



EURASIA FOUNDATION



Community Living and Employment

Project Partners

- University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration, USA
- Life Route & Ordinary Childhood, Russia

“ In Russia...reform has begun, changes are taking place, but there is still a lot of work ahead. First, we must inform people – change attitudes towards people who differ from the majority.

— **Alena Legostaeva**, Ordinary Childhood, Russia

Purpose of the Handbook is to highlight key topics in community living and examine employment opportunities and services for people with disabilities available in both the United States and the Russian Federation. Each chapter is co-authored by U.S. and Russian professionals and accompanied by concrete examples of innovative approaches in community living, offering the users from both countries an opportunity to learn from each other's initiatives.

Background

Even though there has been great progress made toward increasing the number and quality of community-based services and support available to persons with disabilities, there are still challenges to providing the opportunity for a greater number of choices in community living and employment.

These challenges can result from a lack of available support for inclusion, negative attitudes persons with disabilities experience in their neighborhood or workplace, feelings of loneliness, and/or not feeling valued for who one is as a person.

Handbook Topics

- Transitioning from school to adulthood
- Working with families
- Health, wellness and relationships
- Community-based service system
- Guardianship
- Activities of daily living
- Opportunities for employment, supported and customized employment.

Featured Excerpts

The following strategies for community living and employment for people with disabilities are included by the handbook’s authors to provide innovative, community-based approaches in Russia and the U.S.

• Work-Based Learning

Work-Based Learning (WBL) is an instructional approach by a licensed work coordinator who specializes in working with PwDs. It occurs concurrently at school and a worksite. WBL involves sequential building of knowledge in career awareness and critical thinking skills. It includes classroom instruction in Workplace Safety, Rights and Responsibilities, Rules, Conduct and Expectations, Employability, Career Planning, Financial Literacy, Technology and Communication, as well Job Development and Community Exploration. This combination helps a person learn the necessary “soft skills” of employment. Building community partnerships with local businesses is a critical element to a successful WBL program. Students receive experience in real work environments and employers get to see the value of the individuals’ work.

• Guardianship

Guardianship plays an important role in community living and employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Effective guardians engage the individual with IDD in the decision-making process and spend time learning and understanding the individual’s priorities, goals, and preferences. Guardianship continues to be the predominant form of substitute

decision-making used to protect people with IDD; however there have been some reforms that have benefited people with IDD. The tree most common include (1) the right to legal representation for the person with IDD throughout the guardianship process, (2) annual reporting requirements for guardians, and (3) the annual requirement that the person with IDD under guardianship be given notice of their right to ask the court to end the guardianship or appoint a new guardian.

Participant Testimony

“When I want to write my description of the trip [to the U.S.], I want to write it not as a description of what I saw, but as the questions that arose in the moment and how I want to help launch such projects in Russia: How would you organize workshops for PwDs to make friends and who would run these workshops in Russia?” – **Vera Bitova**, project participant from Russia.



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About Eurasia Foundation

Eurasia Foundation, an international nonprofit organization, works to engage citizens and empower communities to take responsibility for their own civic and economic prosperity. Founded in 1992, EF uses best practices in advocacy,

institutional development, and cutting-edge online training and education tools to foster the next generation of leaders in the Middle East and North Africa, China and the Eurasia region.

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