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**FOSTER FAMILY AS A FORM OF UNITS FOR ORPHANS AND
CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTAL CARE
(CASE STUDY OF SARATOV AND BELGOROD REGIONS)**

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This paper discusses the development and functioning of foster families, one of the priority interventions for children without parental care in Russia and abroad. The paper analyzes the current official statistics on the problem of child abandonment in Russia as a whole and in the Saratov and Belgorod regions of Russia in particular. The mechanism of social adaptation of children in foster care is based on the qualitative and quantitative methods (surveys and interviews) of foster parents and foster children. The author identifies obstacles to the development of social institutions in the regions and the necessity of its active implementation in domestic social practices. The study found that foster care has been successful in areas where accepted legal basis allowed the recruiting, selecting candidates for adoptive parents, and foster care maintenance are carried out by social services. In addition, in order to reduce risk factors such as the secondary abandonment of foster children it is necessarily to increase assistance from the social guardianship bodies and professionals as well as building trusting parent-child relationships that use the democratic parenting style by foster parents.

Keywords: orphanhood, children without parental care; foster family; social adaptation of foster children; regional social policy.

ПРИЕМНАЯ СЕМЬЯ КАК ФОРМА УСТРОЙСТВА ДЕТЕЙ-СИРОТ И ДЕТЕЙ, ОСТАВШИХСЯ БЕЗ ПОПЕЧЕНИЯ РОДИТЕЛЕЙ, (НА ПРИМЕРЕ САРАТОВСКОЙ И БЕЛГОРОДСКОЙ ОБЛАСТЕЙ)

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В статье рассматриваются особенности создания и функционирования приемной семьи как одного из приоритетных видов устройства детей, оставшихся без попечения родителей, в России и за рубежом. В статье проанализированы современные официальные статистические данные по проблеме сиротства как по России в целом, так и по Саратовской и Белгородской областям, в частности. На основе качественных и количественных методов исследования (анкетирование, интервью) приемных родителей и детей раскрыт механизм социальной адаптации детей в приемной семье; выявлены причины, препятствующие развитию данного социального института в регионах; обоснована необходимость активного его внедрения в отечественную социальную практику. В результате исследования было выявлено, что институт приемной семьи развивается успешно в тех регионах, где принята нормативно-правовая база, отлажен механизм привлечения, отбора кандидатов в приемные родители, осуществлено сопровождение приемной семьи со стороны социальных служб. Кроме того, риск вторичного сиротства из-за возврата приемных детей в систему институционального воспитания снижается, при условии оказания приемной семье своевременной социальной помощи со стороны органов опеки и попечительства, специалистов, установления доверительных детско-родительских отношений, использования приемными родителями демократичного стиля воспитания.

Ключевые слова: сиротство, дети, оставшиеся без попечения родителей; приемная семья; социальная адаптация приемных детей; региональная государственная социальная политика.

Introduction

There are an increasing number of orphans and children without parental care worldwide according to national monitoring as well as individual scientific studies. Today in Russia, official statistics indicate that there are about four million homeless children. Approximately 760,000 are orphans and 95% of them are social orphans. The Ministry of Education and Science reports that there are 100,000 children without parental care annually and of those 70% are transferred to foster families and 30% to residential children's homes [5].

In England in 2009 there were 60,900 children, 25% more than in 1995. During the same period, the number of orphans in Scotland has reached 15, 288, and 4,941 in Wales, which is 50% higher than the 1997 [13]. In 2010, in the United States there were 463,000 orphans and children left without parental care [12]. In 2011 in Australia there were 37,648 orphans and children left without parental care living outside their birth families. This figure has increased of 4.9% (35,895) since 2010 [11].

