

The Role And Objectives Of A Social Worker In Poland, In Work With A Family With Numerous Problems, Including A Family With An Untreatable Child

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Abstract

A contemporary Polish family contends with various problems which negatively influence on its structure, stability and quality of mutual relations. At present, it may be observed that there is an increasing number of families which demand help, support and care, especially families with the low economic status, but also families with a disabled child, including an untreatable one. In 2010, in Poland there were 1 375 541 with the number of 3 624 223 members in the families that were covered with help. PHelp was given to those families mainly due to poverty, unemployment, disability, prolonged or serious illness as well as helplessness in childcare issues and housekeeping (the Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for 2012). This fact indicates that there is a strong demand for a professional support for the families. A social worker acts for individuals, families, groups and the social environments, that are in a difficult situation. It enables or facilitates accomplishment of aspirations and aims in life. It also strengthen capabilities of the social groups, persons, families to solve own problems and manage independently. In the families with an untreatable child, a social worker plays a special role. He or she is a a driving force of changes in the family as well as is a foundation of multifaceted help and support.

Keywords: Social work, a social worker, a multi-problem family, terminal illness

The family plays a significant role in shaping and upbringing the younger generation. It influences on its further life, determines directions of functioning as well as build up the basis for the further development. In social work concern for a family, well-being of the individual members as well as the whole groups is the main subjects of the effects. It makes the

essential point of a social worker's influence. A contemporary Polish family contends with various problems which negatively influence on its structure, stability and quality of mutual relations. At present, it may be observed that there is an increasing number of families which demand help, support and care, especially families with the low economic status, but also families with a disabled child, including an untreatable one. The notion of a care of a child system may be understood in two dimensions (Kelm, Rzeszów 2008, p. 13): *in a global perspective*, including premises and organizational and legal basis, the scope of undertaken social needs, directions and forms of care of a child as well as mutual functional relations, the institutions undertaking the tutelary actions and scope of their competence, staff - its education and professional status. The care system in the global perspective constitutes a significant element of social secure as well as in the individual perspective, meant as either the action system in the field of specified form of care of a child (the care system in a children's home, a day-care room, a a boarding house etc.) or described as a conception of protectively and educational work.

According to the regulation in the Act (the Social Assistance Act of 12th March 2004, art. 6, point 12) the social work includes:

„professional activity that is supposed to support persons and families in strengthening or regaining capability to function in society through playing specific social roles as well as creating conditions that create favorable conditions for this aim”. The theory of social work is connected with Helena Radlińska, who as a forerunner of the social work, determined it as a social work, while the term of the social work means simultaneously a goal and a way of gaining this goal.

The most important tasks in the social work include providing the basic conditions of life for those who do not have them through organizing financial, material and psychological support. A social worker is supposed to satisfy the needs that cannot be satisfied individually or by other institutions.

This is a compensatory goal and the example of this may be referring the patients without insurance for free medical treatment. Another task is to minimize a negative influence of those factors, which cannot be changed or eliminated - a protective goal through e.g. Assistance and care of members of a disabled person's family. In a multi-problem family, these goals very often alternate with each other or are linked. The family copes with difficulties which significantly make a proper functioning more difficult.

The social worker helps to determine a goal for the family, because lack of him/her may considerably influence on the quality of life of the family, cause negative behaviors of the family's members as well as influence on improper adaptation to needs and abilities of forms of support and assistance.

The second very important professional goal of a social worker is strengthening the abilities of social groups, persons and families in individual solutions to own problems as well as improvement of existing forms of institutional activity and mutual help. The scope of the tasks include broad counselling based on giving information, hints and assistance in the field of solving life issues to persons who are able to solve problems individually that are the causes of their difficult situation. It will be also crucial to accompany the family with numerous problems in gaining skills or shaping its competence in coping with difficult situations.

The next task of a social worker in this scope is to stimulate social activity, inspire self-assistance in satisfying life needs of persons, families, groups and social environments, initiate new forms of providing assistance to persons in difficult life situation as well as inspire, work out, implement and develop the social programmes oriented to improve quality of life.

Moreover, the very important task is to initiate and participation in the research on social problems and announcement the results of the research to bring the existing social problems to local authorities.

