DISTRIBUTION OF WORKLOAD OF PUBLIC HEALTH SPECIALISTS WHO ARE WORKING IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Research period 2020 April–December.

Relevance of the research. Previous studies conducted in Lithuania allowed to see weak points of health care in educational institutions but did not reveal why problems arise and how they could be solved. In order to ensure efficient and effective public health care in schools, it is necessary to perform a detailed analysis and assess the workload distribution of public health specialists working in educational institutions (hereinafter – PHS), as well as the factors that promote and hinder these activities. It is important to mention that in Lithuania public health specialists who work in education institutions belong to the Public health bureaus in municipalities (hereinafter – HB) and the size of fully-staffed public health specialists is calculated according to the number of children in educational institutions.

Aim. To evaluate distribution of workload of public health specialists working in educational institutions.

Objectives. 1. To evaluate the distribution of positions of public health specialists working in educational institutions and the nature of their activities. 2. To identify factors influencing the distribution of workload of public health specialists working in educational institutions.

Methodology. Quantitative and qualitative research was performed. To assess the distribution of positions of public health specialists working in educational institutions, a survey was conducted of 6 HB that agreed to participate in the survey. A weekly diary method was used to assess the nature and timing of PHS activities (involving 36 PHS) and a focus group discussion was held with 7 PHS to identify factors influencing workload distribution. Individual interviews were also conducted with heads of the two HB. Descriptive statistical methods were used for the analysis of quantitative data. The analysis of qualitative data was performed in accordance with the deductive methodological provision of content analysis. The distribution of texts based on SWOT analysis.

Results. The size of fully-staffed PHS approved for public health care in surveyed HB varied from 5.25 to 69.77, depending on the size of the municipality served by HB. The maximum number of educational institutions per specialist is 6 institutions. PHS activities were grouped into three blocks: health promotion activities, activities related to health promotion and activities related to COVID-19 pandemic. PHS organized and implemented various health promotion activities. They usually gave lectures, lessons, exercises. The analysis of diaries revealed that PHS spend vastly different amounts of time on the same activities. PHS took a long time to prepare for their works. For example, it may take a specialist from 15 minutes to 4 hours to prepare for a lecture/lesson (including gathering information, preparing slides). The qualitative research identified the strengths of PHS activities - health topics identified by the informants (healthy diet, personal and oral hygiene, harmful habits) and forms of health promotion activities (such as organizing and conducting events) in which they feel having good competencies. In certain topics PHS indicated that they feel weaker, for example in the topic of sexuality. Opportunities for the development of health promotion activities include PHS cooperation with the educational institution, HB, as well as with various other institutions. One of the main identified problems of implementing health promotion activities is related to the workload of PHS.

Conclusions. The maximum number of educational institutions per specialist is 6 institutions. PHS activities were grouped into three blocks: health promotion activities, activities related to health promotion and activities related to COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis revealed that PHS spend hugely different amounts of time on the same activities and took a long time to prepare for their

works. SWOT analyses allowed to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of health promotion activities.

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