

STATUS REPORT 2006 - 2007

MISSION

To ensure the psychical well-being of children by providing professional effective complex assistance for children and families.

CHILDREN' S SUPPORT CENTER

- **Provides** psychological assistance to children, adults and families, and helps them cope with and overcome psychological crises and emotional disturbances;
- **Provides** psychological assistance to children and adults who have experienced abuse;
- **Implements** substance abuse, child abuse and suicide prevention programs;
- **Carries out** the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, fosters the volunteers who mentor children;
- **Develops and implements** professional training and interdisciplinary partnership programs for specialists in education, health care, law enforcement, and social services;
- **Advises** parents and guardians, develops and implements programs that teach effective family communication and child rearing skills;
- **Represents** the interests of children in the process of drafting legislation guaranteeing child rights;
- **Encourages** community involvement in defending and meeting the needs of children.

IMPORTANT FACTS AND DATES

- The Children Support Center began its work in **1995** by implementing the Big Brother Big Sister program which was sponsored by the Open Society Fund of Lithuania. Center employees also began counseling children with emotional or behavioral problems and developing training for people working with children.
- Since **1996**, child abuse prevention and assistance for child victims of violence or abuse and their families has been a top priority for the center.
- **1998 – 2000** - The Center participated in the Street Children/ Children in the Street project, a joint Open Society Fund of Lithuania and King Baudouin Foundation (Belgium) project. Training courses were organized and a center was established, whose library and resources were available to those working with children with behavior and emotional problems, with abused children or with street children.
- In March **1999**, OSF founded the Children Support Center, a non-governmental, not-for-profit public institution.
- In **2000**, the Big Brothers Big Sisters Association of Lithuania (BBBS LA) was founded by the Children Support Center (Vilnius), the Spiritual Help for Youth Center (Klaipeda) and "Big Friend, Little Friend" (Kaunas). BBBS LA is accepted and becomes a member of the international BBBSI.
- In **2001**, the Children Support Center acquires its own home at Latviu 19A in Vilnius.
- In **2002**, a CSC website is developed.
- In December of **2002**, an agreement is signed with the Lithuanian Military Academy to work together in the BSBS program.
- In **2004**, an agreement is signed with the Carnegie Social Initiative Fund (Sweden) supporting the qualitative and quantitative development of the BBBS program.

- In **2004**, implementation of the “Second Step” program, a violence prevention program is begun.
- In **2005**, Gallup polled the effectiveness of the BBBS program.
- In September **2005**, BBBS celebrated its 10-year anniversary with the live “Be My Friend” concert for the community at large and an international conference, “Voluntary Mentoring of Children from Underprivileged Environments - the Big Brothers Big Sisters Experience in Europe”.
- In **2005**, an agreement is signed with the Nobody’s Children Foundation (Poland) aimed at implementing a long term child abuse prevention program “Childhood without Abuse”.
- In **2006**, the social campaign “Childhood without Abuse” implemented by CSC receives widespread attention from the community.
- In **2006**, the Vilnius BBBS program was taken over by a new manager
- In May of **2007**, the „6th international consortium on the Second Step program and social - emotional learning“ took place in Vilnius. **45** teachers and psychologists from **18** countries participated and shared experiences about stopping increasing bullying and violence among students.
- In **2007**, project “The Child – A Witness with Special Requirements” was implemented. Social campaign and trainings for law enforcement were held.
- At the end of **2007**, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Vilnius moved into a new facility.
- In December of **2007**, the international conference “Modern Approaches Toward the Prevention of Bullying and Violence in the School“was organized together with NGO Children’s Line and the Children’s Rights Protection Controller’s Office of Lithuania.
- In **2007**, the Children Support Center received an award for being the NGO of the Year.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN 2007

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10. **Žadeikaitė Loreta** – Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, Head of Primary and Secondary Education department

CENTER EMPLOYEES

1. **Aušra Kurienė** – Center Director, Psychologist, Psychotherapist
2. **Erna Petkutė** – Project Manager, Psychologist, Psychotherapist Director of the „Big Brothers Big Sisters“ in Lithuania program
3. **Žydrė Arlauskaitė** – “Second Step” Program Manager, Psychologist, Psychotherapist

