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Early intervention in social work with pregnant HIV-positive women.

Due to the fact that the majority of HIV-positive women are in reproductive age, the main challenge for them is decision about giving birth to a child and taking care of a child further.

There are different programs on prevention of HIV/AIDS on national and local levels in Russia which put an emphasis on prevention of HIV transmission from mother to child. First of all it is about providing access to anti-retroviral therapy for pregnant women and newly-born children. In St.Petersburg anti-retroviral therapy was available for 96 % of them in 2006, and 100% in 2007.

But drug and/or alcohol abuse, sex business, deviant behavior are the reasons for avoiding medical services by women living with HIV. Still the number of children born to HIV-positive women is growing. 12 823 children were born to HIV-infected women in Russia by 30.09.2005, and 19329 by the end of 2007. (data of Federal Scientific and Methodological Center for the Prevention of and Fight against AIDS). 10 % of the children exposed to HIV-infection by perinatal way have been abandoned. In the majority cases, the children were given up by their mothers at birth. To a large extent such situation is connected to the fact that basically only public health services take care of pregnant women living with HIV without providing social and psychological help, which is extremely important for women with different kinds of deviant behavior.

It is obvious, that the decision and readiness of HIV-positive women to care of a child after a birth is not defined exclusively by the fact, whether the woman has access to medical services and anti-retroviral therapy or not. Women living with HIV are in a situation of social and psychological vulnerability, need support from experts which could give them confidence not only of their future, but also the future of the children. The very important point is to start to work with them since the first months of pregnancy and continue to provide medical, social and psychological help for them and their children after giving a birth. Using the experience of already existed programs of early intervention can be very helpful in this case.

Development of programs of early intervention for pregnant HIV-positive women and their children can become one of the ways of organizing complex medical and social-psychological help.

Such programs are good base for preparation for motherhood, raising the level of social activity of women living with HIV, educating them in the healthy way of life, creating positive conditions for the growth and upbringing of children in families having HIV-positive members, prevention of social abandonment, changing deviant behavior of parents.

The study of problems of social work with people living with HIV in 2008 has financial support from Government of St.Petersburg.