

CHILD SAFEGUARDING TEAM

Who we are:

The Child Safeguarding Team (established in 2001) within the Issues Affecting Children Program of the International Center "La Strada", consisting of **an attorney** and several **psychologists**, provides assistance to children victims and witnesses of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation throughout the criminal proceedings.

Our mission

To ensure that the rights and interests of the child are respected throughout the criminal procedure in order to avoid the repeated victimization and follow all the principles of restorative justice.

Area of competence

Any form of sexual violence against children, either it is sexual abuse or sexual exploitation, represents the area of our activity. **The informational technologies** as recruiting and enticement method, as well as the environment of sexual abuse or exploitation are the key elements of our specialization. We provide legal and psychological assistance to the child victim or witness of the following offences:

- Rape (art. 171 Criminal Code of RM)
- Violent actions of sexual nature (art. 172 Criminal Code of RM)
- Sexual harassment (art. 173 Criminal Code of RM)
- Sexual intercourse with the person aged under 16 (art. 174 Criminal Code of RM)
- Perverted actions (art. 175 Criminal Code of RM)
- Solicitation of children for sexual purposes (art. 175/1 Criminal Code of RM)
- Child trafficking (art. 206 para (1) let. a) Criminal Code of RM)
- Child pornography (art. 208/1 Criminal Code of RM)
- Child prostitution (art. 208/2 Criminal Code of RM)

Our principles

- Ensure the balance between criminal justice and the best interests of the child;
- Confidentiality and protection of the victim's identity;
- Avoid interventions where the child benefit is reduced while the risk of the harm is high;
- Child participation in the decision making process that concerns him/her.

Who can ask for our services?

- Law enforcement agencies;
- Frontline specialists from child protection and related fields (social assistance, education, health)

Our services

- ✓ **Assist and consult law enforcement agencies** at the investigation stage;
- ✓ **Specialized psychological support and assistance for children and their families** during criminal proceedings;
- ✓ **Legal consulting and specialized legal assistance for children and their families;**
- ✓ **Child friendly hearing space** for victims/witnesses of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation.

