

„SURPRISING FINDINGS“

Empirical, method(ological), and theoretical considerations from interdisciplinary research on consequences of social service

Conference of the DFG Research Training Group „Consequences of Social Services“
March 11-12, 2027 | University of Siegen

With its conference “Surprising Findings”, the DFG Research Training Group „Consequences of Social Services” invites scholars across disciplines and career stages to explore and discuss unexpected developments and unforeseen outcomes in research on the consequences of social services.

Research on consequences is characterized by a particular openness to examining non-programmatic goals and unintended effects of social services. Such effects are not inherently positive or negative – rather, their evaluation depends on perspective. The previous conference already highlighted the particular relevance of unintended consequences for recipients’ ways of life, their sense of belonging, and their biographies. It is therefore crucial to investigate these often hidden perspectives more systematically than before. From a user-oriented perspective, consequences arise within social contexts that are difficult to control in complex settings of social services. These contexts are shaped by societal notions of normality, neediness, and deviance ascribed through attributions of meaning. How service users engage with such notions is largely prestructured by their individual social situation and the respective service setting in which they are embedded.

Systematic research on unintended consequences may lead to surprising results and theoretical insights. Moments of surprise during fieldwork, data analysis, or interpretation provide insight into (implicit) expectations, methodical decisions, and institutional conditions underlying the research process. They mark key moments that encourage reflection on researchers’ own roles, positions, and epistemic practices. At the same time, surprising findings may challenge the publishability of research outcomes, especially if they do not readily align with disciplinary expectations. „Surprising findings” thus reveal both social service and scientific inquiry as dynamic terrain.

We therefore invite researchers across disciplines and career stages to contribute to the discussion on surprises in research on the consequences of social services by addressing the following topics:

1. Which methodical and methodological approaches enable or generate „surprises“ in researching the consequences of social services?
2. Which perspectives tend to be hidden throughout research on consequences of social service? Who or what remains unnoticed, and why?
3. What role do researchers' reflexive key moments play in investigating and engaging with the consequences of social service?

An abstract relating to the conference theme may be submitted as a PDF file by **4 October 2026** to the following email address: folgentagung@uni-siegen.de

Abstracts are limited to

- a) up to 1,000 characters for DIN A0 posters
- b) up to 2,000 characters for individual presentations lasting over 20 minutes. Accepted individual presentations will be grouped into thematic panels, each comprising three presentations.

Notification of acceptance will be sent by 15 October 2026. We are striving to put together a wide-ranging conference programme and look forward to your contributions!

