



MAMA+ Project to Prevent Child Abandonment by HIV-positive Mothers, St. Petersburg, Russia

Roman Yorick, Olga Sukovatova, Yulia Batluk –

Doctors of the World-USA (DOW) field office, St. Petersburg, Russia;

Svetlana Suvorova, Zinaida Kuzmina – Doctors to Children (DTC), St. Petersburg, Russia;

Allison Lynch, Vandana Tripathi – DOW Headquarters, New York, USA



Doctors to Children



Abstract

Background:

Over 20% of children born to HIV-positive mothers across Russia are abandoned to the state. These children are then destined to a life in government institutions, such as orphanages. The MAMA+ Project aims at preventing child abandonment and retaining family support for HIV-affected children.

Intervention:

Since 2005, DOW together with local partners is running an integrated program assisting HIV-positive women and their family members to care for their young children, including:

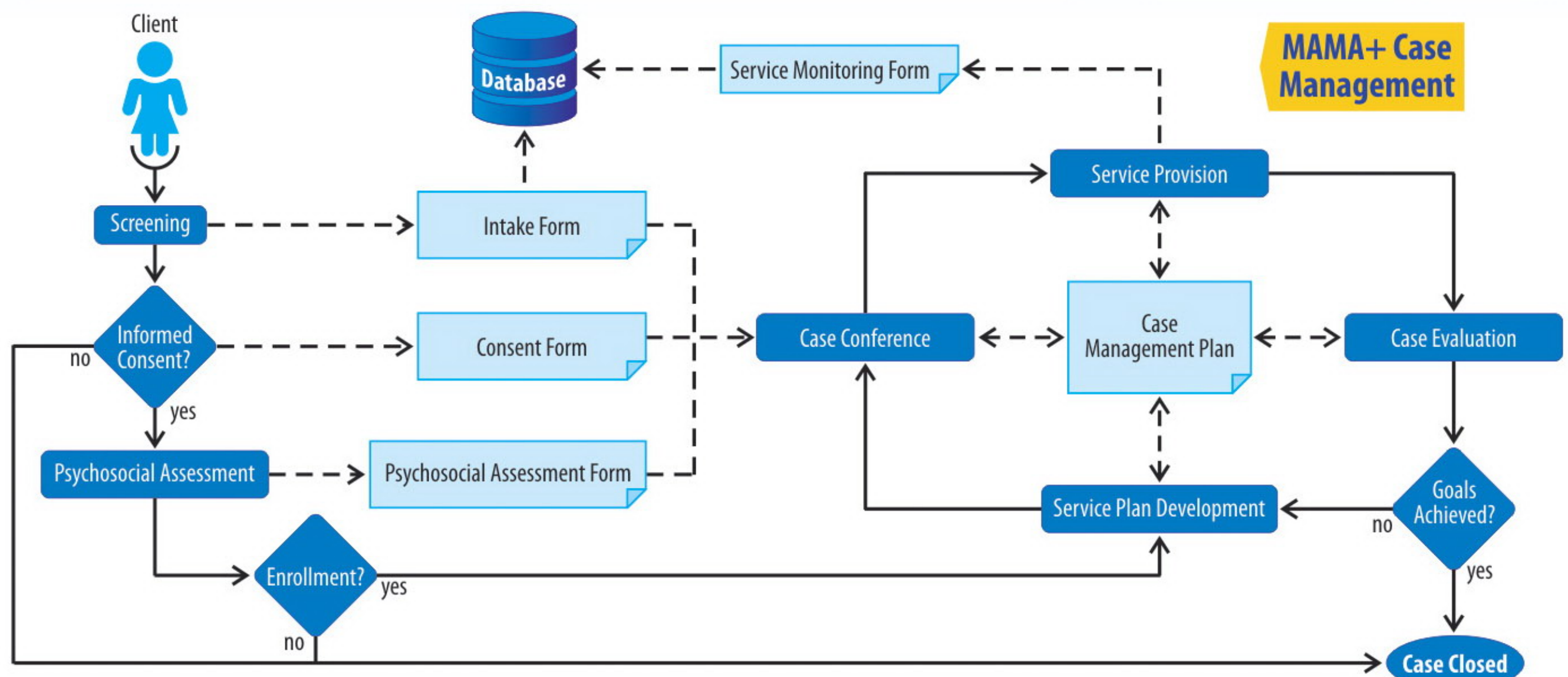
1. **Early identification** of HIV-positive pregnant women or mothers at risk of abandoning their children;
2. **Home visiting (patronage)** program for assisting and mentoring HIV-positive women and their caregivers;
3. Comprehensive MAMA+ **daycare and counseling center** for children, their mothers and caregivers;
4. **Halfway house** for HIV-positive women with children - shelter for victims of violence, homeless women;
5. Group of **volunteer caregivers** (former MAMA+ clients) assisting HIV-positive mothers and family members;
6. **School of Palliative Care** for family and volunteer caregivers on special needs of HIV-positive women with children;
7. **Peer support groups** for HIV-positive women, their family members, and peer volunteers;
8. **Provider education** to reduce stigma and discrimination towards HIV-positive women and their children.

