



Making decisions for the better care for children

**Network meeting
Better Care Network Netherlands
April 22, 2016**



- **14:00 Introduction – Jolijn van Haaren, UNICEF Netherlands and steering committee Better Care Network Netherlands**
- 14:15 Introduction gatekeeping - Maria Herczog, Better Care Network
- 14:55 From policy to practice: experiences in the field
- 15:25 Coffee break
- 15:45 Gatekeeping in Moldova - Stela Grigoras, Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Moldova
- 16:25 Plenary discussion
- 16:55 Closing remarks



Welcome!

**Better
Care
Network
Netherlands**





We base our work on

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- The UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (2009)

GUIDELINES FOR THE ALTERNATIVE CARE OF CHILDREN

A United Nations framework



CELGIS Centre for excellence
in research and practice

MOVING FORWARD: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'



In association with



Supported by





Better Care Network Netherlands

Urgency

Millions of children worldwide are deprived of parental care. Partly because children are orphaned or not well cared for, but largely due to material poverty. There is an urgent need to place the best interest of the child central to decisions taken for these children and their families.

Our aim

To improve the support to these children in developing countries – by Dutch professionals, Private Initiatives (PI) and government - through the exchange of knowledge and lessons learned.



Vision

- Growing up in a family environment is – in principle – best for every child;
- Children without (adequate) parental care are best of with family members, foster care or small group homes. Children's homes – often misleadingly called "orphanages" - are in general not a good place for a child to grow up;
- Better care starts with prevention; providing support to families and communities to take care of their children themselves.



Target groups

All individuals and organisations working from the Netherlands to support projects for better care for children in developing countries:

- Professional organisations working in children's rights and international development;
- Private Initiatives ("het PI") and the general public;
- Donors, government and policy makers, in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



What do we offer? Linking & Learning

- Network meetings and trainings;
- Website – Database of *good practices* and publications to support the implementation of the Guidelines and thus better care for children;
- Newsletter (800+ members);
- Link to the international network and sharing their work in the NL;
- Support and advice to projects in the NL focusing on better care for children: private initiatives, professionals, volunteering agencies;
- Advocacy



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Gatekeeping to support families and protect children better

Maria Herczog
Senior Technical Advisor
Utrecht, 22 April 2016

Gatekeeping

Mechanisms by which decisions are made about preventing children's placement into alternative care, and services provided to them following the identification of concerns about their safety and well-being.

In case of placement:

- Necessity – when it is needed
- Suitability – meeting individual needs

Based on the UNCRC and the Guidelines on Alternative Care and other international and national commitments

Components of gatekeeping

- Strengthening the capacity of parents and families to care
- Preventing child-family separation
- Providing a continuum of appropriate alternative care options, reviewing care plans
- Reintegrating children into safe and nurturing families
- Supporting professionals and organisations responsible for the decisions and care of children with a consistent and informed process

Different actors and set up of gatekeeping

- Multisectoral teams
- Judicial mechanisms
- Local municipalities, councils
- Hearings, community-based mechanisms (e.g. FGC)
- Case management
- Case conference



Fundamental requirements

1. Working together with dedicated and competent professionals reviewing individual cases – oversight, coordination, monitoring, evaluating;
2. Availability of diverse and high quality services and opportunities;
3. Human and financial resources;
4. Research, data and information management system;
5. Local understanding and commitment for appropriate gatekeeping.

Challenges and recommendations

1. Availability of strong preventive, family strengthening services – active participation of the families, community members
2. Political and financial commitment to redirect focus and services, prevent unnecessary child-family separation
3. Systematic documentation and evaluation of the steps taken and data gathering
4. Effective linkage between formal and non-formal mechanisms with limited options available
5. Investing in strengthening evidence base for gatekeeping
6. Sufficient resources, dedicated professionals
7. Evidence based tools and guidance
8. Children's rights to participate in decision making and taken into consideration

"Supporting families, parents to help them fulfilling their responsibilities in taking good care and upbringing of their children and ensuring their well-being, is serving not only the best interests of children as a paramount obligation, but at the same time the best interests of the entire community, society."

Thank You



for your attention!



