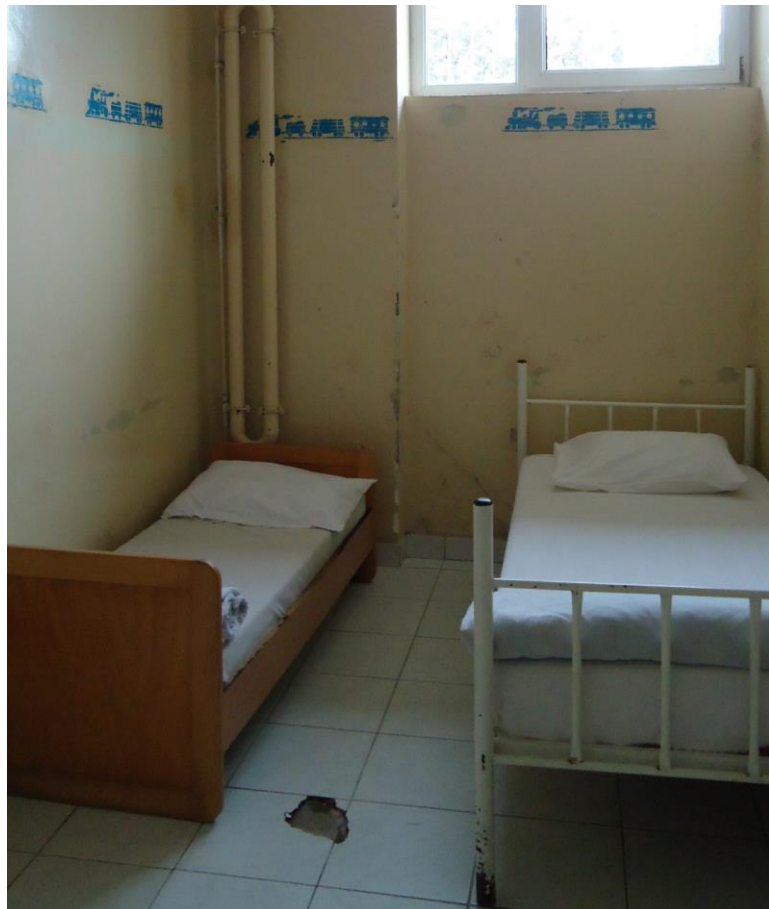


It is my dream to leave this place

What is happening to children with disabilities in Serbia







Who we are

We are called Human Rights Watch.

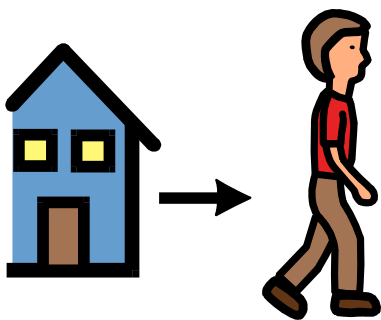


We work to make sure everyone in the world is treated fairly and gets their rights.



What is this report about?

This report is about children with disabilities in a country called Serbia.

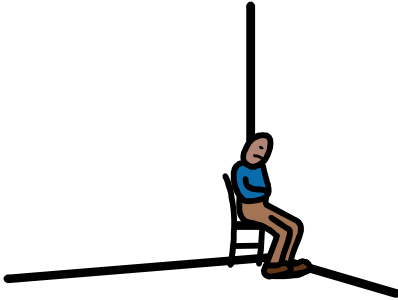


Many children with disabilities in Serbia live apart from their families.

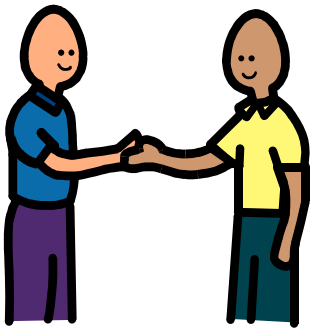


They are sent to big homes for children with disabilities.

These homes are often far away from their families and other people.



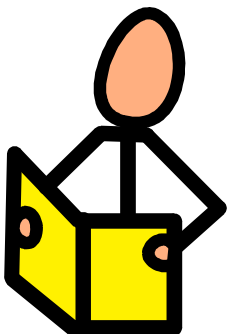
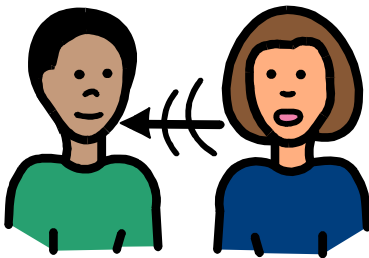
Many children with disabilities live in homes like these for all of their lives.



We went to some homes for children with disabilities in Serbia.

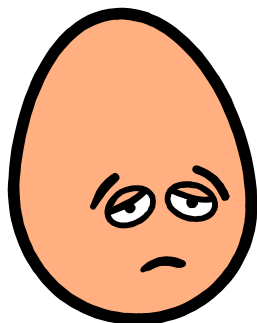
We spoke to:

- children with disabilities and their families
- staff who work in the homes
- people from the government



This report tells you what we found out.

