

REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF VOJVODINA

**CENTRE FOR FOSTER CARE AND
ADOPTION NOVI SAD
S T R A T E G I C P L A N
September 2019 – September 2022**

Novi Sad, September 2019

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CFCA NS Centre for Foster Care and Adoption Novi Sad

CFCA(s) Centre(s) for Foster Care and Adoption

APV Autonomous Province of Vojvodina

CSW(s) Centre(s) for Social Work

PISP Provincial Institute for Social Protection

RISP Republic Institute for Social Protection

LSW Law on Social Welfare

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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The Strategic Plan of the Centre for Foster Care and Adoption Novi Sad (hereinafter also referred to as “CFCA NS” or “the Centre”) was created in the period from February to September 2019. The plan relies heavily on the implementation results of the previous Strategic Plan 2015-2018 and is based upon both the analysis of the implemented Strategic Plan and the mapped needs for the following period.

As strategic planning has proven in the past to be a good instrument for long-term and short-term planning of activities, as well as for monitoring the effects of work, this new document represents an upgrade and improvement of work guidelines that ensure the fulfilment of the Centre’s mandate, better communication with partners and stakeholders, as well as sustainability of activities. Additionally, this Strategic Plan should provide a basis for further improvement of the quality of reporting at all levels.

The process of planning was open, efficient, participatory and productive. We implemented John Bryson's planning methodology,¹ tailored to the needs of planning in public institutions, local communities and civil society organisations. This planning model is based on the definition of expected results stemming from the analysis of context and needs. It is of particular importance to point out that the model is adapted to the conditions of an extremely variable environment, unexpected events and contradictions that exist in present-day Serbia in transition.

During the first phase of drafting the Strategic Plan, internal documents have been analysed to gain insight into the chronology of activities in the previous three-year period, as well as the achievements and challenges faced by the CFCA NS. A series of consultative meetings and other forms of communication have been held with employees at CFCA NS and its stakeholders. The Director and staff of the Centre have provided all the necessary resources for a successfully carried out process.

In the participatory process of strategic planning, two consultation workshops have been organised with employees, as well as three meetings with stakeholders: one consultation workshop with partner institutions and organisations, a focus group with foster parents and a focus group with children and youth in foster care. In this way, an analysis of the context in which the CFCA NS was operating was carried out. Key changes in the environment that had had an impact on the Centre’s work in the previous period were identified. Stakeholders' opinions and assessments of the work done by the Centre so far have been mapped, as well as expectations from the Centre in the coming period. The staff members have also stated their views on the past and future work and certain elements of the strategy have been redefined.

¹ The methodology is described in John M. Bryson’s *“Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement”* (Jossey Bass Public Administration Series, 2011).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Strategic Plan of the Centre for Foster Care and Adoption Novi Sad, September 2019 – September 2022, arose from previous good practice and positive experience in the implementation of the strategic planning methodology at work. This document will further enhance work and efforts to mobilise the current resources and inner strengths to the maximum in order to seize opportunities in the environment and improve foster care in the region that the Centre covers.

Bearing in mind that the Centre for Foster Care and Adoption Novi Sad is the first such centre of the planned three and that it had been the only one founded in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (APV) until recently, the vision and mission of the CFCA NS were defined during the making and implementation of the first Strategic Plan. With this Strategic Plan, the vision, mission and strategic goals have been retained in the same form as they are still relevant. Strategic measures have been redefined and will, along with strategic goals, continue to be the basis for the creation of the annual work programmes of the CFCA NS.

First of all, we owe a debt of gratitude to the employees and assistants to the Centre for their serious deliberation and ideas that enriched the content of the Plan.

Since the process of strategic planning is organised in a participatory, inclusive and transparent manner, we express our thanks to the participants of all relevant stakeholders for supporting the creation and design of this paper. We would also like to thank representatives of the republic, provincial and local authorities, institutions of the system of social protection and institutions from other systems, as well as civil society organisations and the profit sector.

We give our special thanks to **foster parents, children and youth in foster care** for having utilised their own experience to help us recognise the activities crucial to improving the quality of our service.

Finally, we wish to express appreciation to Mirjana Beara and Tatjana Lazor Obradović for heading the process of strategic planning professionally and encouraging all participants in the process to actively contribute to the completion of this paper.

ABOUT CFCA NS

Basic information

The **Centre for Foster Care and Adoption Novi Sad** was established in accordance with the “Decision on the Establishment of the Centre for Foster Care and Adoption Novi Sad” (“Official Gazette of APV”, No. 6/2014), made on 19 February 2014, for the administrative districts of South Bačka, Srem and Central Banat. Although the “Decision on the Network of Social Welfare Institutions for the Accommodation of Beneficiaries” envisages that foster care and adoption centres be also established in Subotica and Bela Crkva, a CFCA was founded only in Subotica at the end of 2018.

The CFCA NS was established to provide assessment and counselling service to future foster and adoptive parents, support foster and adoptive families and perform other tasks in the field of alternative family support. It was founded by the Provincial Government. Establishment and operation of the Centre as the first institution of its kind in the APV has directly contributed to the achievement of the most important reform goals outlined in the strategic documents of the Republic of Serbia which lay down the development of services, measures and forms of protection of children and the elderly, where a priority is given to the development of alternative rather than institutional forms of care and providing equal opportunities for all.

Due to the current “Regulation on the Maximum Number of Employees in the System of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina” (“Official Gazette of AP Vojvodina”, No.3/2016, changes 31/2016), the Centre still does not have the optimum number of staff, i.e. the number envisaged by the Rulebook on Foster Care, which hinders it from performing basic duties at its full capacity.

Funds for the establishment and work of the Centre were provided in line with the decision of the provincial Assembly on the budget of the APV, for each year of the Centre's work. The structure of the budget is shown in the following table:

Year	Funds in RSD	Funds in RSD – donations
2019	27,184,967.00	3,976,735.00
2018	26,438,595.00	1,200,000.00
2017	25,170,510.00	1,200,000.00
2016	24,304,555.02	3,749,095.52
2015	13,130,836.82	/
2014	150,580.35	/

Working space was provided with the support of the Provincial Secretariat for Social Policy, Demography and Gender Equality and is part of the Children's Village in Sremska Kamenica. It is furnished with adequate equipment indispensable in performing basic activities. The CFCA NS uses two facilities. One facility has a total of 148m² and is situated in Sremska Kamenica, Children's Village 1, built on cadastral

parcel number 4037/1, registered with the Cadastral Municipality of Sremska Kamenica, marked in the Property List number 7945 as building No. 14 – family residential building.