4. **Juratė Čižauskaitė** – BBBS Program Manager, Psychologist
5. **Agnė Černiauskaitė** – BBBS Program Administrator, Attorney
6. **Eglė Šekštelienė** BBBS Program worker, Psychologist
7. **Ieva Daniūnaitė** – Project Coordinator, Psychologist
8. **Birutė Paurienė** - Accountant
9. **Renata Paslaitienė** – Office Administrator
10. **Daiva Olkštinaitytė** – social worker

„BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS“ PROGRAM

The **mission** of „Vilnius Big Brothers Big Sisters“ is to promote and develop the idea of an adult volunteer individually helping a child in Vilnius and Lithuania.

The **basis** of the „Big Brothers Big Sisters in Lithuania“ program is the long term relationship of an adult volunteer with a child which seeks to foster the child’s sense of responsibility, self-confidence and caring for oneself and others, and to increase a child’s ability to resist harmful influences in the environment. This strengthens inner development so the child can improve relationships at home, at schools and in the street.

The program is **for the children** ages 7 – 17 who are in psychological crises and experiencing psychological difficulties, for children who are in need for individual, continuous support, and positive adult role model.

„Big Brothers Big Sisters“ is an international program which is implemented across the world. It was started in Lithuania in 1995. The program is unique because it:

- Provides voluntary and individualized support for the child;
- Carefully selects, trains and prepares the volunteer;
- Provides professional oversight of and consultations for the child/volunteer relationship

Development of the „Big Brothers Big Sisters“ Program

Dissemination of information about the BBBS program:

- Approximately 350 professionals in Vilnius were informed about the psychological and social help available at no cost to at risk children and families through the „Big Brothers Big Sisters“ program:
 - Every year informational letters were sent to all schools in Vilnius;
 - Presentations for teachers, psychologists and social workers took place at schools.
- 25 information meetings were organized for students living in Vilnius:
 - These meetings took place at Vilnius University, Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius Pedagogical University and the Lithuania Military Academy. Approximately 700 students of philosophy, social work, psychology, mathematics, public administration, economics, and business management attended the meetings.
- On May 25, 2007, a conference for families with foster children „Embrace Me“ took place in the Lithuanian Parliament. The paper „Big Brothers Big Sisters in Lithuania – the Healing Effect of Friendship“ was presented.

- On December 8 – 9, 2007, the „Big Brothers Big Sisters“ program was presented as one of the most effective violence and bullying prevention programs at the conference organized by „Children’s Line“ „Modern Approaches Toward the Prevention of Bullying and Violence in the School“.

Vilnius BBBS Program Statistics

INDICATORS	2007	2006
Volunteers		
Interested in volunteering	157	163
Accepted for training	142	139
Successfully completed training	99	94
Children		
Parents/ guardians interested in child participating	63	60
Children selected	57	58
BBBS matches		
BBBS matches	134	116
Average number of hours per year that BBBS volunteers committed to the relationships with the child	8200 hrs.	7800 hrs.

What Bigs and Littles did

- Walked around Vilnius and discussed the beauty of the city in the rain, snow and sunlight;
- Drew pictures, wrote lines of poetry, sculpted clay and otherwise developed their creative talents;
- Remembered the tradition of meeting together to mark the beginning of the school year with bowling;
- Went to the movies, theater and ballet and rejoiced in understanding the secrets of art;
- Performed good deeds and participated in the annual „Food Bank“ event;
- Enjoyed Christmas carnivals at the Lithuanian Military Academy;
- Baked cakes, made pancakes, sandwiches, and took pride in their culinary abilities;
- Enjoyed impressive outings to Anyksciai and its environs, and the water park in Druskininkai;
- Threw hoops, went swimming, rode bikes and skated – it’s more fun to exercise with a friend that alone;
- Participated in the contest „Be Friendly – Get to Know Vilnius with a Friend“ and listened to live song performances by Lithuanian singers;
- Dined at cafe and pizzerias and learned good table manners;
- Girls explored beauty secrets and learned to take care of one’s appearance and health;
- Spent summers at BBBS camps near the beautiful Lake Burokraistis in the Varena region;
- Followed the activities of sports stars and participated in the NBA basketball camp „Basketball without Walls“;
- Explored the beauty of Norway as part of the international Lithuanian- Norwegian youth exchange project „Friend. Sports. Health“ and hosted guests from Norway in Vilnius;
- Took part in the „Music without Walls“ project and actively participated in the international rock festival „Be2gether“ in Norviliskes;
- Showed support for an enlightened idea by chanting „No Bullying“ at the Friendship Carnival organized by „Children’s Line“;
- Welcomed and became friends with volunteers from the Estonia BBBS program;
- Shared knowledge about geography, history and the Lithuanian language;
- Dreamed of discovering a time machine and visiting the future;
- Contemplated if a full moon causes accidents and troubles, and why a snail always carries