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Jean Claude Karorero

Micro Projects Foundation
Burundi



Anja de Boer

SOS Children's Villages



Coffee Break



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**Making decisions for the better
care of children**
***Gate-keeping system in the
Republic of Moldova***

Dr. Stela Grigoras
22 April 2016

Country context



- population - 3.5 million, 20% children
- declining and ageing population
- the poorest country in Europe
- high child poverty rate (19%)
- high migration rate (16% of children have at least one parent abroad)
- political instability
- high dependency on external aid

Back in 90s – need to change minds and to change a “well-established” system

- Childcare system heavily reliant on residential care
- Professionals encouraging families to leave their children in residential care
- No coordination in policy making and implementation
- Social work profession non-existent
- Low capacities of authorities in service development
- Lack of workforce with gate-keeping functions
- Community based preventive services non-existent
- Few alternatives
- Poverty and educational reasons as main pushing factors
- Residential care staff using medical/educational approach to children’s needs
- Length of children’s stay in care till graduation

Changes in Alternative Care

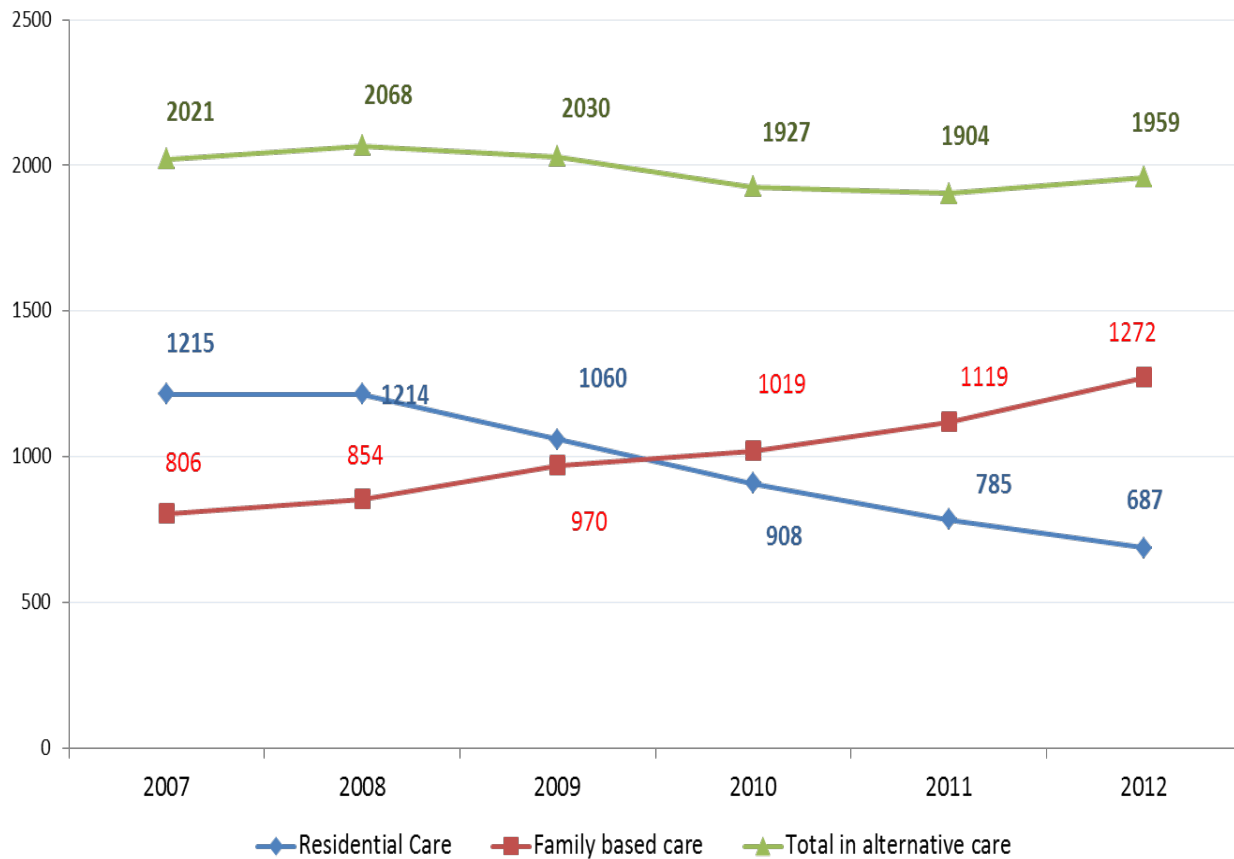
Rates of children in alternative care (number per 100,000 population of children)