At the end of 2018, another facility was allocated to the Centre (No. 3). It also has a total area of 148m² and is built on cadastral parcel number 4037/1, registered with the Cadastral Municipality of Sremska Kamenica, marked in the Property List number 7945 as building No. 13 – family residential building.

In 2018 and 2019, work was intensified to gain adequate parcel for the Centre to build its own facility on and solve permanently its facility issue. The Novi Sad City Administration has allocated a parcel of land in Novo Naselje neighbourhood of Novi Sad, on the corner of the Bate Brkića, Braće Dronjak and Seljačkih Buna streets. The General Plan for Allotment Regulation envisaged that this plot be allocated to the CFCA NS, a decision later approved by the Assembly of the City of Novi Sad. The Provincial Government should provide funds to build the facility in the following period. The Centre currently has three vehicles at its disposal.

Mandate

Law on Social Welfare (“Official Gazette of RS”, No. 24/11) defines the Centre for Foster Care and Adoption (Articles 130-133) as an institution for social protection. Its competence and work are also defined by the Law. The Centre’s mandate is defined by the Rulebook on Foster Care (“Official Gazette of RS”, No. 36/08) and the “Decision on the Network of Social Welfare Institutions for the Accommodation of Beneficiaries” (“Official Gazette of RS”, No. 51/2008).

Adoption has not yet been transferred to the competence of the CFCA NS. It is covered by this Strategic Plan, as well as by the previous ones, only in terms of initial preparatory activities so that this activity could be taken over in the future.

The Centre is a social protection institution whose mandate comprises organising, providing care for beneficiaries and providing technical assistance to foster and adoptive families to whom beneficiaries have been entrusted. Regulations concerning public services and regulations in the field of social protection and family relations apply to the establishment, organisation and work of the Centre.

The Centre is a legal entity with rights, obligations and responsibilities defined by laws, the Decision on its establishment and the Statute. In accordance with the Law on Social Welfare (LSW), the Family Law, as well as regulations adopted for their implementation, the Centre carries out the following:

1. Preparation, assessment and training of future foster and adoptive parents
2. Provision of support to adoptive and foster parents, i.e. families who provide family accommodation
3. Reporting to the Centre for Social Work (CSW) on the activities of foster parents and functioning of the families providing foster care; suggesting further measures in order to eliminate possible irregularities
4. Performing other tasks in line with laws and regulations

The Centre performs the following tasks:

- 1) Popularisation and advancement of foster care
- 2) Participation in the assessment of general eligibility of families for foster care and their preparation for foster care
- 3) Creating a register – a foster care database
- 4) Participation in the selection of foster families
- 5) Participation in the planning of services and measures of protection in foster care
- 6) Monitoring and review of the accomplishments of foster care
- 7) Support for beneficiaries and foster families
- 8) Participation in the preparation of beneficiaries to exit the system of social protection or change service
- 9) Research
- 10) Training of professionals, foster and adoptive parents
- 11) Participation in project activities
- 12) Preparation and publishing of technical literature
- 13) Dissemination of information, promotion and organisation of conferences and seminars

The annual work programme of the CFCA NS determines the type and scope of its work, with a specified amount of funds necessary for the execution of the programme activities in the current year.

The CFCA NS uses various opportunities to apply for project funds with both the national and international donors, thus providing additional means for its work.

Transparency of the Centre's work is ensured by the public nature of its decisions, work of the Managing Board, submission of reports, by general regulations, programmes and decisions.

Information on the work of the Centre, relevant documents related to the transparency of its work and information on its current activities can be found on the Centre's website.²

Organisation of work

The Rulebook on Internal Organisation and Systematisation of Job Positions of the CFCA NS, No. 562-110-2/2018 from 19/03/2018, specifies the maximum number of permanent employees at 13, in line with the Regulation on the Maximum Number of Employees in the System of AP of Vojvodina for 2017 ("Official Gazette of AP Vojvodina", No. 54/17, 10/18 and 56/18).

Under the standards prescribed in Article 62 of the Rulebook on Foster Care, the CFCA NS **should have 48 employees** to carry out activities in the territory it covers. However, this number is difficult to achieve, given the circumstances in which the CFCA NS operates.

²http://www.cpsuns.rs/sadrzaj.php?id_sadrzaja=142

CFCA NS staff

Position	By the standards	Actual number of staff
Managing personnel	1	1
Professional staff	17	9
Personnel in administration and finance	3	2
Technical personnel (drivers)	2	1
Other (maid)	1	1
TOTAL	24	14

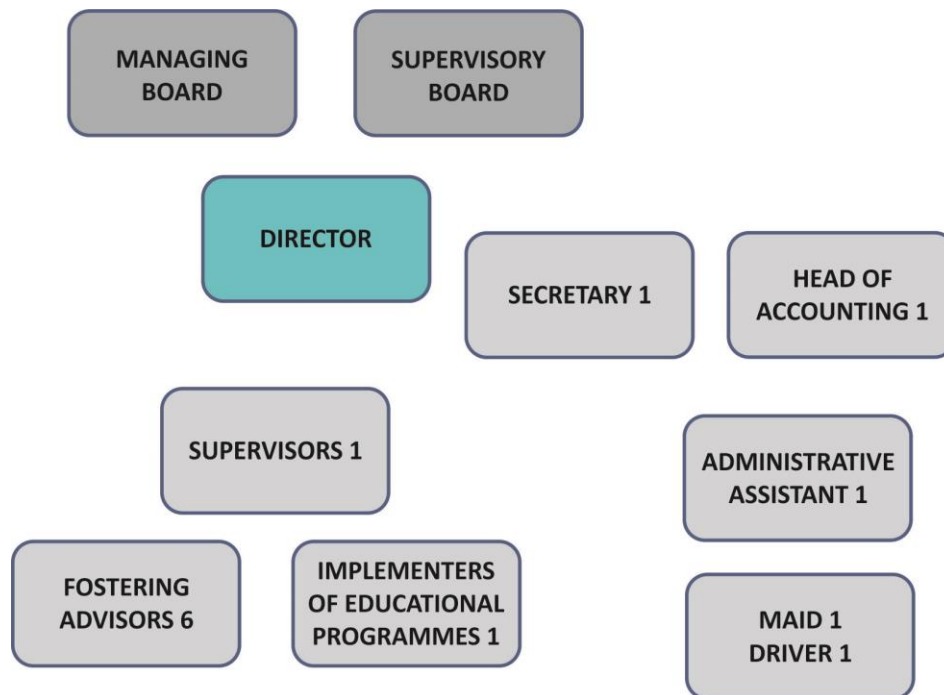
The leading, managing and supervisory bodies of the Centre are the following: Director, Managing Board and Supervisory Board. The bodies are appointed and dismissed by the Provincial Government, and their term of office is four years.