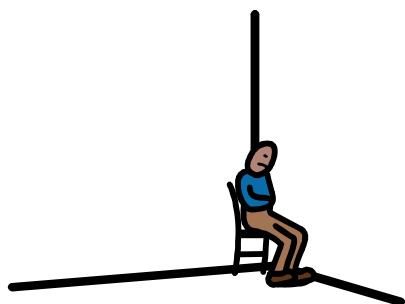
What is life like for children with disabilities in these homes?



Many children with disabilities in these homes do not get the care they need.



Many homes do not have enough staff to care for and help all the children.



In these homes:

- Some children have to stay alone all day

This should not happen.
Children should have people to spend time with and talk to about how they feel



- doctors decide that many children must take lots of medicine to calm them down

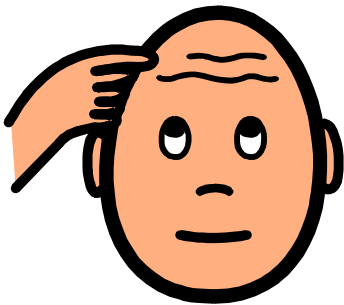


Sometimes staff give children medicine without asking them first or telling them what it is for.



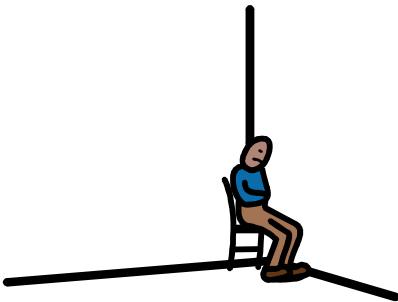
Many children and young people with disabilities in the homes do not get:

- an education

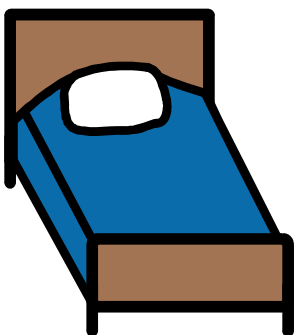


- support to make their own decisions

Other people make decisions for them about things like taking medicine



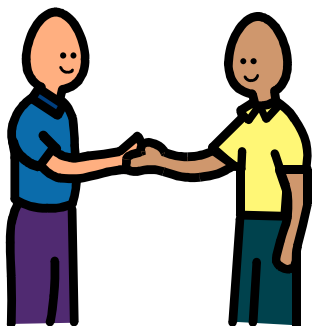
People who are supposed to make sure children are treated fairly do not even visit them in these homes.



Many children with disabilities have to sleep in the same rooms as adults.

This is not good for them and may be unsafe.

What is the government in Serbia doing?



Serbia has agreed to make sure children with disabilities are treated fairly and can have a good life.



They signed some documents about this.

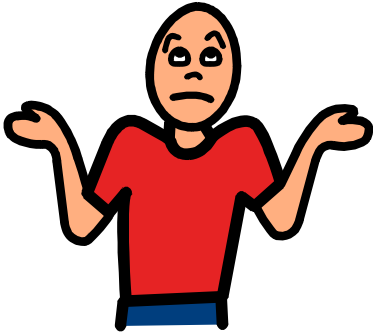


Some things have changed in Serbia.

For example, the government has made new rules to allow some children to stay with their families.

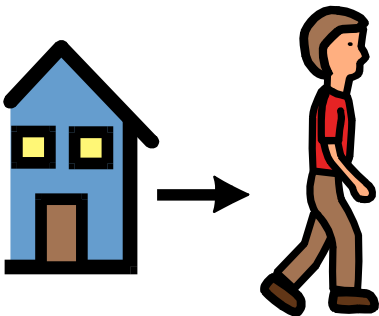
But there are still many problems.

For example:

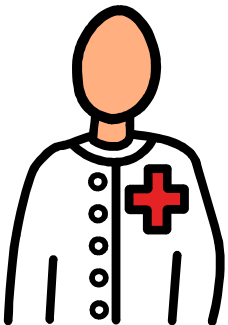


- there is hardly any support for children with disabilities and their families in their communities

Support means health care and education



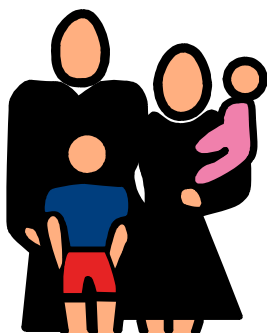
- babies with disabilities are still sent to these homes



- medical staff often tell parents that it is best to send their child to these homes

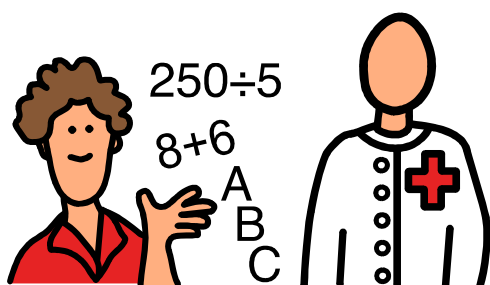
What we want to happen next

These are things for the government in Serbia to do.