In Russia, the problem of orphanhood is serious and urgent given the negative natural growth rate, high mortality, limited number of children in Russian families, and the upward trend in orphans and children left without parental care placed in institutions for full government support. However, solving the problem is difficult due to many obstacles and in particular with the absence of an established mechanism of the orphans' de-institutionalization recommended by the state as well as ineffective prevention services for needed families. Typically the orphans and children left without parental care are removed from dysfunctional families as a result of alcoholism, drug abuse, immoral and anti-social behavior of their biological parents, which ultimately leads to the formation of certain negative personality traits shift of values, a distorted view about socially acceptable, moral and ethical behavior.

Analysis of regional social policy (case study of Saratov and Belgorod regions of Russia)

Beginning on January 1, 2006 the legislative powers of the subjects of the Russian Federation were expanded to include the right to impose additional measures of

social support and social services for certain categories of citizens at the expense of its own budget. This fact can be seen in two ways, on the one hand, providing more authority to the local authorities, knowing the local conditions and the specific region, and on the other hand, we can see the separation of children on the basis of the financial viability of the region and the social responsibility of the authorities for the protection of their legitimate rights and interests. In most regions the lead agency to address the problems of children without parental care is either a territorial education authority or state social services.

According to the Ministry of Social Development of Saratov region the number of children in the total population is 17.2%. The total number of children living in the area is 433,485 and orphans and children left without parental care are 2.3% or 10,105. Approximately 1.4 million orphans and children left without parental care are brought up in institutions with other children are placed in different forms of foster care [10]. Despite the fact that the number of identified orphans and children left without parental care in the Saratov region in 2011 decreased by 26%, their portion of the total child population is not reduced. It should be noted that the percentage of orphans continues to remain high – 82% [10].

To solve this problem the region has adopted and implemented a long-term regional target program "Prevention of marital distress and child abandonment of minors for 2011-2013." The primary goal is to create conditions for effective rehabilitation and social adaptation of children in difficult situations by early identification of family trouble.

At the beginning of 2013 in the Saratov region the "Strategy for Children in the Saratov region in 2013-2017" law was approved. This law determines the overall system of beliefs, principles and priorities for the implementation of public policies for children and sets goals, objectives and key activities of the authorities and society in the field of social support, health, education, development, recreation, child safety and protection of their rights in Saratov region.

One of the main directions of the Strategy is to support orphans and children left without parental care, promoting their right to live and grow up in a family and assisting in their socialization and integration in the society.

The number of orphans and children left without parental care, who are placed in different forms of family care, is increased from 72.5% in 2008 to 77.5% in 2011. Due to the measures taken for the development of family-based strategies, the number of children in state institutions is slightly reduced in 2012 by 12% in comparison with the previous year. In addition, Saratov region has developed and implemented the foster parent training program "School of the adoptive parents" since 2012. According to Galina Kalyagina, head of the guardianship and protection of the rights of minors of the Ministry of Education: "In 2012 there are 152 registered foster families, most of them live in the rural areas. In Saratov, there are only 6 foster families"[1].

The order and size of monthly payments for the maintenance of orphans and children left without parental care who were placed under custody / guardianship are set by the region. Orphaned children have rights to free education, provision of school textbooks, payment of short-course training for admission to institutions of secondary and higher vocational education, fellowship, access to urban and suburban public transport, housing under social recruitment preservation, and maintenance and repair of empty buildings that are saved for minors without parental care [6].

The Belgorod region has extensive experience in the implementation of social policies for orphans and children left without parental care. In 2012, there were 2,317 orphans and children left without parental care, 72% of which have been arranged for various forms of family care: on kinship care there were 1,670 children, in foster care - 455 [2].

One of the fundamental documents in the sphere of child protection services is the Decree of the Government of the Belgorod region from 28.03.2011 N 109-pp (as amended on 13.08.2012) "Regional development program of family-based care for orphans and children left without parental care "Belgorodchina – the territory without orphans" in 2011 - 2013 years "[7].

