

The Projecto Família® is a program in the area of family preservation, implemented in Portugal since 1996 by the Movimento de Defesa da Vida (MDV), a national non-governmental organization. Projecto Família® targets families with children and young people at risk for being placed in residential care or preparing for family reunification.

The Family Project® is an adaptation of the American Homebuilders-Families First model, and its main objective is to prevent children and young people from being placed in residential care. It consists of intensive collaborative support provided to families for six weeks (10 to 12 hours a week), when families are in a crisis situation, at-risk for family breakdown.

This intervention has the following differentiating elements: (1) it is a family and home-centered intervention adjusted to each family needs; (2) it is a structured intervention (six weeks of intensive intervention, and by follow-ups performed 1, 3, 6, and 12 months after the end of the intensive intervention); (3) the practitioner is fully available to the family on a 24/7 basis during the intensive intervention; (4) the ratio of families to each practitioner during the intensive intervention is only two.

During the first two weeks, a diagnostic assessment is carried out using the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (NCFAS), which is followed by intensive parents' training on personal, social and parental skills. The NCFAS is applied again at the end of the six weeks of intensive intervention. The practitioners who deliver the program should have initial training in the social and human sciences domain and receive a 40-hour specific training program provided by the MDV. Technical supervision is provided weekly by a supervisor with experience in delivering the program, and emotional supervision is provided monthly by a psychologist external to the MDV to ensure the practitioners' emotional well-being.