The government should make sure:

- children with disabilities can live with their families



- children and their families can get the help and support they need near where they live

For example, good healthcare, schools and support with money

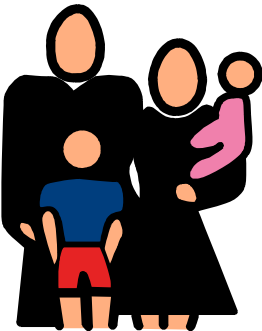


- children with disabilities and their families have good information about the help and support they can get

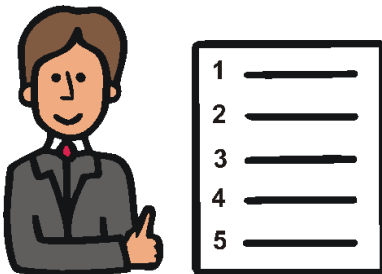
The government should make sure:



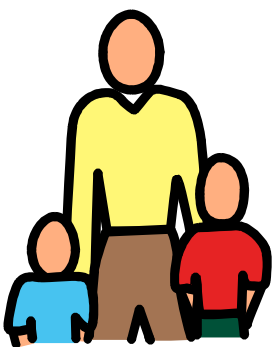
- money is spent on help and support for people near where they live



- children with disabilities in these homes can go back to live with their families where possible

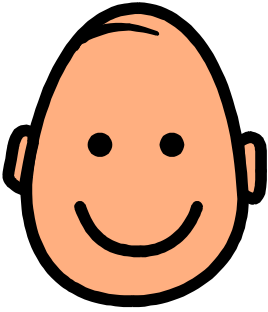


There should be good plans about this

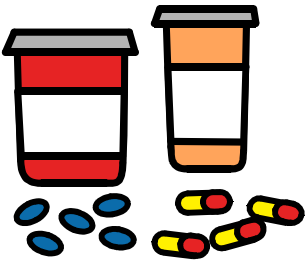


- children with disabilities who cannot go back home have good places to live with other families

The government should make sure:

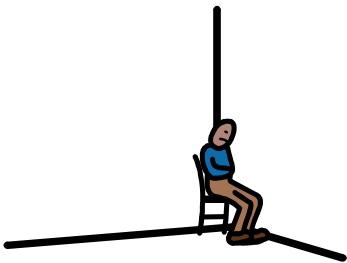


- children with disabilities in these homes are safe and treated well

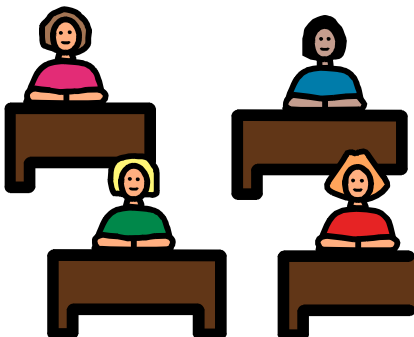


- bad things do not happen to children with disabilities in these homes

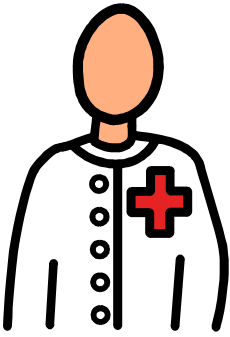
For example, giving children too much medicine to deal with their behavior or keeping them away from other children



- people who treat children with disabilities badly can get into trouble

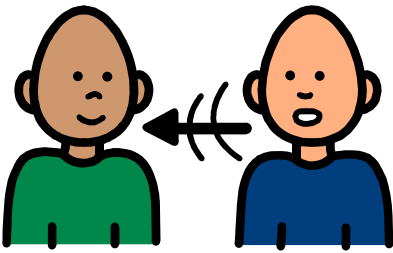


- children with disabilities get a good education in the same schools as other children

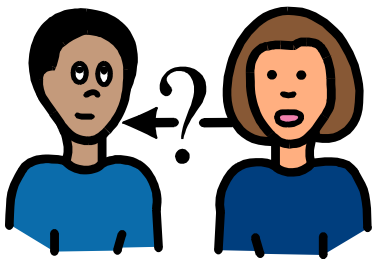


The government should make sure:

- children with disabilities get good healthcare



- there is an easy way for children with disabilities to tell others if they are treated badly



- staff listen to what children want
- children and young people can say yes or no to medical treatment where possible



- adults with disabilities get support to make their own decisions about things like taking medicine

By adults we mean people over the age of 18

The government should make sure:



- the laws are changed so that other people cannot make decisions for adults with disabilities without asking them



- people with disabilities and their families have a big say in plans and laws and things that happen to them



Other countries and groups in the world should help Serbia with this where they can.