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DIFFICULTIES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS IN EDUCATIONAL CARE FACILITIES

Summary. The article presents items related to implementing innovative changes in institutional foster care system in Poland. The article shows external barriers (independent of the employees of the Ministry of Social Welfare) and mental (resulting from attitudes and personalities of educational care facilities' workers). There also have been shown ways of supporting innovation of care facilities. There have been emphasized needs to create small facilities with a professional staff instead of promoting unrealistic idea of closing orphanages.

Keywords: institutional foster care, educational care facilities, innovative methods of working with child and family.

UTRUDNIENIA W REALIZACJI INNOWACYJNYCH ROZWIĄZAŃ W PALCÓWKACH OPIEKUŃCZO-WYCHOWAWCZYCH

Streszczenie. W niniejszym artykule zaprezentowano kwestie związane z wprowadzaniem innowacyjnych zmian w systemie instytucjonalnej pieczy zastępczej w Polsce. Wskazane zostały bariery zewnętrzne (niezależne od pracowników resortu pomocy społecznej) oraz mentalne (wynikające z postaw i osobowości pracowników placówek opiekuńczo-wychowawczych). Wskazane zostały także drogi wspierania innowacji placówek opiekuńczych. Przede wszystkim podkreślono rolę stwarzania warunków do realizowania standardów pracy w domach dziecka, a przez to zaspokajanie potrzeb zarówno dzieci i ich rodzin, jak i pracowników placówek. Podkreślono przede wszystkim konieczność tworzenia małych placówek z profesjonalną kadrą pedagogiczną zamiast propagowania nierealnej do urzeczywistnienia idei zamykania domów dziecka.

Słowa kluczowe: instytucjonalna piecza zastępcza, placówki opiekuńczo-wychowawcze, innowacyjne metody pracy z dzieckiem i rodziną.

1. Introduction

Nobody doubts that innovative changes in the quality of social assistance are necessary. However, despite the ongoing for several years reform consisting of educational care facilities and active operations various non-governmental organizations, the issue of dysfunctional families reintegration is still not resolved. At the same time managing the educational care facilities becomes increasingly difficult. Management of institutional forms of foster care can be described as multidimensional challenge requiring both high merit competence and sense of responsibility for shaping the fate of life of children. For managers and staff of many facilities it was and still is an organizational challenge to implement the Act on family support and foster care system (Ustawa z dnia 9 czerwca 2011 r. o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej). On one hand – there come out some natural processes of resisting to changes, on the other - the need to implement legal regulations in the absence of adequate resources. The purpose of this publication is to name the barriers impeding the realization of educational care facilities tasks – in the context of innovative solutions in a perspective of work of staff of these institutions.

2. Innovation in foster care

The foster care system is a group of people, institutions and activities aiming to provide a temporary care and education to children in case of parents failure to provide them¹. For several years we have seen many changes in this system. Particularly intensive innovative changes have been introduced by an Act on family support and foster care system. Legislative amendment was carried out on the basis of conscious and deliberate search for opportunities for innovative solutions in the system of helping child and family. Psychology emphasizes the importance of the process of creativity, as well as describes the conditions of arising an innovative situation, that is implementing a new items, ideas, methods to change the established elements of a situation of human important to his basic activity². In this perspective, the changes that have occurred in the area of the entire social welfare can be regarded as innovative. With regard to any innovative activities we can talk about their effectiveness as well as about the reasons of not undertaking an innovative activity, about causes inhibiting such activity or making the innovative activity bringing no intended results. These situations have their reference to the changes that occur in educational care facilities.

¹ Act on 9th June 2011 on family support and foster care system, art. 2 p. 2, JoL 2011 No. 149 pos. 887.