- its home on its back;
- Just looked at the sky and did nothing.

BBBS Program in Lithuania

The BBBS program is implemented in other schools and cities in Lithuania: the Pilate, Seskine and Baltupiai middle schools in Vilnius; the Didzdvaris Gymnasium; the Pedagogical Psychological Service in Siauliai; the Birstonas Middle School; Jonas Basanavicius Middle School in Ukmerge; Caritas in the Vilkauskis Diocese; the Spiritual Support for Youth Center in Klaipeda; the Pedagogical Psychological Service of Alytus; „Vilties Saltinis“, Special Education and Socialization Center in Visaginas; and Jieznas Middle School.

Training Seminars

- BBBS program coordinator training „Establishing and Fundamentals of a BBBS program“ – Professionals who work with children from Klaipeda, Siauliai, Vilnius, Kaunas and Ukmerge participated.
- 15 groups went through the volunteer training „Working with Children in the BBBS Program“. A total of 193 volunteers were trained.
- Personal safety training courses for children were organized and delivered in 2007. 13 groups totaling 82 children participating in BBBS program were trained.

Sponsors

- Vilnius Municipality;
- TEO LT, AB;
- Lithuanian citizens who allocated 2% of their income tax to the Center;
- Agency of International Youth Cooperation'
- Carnegie Social Initiative;
- Youth Department of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor.

ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN - VICTIMS OF ABUSE AND VIOLENCE AND THEIR FAMILIES

Providing comprehensive assistance to children, who are victims of abuse, is a top priority for the Children Support Center. Free psychological, social and legal assistance is provided to children and adolescents (up to age 18) who have experienced emotional, physical, sexual abuse, bullying at school, or witness domestic violence in the home. Consultations are also provided to professionals from various areas (psychologists, social workers, teachers, physicians, etc.) who work with children who experience abuse.

In 2006 our special target group were children - victims and witnesses - who have to participate in legal procedures. The aim of the projects was to increase society's awareness to the needs of children victims and witnesses who has to participate in different law enforcement procedures and and to increase specialists' professionalism as well as promote inter-agency cooperation in protecting the child during legal proceedings.

Main projects:

“CHILDHOOD WITHOUT VIOLENCE”

“CHILD – A WITNESS WITH SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS”

Children who experience abuse and their families, as well as professionals working with such children were able to receive these services:

Psychological assistance:

- Assessment and evaluation of the child’s psychological status and needs;
- Individual and /or group psychological counseling or/ and psychotherapy for abused children and their family members;
- Family counseling;
- Supervisions and consultation for professionals working with abused and traumatized children
- Multidisciplinary case analysis.

Social assistance:

- consultations and support of social worker
- Support by trained volunteer for child in the „Big Brothers Big Sisters“ program;

Legal assistance:

- Children/ family members: consultation with lawyer (attorney);
- preparing children for legal proceedings, escorting them to court.

Other assistance:

- Courses, training seminars for parents;
- Referrals for the children and families to other specialists (e.g. psychiatrist, physician, child protection services, etc.) for consultations as needed;
- Coordinating and ensuring the continuity of necessary care.