The **Director** represents the Centre, organises and manages its work, takes care of the legality of work, proposes its Programme of Work, proposes regulations passed by the Managing Board, adopts the Rulebook on Internal Organisation and Systematisation of Job Positions and performs other tasks stipulated by law and the Statute.

The **Managing Board** is appointed and dismissed by the Provincial Government. It has five members – three representatives of the founder and two representatives of employees. In the upcoming period, the Managing Board shall be constituted under with Article 132 of the LSW ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 24/11), and it will include representatives of beneficiaries (i.e. their legal representatives) and representatives of associations which aim at protecting the rights of people in foster care.

The **Supervisory Board** is appointed by the Provincial Government. It has three members – two representatives of the founder and one representative of the employees at the Centre.

The Centre currently has 14 employees. The following organigram shows the number and position of the current staff:



To boost its performance, the following expert teams were established by the Centre at its very foundation:

1. Team for child protection against neglect and abuse was formed with the goal to exercise the child's right to be protected from neglect and abuse. The team acts preventively in order to thwart neglect and abuse of children, simultaneously initiating a quick and coordinated procedure to stop abuse, protects children from further abuse and neglect, assist their recovery and ensure their further safe development.
2. Team for the assessment and implementation of new accommodation in foster families was formed to recruit foster families to suit the needs of particular beneficiaries seeking foster care. It determines complementary eligibility of both the beneficiary and foster family, thus providing families that will meet the needs of beneficiaries in the best way, i.e. provide conditions for their unhindered growth and development.
3. Teams for the assessment of overall eligibility for foster care (2 teams) formally consist of three expert consultants: a psychologist, an educationalist and a social worker. The experts simultaneously conduct interviews with the candidates who have applied to become foster parents to gain insight into their awareness of the current foster care standards. Both teams have the task of ensuring a continuous evaluation of foster families in order to find foster parents who possess adequate competence and care about children without parental care properly. Foster families also have to stimulate children's growth and enable them to reach their full potential. In the revised eligibility processes, the teams determine foster family eligibility through repeated examinations, after which they issue the Foster Care Licence for a period of two years.

4. Teams for the training of candidates for foster care consist of trainer pairs who carry out foster care preparation programmes (3 pairs). The teams select new foster families with appropriate education, work and parental experience and acceptable motivation for foster care, as starting points for the development and building of foster care competences. The trainers of the Centre have passed “Safe Steps to Foster Care”, an accredited training course for trainers, and they have a licence issued by the Republic Institute for Social Protection.

Activities

The CFCA NS supports foster families on the territories of the City of Novi Sad and the municipalities of Petrovaradin, Beočin, Sremski Karlovci, Bačka Palanka, Bački Petrovac and Bač. At the end of 2018, meetings were organised with the Centres for Social Work from Temerin and Srbobran in order to extend competence to families from these areas, too. Monitoring of foster families from these two municipalities began in the first half of 2019.

Over the past three years, the CFCA NS has developed a fruitful collaboration with stakeholders in the environment. Emphasis was placed on intersectoral cooperation, which resulted in the implementation of projects and donation programmes for children and youth in family care, as well as numerous activities to empower foster parents, children and young people.

In addition, funds were provided for the professional training of employees (education in various psychotherapy schools: transactional analysis, rational-emotional and cognitive-behavioural therapies, systemic family therapies, as well as for a number of other accredited training courses) and equipment (purchase of two more vehicles, computer equipment, etc.).

Intersectoral cooperation has been initiated with all systems relevant: health, education, employment, civil sector, private sector, sports clubs and societies. As one of its goals, the CFCA NS has defined the intersectoral cooperation and sensitisation of professionals from other systems, as well as raising their competences to work with children and foster parents. The outcome of these and subsequent ongoing collaborations were various private sector initiatives that included children and youth from foster families free of charge in content offered by other actors, or initiatives that provided children and youth with other types of support.

The CFCA NS projects have been supported by numerous national and international donors: in addition to local self-governments – particularly, the City of Novi Sad, which provided support through its programme of social protection improvement – the projects have been supported independently or in partnership with other organisations such as Ministries of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, UNICEF, GIZ and Novak Djoković Foundation. Also, donations were provided by the private sector. Significant perennial cooperation has been ensured with the Rotary Club Alma Mons, Sberbank

and representatives of other profit agencies and companies that have recognised the importance of the cooperation and are ready to operate socially responsible.

The following are some of the most significant projects implemented by the CFCA NS:

- **"Developing Counselling and Therapy Services for Children in Foster Care at the Centre for Foster Care and Adoption Novi Sad"** (supported in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 by the City of Novi Sad, City Administration for Social and Child Welfare)
- **"Capacity Building and Promotion of the Centre for Foster Care and Adoption Novi Sad"** (supported by UNICEF in 2016)

The following are some of the most significant projects that the CFCA NS took part in as partner institution:

- The Centre cooperated with the Provincial Institute for Social Protection in the implementation of the project **"Development of Kinship Care, Shared Care of Children with Disabilities and Culturally Competent Practices in Social Work"**. Within the greater project "Improving Child Rights by Strengthening the Legal and Social Welfare Systems", financed by the EU and carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice and UNICEF. Respite care – a new form of family care – was formed first as part of the project, then as service. It still exists as a sustainable service only in Novi Sad.
- The project **"Independent Life for All"**, (2017-2019) saw the Children's Village "Dr Milorad Pavlović" as the project leader and the CFCA NS as a partner. Funds were received from the EU Delegation through the programme "Development of Effective Community Services in the Area of Education and Social Welfare at the Local Level" (IPA 2013). The project was aimed at solving the problem of social exclusion of youth leaving the social protection system, particularly the youth with disabilities, with a focus on ensuring their social inclusion through the regional service of supported housing.
- **"Promoting Intergenerational Cooperation and Solidarity"** was a project funded by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, with the CFCA NS taking part as a partner to the Novi Sad Association of Pensioners.
- **"Emergency Care Support"** is a project carried out in 2018, funded by the City Administration for Social and Child Welfare of the City of Novi Sad, with the CFCA NS taking part as partner to the "Baby Friend" association. The project activities aimed at educating families providing the service of emergency care to children aged 0-3.

