

CURRENT SITUATION AND DEMAND FOR PARENTING SKILLS SERVICES IN LITHUANIA

Research period 2019–2020.

Relevance of the research. One of the important factors, relating with children's behavioral problems, is the relationship between parents and children and the principles of raising children. Positive and responsible parenting determines children's well-being, positive social-emotional development. The scientific literature indicates that science-based parenting skills programs play an important role in managing and reducing children's behavioral and (or) emotional difficulties. However, there is a lack of research analyzing the situation of provision of parenting skills services (PSC) and demand for these services in Lithuania.

Aim. To analyse current situation and demand for parenting skills services in Lithuania.

Objectives. 1. To assess the situation of parenting skills services in municipalities of Lithuania. 2. To reveal the situation of parenting skills services, perspectives for improvement, and possibilities from services professionals' point of view.

Methodology. The quantitative research (online questionnaire survey) was carried out for the first objective. The sample of the quantitative research consisted of 54 representatives from Lithuanian municipal administrations. The qualitative research (focus group discussion) was carried out for the second objective. The main criterion for participating in focus group was at least a year experience of organising or providing PSC.

Results and conclusions. The results of the quantitative research indicate that the provision of PSC in municipalities of Lithuania is insufficient: only 51 municipalities out of 54, which participated in the study, provide PSC. In the majority of municipalities, services are provided by municipal institutions and by non-governmental organizations, in several municipalities – by religious and private organizations. In only 39 municipalities parenting services are free of charge for parents. Most institutions subordinate to municipalities additionally provide childcare service, some – transportation service, a few – do not provide additional free services to parents. Also the questionnaire was compiled to learn what problems, according the representatives of the municipalities, do parents face wishing to receive PSC in institutions subordinated to the municipalities. It turned out that there was inconvenient session time for parents, lack of variety of services, arrival to classes difficulties. The most relevant topics for parents are as follow: parenting skills, adolescence and conflict resolution. The most convenient form of PSC is training. The research also revealed that about a third of municipalities of Lithuania plan to expand the supply of these services in the next 3 years.

The data, obtained during the qualitative research, let to separate factors that encourage parents to use PSC: parents' internal motivation, children's behaviour, referral services, recommendations and encouragement from others, provided additional services. Nevertheless, there are many challenges in organizing and delivering PSC, including parents' reluctance to receive PSC, parents' low education, insufficient funding, lack of communication between institutions, access to services and human resources problems. Ensuring the diversity of services, increasing accessibility for parents, as well as the possibility of continuity and legalization on a mandatory basis would help to promote PSC in Lithuania.

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