Neufeld Institute
Making Sense of Kids - *developmental science in practice*

BRIEF SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES
NEUFELD INSTITUTE UKRAINIAN PROJECT
2023-2026

REASON FOR THE PROJECT

Placing children who are currently in orphanages into the care of families is a priority of the Ukrainian government.

In 2023 Neufeld Institute was asked to provide long-term, in-depth training in Ukrainian to Social Workers/professionals working in the adoption system by the Coordination Center for Family Upbringing and Childcare Development of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine.

This project has expanded to providing education for Foster Parents as formally requested by the Coordination Centre in 2024.

Word has been spreading among European countries that the Neufeld Institute has something to offer the children of Ukraine, whether they be orphaned within Ukraine or displaced from their homeland. We are already working with organizations in the Netherlands to provide training and have recently received requests from agencies within five other European countries as well. We are doing what we can to provide resources with our limited staff and finances.

All courses are being offered to Social Workers/professional and Foster Parents free of charge. We have not received any funding through the Ukrainian Ministry of Social Policy or any of the Social Services agencies in Ukraine.

All donations and grants are used to pay our coordinator and facilitator. Oversight of the project by Senior Faculty and administrative support from the Neufeld Institute is provided pro bono.

We could not do this important work without your generous donations.

Total number of courses offered between January 2023 and November 2026 = **21**

Total number of Social Worker/professional participants = **1,819**

Total number of Foster Parent participants = **2,049**

Estimated number of children cared for by these families = **over 4,000**

ORIGIN OF PROJECT

December 2022

Written request to Dr. Neufeld for on-going in-depth training in the Ukrainian language from Kyiv Social Service Center in Kyiv, Ukraine. Previously training in the Neufeld paradigm was provided in Russian through our Russian campus, which was no longer permitted due to the war.

January to March 2023

Further requests came from Transcarpathian Regional Center for Social Services, Kyiv City Center for Gender Equality and Violence Prevention and the Center for the Provision of Social Services of Vyshneve City Council

March 2023

Neufeld Ukrainian Team was established: Eva de Gosztonyi, Senior Faculty; Julia Fomina, Coordinator; Iryna Shokur, Course Facilitator

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

March to June 2023

Creation of:

- NI Ukraine website (https://neufeldinstitute-ukraine.com);
- YouTube Channel https://www.youtube.com/@neufeldinstitute-ukraine ;
- Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/neufeldinstitute.ukraine ;
- Instagram page https://www.instagram.com/neufeldinstitute.ukraine/
- and a campus for delivering courses.

March to June 2023

Creation of an introductory course to the Neufeld model – "What Do Children Need? Looking through the lens of the developmental approach."

July to November 2023

Offering online courses in Ukrainian:

To two groups of Social Workers/professionals = 110 participants

- "What do Children Need" (x 2)

September 2023 to February 2024

Translation of "Making Sense of Aggression" course.

October 2023

Approached for collaboration by the Coordination Center for Family Upbringing and Childcare Development of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, a governmental initiative to train social workers and others to provide support to families adopting orphans.

February 2024

Signed a formal agreement with Coordination Center for the Development of Family Education and Childcare to become an official consultant.

July to September 2024

Translation of "Alpha Children" course through a grant by the Canadian Ukrainian Foundation

March to November 2024

Offering online courses:

To Social Workers/professionals = 435 participants

- "Making Sense of Aggression" (x 2)
- "Alpha Children"
- "What do Children Need"

To Foster Parents = 77 participants

- “What do Children Need”

October 2024

Registered as a Non-Profit Charitable Organization in Ukraine

October 2024 to March 2025

Translation of “Making Sense of Anxiety” course through a grant by the Canadian Ukrainian Foundation

February to December 2025

Offering online courses:

To Social Workers/professionals = 1,172 participants.

- “Making Sense of Anxiety” (x2)
- “Making Sense of Aggression”

to Foster Parents = 1,396 participants.

- “Making Sense of Aggression”
- “Alpha Children” (x2)
- “What do Children Need”

January 2025 to April 2026

Translation of 8-hour course – “The Art and Science of Transplanting children” through a grant by the Temerty Foundation

March 25, 2025

Official request from the Coordination Centre to provide courses for their Foster Parents

October 2025

Request from Netherlands - *Loket Ontheemden Oekraïne* (LOOP - Helpdesk for Displaced Persons from Ukraine) to provide support services to professionals supporting refugee families and their children displaced by the war.

January 2026 to present

On-going discussions with the Dutch Neufeld Institute and LOOP to provide support via Neufeld Institute courses and a website. Other countries are also interested in these services.

February to November 2026

offering online courses:

to Social Workers/professionals = 460 participants.

- “What do Children Need”
- “Transplanting”
- “Making Sense of Aggression”
- “Making Sense of Anxiety”

to Foster Parents = 120 participants

- “Transplanting”
- “Alpha Children”
- “Making Sense of Aggression”

REGIONS SERVED:

Participants have joined the courses from all Ukrainian regions except those in the occupied regions and in the war zone - 25 regions were engaged.

