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## Uzbekistan Pioneers Unique Social Protection System in Central Asia



Published on July 27, 2025

Document Date: Sun, Dec 28 2025 12:34:07 am

Category: ,English,International - ,Snippets

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Uzbekistan is undergoing a large-scale transformation of its social protection system, aimed at improving the well-being of its citizens and enhancing the effectiveness of social services. A key

driver of this process is the national development strategy “Uzbekistan – 2030”, which focuses on the comprehensive and high-quality modernization of the country’s social policy.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has introduced innovative approaches to supporting vulnerable groups, including low-income families, the elderly, persons with disabilities, victims of violence, women in difficult situations, and children deprived of parental care.

Reforms are being implemented both at the legislative level and through specific programs and projects. A significant milestone was the establishment in 2023 of the National Agency for Social Protection (NASP) under the President of Uzbekistan – the only consolidated, ministerial-level body of its kind in the region, responsible for coordinating the implementation of a new generation of social policy.

Unlike neighboring countries, where social functions are divided among several institutions, Uzbekistan has integrated all components of social protection into a single digital system managed by NASP. This has improved coordination, efficiency, accountability, and has led to real improvements in the lives of vulnerable population groups.

In 2021, Uzbekistan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The country offers a range of benefits to companies and organizations that employ individuals with disabilities. Many institutions, streets, and bus stops across the country are gradually being

adapted to accommodate people with disabilities.

A key focus of the reforms is the development of “Inson” Social Services Centers, established in 208 districts and cities across the country. These centers operate on a one-stop-shop model and provide over 100 types of social assistance, including psychological and legal counseling, food assistance, and targeted aid for 12 categories of citizens, such as persons with disabilities, low-income families, and the elderly.

All centers are fully digitized, integrated with state systems, and operate on an individualized support model. Each citizen undergoes a needs assessment and receives a personalized support plan with ongoing guidance through the recovery or reintegration process.

In every makhalla (community unit), social workers are assigned based on a tiered “region–district–makhalla” structure, according to the number of families and individuals in need.

In the second quarter of the year 2025, 1.787 million applications were submitted to “Inson” Centers. Of these, 1.204 million were processed, while 496,200 are under review. The most in-demand services include compensation for gas and electricity costs, child benefits, support for low-income families, and access to health resorts for seniors and persons with disabilities.

The “From Poverty to Prosperity” program, enacted by Presidential Decree on September 23,

2024, addresses issues of social orphanhood and care for children deprived of parental care. It focuses on the creation of conditions as close as possible to a family environment and on an individual approach to each child. Accordingly, measures have been developed to place such children in foster care and provide them with social services. In particular, priority is given to preserving the family setting when placing a child in foster care. The main forms of placement are guardianship, custody, or adoption. Placement in a specialized institution is considered only as a measure of last resort.

Children with difficult life situations are temporarily placed in family orphanages within “Inson” Centers before being placed in foster care. Each child is assigned an individualized development plan, with records managed through the “Social Protection” system, which tracks both identified orphans and families willing to foster.

In this way, “Inson” Centers serve as legal representatives for such children, safeguarding their interests, monitoring living conditions, the use of support provided, and ensuring caretakers fulfill their obligations.

During his visit to the “Inson” Social Services Center in Tashkent’s Shaykhantahur district, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized: “This is a place where every person’s concerns are taken care of and where they strive to make people happy. Through such a system, social justice

and human dignity are established in our society”.

Special attention in Uzbekistan is given to families raising children with disabilities. As part of a public-private partnership, a specialized center “Imkoniyatlar Olami” (“World of Opportunities”) was created to provide services to children from birth to three years of age.

Previously, such infants were exclusively under the care of their parents, and were admitted to specialized institutions only from the age of three. Now, if a risk of disability is identified during pregnancy, expectant mothers can receive help and counseling here, which will strengthen the care of the child. Psychological support is also provided.

Starting March 1, 2025, a day care services for children with disabilities aged 3 to 18 began operating under a public-private partnership model. It offers a wide range of services – social, rehabilitative, educational, and more. The initiative by NASP aims to support children’s social adaptation and enables parents, previously unable to work due to caregiving responsibilities, to return to employment.

A pilot project in Tashkent – the private kindergarten “Wunderkind” in the Yashnabad district successfully operates such a day care service, offering pedagogical, social, and rehabilitative care for children with special needs.

Another example is Family-type home No. 1 in the Mirzo-Ulugbek district. It currently houses nine

children – seven with various medical conditions (Down syndrome, dysplasia, anemia, heart defects), and two without. Education and care are customized: three attend specialized kindergartens, three go to general kindergartens, and three are home-schooled.

The home emphasizes individualized care, love, and a nurturing environment that replicates family life. Caregivers follow development plans and integration programs tailored to each child's needs and capabilities.

“Children choose their meals and even help prepare them, fostering responsibility and independence”, one caregiver noted.

Currently, nine such homes operate across Uzbekistan – five in Tashkent, two in Kashkadarya, and two in Samarkand.

In accordance with the Presidential Decree “On measures to expand the scope of social services provided to individuals in need of care”, the “Step Towards an Active Life” program is being implemented. Under this initiative, adults with disabilities or those requiring constant care receive free social services through vouchers. These include home-based care, supervision, assistance with hygiene, meals, and psychological support.

An example of the program's implementation is a center located in the Nodirabegim makhalla of Mirzo-Ulugbek district. It has capacity for nine people and currently serves seven. The center is

staffed by five experienced professionals.

Iroda Khamidova, a primary school teacher at Wunderkind:

“Our special day care center for children with disabilities, designed for nine children, currently serves seven. Two caregivers and an assistant are assigned to them. The center operates five days a week for nine hours a day and includes a psychological service.

Educators focus on building essential skills such as holding a spoon or expressing creativity with a pencil. The center was established under a Presidential initiative to support children with special needs.

Here, we’ve created all necessary conditions, including a psychologist’s office where not only children but also parents receive consultations and moral support. Seeing their child in a safe and attentive environment reassures them”.

Farhod Kamilov, Chief Specialist of NASP’s Department for the Development of Medical and Social Services for Persons with Disabilities:

“From March 1, 2025, we launched a pilot day care service in seven regions of Uzbekistan, including Tashkent.

By October 1, we plan to expand the service nationwide. Agreements with entrepreneurs in all districts have already been signed as part of public-private partnerships.

Currently, the day care program covers 1,200 children. We believe it is essential to raise public awareness about their specific needs.

Territorial NASP offices operate psychological, medical, and pedagogical commissions. They conduct comprehensive assessments of children with special educational needs and recommend the most suitable path – inclusive, special, or day care service.

It is important to understand that day care is not an educational institution; it focuses solely on caregiving and development. The entrepreneur provides 9-hour daily care, allowing parents to work or do other things.

With mutual agreement, it may be extended up to 12 hours, but the child must always return home to their family.

Our main goal is to reduce, or ideally eliminate, the need for residential care institutions. That is why these day care services were created. Our main goal is to reduce or ideally prevent the placement of children in long-term institutional care. It is with this purpose that such day care services have been established”.

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