² See Hilarowicz A., Pollak A.: Zespół wirtualny jako przykład rozwiązania innowacyjnego i narzędzia do tworzenia innowacji. [in]: B. Kozusznik (ed.): Psychologiczne uwarunkowania innowacyjności. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, „Chowanna” v. 2, Katowice 2010, p. 163

Due to the problematic aspects of this article, there will be specified phenomena of blocking efficiency of innovation in relation to these institutions. Barriers of innovations may be divided into external (independent of the employees of the facilities) and mental (psychological, resulting from attitudes and personalities of educational care facilities' workers). External barriers are: financial barriers relating to limited opportunities to gain funds for new projects, barriers relating to employment, barriers technical infrastructure and placement barriers, barriers related to government policy regarding the introduction of legislation in force and ambiguities in law and barriers related to an access to information on the local level³. Mental barriers are obstacles to the adoption or undertaking innovative actions. They arise from the toughness in acceptance of certain issues. We can talk about the resistance to changes, use of cognitive schemas, or reactions to unfavorable external situation.

Since the 90s the system of social work has been changing and today's social welfare outreaches benefits payment. Most important changes of working in education care facilities are included in three areas: the individualization of approach to each child (instead of group approach; creating a closer relationship with the child), an interdisciplinary collaboration between family supporting institutions and undertaking work with the family of the ward to enable him return home as soon as possible. The principal role of the facility has always been to prepare children for a mature and responsible social life. Today, additionally, the primary socio-educational task of facility is to help families to fulfil their duties of care and education. It is worth to emphasize repeatedly that the state when taking custody of the child should always respect the rights and duties of parents, but the overriding principle should be the interest and welfare of the child. In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.⁴ The Act on family support and foster care system sets the direction of the entire system of social assistance consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The legislature primarily emphasizes the welfare of the child⁵.

3. Difficulties in implementing innovative practices

Among the difficulties of the development and implementation of innovative solutions for the charges of institutional forms of foster care, it is worth to look at some of them.

³ Strużycki M., Bojewska B.: Rola państwa i rządu w kształtowaniu innowacyjnej gospodarki, [in:] Perenc J., Hołub-Iwan J. (ed.): *Innowacje w rozwijaniu konkurencyjności firm. Znaczenie, wsparcie, przykłady zastosowań*, Wydawnictwo C.H. Beck, Warszawa 2011, p. 22.

⁴ Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 3, Jol. 1991, No. 120 pos. 536

⁵ Preamble to Act on 9th June 2011 on family support and foster care system, JoL 2011, No. 149 pos. 887.

3.1. Inefficient system of helping a child and family

Under legal regulations there have been proposed many innovative solutions in the department of social assistance. The aim of the social policy is to intensify supporting natural families as to avoid placing children in foster care. According to the legislator's assumptions we should strive for significantly reducing the role of education care facilities in taking custody over the children.⁶ However, the data in the country show that the number of facilities' foster children is growing. It is the result of constantly deteriorating condition of families with a deficit of candidates for foster families. Family-type forms of foster care are lacking very often due to lack of candidates. Implementation of standards⁷ is often very difficult or even impossible precisely because of the increasing in some regions number of children referred to the institutions and the lack of funds for expensive projects of transformations. Furthermore there is a lack of solutions, which would solve the problem of early family's diagnosis while not being in contradiction with the principle of subsidiarity. The problem is that families whose children end up in institutions were not able to efficiently use the available forms of assistance at the right time and at the same time the difficulties faced up were not sufficiently expressive to the environment and no one intervened.

A big obstacle to the implementation of innovative solutions is popularized a few years the idea of closing orphanages. This has consequences in the marginalization of the role of institutions' educators in the system of social assistance at the local level. As a result, work with parents of foster child becomes in relation to the child support. Also many social workers involved in work with adult family members do not talk to children and arbitrarily states only for what is good for them. It should be remembered that the facility in today's system of help are needed. An intervention child (or on the basis of the judgment of the court) moved into the facility often shows a level of disorder and neglect, which can overwhelm even the best prepared foster families (sometimes even family-type facility). Then the period of diagnosis and familiarizing the child with the new reality and preparing him to live with strangers is the role of the facility. In addition, the children are different – for some of them the contact with biological family may be harmful in their development, for others – it is as important as breathing. There are also children who are simply not able to start functioning in the family system and this situation should be respected.