In 2017, **"Preparation Programme for Foster Carers of Adults and the Elderly"** was drafted and submitted for accreditation to the Accreditation Committee of the RISP. In 2018, a training programme called **"Supported Housing for Youth in the Social Protection System"** was also submitted for accreditation.

Annual expert conferences were organised in cooperation with the Provincial Secretariat for Social Policy, Demography and Gender Equality and other partners (such as GIZ – the German organisation for international cooperation, UNICEF, Novi Sad Faculty of Philosophy, Harmony – a centre for support for early child development and family relations, NS MEDE – the Novi Sad intersectoral children’s network, etc), with the following topics:

- “Kindergarten as a Safe Base: Improving Cooperation between Kindergartens and Social Protection Institutions in the Field of Foster Care“, held in 2017
- “Foster Care as Support to Early Child Development“, held in 2018
- “Family Care Potentials and Experiences in Support of the Biological Family and the Prevention of Institutionalisation“, held in 2019

2017 saw the completion of data entry into the database which aims to facilitate monitoring of work of fostering advisors. Also, the new database allows for a reduction in the administrative workload of fostering advisors and provides better insight into the records of foster families and children in foster care. This database makes it much easier to monitor children and their foster families.

Since its foundation, the CFCA NS has worked intensively on promoting its work. It has created a recognisable visual identity (<http://www.cpsuns.rs>), as well as various promotional material.

The location of the Centre is mapped on internet browsers and Google Maps. The Centre now has a very active Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/cpsuns/>. On its YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/channel/UCLY_9kqKUfa5fG7t9uGRLXg), there are a lot of videos that promote foster care and the Centre’s work.

Detailed information on all activities of the Centre can be found in its annual reports (selected by year, in DOC and PDF formats) on the following link: http://www.cpsuns.rs/sadrzaj.php?id_sadrzaja=142.

OUR VISION

OUR VISION is a society where every person has equal opportunities to live in a supportive family environment, according with their needs and personal potential.

Using our expertise, innovation, quality and creativity, we strive to become a stronghold of alternative family care and a model to others.

OUR MISSION

By strengthening the alternative family and getting closer to the likelihood of growing up and living in a supportive family environment, we contribute to the achievement of the full capacity of children, youth, adults and the elderly without family care in the districts of South Bačka, Srem and Central Banat.

CORE VALUES

- **The welfare of children and other beneficiaries** has been the centre of our interest as a fundamental principle from the beginning. Although currently children/youth make up the biggest group of foster care beneficiaries, adults and the elderly are the beneficiaries with a high priority, too. For the benefit of everyone, further efforts should be made to develop a system of support as an alternative to institutional accommodation.
- We are guided by **altruism** as a universal value that strongly binds us together as a collective and contributes to the development of the integrity of our institution.
- **Acceptance and respect for diversity** are starting points that define us in relation to all stakeholders we collaborate with.
- We believe that with active and essential **participation** of our users we can develop our service and constantly improve the quality of foster care in the region covered by the CFCA NS.
- The belief that investment pays off indicates that **confidence in people** is a decision we have made both as individuals and as a collective.
- We show **enthusiasm and responsibility** in everything we do. We express great enthusiasm regarding expected results and the welfare of each user we access and support. We nurture responsibility with our beneficiaries and associates, as well as with ourselves.
- We are an organisation that promotes and cherishes **knowledge and learning**. We support the individual growth and development of all our employees and beneficiaries. Synergy provided by our individual efforts makes our organisation constantly evolve, thus pushing its own boundaries.

CONTEXT DESCRIPTION

Political and legal context

There has been no significant change in the political and legal context since the creation of the previous strategic plan until today. The Law on Social Welfare is in the process of being amended. However, the process is not complete and, therefore, has had no significant impact neither on the work of the CFCA NS nor the family care service. During 2018, Draft Social Protection Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2019-2025 was made. In early 2019, it was published for public discussion.

Act 3 of the **Law on Social Welfare** defines the following goals of social protection:

1. Reaching and maintaining minimal material security and independence of individuals and families in satisfying their vital needs
2. Ensuring availability of services and exercising rights in social protection
3. Creating equal opportunities for independent life and stimulating social inclusion
4. Preserving and improving family relationships, as well as improving family, gender and intergenerational solidarity
5. Preventing abuse, neglect and exploitation, i.e. eliminating their consequences

The goals of social protection are achieved through the provision of services and other activities that prevent, reduce, or eliminate the dependence of individuals and families on social institutions.

Although foster care service is not recognised as a community service in the LSW, it primarily enables end beneficiaries (i.e. children, youth, adults and the elderly) to remain in their community of origin and get support that is most similar to a family environment: “Provision of foster care implies that children and youth are temporarily provided with care (namely, until the completion of regular schooling or until the age of 26), protection and conditions for their optimal development in a family environment. Foster care for children and youth includes preparation for their return to parents, some other permanent living arrangement and their preparation for independent living. Provision of adults and the elderly with foster care ensures maintenance or improvement in the quality of their life.” (Article 48)

Types of foster care are further listed in the LSW such as standard care, care with intensive or additional support, emergency care, respite care and other types. It is of vital importance that the LSW recognises relatives as primary foster carers if it is in the best interest of beneficiaries. On the other hand, this type of care has not been fully developed yet, although centres for social work had assigned a high priority to kinship foster care even before the LSW was passed. According to the data of the PISP, 12% of the foster children in Vojvodina are provided with kinship foster care. Moreover, the bylaws that would enable the development of kinship, emergency, or respite foster care still have not been passed. In line with the LSW, foster care service can be provided by individuals who have passed training, met the requirements and acquired the licence for delivering such a service. People who reach the status of foster carers

undergo proper training. They are given support while delivering the service and are granted the licence by the Centre for Foster Care and Adoption with a two-year validity.