Statistics about the abused children who have received services at Children Support Center

Table 1 *Total number of children victims of violence and abuse receiving services*

Number of children	2006	2007
Total:	78	89
<i>Boys</i>	27	31
<i>Girls</i>	51	58

Table 2 *Number of children receiving services by age group*

Children’s age	2006 year	2007 year
Till 6 year age	4	9
7-10 year age	26	28
11-14 year age	29	34

Table 3 *Number of service hours provided to recipients*

Hours of counseling	2006 year	2007 year
Children	428	456
Parents, other family members	240	215
Specialists, who work with children	162	174

Training for professionals:

- “Diagnostic and treatment of abused children” - for psychologists and psychiatrists
- “Interdisciplinary cooperation in identification and evaluation of children with behavioral and emotional problems” - social workers, child protection workers, school psychologists, juvenile police
- „Psychological basics when Interviewing the Underage Witness“ were held for 48 judges and other professionals in the law enforcement and judicial system.
- “Early abuse and neglect, attachment disorder and impact on therapy” by R. Johansen (Norway) for psychologists and psychotherapists working with early traumatized children.
- “Under age witness – psychological basis of questioning” - K.Dekens (Netherlands) for law enforcement officers, prosecutors, police
- “Facts and factors that influences child testimony and interview process” - for law enforcement officers, prosecutors, police

Conferences:

- Social campaign “Child is a witness with the special needs”
- In 2006, an international seminar „The Child Witness – Evaluation, Healing and Support Programs for Child Abuse Victims“ was held in Druskininkai.
- A national conference „The Child – A Witness with Special Requirements – Legal and Psychological Challenges“ was attended by 150 people. Partners from Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria participated in the project.

Publications:

- A book for children, „I am Going to Court“,
- A brochure for adults „When Your Child Testifies in Court“,
- A poster „Your Honor, I’m Afraid“
- A.Kuriene “What every child should know about abuse and how to stay save”
- Ž.Arlauskaitė “How to protect my child”

Social campaigns:

- In 2006, the campaign „**Childhood Without Abuse – I am Learning Life from You**“ sought to draw attention to the fact that children observe and learn from the actions and words of the people around them.

The goals of the campaign:

- Encourage greater community participation in the prevention of and battle against child abuse;
- Promote constructive solutions, that protect children against abuse;
- Support and empower local governments to take action to protect children against abuse and provide assistance to victims;
- Advance the system of assistance for the family, fostering good parenting attitudes and skills.

Campaign materials – video clip, 2 radio clips, a poster and brochure.

- In 2007, the social campaign „**Child – Witness with Special Needs**“ sought to draw the attention of justice system officials, teachers, other professionals, parents and the community to the child participating in court proceedings, his/ her situation, experiences and difficulties.

Campaign Materials – poster „Your Honor, I’m Scared“, brochures for parents “When your child is witnessing at the court”.

Partners:

- Children's Rights Protection Controller's Office of Lithuania
- Children's Rights Protection Services of Vilnius,
- Judicial Ministry of Lithuania
- National Court Administration,
- Court of Appeals of Lithuania
- Attorney Generals Office,
- Central Department of Police
- In year 2006 Children Support Center has been a member of coalition "NGO working for and with children";
- Children Support center developed and implemented activities together with other NGOs – Child Line, Save the Children Lithuania, Secure Child Center, Child House, LUSI, Youth Psychological Aid Center, Modern Didactics center, Prosecutors' Office; Civic Initiative Center
- Children Support center has been a partner in collective project "Child's Rights Monitoring in Residential Care and Educational Institutions" together formed coalition with Global Initiative on Psychiatry, Association of Phone Psychological Support Services, Lithuanian Welfare Society for Persons with Mental Disability „Viltis“, Child's Rights Ombudsman's Office and Human Rights Monitoring Institute

Sponsors: Vilnius Municipality, Ministry of Social security and Labor, OAK foundation (USA), European Commission Agis program, SIA Bodybalt department

**PROJECT "CREATING BULLYING - FREE SCHOOLS
IN LITHUANIA AND LATVIA"**

Since 2006, the Children Support Center, „Children's' Line“, Global Initiative in Psychiatry, Lithuanian Association of Telephone Psychological Help Lines, Crisis Center „Skalbes“ in Latvia has been implementing the Project „Creating Bully-free Schools in Lithuania and Latvia“, sponsored by the European Commission's „Daphne II“ Program.

