



# Bojana Brkic Family Outreach Worker, Serbia



***“The part of my job I like best is when I see real progress and change made in the family - when I see the parents being proud of the changes they have made, and when the children become more self-confident and are happier with their lives.”***



## Overview

Bojana Brkic has been a part of a vibrant family-strengthening social work team set up in Belgrade to support the most vulnerable families with children. The Centre for Infants, Children and Youth - Belgrade where she works used to be a traditional children’s home, but now it is focused on providing services in the community and helps parents who want the best for their children but are struggling.

## Typical tasks and responsibilities

Family outreach workers like Bojana visit the families they are working with at least once a week. These families are referred to the family support service by a case manager from the Centre for Social Work who has registered child protection concerns in this particular family. Concerns of neglect can be a consequence of poverty and marginalization. Warning signs can include a lack of school attendance, alerts regarding domestic violence from the police, and continued calls for assistance by the family.

Bojana helps the family jointly identify the most pressing as well as the most important challenges it is facing. Bojana also helps families access the services, including from the health center to address disability concerns, enrollment in preschool or access to financial benefits for families under the poverty line, or those with a disability.

Her role is to help parents improve their positive parenting skills – so that their family environment is a safe and caring place and children are included in play and educational activities in the community.

For Bojana, the most important thing is that the children’s well-being is improved. The road to this may be long – and this is why she will be working with a single family for up to nine months.

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## Typical daily schedule

“Every day is a busy day for me”, says Bojana. “But I always feel like I have done something meaningful and made a change in someone’s life – or at least tried to do my best to do so.” Sometimes problems families are facing are overwhelming. This is why Bojana has supervision once a week, when she can consult with a more experienced social worker on how to handle the case. On a regular day, Bojana visits around three families. All members of the family usually sit together to reflect back on their plan and the responsibilities each member of the family agreed to. Bojana’s role is multi-faceted, because she often needs to mediate conflict or disagreements. She tries to get everyone to agree on a common goal. Bojana may also visit the school or other service the child is attending. This is why Bojana says she is an advocate for her family in the whole community.

## Training and skills

Most family outreach workers like Bojana have a degree in Social Work. Some of them are trained psychologists or pedagogues. “We learn about the role of the Centre for Social Work, how and on what basis children may be removed from their families and placed into care and how to identify and address child protection issues.” The most important skill for a family outreach worker is motivation and commitment to help a family change. This is a competency that is not learned at school, but is a core part of a selection process and is valued by the managers of the family outreach service.

## Why Bojana loves her job

Bojana says that she likes her job because it is rewarding, and her client families are really appreciative of the effort she makes to support them. “The part of my job I like best is when I see real progress and change made in the family - when I see the parents being proud of the changes they have made, and when the children become more self-confident and are happier with their lives. ”

To view a video of Bojana in action as a Family Outreach Worker helping a family please visit

[http://www.unicef.org/serbia/media\\_28076.html](http://www.unicef.org/serbia/media_28076.html)



## “Improving the workforce. Improving lives.”

### Who is the social service workforce?

While capturing any one definition of the social service workforce is challenging, it can be broadly defined to describe a variety of workers – paid and unpaid, governmental and nongovernmental – who staff the social service system and contribute to the care of vulnerable populations. The social service system is comprised of a set of interventions, programs and benefits that are provided by governmental, civil society and community actors to ensure the welfare and protection of socially or economically disadvantaged individuals and families.

### What is Social Service Workforce Week?

During this week, advocates will bring attention to and build support for the social service workforce as well as raise awareness about promising workforce strengthening efforts supported by stakeholders around the world. Organized around daily themes focused on areas of practice, the week will allow Alliance members and the public to engage in a dynamic platform of information exchange and advocacy through various forms of social media.

### What is the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance?

The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance works toward a world where a well-planned, well-trained and well-supported social service workforce effectively delivers promising practices that improve the lives of vulnerable populations. Launched in June 2013, the mission of the Alliance is to promote the knowledge and evidence, resources and tools and political will and action needed to address key social service workforce challenges, especially within low- to middle-income countries.

The Alliance is funded by PEPFAR/USAID and the GHR Foundation. IntraHealth International acts as host and fiscal sponsor of the Alliance.

### Learn More

Learn more about **Bojana** and other social service workers! Join the conversation on Twitter using the hashtag #SSWWeek, on our Facebook page and at [www.socialserviceworkforce.org/SSWWeek](http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/SSWWeek).