

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10118-3299
Tel: +1-212-290-4700
Fax: +1-212-736-1300; 917-591-3452

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HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

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Dear Mr Abdikarimov,

On behalf of Human Rights Watch, please accept my best regards.

As you know, Human Rights Watch is an independent international organization that works in over 90 countries to defend people's rights. Human Rights Watch does not receive funding from any government. Our organization has conducted research on the rights of people with disabilities in dozens of countries around the world.

Since October 2019, we have conducted over 120 interviews on this subject in Kyrgyzstan, specifically with regards to the rights of children with disabilities in state institutions or residential schools. During this process, we learned that many children with disabilities in institutions and special residential schools are frequently prescribed antipsychotics and sedatives, particularly Aminazin, Azaleptol, and Phenobarbital.

Interviews with staff in psychoneurological institutes (PNIs) for children suggested that these medications are used as a chemical restraint, i.e. as a means of preventing behavior deemed difficult by staff, rather than for specified therapeutic purposes. Human Rights Watch is concerned that important consent procedures appear to be lacking in these cases. In cases where a child has a parent or legal guardian, they are not regularly or comprehensively informed about the use of these medications, the expected treatment outcome, potential side effects, or alternative treatment. Human Rights Watch has not been able to verify whether children are informed or consulted about the use of these medications.

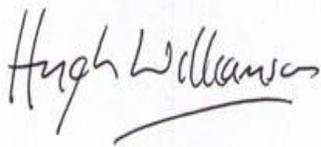
In special residential schools, we learned that most facilities do not have the medical staff required to administer these types of medications onsite. However, we learned that children whose behavior is deemed problematic by staff are often sent to outside psychiatric hospitals for disciplinary purposes, where they are treated with the same medications mentioned above. Yet again, it is unclear how comprehensively parents are informed about these processes, and children without parents are sent for treatment with a sign-off from only the institution director.

We write to you in the spirit of constructive engagement to better understand the protocols regulating the use of these medications in children. We would appreciate if you could respond to our questions by June 15, 2020 so as to allow us to comprehensively reflect your views and information in a report we hope to publish in the autumn.

1. What guidelines or protocols regulate the use of psychotropic medication in children? Could Human Rights Watch receive a copy of these guidelines or protocols?
2. What procedures are put in place to ensure that children with disabilities receive psychotropic medication that is licensed and approved for children in Kyrgyzstan? Is there a list of approved and licensed medication for use in children? If yes, could Human Rights Watch receive a copy of the list?
3. What is the legal framework and what guidance exists on the use of psychotropic medication as a chemical restraint for children with disabilities?
4. What measures have been adopted to ensure that health care services, including the use of psychotropic medication in children, is based on the free and informed consent of the person concerned, including a child or an adult deprived of legal capacity?
5. What training do health workers receive regarding non-invasive ways to support children in case of challenging behavior?
6. What role does the Ministry of Health play in overseeing the prescription of medications, including psychotropic medications, in psychoneurological institutions for children? Does it conduct any regular monitoring or review of healthcare workers and facilities within these institutions?
7. Is there an oversight mechanism to protect children with disabilities from forced medication used to control their behavior?
8. Who is responsible for giving consent to psychiatric treatment when a child is in state custody, for example at a special residential school? Are there any protocols or mechanisms to regulate this procedure?

We thank you for your attention to these questions and look forward to receiving your response. Please send your response to my colleague, Laura Mills (by email at millsl@hrw.org or by phone at +1-917-836-9883) or Aichurek Kurmanbekova (by email at kurmana@hrw.org or by phone at +996 555991023). Please do not hesitate to contact either of them with questions in the meantime.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hugh Williamson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath the name.

Hugh Williamson
Director, Europe and Central Asia Division
Human Rights Watch