- As part of the project in 2006 – 2007, a two day seminar „Preventing Bullying in Schools“, was organized in 50 Lithuanian schools and 20 Latvian schools.
- In June of 2007, two British documentary films „Find Time to Care“ and „Don't Suffer in Silence“ were presented. Both films were dubbed into Lithuanian. Created in 2002 „Don't Suffer in Silence“ depicts how children who are bullied feel, as well as how children become bullies. Important information about bullying is underscored by personal stories told by children, teachers, parents and prominent people. A part of the movie is devoted to organizing bullying prevention programs in schools. In „Find Time to Care“, a bullying prevention program, implemented in a Wales school, shows students providing support and help to their peers. In the film, participants talk about their experiences during the program, its impact on the school community, and the reduction in bullying. The two films are available on the „Children's Line“ website.
- In November, 2007 „Creating Bully-Free Schools“ was published.

- December 6 – 7, 2007 The international conference „Modern Attitudes Towards Bullying and Violence Prevention in Schools“ took place in Vilnius. It was the first time that the issue of bullying and violence in schools was examined at a national level and the conference was attended by many international experts.

TRAINING

- **„Fostering psychological resilience“** - practical training seminar for parents and teachers, aimed to learn ways of helping children overcome crises and emotional difficulties, to make right choices and to stay safe.
- **„Emotional and behavioral difficulties of small children – how to understand and to intervene“** - seminar for parents to learn effective ways of disciplining children, teaching them empathy, impulse control, containing feelings.
- **„Safety Lessons“** – practical activities for children about protecting oneself from abuse and abusers. These lessons enhance self esteem; teach children how to act in various uncomfortable or dangerous situations. Children learn where they can go for help. In 2007, **82** children participated in these lessons.
- **„Fostering Peer Support Skills“ or „Understanding your Peer and How to Help“** – practical seminar for upper class high school students. Student gain psychological knowledge about a variety of problems and their solutions: conflict, interpersonal difficulties, violence, crisis, harmful habits, etc. Students also learn how to recognize a peer who is experiencing difficulties, understand how he/she can help, when and where to turn for professional help. **50** students participated in the seminars.
- **„Psychological First Aid in School – Assistance Team“** - A drop out prevention project in Siauliai schools, during which assistance teams were created in **16** schools. Every team participated in theoretical and practical training seminars. Reference materials for creating assistance teams were put together.
- **„Counseling At Risk Children and Adolescents Individually and in Groups“** – a training program for school psychologists. **84** psychologists participated in the training program. Program length is 186 hrs.

„SECOND STEP“ - TEACHING SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SKILLS AT SCHOOL

The „Second Step“ program aims to develop and strengthen social and emotional skills in children. Its objective is: to decrease aggressive behavior in children, to teach children how to deal with their own feelings, to refrain from acting impulsively, to resolve conflicts, to solve problems and understand the consequences of their actions.

The program was founded in Seattle, Washington and has been effectively implemented for over 20 years. The program reaches children not only in the US, but in Denmark, Norway, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Great Britain, Japan, Greenland, Iceland, Slovakia, Kurdistan, Canada, Venezuela and Guatemala.

Through real life activities and role plays, children learn and practice essential skills, which are enhanced through positive reinforcement. In Lithuania the „Second Step“ program can be used in grades 1 – 4.

The program has been in use since 2004 and the results have proven its effectiveness. It is well known that social and emotional skills are directly correlated with academic achievement. Our teachers, who have worked with the program tools, have confirmed that „children feel more self conscious, are not afraid to express their opinions, and are able to find more wide-ranging solutions“ (teacher Neringa). Another teacher noted that „children learned to vocalize their feelings instead of resorting to fist fights, the number of aggressive solutions to conflicts decreased, and children were better able to focus their attention, thus improving their academic performance“ (teacher Rasa.). Many teachers also noted that the program provides excellent and varied tools which are interesting, child oriented and easy to use (Photo-lesson cards with information for teachers on the other side.)

