

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR FOSTER FAMILIES UNDERTAKEN TO BRING UP CHILDREN WITH LIMITED ABILITIES

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Orphaned children and children with limited abilities, (LA) who left without parents' support, represent a specific group which is unable to be adapted and socialize in contemporary society without the help and support of the state, social institutes. One of the effective ways of solving the problem of child abandonment is a foster family. The arising problems, a low level of psychological readiness for upbringing a child with limited abilities in a foster family lead to an emotional exhaustion of the parents, a decline of resilience, an elevated risk of child abandonment. Being a foster family for a child with limited abilities and specific needs requires a comprehensive assistance from various specialists. The main purpose of work for the psychological service with this category of people is, to our mind, to stabilize the psychological state of foster parents looking after the children with limited abilities and as a consequence of this the optimization process for their children's entry into the social environment. This article deals with the main directions of psychological support for foster families bringing up the children with limited abilities, the psychological support model for foster parents has been described, the work stages of the psychological service and various techniques of conducting classes, the methods of psychological correction have been offered and expected results have been outlined.

**Key words:** a foster family, psychological support, children with limited abilities, foster parents, psychological correction methods.

### INTRODUCTION

At present a birthrate growth of children with health impairments and limited abilities (LA) is observed. Giving birth to such a child causes a strong emotional reaction in parents, due to which there is a significant growth of cases of abandoning such children.

One of the most topical problems of Russia is to overcome social orphanhood. This problem is solved in our country by means of implementing a very important direction of the social policy - creating the rights protection system and securing it in legislation, the children's lawful rights who left without parents' support as well as sending them to foster families. A foster family is a notion not secured by law, designating any family which an orphan or a child left without the parents' support is placed in a foster family (Shulga, 2015).

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In view of the numerous data both intellectual and emotional development of a child takes place in a foster family more successfully than in state institutions.

Children with health impairments and limited abilities need a constant psychological, medical, pedagogical support, life activity of such a child is very specific and requires a special approach from adults (Bedredinova et al., 2015). Orphans and children with disabilities left without parents' support represent a definite specific group that is unable to be adapted and socialize in contemporary society without the help and assistance of the state, social institutes, a foster family being one of the most important of them (Volkovskaya, 2004; Tashcheva & Nagoyeva, 2011).

The family for a child with limited abilities is corrective space and main condition of his comprehensive development (Goryachev & Solntsev, 2007; Tashcheva & Bedredinova, 2016). Having taken a child with limited abilities in the family, the foster parents encounter the difficulties of bringing up such a child, the problem of social adaptation acquires a special significance of not only a child who suffers from this or that pathology but also a family where he or she is brought up because the social isolation has a negative effect on the development and self-realization of a person (Maklakov, 2005).

The family is the close and immediate environment for a child. One of the conditions for a successful integration of children with limited abilities into society is adequate perception and evaluation of their abilities by these children themselves, whose formative patterns depend on life philosophy, parents' mindsets, their psychological peculiarities as well as specific features of accepting children with disabilities (Tashcheva et al., 2015; Salakhova, 2017).

The arising problems, a low level of psychological readiness for bringing up a child with health impairments and limited abilities in a foster family lead to an emotional exhaustion of the parents, a decline of resilience, an elevated risk of child abandonment. In our opinion, because of this, it is required to provide timely psychological and pedagogical support for such families, which is directed to forming an adequate perception of a child with limited abilities, raising resilience and social competence in foster parents (Bedredinova & Tashcheva, 2016).

## **METHODS OF RESEARCH**

The main purpose of work for the psychological service with this category of people is, in our opinion, to stabilize the psychological state of foster parents looking after the children with limited abilities and as a consequence of this the optimization process for their children's entry into the social environment.