According to the Polish law placing the child in an institutional foster care is temporary, but in many cases, temporality is reduced to leaving the facility after becoming independent as a result of child's dysfunctional family inability to reintegrate. The reality is that often the facilities take long-term care for a child. After becoming independent a foster child after long (even several years) living in a facility unfortunately often duplicates dysfunctional behavior

⁶ Institutions will eventually have to be designed for older children (10 years of age as of January 2020) who have special needs and difficulties in adapting to family life.

⁷ Standards of care and organization of the facilities is written in the Regulation of Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 22.12.2011r. on institutional foster care.

patterns of his parents and returns to these patterns after leaving the facility. The system of becoming independent in facilities itself still imperfectly prepares young people to be independent in life, it promotes intergenerational transmission of dysfunctionality. In addition, follow-up care currently offered is insufficient.

The welfare system because of the enormity of the problems has to focus on intervention rather than on prevention. There are no effective forms of support for families that are starting having problems. The number and seriousness of problems, insufficient number of social workers make that there is lack of time to develop more effective solutions and to give sufficient time to each family. These problems arise from organizational problems - financial aspects of the implementation of the Act⁸. For local governments implementing new tasks was a major challenge because increasing of actions in the absence of funds to ensure their implementation is not an announcement of effective innovation.

3.2. Inadequate or poorly understood cooperation of organs of social assistance in solving the problems of family

The foundation of the effectiveness of any innovative activities for children whose well-being in the family for various reasons is threatened is an interdisciplinary understanding and willingness to cooperate. Local authorities and competent services supporting families and children in need in their environment should consistently implement previously approved and adopted to implement local program of preventive care actions towards families and children trying to avoid the final situation, which is taking the child from his natural parents. Primarily there should be pointed out article 33 of the Act „foster care ensures work with family allowing the child come back to the family or – if it is not possible – striving for an adoption of the child”. This notation is difficult to achieve. Mainly because there is no efficient methodology to enable proceedings to determine when returning of the child to the family is impossible. For the staff of the facility situation clears up after the six-month follow-up procedure of observing family actions towards their child, but the assistant of the family and / or social worker may not share that point of view indefinitely hoping for a positive change in their clients.

The greatest contact with children pursue workers of an education care facility. In turn, other employees of other social welfare institutions are focused on helping the family, because their clients were and are biological parents who definitely need an extremely high support and assistance in life. However, the fundamental task becomes the unifying of actions and determining: who should be served primarily in a particular case? It cannot be stated in one sentence - there is needed here an actual, interdisciplinary collaboration involving the

⁸ Act on 9th June 2011 on family support and foster care system, art. 2 p. 2, JoL 2011, No. 149 pos. 887.

exchange of information and determining a plan of action (recourse to the main direction of the work: the return of the child to home, regularization and adoption or becoming independent). It becomes important to properly formulate messages so as to minimize suffering of both the child and his parents. The difficulty can, however, be the attitude itself to fulfill the role of help. Revoking of parental rights for social welfare's client may be understood as a professional failure. At the same time the same situation within the staff of the facility can be a source of conflicting emotions. So with this in mind employees of various institutions supporting dysfunctional family must strive for objective picture of the situation in order to bring actually needed help and leading to solve the problems of the family. Leading work towards the return of the child to the family must be justified in the attitude of the family itself and their actual commitment to the child and most of all be aimed at meeting the needs of the child.