RESULTS:

1. residential care on decrease (number of children decreased by more than 50%)

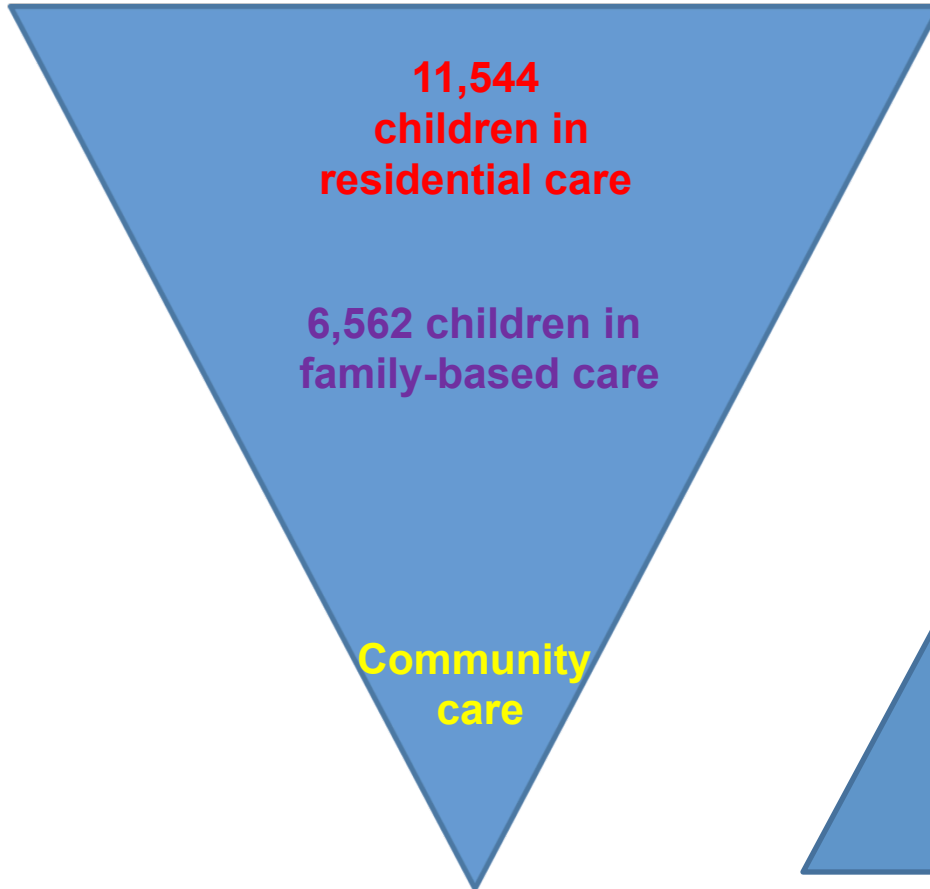
2. family-based alternatives are overtaking residential care