The main objectives of the program are: the organization of the conditions of to identify and address the causes of child abandonment and of family distress; social support for families with children; management of the regional budget to support the family and the development of family-based (foster care), and the reduction reshaping educational institutions for orphans and children left without parental care; reorientation of their activities to ensure the rights of the child to live and grow up in a family; expanding the institution of foster families; informing residents of the area of foster care and the problems of orphans in general; and the creation of training and support of foster families.

In addition, Belgorod region provides 8,000 rubles monthly social benefits to adoptive children under the age of 18 or under 23 years (if they are studying full-time). Also, according to the regional Social Code, the remuneration of foster parents is 4611 rubles for the first child, and the payment is increased by 20% for each subsequent child. Wage of foster parents, working in foster homes, is 9,222 rubles a month. In addition, foster parents receive an allowance for child support in the amount of 5,286 rubles [9].

According to the law "On Amendments to the Law of the Belgorod region regarding providing living quarters for orphans and children left without parental care in the Belgorod region," adopted March 28, 2013 by the regional Duma (Resolution number P/25-19 -5), orphans are provided with housing by the state (since 2009 only from the primary fund). In 2012, according to the social contract of employment for orphans and children left without parental care provided 336 flats, but in 2013 it is planning to give 102 residential areas. [4] In addition, the orphans receive compensation to pay for public services, the monthly amount of which is 500 rubles.

Materials and methods

Analysis of regional social policy, scientific literature and the results of author's own research suggest that the adoptive family as a form of family structure has a number of advantages compared with the transfer of orphans and children left without parental care in institutions. Leaving in institutions makes them feel maladjusted

to the society, experience the material and housing problems, learning difficulties. They are unable to protect themselves in a crisis situation, have a high level of rider attitudes.

Among the benefits of the foster family are continuity, duration, stability, the ability to ensure the child's safety, efficiency, openness to control and expert assistance, favorable conditions for the physical and psychological development, social adaptation and socialization of foster children.

In order to identify factors that affect the process of social adaptation of orphans in foster care, this sociological study was conducted in Saratov and Belgorod regions. The main methods of the study were: the method of analysis of documents (the study of individual cases of foster children and foster parents) survey (questionnaire and interviews with foster parents and children); psychodiagnostic study of the process of social adaptation of orphans in foster care with parental attitudes questionnaire developed by A.J. Varga and V.V. Stolin; questionnaire developed by E.G. Eidemiller and V.V. Yustitskis.

The study involved thirty foster families in both Saratov and Belgorod regions which were having foster children for the first year. Foster families were chosen, using the following criteria: 1) the age of the foster parents of 30 to 55 years, 2) the period of stay of children in foster family up to 1 year, and 3) the absence of any form of deviant behavior at the foster parents, and 4) the lack of kinship between foster parents and foster children.

The survey included 30 participants; twenty eight were women (foster mothers) and two men (foster fathers) from different social backgrounds. All foster families, involved in the study, were complete and were in officially registered marriage. Twenty-seven families have their own children in the age range from 9 to 25 years old, in three families – there were no children.

Response to the question: "What did your own children think about having a new child in the family?", we get the following answers: twelve foster parents claimed that they get the understanding and support from their children, ten faced

with some caution, six experienced a direct resistance from their children / child and only two respondents cited a lack of interest on the part of their children (because they have not lived with their parents and have families of their own).

Twenty-eight foster parents at the time of the survey had experience rearing of foster children. The main motives to take a child in the family were the following: "to help orphaned child", "no children of their own," and "my children are grown."

As stated in the Guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, the training of persons wishing to take a child into the family is an important aspect of placement of orphans. The need of the foster parent training became important with the normative reinforcements in Art. 153 of the Family Code of the Russian Federation, which was put in place to reduce the risk of problems associated with the process of socialization of children in a new foster family, including the protection of children from abuse, harm to their life and health, as well as the removal of children from the family, to avoid the secondary orphanage.