3.3. Unfavorable changes in financing of educational care facilities' staff

Pedagogical workers who were employed in educational care facilities by the year 2003 were subject to the provisions of Teachers' Charter until the end of year 2013. Since 1st of January 2014 they are subject to the Act on the self-governmental workers⁹. This change may colloquially be annotated as "mentors punished, novices awarded". This way is this change sensed by long-term employees of facilities who – full of enthusiasm and devotion to children – have built methods of working with the child and his family. In the face of complex of adverse changes experienced teachers experience a reduction of motivation in implementing innovations in methods of work.

3.4. General discouragement, lack of facilities workers enthusiasm

External difficulties have consequences in the attitudes of people working in foster care. The effectiveness of teacher's interactions is closely related to the way he operates. Deficiencies in resources, the need to care for large groups make another tours of duty pass and that weakens teacher's creativity and leads to the routine. If in such circumstances the teacher wants to show initiative he has to put a lot of energy in it. As a result, the work is physically exhausting, and sooner or later leads to burn-out and dropping initial activeness. Education care facilities containing several dozens of workers create a system in which there are many factors that contribute to discouragement.

The reason for the difficulties in the implementation of an innovative model of working with foster child's parents by educators is often the attitude of the parents themselves -

⁹ This change has been implemented by an Act on 9th June 2011 on family support and foster care system, art. 2 p. 2, JoL 2011, No. 149 pos. 887., which came into force on 1st January 2012.

recipients of help. Parents often find it difficult to understand that the facilities' workers want to act on their behalf. Punctuality of contracts on cooperation with the facility for the return of the child to the family is seen as a method of impeding contact with the child. If the reason for placing a child in a facility was an enormous domestic violence, it may also be the mental barrier that hinders parents' openness to cooperation with the staff of the facility.

3.5. The sense of lack of time to develop creative ways of working

The feeling of overload, fatigue, is not conducive to the development. Numerous tensions are additionally enhanced by the employment system in a facility. Counselors work at different hours, also at night, and that is the reason why they are absent in their own home during the important events of their own families, and their availability in relation to their loved ones is highly limited.

3.6. Emotional costs

Working with dysfunctional family system is emotionally aggravating; it is difficult, monotonous, and simultaneously unpredictable, with never-ending tasks. Besides, working at the facility is accompanied by lack of quick results of efforts, because the educational process is long and its effects are usually observed only after that when the foster child becomes independent. Factor which causes enormous stress is constant vigilance, while care should be extended to large groups of children, often not just one group of education but the whole, a few dozen children's home. In this situation, the teacher is focused on ensuring children's safety, not on innovation developing. What is more, teachers very rarely get appreciated and rewarded for a job like that. According to the research¹⁰, emotional and behavioral cost that are paid by the education care facilities' staff are: tension, aggression (including self-harm), smoking, morbidity (decreased immunity resulting in frequent illness). These costs are associated with both the employee's personality factors and the situation of the entire group of workers, they arise from i.e. changes related to the reform, the lack of social support and understanding from the surroundings and the lack of adequate remuneration.¹¹ Employees of such facilities very often experience reluctance from parents of children and children themselves. As most available representatives of child-care system, they are recognized as the perpetrators of placing children in the facility and are the recipients of aggressive behavior

¹⁰ Piasecka B.: Przetrwac w placowce. Kultura organizacyjna, stres w pracy i reforma w placowkach opiekuńczo – wychowawczych. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2009.

¹¹ Polkowski T.: Wypalenie zawodowe wychowawców w tradycyjnych domach dziecka i nowych mieszkaniach i domach dla dzieci. Towarzystwo „Nasz Dom” <http://www.towarzystwonaszdom.pl/?sub=23> (22nd July 2014).

from children and their parents.¹² It is worth noting that social messages often create a detrimental (because usually unmarked, schematic) picture of facility-teacher. With respect to congested, unappreciated and frustrated educators (including the director, educator, social worker, psychologist, hygienists) there is always made a dispositional attribution and there is no support system for facilities' staff. In the absence of support, increasing demands, just as the seniority grows, orphanages teaching staff is exposed to burnout.

