



# Insights from Moldova: Closing of a Residential Institution

## CHANGING THE WAY WE CARE MOLDOVA

Changing the Way We Care is a global care reform initiative that promotes safe, nurturing family care for children reunifying from institutions or at risk of family separation.

Changing the Way We Care Moldova's key partners include Partnerships for Every Child, Keystone Moldova, and Copil, Comunitate, and Familie (CCF) Moldova.

After 60 years of serving as a residential institution for children with disabilities, the Hîncești Auxiliary Boarding school (Hîncești SIA) in Moldova closed its doors to children in May 2022.

The closing of Hîncești SIA and the reintegration of the remaining children in its care, serves as a harbinger for what is possible for other institutions for children with disabilities in Moldova and around the world. Its closure was not inevitable, but rather a result of collective efforts by government, community, and civil society organizations. The closure took years of laying the groundwork for reintegration, coordinating closely with the Government of Moldova, conducting assessments on all aspects of the institution, and the painstaking work conducted by social service workers of assessing every child and every family to inform the development of case plans.

This reflection works to capture the steps that made the closure possible and the insights into the key inflection points that influenced its closure.

Hîncești SIA opened its doors in 1960 in a city of about 19,000 people located 33 km from the capital Chișinău. It was established to support children with disabilities from across the country and provide educational services, accommodation, food, and health care. It operated under the auspices of Moldova's Ministry of Education and Research and was financed by the national government.

At the time of its opening, widespread placement of children in institutions was common in countries in the former Soviet Union. Parents were often persuaded or sometimes forced to relinquish their parental rights and send their children to institutions such as Hîncești, believing that the state was the only place their children could receive proper treatment and education. The legacy of institutionalization of children lasted well into the early 2000s, when Moldova began its reform process.

Hîncești SIA was the last institution under the control of the Ministry Education and Research to close.