COLABORATIONS:

- Official consultant to the **Coordination Center for Family Upbringing and Childcare Development of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine -** signed February 14, 2024
- Over 900 different Ukrainian organizations have been involved in taking the courses.

FUNDING:

PRIVATE DONATIONS from Neufeld Institute members and others

GRANTS RECEIVED:

CANADIAN UKRAINIAN FOUNDATION – to translate and deliver “Making Sense of Anxiety” and “Alpha Children” courses – completed 2025

T**EMERTY FOUNDATION –** to translate and deliver “The Art and Science of Transplanting Children” –completed May 2026

CANADIAN UKRAINIAN FOUNDATION – to deliver “Making Sense of Anxiety”, “Making Sense of Aggression” and “Alpha Children” courses to Foster parents and Social Workers/professionals – in progress.

NEUFELD INSITUTE UKRAINE TEAM:

- **Eva de Gosztonyi**, Senior Faculty and International Director, Neufeld Institute, psychologist (retired). Although not Ukrainian, her parents are from Hungary, and she has an understanding of the history and culture of Eastern Europe.
- **Iryna Shokur**, Course Facilitator, Neufeld Institute, developmental psychologist, counselling children and parents. Iryna is a Ukrainian citizen from Kyiv presently living in Sarnia, Ontario with her family.
- **Julia Fomina**, Project Coordinator, Neufeld Institute, practicing family counsellor, specializing in the developmental approach and trauma. Julia is Ukrainian, presently living in Richmond Hill, Ontario with her family.

TESTIMONIALS

Foster parent: *I am writing to express our family's deepest gratitude for the* ***Art and Science of Transplanting Children*** *course and the* ***Alpha Children*** *course. For five years, our family struggled to find an approach to one of our foster daughters. She was impossible to manage. Psychiatrists considered her a very difficult patient, and she was receiving psychiatric treatment. Our marriage was falling apart, and we were seriously facing the possibility that we had failed and would have to end our foster placement. My husband, in particular, was suffering deeply. Over the years of chaos our family had lived through, he had developed a strong aversion toward this child. After taking your courses,*

we finally understood what was happening with her. We changed our approach, and today our family is alive again and filled with love. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your incredible work. And I honestly don't even know how to thank Gordon for creating these courses. They are both brilliant and beautifully simple at the same time.

***Nataliia, Social Educator** - The course "**What Children Need: Looking Through the Lens of the Developmental Approach**" appealed to me very much overall. I especially appreciated how the course framed child-rearing within the context of the adult–child relationship, as well as the discipline strategies that are both safe and supportive of healthy development. What stayed with me most was the six-level model of attachment and the ways relationships can be supported at each level, along with the three processes of maturation (emergence, adaptation, and integration) and how they help unfold a child's personal potential. Thank you for offering such an essential course for every educator. Everything was structured clearly and explained in an accessible way.*

***Oleh, Specialist at a charitable foundation supporting children affected by abuse -** The Neufeld training "**Alpha Children**" became a true revelation for me. It helped me gain a deeper understanding of the nature of children's behavior and the role of the adult in forming healthy attachment. The material is presented in a clear, structured, and deeply humane way — without pressure, and with great respect for both the child and the parent.*

***Olha, Social Worker** - The Neufeld Institute course "**Alpha Children**" has been a deeply meaningful and valuable learning experience for me. It helped me see the nature of children's behavior in a new way, along with the role of alpha instincts and the importance of secure attachment. The insights I gained are already transforming my approach to working with both children and parents — bringing more awareness, calm, and confidence to my adult role. I sincerely recommend this course to anyone who works with children or is raising them.*

***Maryna, Social Worker - Making Sense of Anxiety** course was a true revelation for me. I began to see the nature of anxiety in a completely new way — not as a problem, but as a signal of lost safety or disrupted connection. The idea of the essential role of attachment in overcoming anxiety was particularly valuable. The material is presented with depth and clarity. I highly recommend this course to anyone who wants to better understand children, themselves, and emotional processes overall.*

***Iryna, Psychologist** - "**Making Sense of Aggression**." For me, this training became a real discovery. I learned a great deal of new information, and from the very first lecture I found myself analyzing my own approach to raising my child — noticing many gaps that came simply from a lack of knowledge and experience. The new understanding of aggression — why it arises and what lies beneath it — is something I can immediately apply in my work with children at the Centre for Social Adaptation and their families. This is an invaluable experience that has already changed how I view the behaviour of both children and adults.*

***Tetiana, Psychologist, -** From the course **What Children Need: Looking Through the Lens of the Developmental Approach**: I enjoyed absolutely everything. While working through the material, I couldn't shake the feeling of endless positive energy and kindness. We were all children once, and many things brought back memories from my own life— warm memories that make the heart feel lighter even now. My sincere thanks to the team who created this course! You inspire us to change, to be more attentive both to children and to ourselves, and to discover new dimensions of relationships.*