3.7. Burnout

The process leading to burnout begins slowly and imperceptibly until it reveals suddenly and with great force. People who work for people and treat their profession as a mission to perform often at the expense of sacrifices are experiencing higher psychological costs of performed job¹³. The causes of burnout can be considered on three levels: personal, interpersonal, and organizational. In an institutional foster care we have to deal with every of these three levels of difficulties. Negative organizational changes (external factors of burnout: working conditions, institutional aspects) aggravate the facilities' staff burnout process and cause internal reactions of the organism in the form of multi-dimensional interference in the functioning of the individual.

Requirements for education care facilities' workers are extremely high. The difficulty in doing such job results from all-day and all-year tasks performing. The tools that teaching staff has are: personality, attitudes, kept values and knowledge from different disciplines (law, psychology, pedagogy, sociology, management). Furthermore, the described requirements' complex is being fulfilled in negative, demotivating surroundings. However, despite the weak support system for facilities' workers, many of them presents an attitude full of commitment and empathetic relations to their charges. For example, many facilities have worked with a child and his family on the basis of individual action plans with understanding the direction of the work: returning home a few years before legal acts regulating that came into force¹⁴.

¹² Aggressive attitude of the children and their parents in relation to employees comes from difficulties lived by them, more in: Piekacz A.: Personalne poczucie bezpieczeństwa w relacji psycholog – wychowanek instytucjonalnej pieczy zastępczej. [in]: N. Dębowska (red.): Bezpieczeństwo – wielorakie perspektywy. Człowiek – społeczeństwo – państwo w sytuacjach kryzysu. Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Bezpieczeństwa, Poznań 2014, p. 113.

¹³ Sęk H.: Wypalenie zawodowe – psychologiczne mechanizmy i uwarunkowania. Zakład Wydawniczy K. Domke, Poznań 1996.

¹⁴ An example could be here a way of working with a child a family impemented in education care facility „Chance for the child” in Bytom, See Piekacz A., Panek W.: Ekspresja plastyczna dziecka osieroczonego jako forma pracy terapeutycznej w nowatorskich placówkach opiekuńczo-wychowawczych. [in] K. Krasoń, B. Mazepa-Domagala (ed.): Wymiary ekspresji dziecięcej. Wyd.: Librus, Katowice 2005, p. 221.

4. Ways to support innovative methods of working in facilities

In the area of promoting innovation throughout the welfare system there is very much to do. It is worth to point out a few suggestions (already being realized, or not) which may play a significant role in improving the quality of innovative changes while working at the facility for the child and his family:

- changing of education system for students at the pedagogical and psychological universities. Graduates who start working in an education care facility are very surprised with the conditions and nature of the work in this place. It is therefore extremely important element of the social welfare system to prepare workers of this sector very good for practical actions;
- popularization of realizing projects, innovative programs of realizing foster care. One of the examples may be “World of good future” project¹⁵, which aims to develop and implement an innovative, individualized and multifaceted educational method, based on early social intervention combating social exclusion of the foster care children. Another example is the innovative and testing project of Gdansk Foundation of Social Innovation carried out under the patronage of the Children's Ombudsman, lifting the methods of educational work in the process of foster children becoming independent, focused on education and professional activity of foster children based on a three-sector cooperation¹⁶;
- developing a coherent model of cooperation between different institutions to exchange experiences. It is necessary to create a permanent team of support for teachers, and a supervision, including equipping teachers with the ability of emotional distance to events and focusing on the causes of events and planning countermeasures. It is extremely important to provide an industrial safety, especially regarding to working hours planning and integrating the team;
- social consulting. Social consulting as a process of getting opinions, statements, suggestions from education care facilities' staff and other welfare institutions should be realistically carried out on a large scale. All decisions recorded in the acts and actions have a significant impact on the effectiveness of education in facilities, family problem-solving and thus the development of the whole country;
- training in personal development, and conferences. Some proposals of such training are offered by the Society "Our House"¹⁷;

