dedicated to supporting him. Daniel's father was also deeply distressed, experiencing a complex mix of anxiety and shame, and received psychological counseling during which he expressed his determination to seek justice.

Following these initial consultations and after receiving information from the Barnahus social worker, Daniel consented to participate in a child-friendly forensic interview. He opted to be interviewed by a male forensic interviewer, feeling more comfortable in that setting. Concurrently, Barnahus specialists collaborated closely with local social services, gathering pertinent information collected by the community social worker during the initial assessment phase. The forensic interview was successfully conducted within 24 hours of the abuse. During the interview, Daniel provided a detailed account of the abuse, while the observing psychologist noted significant emotional distress. To assess the trauma's impact, Daniel was offered enrollment in a psychological evaluation and therapeutic support program.

Over the subsequent month, Daniel attended weekly psychological counseling sessions at Barnahus, establishing a trusting relationship with the assigned psychologist, who compiled a comprehensive psychological evaluation report based on these sessions.

Daniel's father's involvement was critical in completing the evaluation, providing valuable insights into the child's developmental history and family dynamics. Throughout the process, Barnahus professionals maintained close coordination with the community social worker and the criminal investigation officer to ensure Daniel's safety, confirm he was not exposed to further harm, and prevent secondary victimization.

The psychological evaluation report, detailing the extent of Daniel's trauma and psychological impact, was submitted to the prosecutor and served as critical evidence in the judicial proceedings. The findings unequivocally demonstrated that Daniel's suffering extended well beyond the abuse incident itself, leaving profound emotional scars that affected his trust, sense of security, and worldview. According to the prosecutor, this evaluation was instrumental in informing a tailored sentencing decision, underscoring the gravity of the perpetrator's actions and their enduring consequences for the victim.

The evaluation report was also shared with local child protection authorities, accompanied by recommendations to include Daniel in a rehabilitation program—an essential component in facilitating his recovery and restoring emotional stability.



STANDARD 7

The Center ensures the provision of specialized assistance services to the child without undue delay

- ✓ Prompt intervention was a decisive factor in this situation, having a significant impact on how the child's needs were addressed and on the conduct of the investigative process.



STANDARD 11

The child is interviewed at the Center by a specially trained interviewer who holds certificates or official documentation attesting to their training in this field

- ✓ Conducting the interview just one day after the incident, and allowing the child to choose the gender of the interviewer, contributed to the child providing clear and coherent information, which was important for obtaining valuable evidence.



STANDARD 8








The Center shall implement measures to prevent retraumatization and revictimization of the child at every stage of specialized assistance services

- ✓ The support provided to the child by his father contributed to preventing his re-victimization and retraumatization.




















The perpetrator was found guilty of committing the offense and was sentenced to 11 years of imprisonment for violent sexual acts committed against a person known to be under the age of 14 (Article 172, paragraph (3), letter a) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova).

Minimum Quality Standards for Services Provided by the Regional Center for Integrated Assistance to Child Victims and Witnesses of Crimes

 STANDARD 1	The Regional Center for Integrated Assistance to Child Victims and Witnesses of Crimes shall be situated in a location that is both accessible and secure for its beneficiaries.
 STANDARD 2	The Center shall be appropriately furnished and equipped to ensure operational efficiency and the delivery of specialized assistance services to children within a safe, intimate, and child-friendly environment.
 STANDARD 3	The Center shall ensure effective information dissemination and awareness-raising among employees of central and local public administration authorities, as well as community members, regarding the Center’s mission, objectives, services, and outcomes.
 STANDARD 4	The Center shall provide equitable and non-discriminatory treatment to every child, regardless of their or their parents’ or guardians’ sex, race, ethnicity, age, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, socioeconomic status, parental status, minority affiliation, property, birth circumstances, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other status.
 STANDARD 5	The Center shall guarantee the confidentiality and protection of personal data pertaining to the child and all individuals involved in the provision of specialized assistance services, in compliance with applicable data protection regulations.
 STANDARD 6	The Center shall ensure that the child and, where applicable, their legal representative or trusted person, are fully informed and actively involved at all stages of the service provision process.
 STANDARD 7	The Center ensures the provision of specialized assistance services to the child without undue delay.



 STANDARD 8	The Center shall implement measures to prevent retraumatization and revictimization of the child at every stage of specialized assistance services.
 STANDARD 9	The Center shall promote intersectoral collaboration to ensure that the child receives integrated specialized assistance within a safe and coordinated setting.
 STANDARD 10	The Center shall provide multidisciplinary interventions, delivering integrated psychological, legal, medical, and social support tailored to the child's needs.
 STANDARD 11	The Center shall conduct child interviews in accordance with Article 110 ¹ of the Criminal Procedure Code, ensuring the integrity and quality of the evidence collected.
 STANDARD 12	The Center shall provide quality primary legal assistance to the child's legal representative or trusted person, or directly to the child when appropriate.
 STANDARD 13	The Center shall facilitate comprehensive medical evaluation and examination of the child.
 STANDARD 14	The Center shall coordinate forensic medical examinations and expert assessments in compliance with legal and medical standards.
 STANDARD 15	The Center shall facilitate the implementation of urgent protective measures in cases where the child's life or health is at imminent risk.
 STANDARD 16	The Center shall provide crisis psychological support to the child and, where applicable, to their legal representative or trusted person.

 STANDARD 17	The Center shall conduct thorough psychological assessments and prepare detailed psychological evaluation reports for each child.
 STANDARD 18	The Center shall assess the needs of the child and their legal representative or trusted person to inform service planning.
 STANDARD 19	The Center shall develop individualized specialized assistance plans based on comprehensive needs assessments for the child and, where applicable, their legal representative or trusted person.
 STANDARD 20	The Center shall maintain accurate and confidential internal case files for each child.
 STANDARD 21	The Center shall adhere to transparent and merit-based recruitment and promotion procedures for its staff.
 STANDARD 22	The Center shall ensure continuous professional development and initial training for all personnel.
 STANDARD 23	The Center shall provide systematic professional supervision to specialized staff to maintain service quality.
 STANDARD 24	The Center shall conduct annual evaluations of the professional competencies of specialized personnel to ensure ongoing excellence in service delivery.

Useful resources:

www.barnahus.md



Information for
professionals





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