

Information  
About All Ukrainian Public Organization of Invalids  
Users of Psychiatric Help  
«USER»

Our organization was created over the span of two years as part of the Vinnitsya Public Organization of Invalids and Users of Psychiatric Help and Patients with Epilepsy «Renascence». This was a good beginning, as «Renascence» has over 10 years of experience defending the rights of people with mental health problems. In particular:

- Creating a series of publications in relation to defending the rights of people with the problems of psychiatric health with the support of the Canadian Fund of Collaboration and International Renascence Foundation.
- Development and introduction of an educational program for users and their relatives "Institute of rights protection" with support from the Fund of Charles Stewart Mott.
- Creation of the Center of Rights Protection for people with mental health problems sponsored by the International Renascence Foundation.
- Creating a campaign to the supply necessary medicines (for treatment of epilepsy) to the pharmacy network of the country (2004).
- Project aimed to modernize the hospital and color the walls of the children's ward in the Vinnitsya regional psychiatric hospital with the help of Users of Psychiatric Help and Professionals, sponsored by the Dutch foundation «Doctor Luba».
- And also in 2005-2006 a partner of the project «Defending the rights and providing equal access to justice for people with the mental health problems», was supported by the Commission of European Community and sponsored by the APU of Ukraine.

The public organization «USER» will turn four in December. Today it consists of over 250 active members in more than 14 regions of Ukraine. A primary purpose of our work is meeting and defending legal, social, economic and other general interests of the members, as well as representing their interests in state and other establishments. We do not have regular workers so far, and all of work is done voluntarily by members and concerned citizens. However, we have some things to be proud of:

In 2005 we started the project called «Monitoring the observance of rights for persons with psychiatric disorders during their stay in psychiatric facilities».

The results of this project had a large practical value. Right after the project started the personnel and administration started to pay more attention to informing the patients of their rights.

Members of our organization work very closely with the Ministry of Health and have been part of the workgroup that created the Mental Healthcare program for 2007-2017.

In 2006, All Ukrainian Public Organization of Invalids Users of Psychiatric Help «USER» together with other public organizations conducted, with the help of the International Renaissance Foundation, the monitoring of observance of rights for persons with mental disorders during their stay in psychiatric facilities. The results of this research were published. This research for the first time looked at the mentally ill attitudes and awareness of their rights while committed to the psychiatric establishment.

In 2006 our organization carried out, with the help of the International Renaissance Foundation, a project called «Observance of the rights for people with problems of mental health, making changes». The purpose of this project was to study the obstacles in the observance of rights for psychiatric patients (according to Law «On psychiatric help») by the psychiatric system. We used surveys and interviews with the hospital's personnel, to develop and install the plan for practical actions at the level of the psychiatric hospital (m. Kyiv, Vinnitsya, Poltava). As a result of this project we had practical recommendations on how to implement changes in the hospital and psychiatric system as a whole.

Members of our organization are part of the Ministry of Health workgroup that created the Mental Healthcare Program for 2006-2016. This research will help in the humanizing of the psychiatric system, observance of rights for people with the problems of mental health and will promote the implementation of Law «On psychiatric help». This report was made public and available for all of the psychiatric facilities of Ukraine, Ministry of Health in Ukraine and The Human Rights officer in Ukraine, the Cabinet of Ministers, and other state institutions. This report is widespread among public organizations which work within the system of Mental Healthcare and Human Rights, and the rights of mass media.

In 2007 with the help of the International Renaissance Foundation we have made public the inconsistencies and violations of the rights of people with psychiatric disorders during court hearings. We held round tables, conferences, press-conferences and training sessions, namely, the problems with the laws concerning the guardianship of the mentally ill.

For the first time the legislative base was analyzed on questions of giving guardianship. A large amount of inconsistencies were found. Cases, related to the violation of rights of the mentally ill people were conducted and documented. The cases of the violation of the patient's rights were brought up in public by means of discussions, round table and press-conferences, bringing in public officials, representatives of public organizations, and the relatives of offended victims. Additionally, information of instances of rights violations were made available over the Internet.

In 2008 with help from the Democratic Development Foundation (by the embassy of the US in Ukraine) implemented a program called «Provision of legal help for the mentally ill within the norms of the Ukrainian Law and International Legal Documents». The project's goal was to increase lawyers' and social workers' awareness of the rights for invalids, users of psychiatric help. The project took into consideration the specificity of providing legal help to different population groups. The specialists that attended the program will continue to develop their knowledge base and gain experience with their communities.

Members constantly increase their professional level. That is why the president of the organization following the recommendations of various organizations attended and graduated from The Helsinki Foundation of Human Rights in Warsaw of 2007-2008.

The administrator of the organization has completed the summer course load at the Helsinki Foundation of Human Rights.

The knowledge and experience is used everyday in our work to represent the rights of the patients as well as providing information for the social workers and lawyers.

All Ukrainian Public Organization of Invalids «USER» is a member of a public committee at the Vinnitsya regional government, the «All Ukrainian Foundation of Social Protection for Disabled within the Ministry of labor and social policy of Ukraine».

In 2008 our organization carried out a number of projects. We created a volunteer center within our organization where the volunteers get necessary knowledge on the social policies and consult with the clients.

The plans of our organization for the nearest future:

- Creating a consulting center for the users of psychiatric help and their relatives. Skilled lawyers, social workers, psychologists will assist in the organization and in the hospitals of Ukraine. We are trying to create a mobile consulting center, a hot line which will allow for

- patients to remain anonymous while receiving professional consultation free of charge and most importantly very fast.
- It is in our vision to create support systems to support PTSD patients and people with psychiatric disorders.
  - We continue to work for the rights of the patients. It is important to develop at least a 6-point help system that will include psychological, social, medical, financial, educational and legal support.
  - A program to help adolescents is in the works. Not just the young adults that need help, but also the ones that have suffered the consequences of a traumatic event like death of a family member, sexual assault, catastrophic events, etc.
  - A tutorial named «Social accompaniment of patients during pre-trial investigation, trial and preventive work» was developed for social workers and lawyers that is to be used during the training sessions with specialists.
  - A methodical manual has been created as part of trainings named «I have a right» for people with mental health problems, and a professional team of skilled human rights activists have been created and is ready to share its knowledge.
  - We are developing a system to help patients that live alone or patients whose guardians are becoming of age. We are trying to recruit lawyers, social workers, people who could help out with the daily activities, psychologists, etc.
  - The creation of "The Volunteer school" that will try to recruit medical students from the local university. It will become a place for future doctors and social workers to be able to intern and gain experience.
  - The Organization conducts research on the Civil Code of Ukraine, and particularly the part which deals with guardianship, care giving and inheritance. We make recommendations for changes to the document in order to prevent crooks from taking advantage of the mentally ill.
  - A number of suggestions are being developed concerning the social housing for people that lost family ties or were cheated out of their housing, and who do not have the right criteria to be admitted into the psychiatric boarding school. This would not only include providing housing, but also the creation of social enterprises.

We are open to collaboration with public institutions, International and Ukrainian human rights organizations, educational establishments and local governments, law enforcement authorities, district attorney office, Ukrainian Security Service, and all of conscious and active citizens of Ukraine.