According to paragraph 1 of Art. 8 of the Federal Law "On the guardianship" of 24.04.2008 N 48-FZ, the preparation of citizens who have expressed a desire to become guardians and caregivers, or take the children left without parental care in a family of non-statutory forms, refers to the powers of guardianship. However, paragraph 4 of Art. 6 of the Act authorizes the educational, healthcare organizations, social services and other organizations to identify those in need of establishing guardianship (curatorship), to carry out the selection and training of citizens who wish to be foster parents [8].

According to the survey, a special pre-service training had only a small part of the parents (only 8 families). The other candidates claimed that they had preliminary talks to the staff of the guardianship, social workers or a psychologist of the Center for Social Assistance to Families and children, but these conversations were sporadic and could not fill the gaps in knowledge about the peculiarities of the orphans' behavior who had an experience of living in the long-term institutional care.

Therefore, in response to the question: "Were you well prepared for a foster child, coming to the family?" Nine respondents answered "good", twenty-one – "not enough". Despite of this, all of the respondents would like to receive additional training on learning, communication and development of foster children.

The results of the secondary analysis of the survey conducted in Moscow, Murmansk and Novosibirsk showed, that 223 (89%) foster children at the time of the study knew that the foster parents were non-native to them, 66% remembered their biological parents, but only 7% of children interacted with them frequently, 24 % rarely or only by phone, 69% did not communicate at all. According to 58% of the respondents, rehabilitation work with biological parents was rare because of the lack of specialized services for the implementation of social support for disadvantaged families [3, с. 138].

In addition, the rehabilitation efficiency is dramatically reduced after the termination of parental rights of the biological parents. Only 5% of children in foster care come from the biological family, 58% – from the institutions, where they remained for a long time, the rest of the shelters where there is no rehabilitation with blood family at all [3, с. 138].

According to the results of the author's study, almost all of the foster parents state that they have been preparing for coming of a foster child/children (they prepared a children's room, bought toys, books, household items, etc., discussed this decision with other family members and relatives). The most significant help, according to the foster parents, they receive from the staff of the social services as well as representatives of the guardianship authorities.

In the author's research from the interviews with foster parents was found that the life style, the family climate, the habits of new foster family members had been significantly changed. On the one hand, the parents noted positive feelings due to the emergence of a foster child, they had hopes and expectations that had not been able to realize in the past. On the other hand, most of foster parents had experienced a

heightened sense of anxiety and responsibility for "strange" child, fear of "do something wrong," "not cope with their professional role."

One of the important factors in the process of the social adaptation of children in foster care is the perception of his/her by foster parents. The term "perception" we mean a positive attitude to the person, taking to the account of his/her advantages and disadvantages. This process is extremely important because it is the basis for the formation of the relationship between the foster parents and foster children. Therefore, from the beginning the foster parents must be formed a positive attitude toward communication and interaction with foster children.

According to several national surveys conducted by the NSCAW, most foster children have a positive relationship with their foster parents: 76-89% children of the age of 11-14 years reported close and friendly relations with their caretakers, 97% of respondents claimed that they have an adult to whom they could turn for help if they have a serious problem, 96% said that they could seek the assistance of a parent or someone who is like a parent with a serious problem"[14].

However, during the interview, some foster parents pointed to the emergence of a sense of helplessness about the fact that they had a foster child who did not match with their previous perceptions and expectations (regarding the appearance, manner of speaking, laughing, eating, dressing, behaving, etc).

Foreign researchers, such as Maas, Engler, Schor, Bowlby, Tizard, believe that children left without parental care, who spent the first two years of their lives in residential care, have a tendency to social and emotional disorders in adolescence and early adulthood, is more likely to lose contact with friends, relatives and family members [11].

According to The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being in the U.S. foster children are four times more likely to have health problems than children of the same age growing up in biological families. About $\frac{1}{4}$ of foster children (24%) have a chronic disease, of which one third are children under 6 years of age (30%), almost one third (30%) for adolescents under 15 years of age [14].