Achievements: Last year was a very successful year for the program and its dissemination. „Second Step“ was positively received in Lithuania as well as at international events:

- 2007 - An agreement was signed with „Committee for Children“ for use of the „Second Step“ program in Lithuanian schools grades 1 – 4.
- May 10 – 13, 2007 - The Consortium was opened and attended by the President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus. Representative from 18 countries participated.
- May 2007 the „Second Step“ program is introduced in Warsaw, Poland at the Conference of „Camhee“ Programs as a violence and self destructive behavior prevention program.
- July 2007 – The „Second Step“ program is presented at the International Association of School Psychologists colloquium in Tampere, Finland.
- December 2007 - The program is presented at the conference of European „Camhee“, „Daphne“ program participants as well as representative from Lithuanian educational organizations.
- Parents are familiar with and actively seek out the program.
- CSC conducted 5 training seminars in 2006-2007, during which 90 teachers were trained: 58 elementary school teachers from Vilnius, 22 from Siauliai. A total of 104 educators have been trained to implement the „Second Step“ program to develop social and emotional skills in children.
- In 2007 use of the program began expanding and is not only in capital city Vilnius, but also implemented in Siauliai.
- The „Teachers’ Book for Grades 1 – 3“, a guide for teachers using the „Second Step program“, is translated.
- Outcome evaluation, which will be completed in 2008, is begun. 14 teachers from 4 schools in Vilnius are participating in the process.

Partners and sponsors: Ministry of Education and Science, Committee for children (USA), Teo LT.

FUNDING RECEIVED IN 2006 – 2007

Capital, 2006

Sources of Financing	Litas	%
<i>Governmental Institutions</i>		
	21500	3%
Vilnius Municipality Culture and Education Department	4000	
Vilnius Municipality Health and Social Welfare Department	5000	
Ministry of Social Security and Labor	12500	
<i>Nongovernmental National and International Organizacions</i>		
	314738	48%
European Omission	158098	
Carnegie foundation for Social Initiative (Sweden)	83902	
Oak Foundation (Geneva, Switzerland)	61538	
Agency of International Youth Cooperation	11200	
<i>Business Companies</i>		
	2500	0%
UAB "Censor"	2500	
<i>Private donations</i>		
	18820	3%
Lithuanian citizens deducted 2 % of income tax	18820	
<i>Income for Services provided</i>		
	298819	46%
Consulting and training	296142	
Bank interest	2677	
Total:	656377	100%

Capital, 2007

Sources of Financing	Litas	%
<i>Governmental Institutions</i>		
	143500	20%
Vilnius Municipality Culture and Education Department	13500	
Vilnius Municipality Health and Social Welfare Department	86000	
Ministry of Social Security and Labor	44000	
<i>Nongovernmental National and International Organizations</i>		
	199724	28%
European Omission	16528	
Carnegie foundation for Social Initiative (Sweden)	134107	
Oak Foundation (Geneva, Switzerland)	34139	
Agency of International Youth Cooperation	14950	

<i>Business Companies</i>	86500	12%
UAB "Delta management solutions"	500	
TEO LT, AB	60000	
SIA Bodybalt department	20000	
A. Bekeris enterprise of services and commerce	6000	
<i>Private donations</i>	20873	3%
Individual people support	382	
Lithuanian citizens deducted 2 % of income tax	20491	
<i>Income for Services provided</i>	261449	37%
Consulting and training	254829	
Bank interest	6620	
Total:	712046	100%

APPENDIX – PRESS RELEASES

Child Witnesses in Lithuania Lack Protection 9-21-2007

In Lithuania, children who are witnesses in court or are participants in pre-trial investigations lack psychological and moral support because law enforcement specialists who deal with children are not adequately prepared to work with them. According to psychologist Erna Petkute, because of this reason, children are not only harmed, but the probability of gathering accurate evidence is diminished. That is why Lithuania, represented by the Children Support Center, together with Poland, Bulgaria and Latvia, is implementing the project „**The Child – A Witness with Special Requirements**“. This project aims to educate law enforcement and justice system professionals about the psychological condition of children, to initiate changes in the investigation process and to strengthen protection for the child witness.

