



УДК 747: 725.5+72.012

EMERGING TRENDS IN THE INTERIOR DESIGN OF SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE CENTERS

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This paper explores current trends in the interior design of social and psychological assistance centers, with a focus on creating inclusive, multifunctional, and emotionally supportive environments. It highlights the specific needs of diverse user groups and examines how design solutions can enhance accessibility, psychological comfort, and social reintegration. Based on case study and user needs, the study identifies key strategies including universal design principles, avoidance of clinical aesthetics, multifunctional zoning, and integration of natural materials and daylight. These findings offer practical recommendations for updating the design of such facilities in Ukraine in line with global best practices.

Key words: interior design, visual environment, social and psychological assistance, social environment, psychological rehabilitation, inclusivity, multifunctionality, environmental design.

INTRODUCTION

The full-scale war in Ukraine has led to mass civilian displacement, traumatic experiences, and increased psychological distress, resulting in higher demand for mental health and social services. In this context, social and psychological assistance centers play a critical role in providing counseling, legal support, shelter, and other services for vulnerable populations [1]. These centers must be viewed as multifunctional spaces, with interior environments that are inclusive, accessible, and emotionally supportive. Given the powerful psychological influence of the built environment, interior design must contribute to feelings of safety, calm, and recovery.

PURPOSE

The aim of this study is to identify key user needs and contemporary trends in the design of interiors for social and psychological assistance centers. It proposes design strategies that ensure functionality, inclusivity, and emotional comfort for diverse groups of users including children, women, veterans, elderly people, and individuals with disabilities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social and psychological assistance centers provide comprehensive services such as psychological counseling, legal aid, group therapy, temporary shelter, and humanitarian support. The interior design of such spaces must address the specific needs of diverse user groups:



- **Children** require safe, welcoming, and play-like environments that avoid associations with clinical or medical spaces. Interiors should use natural materials, rounded forms, bright accents, visual stimuli like graphics, and age-appropriate zoning. Natural light and soundproofing are essential.

- **Women**, particularly victims of domestic violence, need environments that ensure privacy, safety, and access to services like mother-and-child rooms and crisis accommodation. Design must account for comfort, confidentiality, and basic needs such as hygiene and rest.

- **Veterans and war-affected civilians** often suffer from PTSD or anxiety and may resist traditional medical settings. Warm color palettes, natural light, tactile materials, and non-clinical furnishings help create a restorative atmosphere [2]. Open planning and social zones promote informal communication and reintegration.

- **Elderly users** require barrier-free environments with clear wayfinding, non-slip floors, ramps, handrails, and accessible facilities. Services such as legal and economic consultations or technical aid must be supported by ergonomic and safe design solutions.

- **People with disabilities** need fully inclusive environments: wide corridors, adjustable furniture, tactile tiles, Braille signage, and clear visual communication systems. All design must adhere to universal design and accessibility standards.

In general, users do not want to associate these centers with hospitals. Therefore, interior design must avoid sterile aesthetics and instead offer cozy, human-centered environments. Emphasis should be placed on open planning, social zones, and flexible space use tailored to user needs.

Key design trends identified in international best practices include:

- **Inclusive and ergonomic environments for all user categories**

Spaces should be accessible and comfortable for children, elderly individuals, persons with disabilities, and others with special needs, incorporating features like ramps, handrails, tactile guides, and adjustable furniture.

- **Multifunctional zoning allowing spatial transformation**

Interior layouts should support various functions (consultations, therapy, rest, education), enabling adaptation of rooms according to changing demands and specific user group needs.

- **Social interaction areas as tools for reintegration and support**

Common areas should encourage communication and community engagement, helping clients restore social connections and reduce the effects of isolation or trauma.

- **Comfortable recreation zones with options for privacy and openness**

Waiting and relaxation areas should include both shared and secluded spaces, recognizing the different emotional needs of individuals in stress or crisis.

- **Connection to nature through natural materials, greenery, and daylight**

The inclusion of biophilic elements like indoor plants, panoramic windows, and wood finishes fosters a calming atmosphere and enhances mental well-being.



• **Visual harmony, avoiding clinical aesthetics and overstimulation**

Interiors should maintain a cohesive, soft visual identity with restrained color schemes and minimal sharp contrasts to avoid triggering anxiety or discomfort in visitors.

Examples of well-designed international centers include CLUES (USA), Vassar Brothers Medical Center (USA), The Social Health Center (Italy), and Rehovot Community Center (Israel), all of which demonstrate user-centered spatial planning and aesthetics.

CONCLUSIONS

Interior design for social and psychological assistance centers must balance functionality with emotional and psychological support. Creating inclusive, flexible, and humanized spaces based on universal design principles can enhance recovery and integration processes. Aesthetic environments play a crucial role in user well-being, reducing stress and contributing to a sense of dignity and safety. The adoption of international best practices offers valuable guidance for updating outdated post-Soviet models and shaping a more humane and effective support infrastructure in Ukraine.

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ШМЕЛЬОВА-НЕСТЕРЕНКО О.

АКТУАЛЬНІ ТЕНДЕНЦІЇ ДИЗАЙНУ ІНТЕР'ЄРІВ ЦЕНТРІВ СОЦІАЛЬНО-ПСИХОЛОГІЧНОЇ ДОПОМОГИ

У статті досліджено сучасні тенденції в дизайні інтер'єрів центрів соціально-психологічної допомоги, з акцентом на створення інклюзивного, мультифункціонального та емоційно підтримуючого середовища. Розглянуто специфічні потреби різних груп користувачів і проаналізовано, як дизайн-рішення можуть сприяти підвищенню доступності, психологічного комфорту та соціальної реінтеграції. На основі аналізу кейсів та запитів цільової аудиторії визначено ключові стратегії, зокрема принципи універсального дизайну, уникнення клінічної естетики, багатофункціональне зонування, а також використання природних матеріалів та природного освітлення. Отримані результати містять практичні рекомендації щодо оновлення дизайну подібних установ в Україні відповідно до світових тенденцій.

Ключові слова: дизайн інтер'єру, візуальне середовище, соціально-психологічна допомога, соціальне середовище, психологічна реабілітація, інклюзивність, мультифункціональність, дизайн середовища.