

How does a new training program PRIDE for foster families work in Lithuania ?

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Background of the research and program

- The first graduates of social work developed recruitment, training and support program for foster families in Kaunas in 1996, but this experience was not adequately supported by the state.
- The stronger political will to develop national wide program for foster and adoptive parents started in 2007, when the governmental “Program of reorganization of substitute child care system in Lithuania” was accepted.
- The PRIDE (***Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education***) program from the US was bought in 2007 and preparation of the trainers for foster and adoptive parents started in 2008.

Legal framework

- Law on Child Care of Republic of Lithuania was adopted in 1998 – the priority is articulated for the family care;
- Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania (2000);
- Republic of Lithuania Law on Social Services 2006 (Žin., 2006, No. 17-589; 2008, No. 71-2702);
- Social Services Catalogue, (order No. A1-93 „Concerning approval of the Social Services Catalogue“ (Žin., 2006, No. 43-1570; 2008, No. 2-72).
- Strategy for Reorganisation of Child Care System for 2007 – 2012 and the Child Care Institutions – up to 60 children and 12 children in the group;
- 2012 a new project of strategy for reorganization of child care systems started and still is in progress..

The aim:

The aim of the paper is to reveal how does the new program PRIDE (GIMK), dedicated to train, educate and prepare foster and adoptive parents, work in Lithuania.

Original method PRIDE

- PRIDE from the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) for the development and training of foster care and adoptive families.
- The main task of this program is to recruit, train, and select foster and adoptive parents.
- Was designed, or is commonly used, to meet the needs of children, youth, young adults, and/or families receiving child welfare services. (14 topics).
- PRIDE strated in the broadly developed context of social services for children and families, where the culture of adoption and fostering together with professional social work has a long tradition.

Adopted method (GIMK) in Lithuania

- Came as a state run program, but implemented by state and NGOs in 25 organizations;
- Content consists of 10 themes: *introduction, team work for the development of permanency for the child placement, open talk with the child, meeting child's development needs, bereavement, children's relationships with the family of origin and self-esteem, upbringing, consolidation of permanent relations, preparation and planning for change, and informed decision making.*
- There are at least two individual consultations with a future adoptive or foster family at home, when social workers make an assessment about the family's ability to fulfill child's physical, emotional, social needs, and preparation to cooperate in the problem solving.
- This educational process continues 3 - 4 months, while the decision about preparation is made and conclusion is written.
- Preparation for adoption and foster care is a fresh innovation;
- Services for families and children in need are underdeveloped.

Scope of the program

- According to this program there were prepared:

- 95 trainers – 50% of them do not continue working;

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Prepared foster families	83	270	272	218	229
Prepared families for adoption	44	118	125	93	89
Continual training				147 adoptive 393 foster parents	85 adoptive 350 foster families

Research methodology

- Quantitative and qualitative research projects at Vytautas Magnus University, School of Social Work in 2011, conducted by:
 - Snieskiene D., Buchalcaite R. (2011)
Assessment (quantitative) of social support for children foster and kinship families;
 - Paulauskaitė L. Snieskiene D. (2011)
Preparation of foster carers from the point of view of social workers (Qualitative).

Qualitative findings: **point of view of social workers** (Paulauskaitė, 2011)

- Semi-structured interviews with 8 social workers, at the Childs Rights Protection Agency:
 - Positive
 - Negative

Positive: point of view of social workers

- Groups give support;
- Knowledge about child development and socialization;
- Encourage to talk about problems;
- Helps to test yourself;
- Inform about the system of child welfare;
- Gives feeling, that you are not alone, there should be helping system for the family and the fostered child;
- Form is simple, everybody can understand;

Negative: Point of view of social workers

- Over articulation of responsibilities as the protection of child rights - foster caregivers become too afraid and controlling a child;
- Lack of specialized training about growing children with disabilities: mental or physical, or problems of conduct;
- Lack of training content growing a child after child's sexual abuse and neglect, and lack of therapeutic service for these kids in the society;

Negative: Point of view of social workers

- Too much responsibilities put on the foster care families in the field of communication with biological families:
 - caregivers coerce children and biological parents to keep relations;
 - are not helped to deal with the emotions and stress in this field;
- Social worker at the CRPA are controllers of the quality of care, and the foster parents are afraid to talk openly with them, "appeal for supreme moment , when nearly do what you want or take a child away"
- there are not developed services to the foster families and children, no social workers, whose help the family.

Negative: Point of view of social workers

- Society, neighbourhood do not support foster families, and they have to deal with discrimination;
- Majority of children in care want not to be different, according their status, and families have to keep secrets;
- If the foster families apply with the big problems when they are not able to manage them to the CRPA, the workers of the agency takes children out of the family and it is completed.
- Any help the family gets after the child is taken away;

Negative: Point of view of social workers

- Too low support for child bearing and development from the state;
- No continuation and support after the training; (*the continuation training programs started in some municipalities from 2011*);

Quantitative assessment of social support to foster and kinship child care: Buchalcaite, Snieskiene (2011)

Comparative study with the same questionnaire after 10 years.

200 respondents from Kaunas region:

- 108 (52,7%) – kinship care families;
- 92 (44,9%) – foster families;
- List of families, given from CRPA (Child rights protection agency in Kaunas and Kaunas district);
- Method of collecting data: interviews with structured questionnaires;

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Main quantitative findings: positive changes

- There are :
 - Better living materially both groups of the caregivers;
 - More families materially situation became better (65,43%p.) or stable (30,61 %p.)
 - More caregivers with higher education;
 - Information given about the child is better;
 - More (108,18% p) foster caregivers participated in training programs, and (255.31% p) of kinship care.
 - Less (39,21%.p) of them have problems between biological and the fostered children;
 - More positive (56,39%p.) about CRPA workers
 - more husbands (54,16 % p.) are involved in the foster child care process;

Findings: negative changes

- Still is lack of particular information about the child's health, history, experiences and etc.
- More (95,2% p.) foster families expectations were different about the child care process, than in 2001.
- Less (1,51 % p.) of them trust to themselves in decision making about the child care;
- more (82,52 %p. kinship) and (114,28 % p.) of caregivers think that the substitute child care is more hard work, than looking after their own children;
- Very negative evaluation (413, 48 %p). of the material support for a child's upbringing, than in 2001.

Insights from the research

- for adaptation of the imported program should be prepared not only people who are going to train others but as well as system of services;
- the parallel training for social workers, involved in any services related to foster, kinship care system should be provided;
- the services for kinship, adoptive and foster families were not developed before the implementation of PRIDE program and now the program suggest to new foster families services that do not exist in the society;

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Insights from the research

- the training program is good for families and children, because it helps to develop better relations between children and foster parents as well as with biological parents;
- importation of the social programs from abroad brings different culture and sometimes participants of these programs refuse some parts of it as “too much American”, or as the different way of “colonization”.
- Should be worked to change the attitudes about foster families and children in the communities and the society;
- Economical support to the child should fit to the needs of the child and the level of living, at least state poverty line.

References

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