Egocentricity of foster parents/parent, unrealistic expectations, lack of special training, and poor knowledge of the peculiarities of the orphans' individual features, who have experienced a long-term residential care, significantly reduce the effectiveness of mutual social adaptation of foster children as well as foster parents and became a purpose of the disruptions and placement changes.

In addition to that foster parents face other difficulties during the upbringing of orphans, the most common of which include the costs of child behavior (disobedience, moods, stubbornness); the lack of basic sanitation and hygiene practices, disrespect for others (inappropriate remark to strangers or adults, swearing in public, indecent gestures); emotional "deafness"; quarrel with other children; conflict relationships with adults; unwillingness to work and to help around the house.

The results of national and foreign research show that the most common problems faced by foster parents are the following: the "inappropriate child behavior" (26%), funds spent (25%), legal problems (15%), communication with the biological parents of the foster child (14%) [3, с. 138].

According to The National Survey of America's Families, foster children are four times more likely to commit the offense, although serious delinquent behavior are relatively rare among foster children during early adolescence. For example, in the past six months, among children ages 11 to 14, only 1% have been convicted of theft of property valued less than \$50 and only 2% report having been involved in illegal activities such as prostitution or selling drugs. The main types of offenses are running away from home, truancy, and begging [14].

However, the pessimism of foster parents does not always mean that they are unable to perform their duties adequately. During the mutual adaptation, each member of the foster unite needs social assistance and advice how to cope with the problems, in explaining the reasons for the negative behavior of the child, encouragement and support from their immediate environment. A qualified professional team, including education specialists, social protection, guardianship authorities in charge of

foster care, and special foster parent training can help foster family to cope with stress and to strength family to care successfully for their children.

Results and discussion

The study showed that the mutual relations develop more successful in those foster homes where the parents adhere to democratic parenting style, give the child the right to be independent, without prejudice to his rights, and at the same time, requiring the implementation of manageable duties. Control based on trust, warm feelings and reasonable care, usually goes down well with the child and explains the cause-and-effect relationships of a particular act or action allows it to form a self-conscious and motivated to fulfill the request.

Parents, using authoritarian parental style, afraid to look "unprofessional" in the eyes of the children, so they try to limit their communication with the child by the number of formal rules. It is necessary to conduct outreach activities to promote foster care, a system of services to ensure their recruitment, training and integrated support, with the participation of experts from the variety of professional fields.

Conclusion

The first months of the existing of foster family are extremely important and decisive for all its members. The decision to take a child in the family should be made by the foster parents responsibly, deliberately, carefully, and not under the influence of emotions, taking into account all possible difficulties. The most important thing is pre-servicing foster parent training in order to minimize the replacements of children and avoid the "secondary" social orphans.

The results of the study show the urgent need of the pre-servicing foster parent training to improve parents' skills and knowledge about physiological and psychological characteristics of foster children; to bring about a broader range of methods and techniques of interaction with this category of children; to learn conflict solving strategies; to be aware of the methods used in crisis situations; and to prevent "burnout" effect. In addition to mandatory work with foster parents, it is important to carry out the preliminary work with foster children to improve their adaptive capacity in the

new foster family. The younger the child, the more thorough and extensive training it requires.

The study showed that foster children often received little information about new foster family such as the number of its members or the place of residence, which contributed to a decrease in their level of social adaptation. The provisional work with foster children includes the following components: familiarity with the prospective foster parents; trips to visit; and time to develop interpersonal communication, identify common interests, to understand each other's needs, and to develop a common strategy. The third area for successful social adaptation of foster family members to each other is to have an access to the team of professional whose social support helps foster parents and children to establish constructive cooperation, contribute to their personal growth and development.

In general, the foster care for orphans and children left without parental care as an alternative to institutions should be seen as a priority of the state family policy.

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