¹⁵ Project co-financed by the European Union under the European Social Fund, taking into account the transnational cooperation - to develop innovative solutions in the field of educational method in orphanages based on the Italian experience <http://fim.org.pl/projekt/swiat/> (22.07.2014)

¹⁶ Project “Q pracy!”, Measure 1.2 of the Operational Programme Human Capital with the support of the European Social Fund, <http://gfis.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/zalacznik+1+model.pdf> (22.07.2014)

¹⁷ <http://www.towarzystwonaszdom.pl/?sub=12&now=5> (22.07.2014)

- offering support at all levels (facility management, oversight institutions), both substantive and psychological. There should be implemented methods of counteracting the process of burnout;
- developing actions of associations and sharing best practices. An example here could be functioning of Society "Our House", which organizes Homes for Children. Homes for Children are models of innovative, domestic in its character, institutional care. The apartments stay for up to fourteen foster children and the teachers individually care for three or four children in accordance with engineered labor standards in these homes, using the tools of the methods of individual work plans with the child and family, basing their work on emotional ties with individual children¹⁸;
- expanding network of volunteer work. Teachers - educators should work in pairs, in order to limit the tensions connected with the responsibility, emotional engagement, they should also provide opportunities to spend more time on innovative ways of working. The role of teacher support person may be acted by a volunteer or an intern;
- developing subsequent care for former foster children. Help for foster children leaving the facility is offered by family assistance centers. However, the lack of sufficient funds and housing resources forecloses fulfilling the needs of all former foster children. There is a need to develop an offer that is addressed to becoming independent adult people leaving education care facility¹⁹;
- implementation of standards of educational work in homes for children. In Poland, since 2005, there are two different models of institutional care, one of them is based on the rostering system and responsibility for educational groups. The work plan consists of repetitive, monotonous tasks: wake up, cleaning, breakfast in the cafeteria, the leaving of the kids to school, back and lunch in the cafeteria, doing homework in college, dinner in the cafeteria, washing and curfew. Second of them is a home for children, which is converted, reformed orphanage, which has been converted into a large house in a network of independent housing for children and adolescents. Educators implement plans designed to work with child and family, consisting not only of the long-term goals, the teacher creates the conditions for the formation of emotional ties with the child, the scale of which is dependent on the long-term plan, including primarily on whether the child is in the house for children for a short stay or it is planned for the child to return quickly to natural or foster family²⁰;
- developing a system of rewarding facilities' employees for their achievements in working with child and family. Many people who have not encountered directly with

¹⁸ Polkowski T.: Metody przekształceń domów dziecka w świetle założeń reformy systemu wsparcia rodziny (Doświadczenia Towarzystwa „Nasz Dom”) www.towarzystwonaszdom.pl/files/.../133-20081211102952-1.doc (22.07.2014)

¹⁹ Foundation "Secondly" focuses in its group experienced educators, psychologists, lawyers, social workers. It offers multi-disciplinary support for former foster children from education care institutions.

²⁰ <http://www.towarzystwonaszdom.pl/?sub=23&contener=132> (22.07.2014)

foster children and facilities' workers use readily available stereotypes²¹. Appropriate system of motivating by rewarding innovative methods of working with a family seems extremely necessary with regard to the personnel of the institutions. Effective innovation requires strong and disciplined people, supported by the authorities;

- providing opportunities for the implementation of labor standards in schools. The most important form of support for innovative solutions in the work for the child and his family is primarily to provide adequate resources to meet the standards of care for the child. With the consistent application of standards and paying attention to the needs of both children and teachers there is a big chance to improve the system of helping child and family.

Tasks of implementing innovations in carrying for child and family may be realized only by a well prepared and motivated staff. Therefore it is worth to assist teachers working in homes for children and employees of large education care facilities in such a way as to move in the direction of the best developing and helping children from dysfunctional families.

