THE NEEDS AND ROLE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS (VOLUNTEERS) IN SOCIAL WORK WITH FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

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Presented with the support of A Family for Every Orphan
we have been working since 2007

developed 25 training programs

conducted training for 26,913 social workers, specialists, volunteers, who work in social sphere, managers and leaders

we have 30 experts, practitioners, trainers in our team

we improve the professional competence of specialists in the field of child rights protection

we support organizations and teams during the war (training, supervision, psychological consultations)

we prevent emotional burnout among specialists in auxiliary professions

we provide socio-psychological support to Ukrainians during the war (support groups, psychological consultations)
SITUATION BEFORE THE WAR

- Deficitary and surplus approach to volunteering
  - 53.1% - helping people in need, orphans and people with disabilities*

- Law of Ukraine "About volunteer activities" and amendments to it

- Gradual professionalization of the volunteer sector

- Ways of organizing volunteering: formal and informal, organized and spontaneous, collective and individual

- Volunteer registries: official (National Social Service Agency, State Tax Service) and unofficial

CHALLENGES IN THE WARTIME

Migration of professionals and paraprofessionals

Significant number of new and inexperienced paraprofessionals

Decreased accessibility of family-oriented services from state and communal providers

Lack of recognition of paraprofessionals on a state level

Lack of competencies

Burnout (36% of charity sector workers have visible signs, while 35% are in the stage of its formation)*

*Zagoriy Foundation, Socioinform (2023). Research "Professional burnout of non-profit sector employees"
FORMS AND COMMON ROLES OF VOLUNTEERS IN WORKING WITH FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

**Forms**

- Public organizations - civil (children's, youth, sports, cultural and educational, women's, veterans') and religious (Christian)
- Individual volunteers (mentors, patrons, animators)

**Directions of work***

- Evacuation and transportation of refugees and displaced persons
- Blood donation
- Search for children and their parents
- Seeking shelter
- Provision of clothing, food, medicine, basic necessities
- Informational support

*Kolesnyk O. Volunteer organizations currently working in Ukraine. Finance.ua. URL: https://finance.ua/ua/saving/volonterskieorganizacii-in-Ukraine
OUR VISION
THE ROLE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS
Solutions for the paraprofessionals who work with families and children

- Training
- Coordination
- Professional support (supervision, mentoring)
- Burnout prevention
- Creating opportunities for transitioning to paid positions
Key competencies of paraprofessionals working with families and children*

Core competencies in working with families and children

Knowledge of the legal framework and ability to work effectively as part of the child protection system

Ability to support families to ensure the protection and well-being of children in accordance with the strategies of the three-level model

Ability to facilitate and maintain secure attachment between children and their families

Ability to develop and implement child placement plan in a manner that minimizes stress, prevents trauma, and supports placement stability and permanency

Ability to identify and respond to cases of child abuse

Approaches to the work

• Family-oriented
• Trauma-sensitive
• Resilient

Key competencies of paraprofessionals working with families and children

Competencies in working with families and children in the context of ongoing war

- Understanding of the nature of political violence in the conditions of war, its consequences at the level of the individual, family, community and state, and the ability to use this knowledge to organize assistance
- Ability to provide psychological first aid
- Ability to deal with loss (of family, home, work, lifestyle)
- Ability to build communication with veterans and their families, identify their needs and organize services accordingly
Training of paraprofessionals

Developing professional competencies

Training programs
• "From risk to sustainability: work with families in crisis"
• "Trauma, attachment, discipline: key aspects of assistance to orphans and children deprived of parental care"
• "Organization and conducting of support groups"

Professional training and postgraduate qualification training in cooperation with educational institutions

• Postgraduate qualification program with NUKMA University "Fundamentals of social work"
• Educational program with the Academy of Labor, Social Relations and Tourism "Social work with families in crisis"
Why are paraprofessionals critically important?

As a result of the war, Ukrainian society faced numerous social problems: poverty, internal and external displacement of families, law labor market, economic challenges, war trauma, children returning from orphanages to their biological families, etc.

The local government has limited resources to do their role.

Paraprofessionals can become a game changer to address families' needs and support the state in family-based care efforts.
Key Points

- Recognise the unique role of paraprofessionals in the work with families and children in the community
- Strengthen paraprofessionals through coordination, training, prevention of burnout, etc
- Create opportunities for the professionalisation of paraprofessionals to strengthen social work workforce
- Systematic, accessible professional training to develop professional competences that meets their needs is a main condition to the effectiveness of paraprofessional workforce