The LSW states that more detailed requirements for assessing suitability for the provision of foster care service are stipulated by the Minister in charge of social protection. Furthermore, the Minister stipulates the programme and manner of conducting training, standards in providing the service, as well as the design and content of the licence. However, a new rulebook regulating the conditions and standards has not been passed yet. The old Rulebook, adopted in 2011, does not comply with the LSW. Nevertheless, it is still being used.

The “Decision on the Network of Social Welfare Institutions for the Accommodation of Beneficiaries” envisages that eight foster care and adoption centres be established to cover the whole territory of Serbia.

The following centres have been established in Serbia proper so far:

- ✓ In Belgrade, for the territory of the City of Belgrade and the administrative districts of Mačva and Kolubara
- ✓ In Čuprija, for the territory of the administrative districts of Pomoravlje, Zaječar and Bor
- ✓ In Kragujevac, for the territory of the administrative districts of Šumadija, Raška, Rasina, Moravica and Zlatibor
- ✓ In Niš, for the territory of the administrative districts of Niš, Toplica, Pirot, Jablanica and Pčinj
- ✓ In Miloševac, where the service has been provided since 1931.

Of the three such centres envisaged for the territory of the Province of Vojvodina (in Novi Sad, Subotica and Bela Crkva), two have been founded, in Novi Sad and Subotica. The centre in Novi Sad was founded in February 2014. It covers the administrative districts of South Bačka, Srem and Central Banat. These three regions cover more than half of the total number of municipalities in Vojvodina (25 out of 45). The CFCA Subotica was founded at the end of 2018 and it covers the territory of North Bačka, West Bačka and North Banat administrative districts. It is in the phase of constituting and launching regular work. In the upcoming period, the third CFCA should be established to cover the territory of South Banat administrative district.

The CSWs in the territory of administrative districts not covered by the CFCA NS still perform duties that should be within the scope of work of the other two CFCA.

Draft **Social Protection Strategy 2019-2025**, for the strategic goal 2: Social protection, which contributes to reducing social exclusion of citizens and enhances their active participation in society, with an emphasis on supporting (biological) families at risk and promoting gender and intergenerational solidarity, envisages the following measures related to the improvement of foster care:

- Improvement of the quality of foster care and small group households
- Development of kinship care and specialised care (i.e. kinship care and care for children with disabilities and children victims of human trafficking and other forms of violence) and respite care

- Development of mechanisms and programmes to encourage return from foster to biological family
- Introduction of a functional foster care monitoring system
- Expansion of network and capacity building of CFCAs

These measures are linked to the priorities of the Action Plan for Chapter 23, which relates to human rights, particularly in social protection institutions: Measure 3.6.2.5. Improve the foster care system by increasing the availability and quality of services for children with disabilities and their families through the following: capacity building of the regional foster care centres (centres for foster care and adoption) and CSWs; development of procedures and guidelines for foster care as a care shared between the foster and biological families.

Socio-economic context

Foster care is the dominant kind of children support in AP of Vojvodina – children of youngest age, in particular. In 2017, according to the Provincial Institute for Social Protection data,³ a total of 2,288 children were placed in foster care – 2,131 children on 31/12/2017 (2,204 children in 2016, i.e. 1,972 on 31/12/2016). In 2018, there were 2,297 children in foster care – 2,101 children on 31/12/2018.

Of this number, there were a total of 17% of children in foster care in 2017, while in 2018 this percentage dropped to 15%. The combined data for 2018 for APV indicate the need for further development of kinship care.

The age structure of children in foster care has not changed over the years, with groups of children ages 6-14 and 15-17 as the most numerous, respectively. Of the total number of children in foster care in 2017, 406 (or 18%) children were admitted during the year (new users), whereas in 2018, there were 328 such children, which is a 19% decline against the previous year. The age group of children from 6 to 14 years old, the most numerous in foster care, dominates the new admissions as well.

In Vojvodina, there were 1,699 foster care families in 2017 and 1,629 in 2018. Following an increase in the number of foster families in 2017 compared to 2016 (99), there was a decrease of 70 in 2018.

Annual reports of the CFCA NS provide an overview of the number of foster families and beneficiaries in the territory under the CFCA NS mandate (25 municipalities):

³ “Unified Report on the Work of CSWs in the APV, 2017” and “Unified Report on the Work of CSWs in APV, 2018”, Provincial Institute for Social Protection

Year	Number of families accommodating children and youth	Number of children and youth in foster families	Number of foster families accommodating adults and the elderly	Number of adults and the elderly in foster families
2018	753	1,094	60	81
2017	657	1,045	63	63
2016	698	1,050	65	77

In the territory covered by the Centre, there were 657 foster families in December 2017 (38.8% of the APV total) in which 1,045 children and youth were accommodated (45.7% of the total number). In addition, there were 63 foster families accommodating 63 adults and elderly people. In 2018, there were 753 foster families (46.22% of the APV total) accommodating 1,094 children and youth. While the number of foster families accommodating adults and the elderly declined by 3, the number of adults and the elderly accommodated (81) grew significantly compared to 2017, which indicates an increasing need for further development of this kind of family care.

CFCA NS in the environment

The Centre for Foster Care and Adoption Novi Sad has been functioning in a quickly changing environment ever since its inception. The needs of end-users change and the number of actors representing stakeholders is on the increase.

The CFCA NS employees have identified the following stakeholders:

- Foster/adoptive families
- Foster family candidates
- Foster care beneficiaries
- Centres for social work
- Provincial Secretariat for Social Policy, Demography and Gender Equality
- Other CFCAs
- Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs
- Provincial Institute for Social Protection
- Republic Institute for Social Protection
- Chamber of Social Protection
- Preschools
- Schools, universities
- Health care institutions
- Police
- Accommodation institutions
- Local self-governments
- Local social protection service providers
- Biological family
- The media
- Associations of citizens
- Association of Foster Carers
- Red Cross
- Citizens
- International and domestic donors
- Business sector

Foster families are direct partners of the CFCA NS. They require continuous professional support, availability, professional training, the advancement of knowledge and skills, appreciation and acceptance. On the other hand, they are valuable for the Centre, because it considers them as future participants in planning and decision-making. On that account, it is necessary to support the families directly, ensure optimal availability of the support, create new and upgrade current educational programmes, build a partnership and create a positive image of foster care through campaigns and joint activities. Given that the CFCA NS has not yet taken over competence in the area of adoption, work has not yet begun with adoptive families.