One of the duties of a social worker is cooperation with other professionals, specialists, institutions and organizations which are aimed at improvement of existing solutions and looking for the new ones in the field of social assistance. It has also significance in creating social consciousness and promoting social dialogue in the scope of assistance and support of those families which need it most.

According to Polish law, the work of a social worker includes especially (the Social Assistance Act of 12th march 2004, art. 119.1):

1. Social work;
2. Performing an analysis and assessment of phenomena which cause demand for services in the scope of social assistance as well as qualifying for getting these benefits;
3. Providing information, hints and help in the scope of solutions of life issues for persons who thanks to this help will solve the problems being the cause of difficult life situation independently; effective use of regulations during accomplishment of the tasks;
4. assistance in providing counselling for persons who are in difficult life situation, which concerns possibility of solving problems as well as giving help by proper state and local institutions and non-governmental institutions and supporting in gaining this help;
5. Providing assistance according to the principles of professional ethics;
6. Stimulation of social activity and inspiration of self-help activities in satisfying essential life needs of persons, families, groups and social environments;

7. Cooperation with other specialists to counteract and limit abnormalities and negative effects of social phenomena, ease results of poverty;

8. Initiation of new forms of help given to persons and families who are in difficult life situation as well as inspiration of appointing the institutions that provide services aimed at improving the situation of those persons and families;

9. Participation in inspiration, working out, implementation and development of the regional and local programmes of social assistance pointed at improving the quality of life.

It is crucial that a social worker accomplishes his tasks towards the family with numerous problems, including the families with an untreatable child, with full professionalism and according to the diagnosis of the problems and needs. Due to the verification of specificity of those tasks, the families were asked to give an opinion about this issue. Among 70 multi-problem families, including those with a disabled or an untreatable child using the services of social welfare institutions in the Malopolska a diagnostic survey on the role and tasks of social worker was conducted with the use of a questionnaire. The families were asked to give a reply to three open questions about the tasks and roles of a social worker as well as the work itself performed for them. Although the research do not have a representative character, they still determine a trend of the actions and directions of modern social assistance.

Respondents indicated into a social worker's tasks in work with a family. Almost all the families (67 families) mentioned the assistance and support in difficult situation as the most import issue, then assistance in becoming independent and reaching stabilization as well as assistance in satisfying the needs. All the tasks are reflected in the Polish regulations connected with social assistance, in the regulation about a social worker's tasks. The research on families have indicated into professional roles of a social worker which are significant in their point of view, particularly importance in a professional contact with a family with numerous problems. It has been underlined that a social worker in Poland is a professional who professionally takes care of satisfying the needs as well as assistance with the use of methods of social work. Among professional roles, a role of an adviser, an assistant and a mediator have been mentioned, which when accomplished significantly support the independence process of families with numerous problems and when it comes to families with an untreatable child, it constitutes support in everyday functioning.

During the research the respondents answered also the questions: what the social work is? They accepted that the social work mainly was:

- Help given to other people,

- Support the families with problems,
- Satisfying the needs,
- Diagnosis of the needs,
- Building up the contacts and relations in the family,
- The environmental interviews.

The social work as well as the tasks and roles performed by a social worker working with an untreatable child and his family, differ a little from the standard described in the Act. A social worker working with terminally ill child and his family, especially employed in a hospice for children is included in the palliative care team. His/her task is a specialist support an untreatable child and his family at his place of life since the moment when parents and the doctors make a decision about finishing the treatment in hospital. A social worker provides social assistance, multi-dimensional support, including the emotional one, he/she organizes help and support of the other specialists, accompanies the family in all the matters and situations in which they require support. He/she also provides care, psychological support and friendship for the family through the whole period of a child's illness, as well as after the child's death as long as it is needed.

In the last decades, many things were said about the crisis in families. Confronted with the increasing number of divorces, decrease in fertility, pathological changes in families, violence among teenagers at schools, there has a general demand appeared that the family system in the modern social reality is inefficient (Duda, Gulla, 2009, s.7). The range of activities of a social worker towards families is very broad. It demands professionalism and complex preparation of the worker to perform professional role and accomplish the tasks. The modern Polish family contending with various problems, puts out challenges to the social work - social assistance. The standards of social work in Poland try to face up to expectations and introduce far-reaching changes in the Polish family.

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