

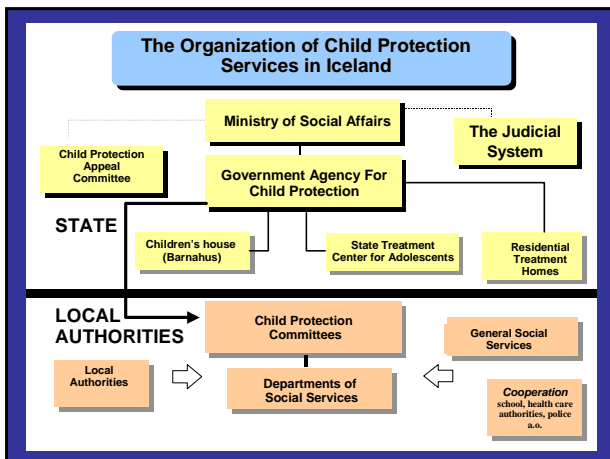
WGCC Conference on the Rights of Children in Institutional Care, Stockholm, 14-15th November 2006

Residential Care in Iceland: monitoring and the “best interest of the child”

Bragi Guðbrandsson General Director
Gov. Agency for Child Protection

Outline

- The Structure and Organisation of Child Protection and Institutional Care in Iceland
- Gate-keeping and out-of-home placement: matching services to individual needs
- Contracting out residential facilities: family based treatment
- Monitoring procedures
- Potentialities: international tools and standards of care



Out-of-home Placement: Local vs. Central Government Responsibility

- Categories of child protection:
 - Failures in parental responsibilities (Child abuse and neglect)
 - Destructive behaviour of the child (delinquent or criminal behaviour, drug abuse etc.)
- Local Authorities: Parenting alternatives - Foster care placement and post-care services
- Central Gov.: Treatment facilities – residential settings, and competence building in foster care (PRIDE)

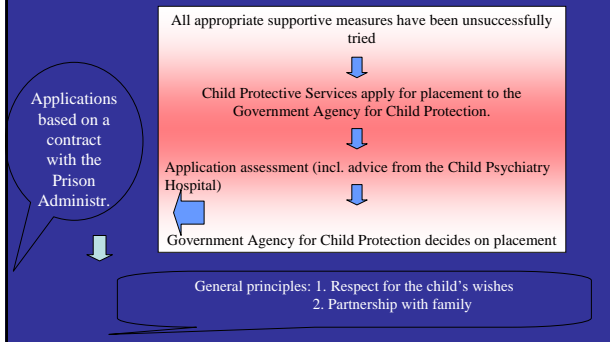
Child Protection and Residential Treatment Services for Youth

- Reorganisation of the treatment services 1995 – 2000; two basic principles:
 - “Gate-keeping”
 - “Contracting out” of long-term treatment
- 5 state operated treatment facilities closed
- A new diagnostic centre established
- Long-term treatment in “family settings”

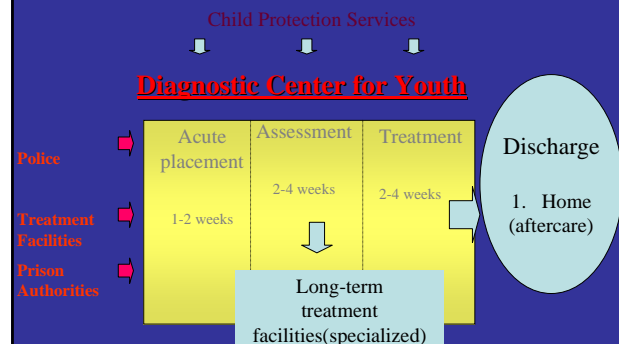
“Gate-keeping”

- To focus on the child's needs and targeting services accordingly
- To ensure that services are provided only to those who meet specified eligibility criteria
- To ration and make effective use of scarce resources
- Should raise thresholds for unnecessary or even harmful placement (low risk youth)

"Gatekeeping" at the primary level - Application for institutional placement



"Gatekeeping" at secondary level: Institutional treatment



Long-term Treatment Services

- seven long-term treatment facilities
- typical size is 6 youth living sharing their lives with the treatment provider
- emphasis put on "emotional nourishment"
- different target groups and variation in treatment goals
- behaviouralistic and environmental approach
- educational objectives and meaningful responsibilities (e.g. vocational training)
- psychological- and family counselling

"Contracting out" residential treatment services

- **The Overt Goal:** to improve quality of treatment, increase flexibility and improve cost efficiency:
 - **Quality** is improved by clearer definition of standards and the separation of service and supervision
 - **Flexibility** is increased as it is easier to accommodate for demand for treatment that changes from one time to another
 - **Cost control** is more effective as a fixed price is negotiated, overhead costs are reduced and management more efficient

The Contractual Framework

- Identifies treatment facilities and location
- Defines treatment goals and "modules"
- Identifies target group and number of youth
- Number of staff, training and special qualification (incl. psychological services)
- Defines the intake and discard process
- Identifies established procedures like the rights of children in institution, confidentiality etc.
- States the monitoring role of the GACP, reports and other information to be submitted
- Defines financial remuneration, the duration of the contract and framework for revision/disagreements

Monitoring Procedures

- GACP role in monitoring the implementation of the contractual framework, includes:
 - Rules on the rights of children living in residential institutions
 - Individual treatment plans
 - Children's experiences and feelings
- Monitoring by Independent Expert
 - Interviews with children
 - Focuses on different issues of importance, eg. schooling
 - Evaluating outcomes, including pathways
- Informal "monitoring": the role of Local CPS and parental involvement

Monitoring – to what end?

- Minimum basic standards of care need to be established
- Specific goals of each unit need to be clearly identified
- Appropriate “indicators” should be defined
- Emphasis on “intuition” and as well as objective criteria
- Participation of children/youth in monitoring

The European project “Quality4Children”

- European Project organized by IFCO, FICE and SOS Children Villages; 32 countries participating in developing European quality standards for out-of-home placement (inclusive of all forms)
- Objectives:
 - *collecting good practices*
 - *developing quality standards*
 - *implementing quality standards*
 - *setting up a European network*
- www.quality4children.info

Future Orientations

- The value of new and emerging international tools in re-visiting residential institutions
 - *CoE Rec. (2005)5*
 - *UN Guidelines on the protection of children without parental care*
 - *Quality4Children Standards of Care*
- The individual care plan should be the focus of monitoring
- Proposed revision of all monitoring mechanism with an active participation of children/youth