Foster family candidates are families that have not been covered by training yet. They have different, often false and vague expectations from foster care and adoption. This stems from their lack of information and different motivations for engaging in foster care. Recognition and appreciation of their needs are a prerequisite for their proper informing, education and new knowledge acquisition. It is vital to carry out a continuous information campaign on foster care and its types. In this respect, the CFCA NS will develop its professional competences and improve its skills in order to educate and inform foster carers. In addition, current foster families may prove to be a resource in this regard as they are one of the most effective and efficient channels to communicate the importance of foster care.

Foster care beneficiaries are indirect users of the CFCA NS, and their best interest is a priority for the Centre. Therefore, the Centre is aware that it is important that they feel good in their foster families, that their needs are met, that advisors are at their disposal and that special service which meets specific aspects of foster care (e.g. children with disabilities, the elderly, adults with disabilities, etc.) is developed. Because of this, the Centre should cultivate direct work in foster families and ensure availability of the service and information about it. Through the support of its advisors, the CFCA NS strives to accomplish the purpose of foster care: that children are accepted and safe in families; that there are appropriate conditions for their life and development; that they can maintain relationships with people who are important to them and be prepared for the changes that await them. Children and young people see the CFCA NS as a highly supportive institution and have high expectations, in this regard. Besides continuity of the support, it is important for them to have a trusting relationship with their foster carers.

Centres for social work are the principal partners of the CFCA NS. In the territory covered by the Centre, there are 21 centres for social work. The CSWs expect to take on all the work in foster care, so it is important that the CFCA NS provides an available foster family for each CSW beneficiary.

The **Provincial Secretariat for Social Policy, Demography and Gender Equality** has a donor role, and it has provided all possible support to date. The bodies of the CFCA NS (Managing and Supervisory Board) include the PSHCDGE representatives, which makes the cooperation complete, in this regard. In the future, the PSHCSPD is expected to provide the same support to the newly established CFCA in Subotica and establish the remaining CFCA for the South Banat administrative district.

The **Provincial Institute for Social Protection** advocated for and initiated the establishment of the CFCA NS. Partnership, the right attitude, support and respect are the main characteristics of our cooperation. In this regard, the **Republic Institute for Social Protection** has great significance for the CFCA NS, too.

The **Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs** is both the creator and implementer of the policy within which foster care service is developed and provided with legal framework. It is in the

best interest of the Ministry that CFCA's operate unhindered, that it has control over them and that it monitors their performance through reporting.

Other centres for foster care are already constituted institutions, with a developed system and organisation of work. They have taken on beneficiaries and have considerable experience in comparison with the Centre. They have provided advisory assistance to the CFCA NS since its beginning in terms of good practice exchange. The new established CFCA in Subotica is in its initial stage of operation and relies on the experience of the CFCA NS which was, until recently, the only CFCA in the territory of the APV.

Cooperation with **the media** has been at an excellent level in the past reporting period and the planned and systematic approach to the promotion of the Centre has produced significant results. The Centre is continuously present in the local and provincial media and acts to inform and educate both the public and the media representatives about foster care as a service in the social protection system, as well as to reduce prejudices against foster carers and the service itself.

Local self-governments are decision-makers and they create social welfare policies and services at the local level. Consequently, this makes them potential donors for the activities carried out within the foster care service. The CFCA NS succeeded in establishing very constructive cooperation with the City of Novi Sad. In 2016, the Centre was included in the "Decision on Social Protection of the City of Novi Sad" ("Official Gazette of the City of Novi Sad", No. 38/11 and 10/12) and the "Development Programme of Social Protection of the City of Novi Sad" for 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Local self-governments have an interest in implementing the policies adopted at the local level. They are also interested in having a competent partner in the creation of new policies that will improve the standard and quality of life of the local community and have a positive impact on their own public image.

The European Union, UNICEF, Novak Djokovic Foundation, German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), Telenor Foundation and other donors currently finance innovative services and have material resources for the development of social infrastructure in Serbia. Additionally, they support best practice exchange, advocacy and lobbying to establish a service that meets the needs of end-users. These organisations find it essential to promote universal values and respect for human rights, thus leaving ample room for collaboration.

Given that foster care service is part of a broader social protection system that is comprehensively aimed at end-users, the educational and health care systems are critical to the CFCA NS. By including children and youth from vulnerable groups in foster care, we prevent children from leaving the **educational system**, striving for quality and inclusive education for every child. This can be done through sensitisation and support for the people working in education in their work with foster children, as well as through dissemination of information and partner relations.

In partnership with the **health care system**, which usually faces family problems first, we can carry out specific preventive activities, work on educating foster families about health and sensitise employees in the health care system to work with them.

It is also vital to cooperate with the **employment sector** to build human capacity of the institution through professional practice and recruitment of trainees or employees in public works and develop employment support programs for youth leaving the social protection system.

Over the past period, the CFCA NS has established excellent cooperation with the **business sector** and this trend continues. Business sector representatives are very interested in supporting children and youth placed in foster families, or those who are leaving the system and becoming independent. The aid is provided both in material assistance (equipment, courses/educational training, driving test, travels, etc.) and in the payment of tuition fees and various informal educational programmes. The CFCA NS will continue to foster and enhance this collaboration.

Besides the analysis of the context it works in and the analysis of stakeholders, the CFCA NS has also analysed its strengths and weaknesses through the process of strategic planning. With the participation of our partners and associates, we have identified numerous strengths.

Human resources, such as good management, quality interpersonal relations and cooperation, professional and motivated staff with specific knowledge such as work with children, training skills, communication skills, fundraising and continuous work on the enhancement of professional competences have been pointed out as major strengths of the CFCA NS. Dedication to work, respect of proclaimed values of organisation and deadlines, availability and flexibility, quick reaction and participation of the staff in the policy-making process are values and ethos also recognised as strengths. Appropriate equipment, a sufficient number of vehicles and secure financing are recognised as strengths in material resources. Quality and timely cooperation with CSWs and other partners (in and out of the sector) and the development of new services have also been highlighted.