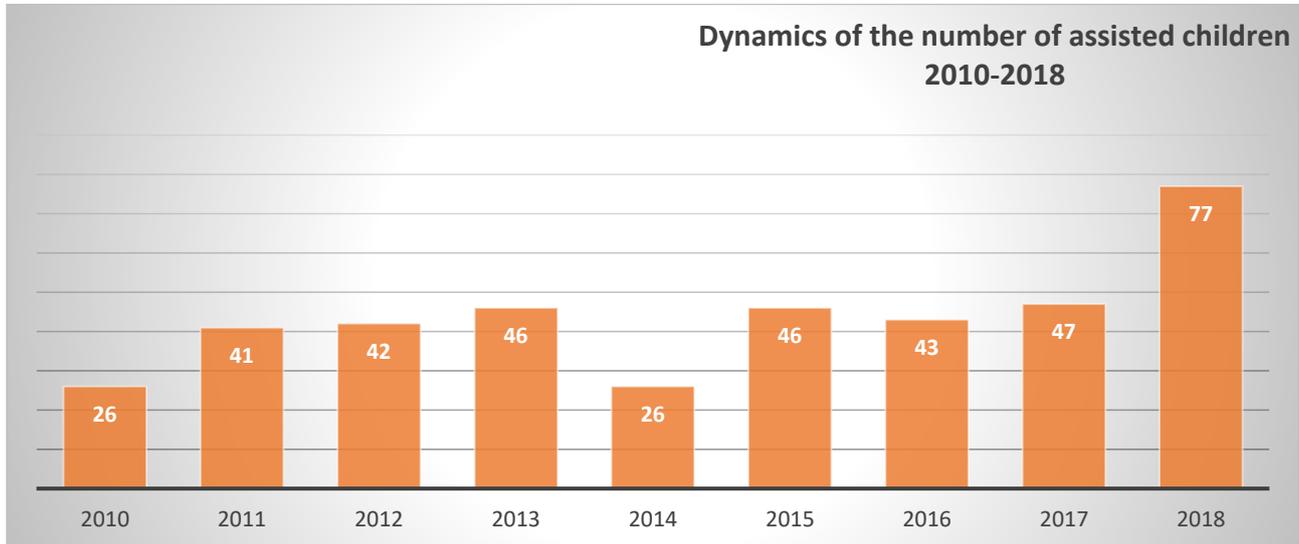
✓ Contacts

- ✓ **Phone:** +373 78 330 406, +373 78 405 660
- ✓ **Web:** siguronline.md, lastrada.md
- ✓ **Working hours: 24/24, 7 days per week.**

CHILD SAFEGUARDING TEAM

Overview of assisted cases in the last 8 years

From the first day of its activity till the end of 2018, the lawyer and the psychologist of the Child Safeguarding Team provided assistance and support to **394 beneficiaries**. These are children and adolescents who became victims or witnesses in legal proceedings related to sexual offences (rape, sexual harassment, solicitation of children for sexual purposes, violent actions of sexual nature, perverted actions) or sexual exploitation (child trafficking, child pornography, child prostitution).



Year 2018: statistics and trends

In 2018, La Strada attorney and psychologists took on **77 new cases** and continued to provide assistance for 6 cases from the previous year. In all these cases, the Internet was the main platform for recruiting or communication between the abuser and the victim. The crime itself happens more often online, especially that related to child pornography and child trafficking.



83 cases

Child sexual abuse/or
sexual exploitation



Trafficking - **38 children**



Pornography - **15 children**



Sexual harassment- **2 children**



Luring - **6 children**



Perverted actions- **9 children**



Rape - **9 children**



Violent actions of sexual nature- **4 children**

Breakdown of cases, assisted by the attorney and psychologist during 2018

CHILD SAFEGUARDING TEAM

- **Online sexual abuses represent a quarter of assisted cases**

In 2018, 32 children, who experienced online abuse, benefitted from legal and psychological assistance during criminal proceedings. Some of them have been repeatedly forced to create and share photos or video with themselves in intimate situations. In most cases, the child begins to be blackmailed when he/she sends the first intimate or sexually explicit content to the people he/she communicates online with. Teenagers' online relationships are developing very quickly. They become acquainted on a social network (usually, Facebook or Odnoklassniki), and then continue communication on other channels (Skype, Messenger etc.). From the moment they get acquainted with them until they share photos of a sexual nature and be blackmailed or threatened, it takes relatively little time – from a day to few weeks.

The children share photos of a sexual nature from various reasons:

- **fall in love** (in most cases, the abuser manipulates them very skillfully, simulating the romantic relationship);
- **are blackmailed** with suicide if they refuse to send photos (single case);
- **are lured** with the promise of a career in modeling (single case);
- **are threatened** with creating a fake account and publishing hurtful things about the child (two cases);
- **are curious** (the abuser is the first who sent photos of video of a sexual nature).
- **Six out of ten children are identified by the law enforcement bodies based on the material shared and distributed online** (photos and video of a sexual nature).

Usually, an identified victim leads to the identification of many others, based on the material found at the abuser. This happens because abusers **communicate with several children simultaneously** and manage to collect dozens of sexually explicit files from them.

Other cases were reported to the law enforcement bodies by an acquaintance or friend of the child (4 cases), or by parents or relatives (3 cases).

The truth is that **teenagers do not usually talk about what happened to them**. Whether they are ashamed that parents will find out about those photos or video, or they do not know whom to talk about. Their first reaction is to delete everything (chat, photos, and their account on social networks) and further avoid communication with the abuser. But in most cases, it is too late, especially if the abuser managed to get what he wanted (photos/video of sexual nature).

Only in 3 cases, registered by the Child Mobile Team, the teenagers/children asked for help directly on the platform www.siguronline.md or by reporting to the police.