Results:

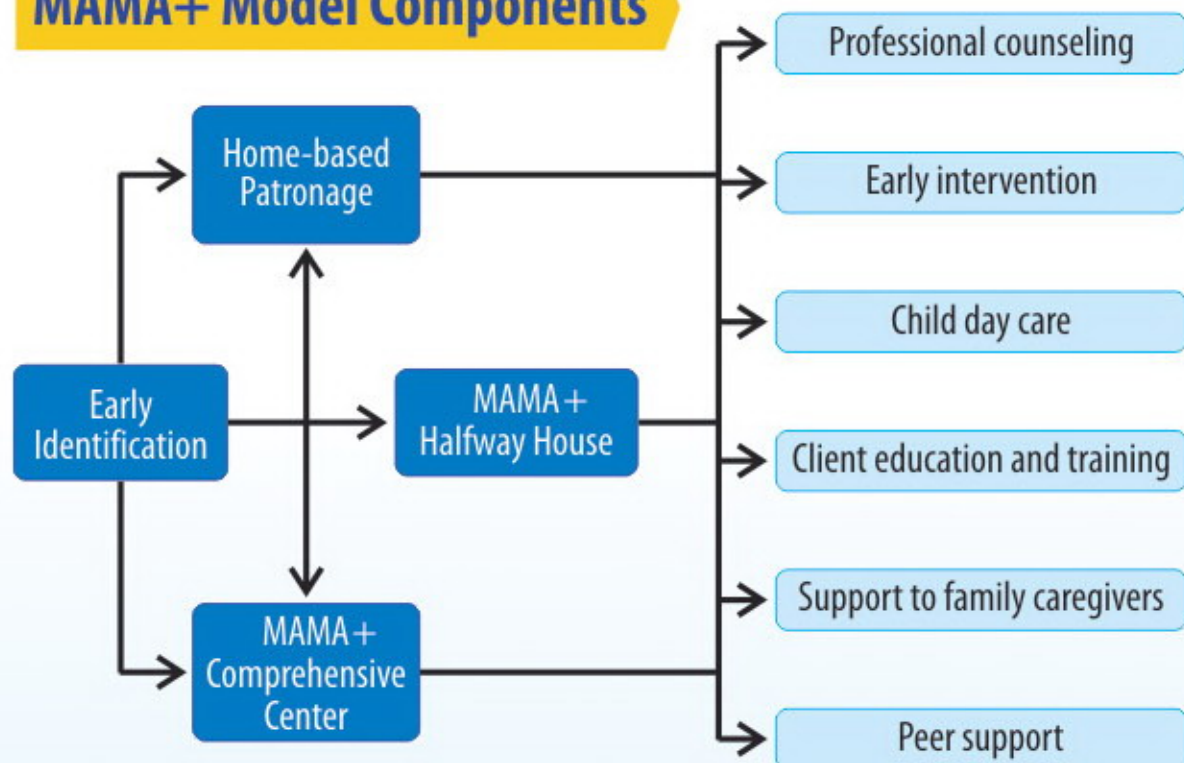
The rate of abandonment by HIV-positive mothers in birthing facilities in St. Petersburg reduced from 27% in 2004 to 15% in 2007. Over 200 women were enabled to keep 260 of their children in family care.

Background

- Russia has the largest HIV epidemic in Europe and Central Asia with over 420,000 registered cases, 10% concentrated in St. Petersburg
- >80% of cases occur in individuals <30 years old; >30% are women
- 66% intravenous route, 32% sexual route, 1-2% vertical route of transmission
- 1% HIV prevalence in pregnant women
- 3,000 children born to HIV-positive mothers in St. Petersburg; >20% abandoned and institutionalized
- Generally low adoption/foster care rate is even lower for HIV-affected children
- 7% vertical transmission rate