3. less children placed in alternative care

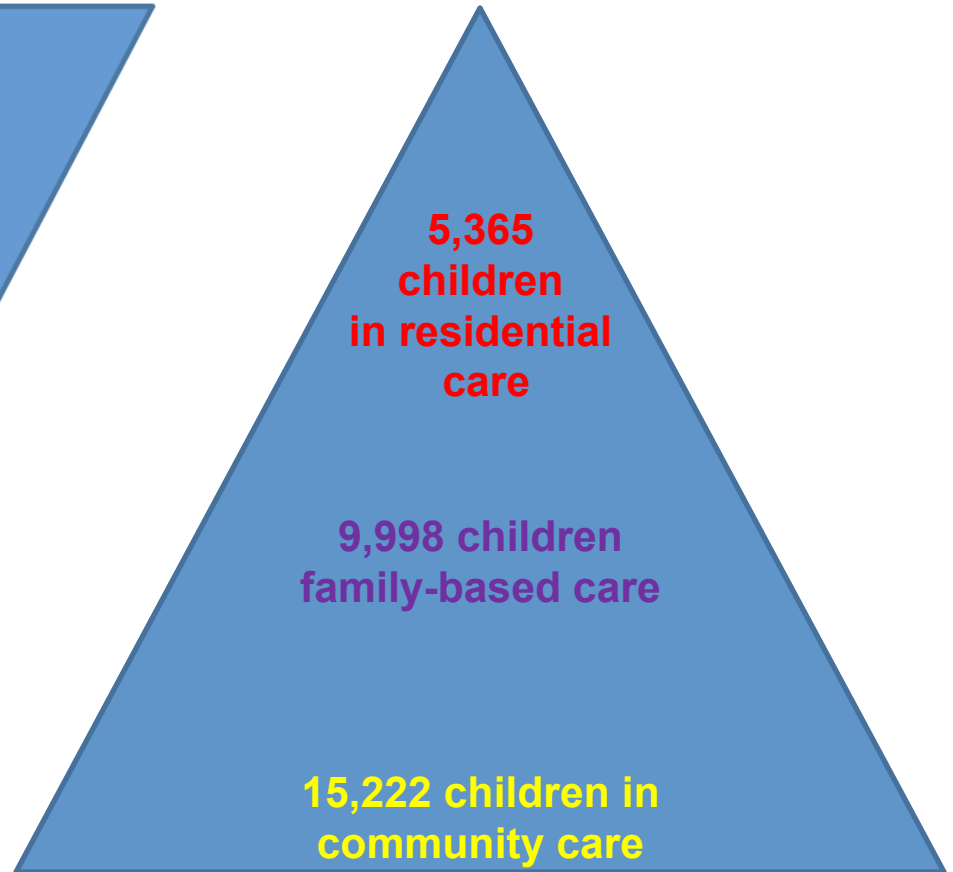


An overview of the national