On the other hand, the CFCA NS also has weaknesses, which currently have a significant impact on its plans: insufficient expert staff (resulting in the lack of time for foster families and absence in all the municipalities it covers), complex administration, insufficiently identified role and importance in the social protection system due to inadequate normative framework, inadequate working space with no dislocated offices in the districts covered by the Centre (e.g. offices in Sremska Kamenica are unavailable and remote for foster parents and children/youth) and lack of international cooperation.

As far as the environmental context is concerned, first of all, it is necessary to point out that the current legal framework is limiting the Centre's activities. The staff and stakeholders deem legislation to be inadequate, because the institutional identity of the CFCA NS in the social protection system has not yet been properly identified, nor has the issue of taking over some forms of services of the Centre, such as preparation of families for adoption, been solved.

Stakeholders maintain that the norm for annual visits to families is too ambitious against the weaknesses – primarily concerning the insufficient staff – so they advise the Centre to change the norm. They have also identified as threats the indistinct methodologies and job sharing between the CFCA NS and CSWs, as well as record keeping and supervision – it is unclear who does what.

Despite the fact that the media promotion of foster care is now far better than it used to be and that a more positive image has been created about foster care and the CFCA NS, some citizens still have negative feelings and prejudices against foster care, which poses a threat that should be addressed in the following period. The following have also been identified as threats: increase in the number of beneficiaries against the number of professionals; foster care as permanent care; poorly recognised role and importance of CFCAs in the social protection system; low remuneration for some types of care such as respite, emergency or specialised care; impeded exercise of certain rights of foster carers (especially those who are employed); lack of institutional identity of CFCAs; limitations in the Family Law and CFCA mandate, etc.

Employees and stakeholders have identified the support of donors and the profit sector as opportunities in the environment. The interest and support of the media, social networks and associations of citizens are also perceived as opportunities.

The trend of deinstitutionalisation in social welfare and pronounced initiative to create an association of CFCAs of Serbia are favourable for the CFCA NS mandate. Calls for cross-border cooperation (EU – IPA) with Croatia and surrounding countries are also an opportunity for capacity building. Foster carers have expressed their wish to assist in the promotion of foster care, so this is also a great opportunity to fight prejudice against foster care and promote the CFCA NS.

Overall, the context seen in this way is the environment in which the Centre develops, improves and innovates foster care service and plans to improve the entire foster care system.

STRATEGIC GOALS

In the strategic planning process for the new three-year period, the Centre will retain the same strategic goals as defined in 2015, primarily because they are fully and currently relevant and because further work is needed for full implementation of all the measures envisaged within each strategic goal. This particularly applies to measures directly related to the external factors listed in the SWOT analysis.

Strategic goal 1: Improvement of the current and development of new forms of foster care

Strategic goal 2: Promotion and development of positive public image about foster care through increased visibility of CFCA NS, eliminating prejudice and building partnerships

Strategic goal 3: Building human and material capacities of CFCA NS

STRATEGIC MEASURES 2019-2022 ⁴

Strategic goal 1: Improvement of the current and development of new forms of foster care

Strategic goal indicators:

- Number and territorial distribution of foster families
- Number and structure of end-users
- Attitudes of users and the expert public towards services

MEASURES	Annual indicators by July 2022
1.1. Providing continuous support for foster families	1.1.1. Number of completed visits with providers of foster care services 1.1.2. Number of provided services to foster families 1.1.3. Number of provided services in the preparatory process of foster parents for adoption 1.1.4. Satisfaction of foster carers and beneficiaries
1.2. Increasing the number of foster families trained in providing proper service	1.2.1. Number of informative talks with potential foster carers 1.2.2. Number of candidates included in the assessment 1.2.3. Number of completed educational programmes "Safe Steps to Foster Care" 1.2.4. Number of trained candidates 1.2.5. Number of implemented foster care cases
1.3. Carrying out educational workshops for foster carers and children	1.3.1. Number and content of completed workshops 1.3.2. Number of families and foster carers participating in workshops 1.3.3. Number of children/youth participating in workshops 1.3.4. Satisfaction with educational training
1.4. Ensuring participation of foster carers in improving the quality of service in cooperation with the Association of Foster Carers	1.4.1. Number of completed activities initiated by the Association of Foster Carers 1.4.2. Type of completed activities initiated by the Association of Foster Carers
1.5. Sensitising experts from various systems and foster carers through education	1.5.1. Number of foster carers who participated in the activities of other systems 1.5.2. Number of experts who participated in workshops 1.5.3. Satisfaction with educational training
1.6. Improving cooperation with various service providers from the social protection system within the Centre's authority	1.6.1. Number of foster families using other services 1.6.2. Number of protocols of cooperation 1.6.3. Number of completed joint activities/projects
1.7. Developing specialised foster care service (foster care with intensive support), emergency and respite foster care	1.7.1. Number of recruited candidates 1.7.2. Number of completed educational training courses 1.7.3. Number of trained candidates in various types of care 1.7.4. Number of implemented foster care cases
1.8. Developing preconditions and	1.8.1. Number of applicants for training 1.8.2. Number of completed educational training courses

⁴ Note: Measures and indicators apply to the entire period covered by this Strategic Plan unless otherwise stated in the measure or indicator itself. It is advisable to monitor the achievement of measures and indicators at the end of each year and enter them in annual reports.