The practices in Lithuania unnerve even the professionals and specialists. Judges complain that it is difficult to get minors to speak, because they do not understand what court is and what is expected of them. Children end up in a very difficult moral situation when they must testify at the scene of the crime, when asked to talk about the specific actions that were done with them in an unfamiliar police station, or when, because of the investigative procedures, they must testify repeatedly about the events.

„Children usually think that they have done something wrong and will be punished. That is why it is so important to employ appropriate methods of communicating with child witnesses, so they would not be afraid to tell the truth and would not feel bad about it,“- says Erna Petkute, a psychologist at the Children Support Center.

On Monday, the Children Support Center will hold a conference „The Child – A Witness with Special Requirements“ at the Ministry of Justice of Lithuania. Professionals and experts from law enforcement, Children Rights' protection service, the psychological, medical, education, social work and other fields will discuss the legal situation of child witnesses in Lithuania, the psychological fundamentals of collecting testimony, as well as highlight the problems in this area and search for effective solutions.

International practices and projects being implemented in Lithuania associated with this issue will be presented. The Lithuanian Minister of Justice, Petras Baguska and Attorney General Algimantas Valantinas will participate in the conference.

The Child Support Center has already trained almost 50 Lithuanian judges and Attorney General's office employees about the psychological aspects of child witnesses. A coloring book for children „I am Going to Court“, which educates children about the purpose and activities of court, as well as a brochure for adults, „When Your Child Testifies in Court“ have been published.

Representatives from „Big Brothers Big Sisters“ of Estonia visited Vilnius 11-7-2007

On October 26th, coordinators and volunteers from „Big Brothers Big Sisters“ of Estonia visited the Children Support Center. They shared experiences about volunteer activities and their relationships, as well as discussed future plans.

„It was a good opportunity to find out how the „Big Brothers Big Sisters“ program is being implemented in another country. Volunteers were able to share their experiences about participating in the program and get new ideas about their relationships with the little ones,“ - said one of the BBBS Vilnius program coordinators, Ieva Daniunaite.

The „Big Brothers Big Sisters“ teams from both countries hope that this collaboration will continue. The participants from Estonia have already been invited to the Vilnius BBBS Christmas celebration.

Help for Teachers – Volunteer „Big Brothers Big Sisters“ for Children 11-28-2007

Volunteer BBBS help children improve behavior and academic performance in school. After just a few months of participation in the „Big Brothers Big Sisters“ program, the teachers and parents of the children notice not only that the child feels better and is able to interact more easily, but also has increasingly better evaluations in school and friendlier relationships with classmates.

„Children who are disruptive in school, cause conflict, act intolerantly towards classmates often have emotional, psychological or social problems. Because of these problems, their relationships with teachers, classmates, parents as well as their academic performance suffer,“ - says psychologist Jurate Cizauskaite. She explains that when a child has emotional problems, he/she finds it difficult to focus attention; when hurting spiritually, he/she has less motivation to improve or aspire towards personal goals.

Such children need help, which parents or teachers often cannot provide. „When there are a few children, who have difficulties working in a group, in a class of more than 20 students, it is difficult for the teacher treat children individually and to teach at the same time. Parents also do not always know how to help their child integrate into society. Thus the child needs a person, who will just be their friend and help them understand their emotions, the events and people around them,“ - says J. Cizauskaite.

When children, age 7 to 14, come to the „Big Brothers Big Sisters“ program, which has been implemented around the world for several decades already, they receive a trained adult volunteer/friend. The pair meet at least once a week and spend time together playing basketball, going on walks, watching movies, listening to music. Studies show that more than 90% of parents notice

improved academic performance and relationships after participation in the program.

Currently social educators and psychologists, who can help children, work in Lithuanian schools. However, a child with problems needs more individual attention to achieve long term results. The environment in which a child spends time also influences how a child feels and thinks. The psychologist or social educator works in the school where the child might feel uncomfortable or unsafe. That's why other kinds of help for the child must be considered.

The Children Support Center has been implementing the „Big Brothers Big Sisters“ program in Vilnius for 13 years. This social program, which was founded in the US, is considered one of the most effective support programs for children encountering difficulties in life.