child care system

2006



2012

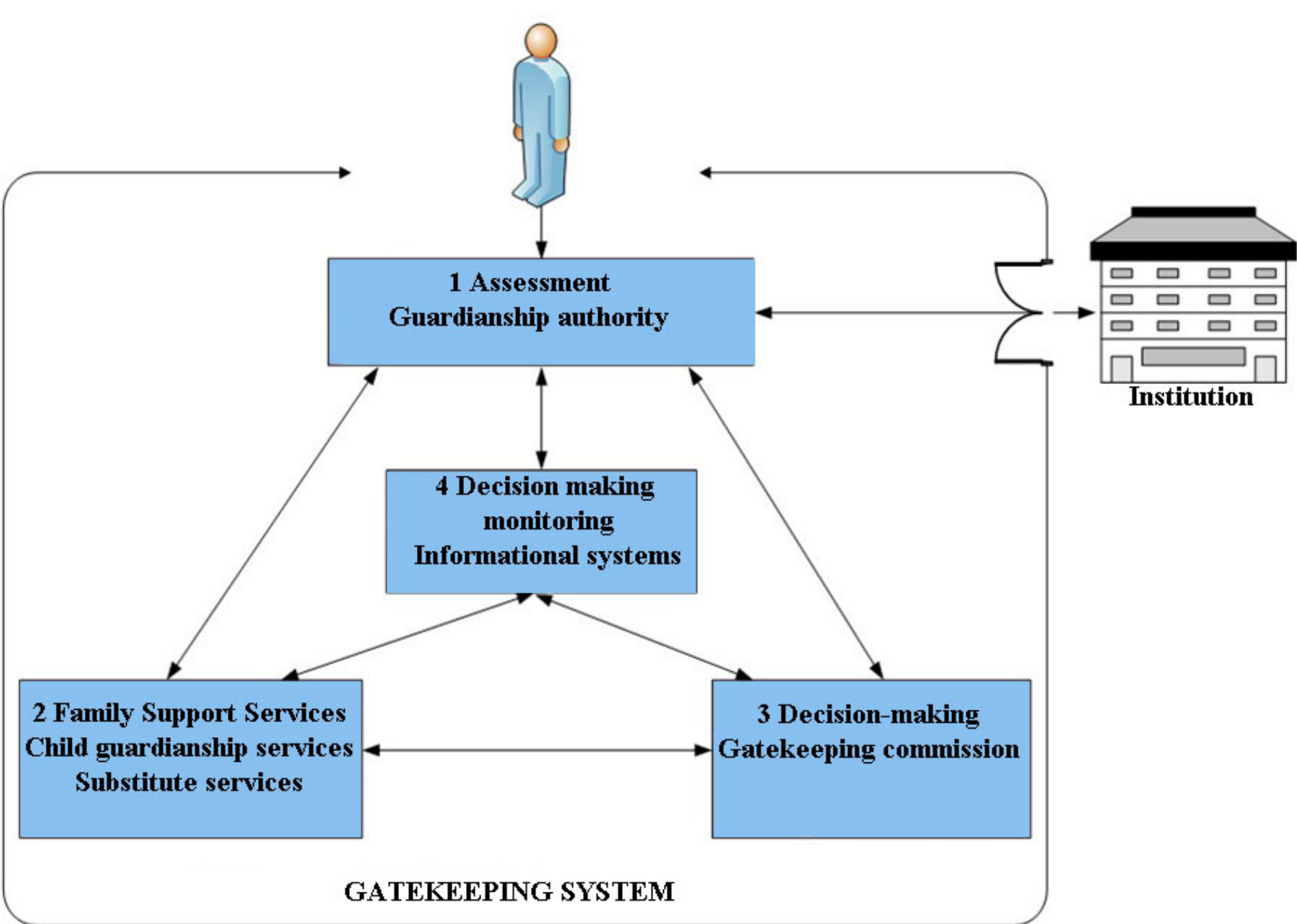


What is Gate-keeping for Moldova?