5. Summary

The foster care system is a group of people, institutions and activities aiming to provide a temporary care and education to children in case of parents failure to provide them²². Reforming the foster care system lasts from 1999. The key event was the takeover of education care facilities located in an education system by the welfare sector in 1998. Another important changes were introduced by the Act on family support and foster care system in 2011. The main objective of the Act, on which the work lasted nearly four years, is to provide support to families with problems, among others, by assigning an assistant of the family and thus reduce the number of children passing into education care facilities. The most important direction of changes in legislation and the thinking is to ensure that all children have the right to grow up in a family in the spirit of the principle of subsidiarity. The guiding idea of the foster care system has become short-termism of the foster care. However, the introduction of innovative solutions in the system of family and child support is difficult. The problems result from insufficient public consultation during the preparation of legislation, as well as from the lack of funds for the implementation of the tasks contained in the Act. Organizational and financial difficulties are frustrating for social assistance workers and that generates mental barriers of innovation in the approach to foster children at education care facilities of the welfare sector. In addition, observations of families encompassed with help let us state that

²¹ A stereotype is a generalization relating to the group within which identical characteristics are assigned to all its members, without exception, regardless of the differences between them; Z. Chlewiński: Stereotypy: struktura, funkcje, geneza. Analiza interdyscyplinarna. Instytut Psychologii PAN, Warszawa 1992, p. 11.

²² Act on 9th June 2011 on family support and foster care system, art. 2, p. 2, JoL 2011, No. 149 pos. 887.

the current proposals are not sufficient to solve the problem of the low ability of reintegration of these families.

At the same time it does not appear that the plan of liquidation education care facilities by the end of 2015 is realistic. Polish family support system is not yet ready for such changes. Besides, we must remember that not all children brought to the institutional care are able to live in a family. Specialists no longer ask questions how to eliminate orphanages, but how to turn them into homes for the children.

In this area there is a great need of creating and implementing innovative solutions at every stage of helping child and his family. First of all there are needed suggestions of methods of helping families by standing on them becoming independent. It also should be remembered that supporting the facilities and their workers in the implementation of innovative approach to a foster child is supporting this child. The child's needs are best acquainted with those who are closest to him. And unfortunately the child in the whole system of family assistance loses his subjectivity, as adults often presuppose the best solution for him on the basis of incomplete knowledge about him.

What is needed is thus multifaceted support organizational and financial to transform the institutions in place of real help and support for workers employed there.

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Omówienie

Mimo kilkunastoletniej reformy sektora pomocy społecznej w Polsce, można zidentyfikować liczne bariery innowacji w sferze pomocy dziecku i jego rodzinie. Najogólniej można wyróżnić utrudnienia zewnętrzne, wynikające z sytuacji organizacyjno-finansowej i te związane z postawą ludzi. W obecnej sytuacji mamy już taki stan wiedzy na temat funkcjonowania środowiska zastępczego dla dzieci, który pozwala twierdzić, iż duże wsparcie dla innowacyjnych zmian powinny otrzymywać placówki opiekuńczo-wychowawcze. Oczywiście jest, że sytuacją idealną byłby brak potrzeby funkcjonowania takich instytucji,

jakkolwiek na pewno jeszcze długo będzie to pozostawało w sferze marzeń. Aktualna sytuacja całego systemu pomocy społecznej niestety nie zapewnia skutecznych rozwiązań ani w zakresie pomocy rodzinom dysfunkcyjnym, ani dzieciom wychowującym się w pieczy zastępczej. Skuteczna pomoc instytucjonalna powinna być realizowana na podstawie spójnej metodyki oddziaływań i polegać na rzeczywistej, realnej i faktycznej współpracy dla dobra dziecka. Zasadniczym warunkiem pomocy dzieciom jest zarówno pełen profesjonalizm pracowników służb społecznych, jak i odpowiednie możliwości realizowania innowacyjnych rozwiązań na rzecz rodzin dotkniętych problemami.