establishing foster care service for adults and the elderly	1.8.3. Number of trained candidates 1.8.4. Number of carried out foster care cases within the territory covered by the CFCA NS
Strategic goal 2: Promotion and development of positive public image about foster care through increased visibility of CFCA NS, eliminating prejudice and building partnerships	
Strategic goal indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public attitudes towards CFCA NS and/or its service Number and type of affirmative content on the Centre and/or services published in the media Number and quality of established partnerships 	
MEASURES	Annual indicators, by July 2022
2.1. Drafting and implementation of a detailed promotion plan	2.1.1. Drafted CFCA NS promotion plan and foster care services for every year of the Programme of Work
2.2. Establishing long-term cooperation and promotion of the Centre in the media	2.2.1. Number of media with whom cooperation has been established 2.2.2. Number of audiovisual records and published articles
2.3. Establishing long-term cooperation and encouraging corporate social responsibility	2.3.1. Number and content of established cooperations/partnerships with the public sector 2.3.2. Number and content of established cooperations/partnerships with the profit sector 2.3.3. Number and content of established cooperations/partnerships with the nonprofit sector
2.4. Promoting the Centre and its services to the general public	2.4.1. Number of campaigns aimed at the general public 2.4.2. Number of visits to the Centre's website 2.4.3. Number of views and followers on social networks 2.4.4. Number of new candidates for the provision of services 2.4.5. Amount of printed and handed out material aimed at the general public 2.4.6. Number of held public discussions aimed at the general public
2.5. Improving cooperation with potential donors and international cooperation	2.5.1. Number of meetings in which employees of the Centre participated 2.5.2. Number of meetings organised by employees of the Centre 2.5.3. Number of international meetings 2.5.4. Number and value of supported projects against the number of applicants 2.5.5. Number and structure of donors cooperating with the Centre
2.6. Improving and motivating current foster and adoptive parents; boosting confidence in the Centre	2.6.1. Number of completed training courses for foster and adoptive parents 2.6.2. Number and content of contacts with foster and adoptive parents 2.6.3. Amount of printed and handed out material for foster and adoptive parents 2.6.4. Degree of satisfaction of foster and adoptive parents with the support of the Centre 2.6.5. Number of workshops within the Open Door of Foster Care aimed at foster carers 2.6.6. Cooperation with the Association of Foster Carers and development of

	joint programmes and activities
2.7. Participation of the CFCA NS in the Association of CFCAs of Serbia in promotion, advocacy and lobbying activities	2.7.1. Number and type of activities of the Association in which the CFCA NS took part
Strategic goal 3: CFCA NS human and material capacity building Strategic goal indicator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee satisfaction 	
MEASURES	Annual indicators, by July 2022
3.1. Strengthening employees and collaborators for providing quality service	3.1.1. Number of collaborators engaged on other bases annually (trainees, professional practice, volunteers, etc.) 3.1.2. Degree of employee and collaborator satisfaction with aspects of work of the CFCA NS 3.1.3. Number and content of educational training for employees 3.1.4. Completed team building once a year
3.2. Establishing national and international cooperation – visits of CFCA NS experts to other CFCAs in the area, exchange of experiences and good practice	3.2.1. Number and duration of student visits 3.2.2. Number and type of exchanged good practice examples 3.2.3. Satisfaction of experts with the visits
3.3. Providing material and other resources for a smooth operation of the Centre	3.3.1. Amount of provided means 3.3.2. Type of funding source for the procurement of material and other resources 3.3.3. Amount and quality of material resources provided

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Centre for Foster Care and Adoption Novi Sad shall implement the strategic plan in line with the current organisation of work and in accordance with regulations.

An operational action plan shall be made for every year, with clearly defined activities, indicators, necessary resources and responsible actors.

The levels of responsibility for the achievement of the strategic goals, measures and activities shall correspond to the levels of responsibility of particular job positions.

Given the fact that the CFCA NS nurtures teamwork and has established the practice of working in teams since its inception, implementation of the strategic plan shall be carried out in accordance with this principle.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLAN

Monitoring and evaluation shall be carried out internally, by the management and employees of the Centre. The Strategic Plan has clearly defined indicators set during the process of strategic planning. The indicators shall be monitored and analysed internally, and the results will be shown in annual reports. The annual reports shall be written in relation to annual action plans.

If funds are sufficient, the Centre shall organise an external evaluation of the Plan's performance by the end of 2018. The external evaluation shall subsidise the set indicators, open new horizons and offer guidelines for further advancement of the institution and the service itself.

PLAN OF COMMUNICATION – PUBLIC REPRESENTATION

Since one of the strategic goals is to increase the visibility of the Centre and foster care service, communication with the public is of vital importance. The positioning of the Centre depends to a great extent on communication with stakeholders. The Centre shall promote its activities and goals through clear and concrete messages to create a positive public image of foster care as a service and the role of the Centre in providing and developing the service in all its forms. Currently, there are an insufficient number of foster families within the social protection system to work with children with disabilities, adults and the elderly. The plan of communication shall be part of annual action plans.

External communication is related to the stakeholders of the CFCA NS.

Internal communication is related to the employees of the Centre, potential volunteers, practising students, etc.

External communication

Target group	Goal of communication	Channel of communication
Beneficiaries (foster families, foster family candidates)	Meeting the CFCA NS Establishment and development of partnership and cooperation Developing participation of foster families in the work of the Centre Developing and upgrading skills and knowledge for a more competent foster care	Direct contact in the field, print media and electronic media Training Printed materials
Centres for social work	Establishment of partnership Development of joint understanding of roles of the CFCA NS and its relationship with CSWs Strengthening CSWs to cooperate with the CFCA NS	Meetings Various public events, expert meetings Printed materials Website Print and electronic media
Civil society organisations	Introduction to the Centre's mandate and development of its positive public image Building partnerships and implementation of joint activities of support to foster parents and beneficiaries; foster care promotion	Meetings Various public events, expert meetings Printed materials Website The media
Citizens	Development of positive attitudes to foster care and its importance to the welfare of users Recruiting potential foster families	Print and electronic media Printed materials Website

Governments at all levels	Contribution to the establishment of a legal framework that encourages the development of foster care (rulebooks, local decisions/announcements, etc.) Raising funds to support foster families, beneficiaries and the CFCA NS activities	Direct contacts: meetings, expert meetings, written materials Print and electronic media Website
Other experts in the social protection system, education and health care	Establishing cooperation, learning about the service and activities of the CFCA NS Sensitisation to the situation and needs of children, other beneficiaries and foster families Contribution to the improvement of services from other systems for foster families and beneficiaries	Direct contacts: meetings, expert meetings, written materials Print and electronic media Website

Internal communication

Target group	Goal of communication	Channel of communication
Staff	Ensuring the highest quality service Achieving the output set by the indicators Exchange of information on ongoing activities Making plans and reporting	Meetings Phone Email
Volunteers, practising students, etc.	Introduction to the service Work on improving competence to work with foster families and children	Direct mentor support, participation in outreach work with beneficiaries Phone Email Facebook