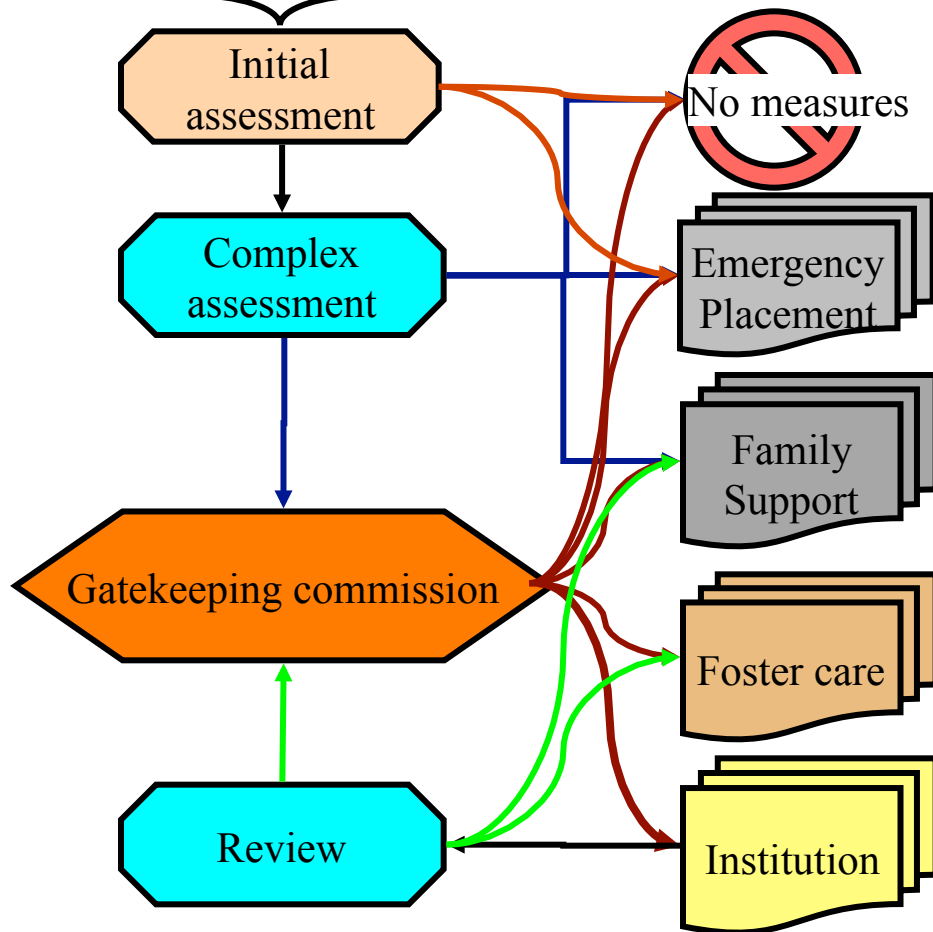
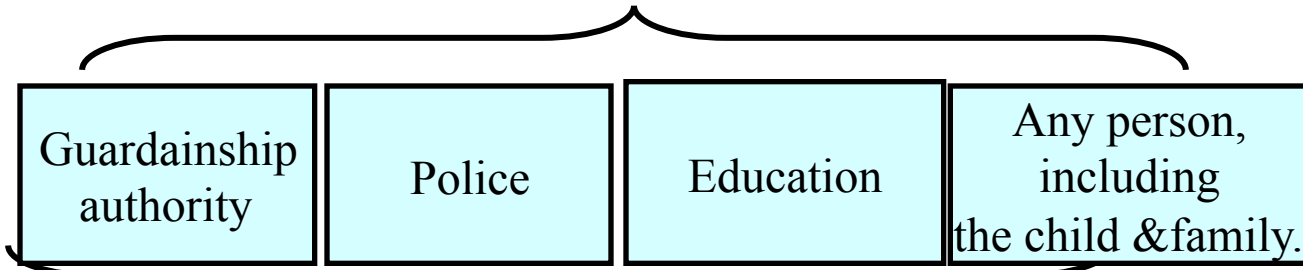
- Policies, procedures and services to restrict the flow of children from family care and contribute to their return to families
 - a mechanism **that blocks the entry of children to, and ensures their exit from institutional care**
 - a set of actions taken by competent bodies aimed at **preventing child separation** from the family and community by all means
- A system to ensure that alternative care is used only when **necessary** and that it is most **suitable to meet children's individual needs**

Why is this system necessary?

- no decisions are made without a thorough and professional assessment
- ensures blocking the entry of children into residential care
- reduces the number of children placed into residential care
- change in the approach – from institutional to family care
- efficient community services planning tool
- tool for targeting of resources towards the most vulnerable
- by using comprehensive child assessment it ensures that the children's needs are met



Problems



What works?

- Focus on preventing separation and regulating placement into care.
- Members of the commission are impartial in their scrutiny of care plans
- A stronger authority to decisions being implemented
- More consistent decisions based on sound evidence.
- Mobilisation of efforts at community and district level for children
- Common methodology, language and ownership of decisions
- The multisectoral nature leads to better decision-making and informs changes in programmes and policies in health, education, policing, etc.
- Improvements in data gathering & analysis allows for evidence-based planning.

Challenges

- The effectiveness of each GK Commission varies across the country
- Competing professional demands for professionals
- There are still districts that have no family-based alternative care provision
- Decentralization of social services and local public finance reform
- Poor focus on early intervention and prevention
- Negative social norms
- **To ensure that ALL SECTORS that regularly come into contact with children play a role in ensuring appropriate care for children, and gatekeeping is a critical part of that.**

“Good gate-keeping is more a matter of attitude and philosophy than the availability of resources.”

Tolfree



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Good gatekeeping is more a matter of attitude and philosophy than the availability of resources



Decisions on placement of children in any form of care can be well made without assessments by professionals



As long as many people depend on the alternative childcare sector for jobs, it will be difficult to establish an effective gatekeeping system



Gatekeeping is not a one-time issue, but should be part of a regular cycle in case management of children in child- or alternative care.



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Thank you!

For more information, please visit
www.bettercarenetwork.nl

Or contact Lotte Ghielen, coordinator
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