MAMA+ Model Components



Partners

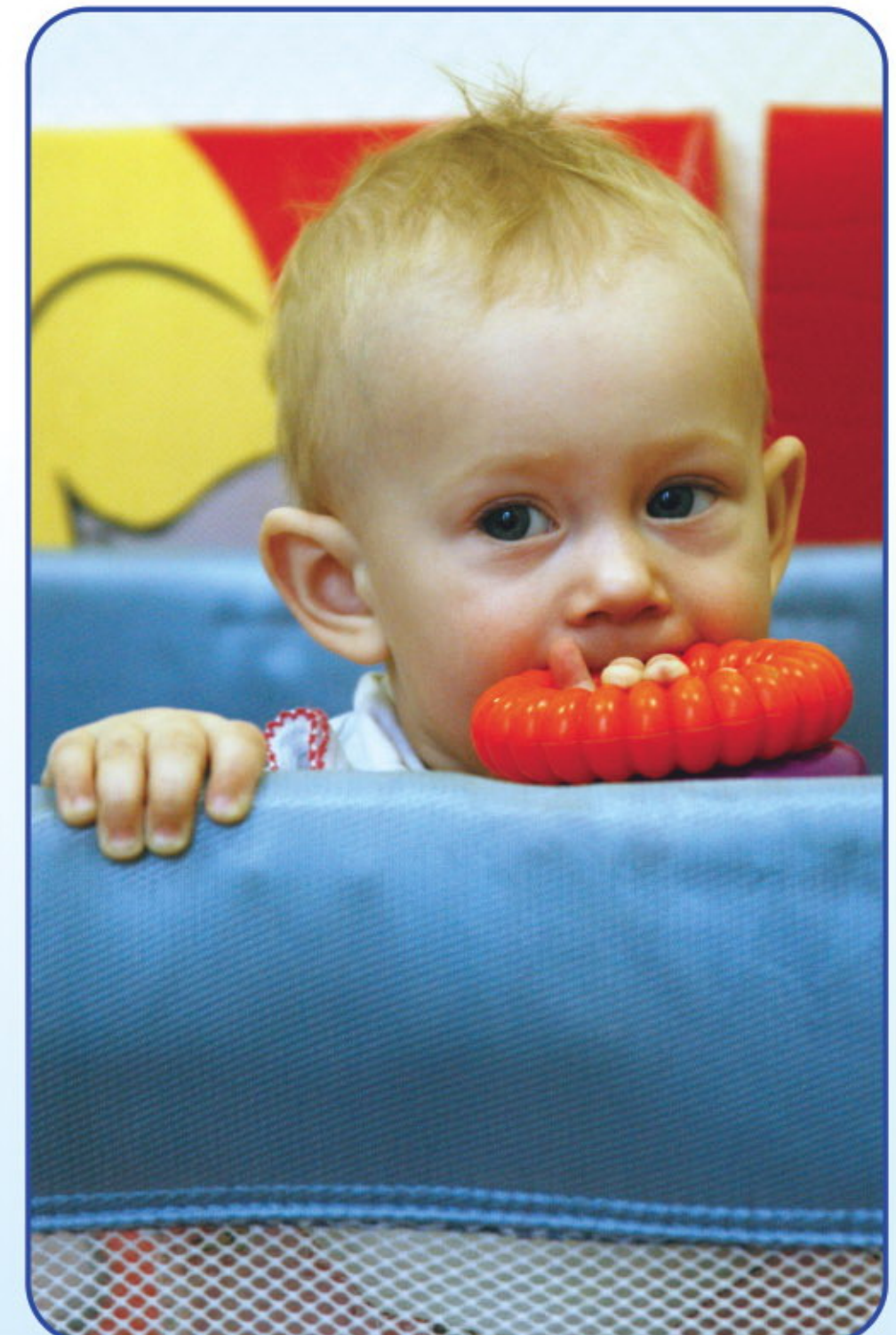
- Local Russian NGO Doctors to Children
- St. Petersburg City and Leningrad Regional AIDS Centers
- Three maternity hospitals delivering children from women without prenatal care
- Children's Infectious Disease Hospital #3 hosting the MAMA+ Center
- City Committee on Labor and Social Protection and its social service agencies
- Pediatric and maternal health clinics
- University Research Company

Results

- 260 children remained in family care
- 216 HIV-positive women and >100 family caregivers received support
- 14 abandoned children reunited with their families
- Rate of abandonment by HIV-positive women in birthing facilities reduced from 27% in 2004 to 15% in 2007
- Model replicated in three cities in Ukraine serving 220 women and reuniting 10 abandoned children with families; currently being replicated in Vietnam
- Guidebook for professionals on retaining family support for HIV-affected children
- Model being institutionalized in government social services

Challenges

- Substance abuse among HIV-positive mothers and their family members combined with lack of drug rehab services
- Rigid residence registration system in Russia preventing clients from accessing government services
- School access for HIV-affected children
- Disconnect between government healthcare and psychosocial services
- Slow state response to needs and challenges



Doctors of the World-USA
80 Maiden Lane
New York, NY 10038, USA
Tel. +1(212)226-9890
info@dowusa.org • www.dowusa.org

Representative Office, Russian Federation
7 Lev Tolstoy St., Office #707
St. Petersburg, 197376, Russia
Tel. +7(812)380-3092
spb@dowusa.org • www.vd-spb.ru