In view of this the following **objectives** of research arise:

1. to reveal and study the needs, peculiarities of a life position, mindsets, personal features of mothers and fathers who have taken children with development disorders to foster;

2. to form stable tolerant mindsets in foster parents and develop the readiness for cooperation with participants of the educational process;
3. to assist in shaping adequate perception and assessment of their capabilities by the children with limited abilities by means of changing parents' mindsets;
4. to shape and enhance the level of social competence in foster parents taking care of children with limited abilities on upbringing issues, effective interaction with other children, establishing social contacts by increasing their psychological and defectologic knowledge;
5. to harmonize and optimize psychic intrafamily relations in foster families by providing systematic psychological assistance;
6. to facilitate a personal and social development of foster parents, to form skills of social constructiveness.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The model of psychological support for foster parents taking care of children with limited abilities should underlie the activity for the realization of the above mentioned goals. This model should be constructed in view of the following principles and approaches: a humanistic direction of psychological aid, harmonization of an intrafamily atmosphere, shaping a positive attitude to a child with special needs, optimization of educational practices and a comprehensive use of psychological and pedagogical, psychotherapeutic methods, collaboration and engagement of all the participants of the teaching and educational process. Favorable intrafamily relations, an adequate perception of a child with limited abilities by the parents, rendering an emotional support from all the family members. All this is the foundation of forming the positive "I" image in a child and strengthening the moral and psychological climate in the family that ensures a more successful entry of a child with limited abilities into the community of healthy peers (Tkachev, 2007).

The model of psychological support for the parents which is offered by us at the stage of the child's entry into a family is directed towards the search for parents' internal resources who bring up children with special needs, towards the harmonization and optimization of their mental state and interrelations with the child, raising the level of their resilience, abilities to overcome difficulties at the expense of their personal resources build-up (Shipitsyna, 2005; Salakhova et al., 2017).

A psychologist planning work with parents teaches them special methodical educational practices of dealing with the child.

In the process of this work corrective action of non-constructive behavior forms is carried out, the transition from the defense position in the collaboration position,

reforming the relations with the child. The parents' mindset for the child's value is formed, understanding his capabilities and perception of his success as small achievements.

Psychological corrective work is built on the personality-oriented approach. The personality-oriented approach was designed by V.N. Myasishev (1995) on the basis of his concept of the person's psychology. A person's relations in conformity with the personality psychology theory represent a conscious, selective, based on the experience, psychological bond with various aspects of objective reality expressed in his actions, reactions and emotional experience (Levchenko, 2008; Rean, 2013).

In a very general form the purpose of the personality-oriented approach is the expansion of self-identity sphere and awareness of an individual. *As an outcome of this process behavior is reconstructed*, and self-regulation acquires the most adaptive forms (Tashcheva, 2017; Tikhomandritskaya, 2015).

In our opinion, psychological work should be conducted in the framework of a foster parents' club who foster children with limited abilities.

A psychological club for foster parents of children with limited abilities represents itself as a form of group psychological work, **the purpose** of which is to render psychological assistance to parents in overcoming a difficult life situation, to stabilize the psychological state of parents and develop resources for overcoming problems (Baryshova & Mikhaylova, 2015).

The activity in the club helps to solve not only personal problems but to evolve social skills in overcoming difficulties. The parents see that there are some families around that are of a kindred spirit and have similar problems; they become convinced on the basis of other families' example that an active involvement of the parents in the child's rehabilitation gives success; they take a undistorted reality without promising the moon, they get objective information with possible implications (Kalinina, 2015; Avdonicheva, 2014).

The activity of the club's psychological service incorporates **three main stages**:

1. **Diagnostic**, directed to revealing personal traits of foster parents, as well as problems and difficulties that may arise when a child is taken in the family;
2. **Corrective**, embracing psychological correction and parents' rehabilitation both in an individual form and in a group form.

Psychological correction, to our mind, should be directed towards the changes of cognitive, emotional and behavioral spheres. *A cognitive sphere* is the awareness of the bond between psychogenic factors and the onset and recurrence of neurotic disorders (the parents aware of arising problems). The parents should shape up a correct realistic perception about the true health character of the child, about physical, psychosomatic and psychological peculiarities of a child with a disorder, about manifestation forms of a symptom and its dynamic patterns.

*Emotional-* focusing on feelings and emotions, obtaining an emotional support, forming empathy. Work is indented for recognizing negative emotions, destructive emotional experiences of the participants of the educational process themselves that arise in a form of emotional blocks, defenses and projections as reactions to communication with a special needs child.

*Behavioral-* the acquisition of skills of constructive collaboration, teaching the practices of a positive attitude to a child with limited abilities in the form of mutual cooperation, focusing on the ways of pushing a child with limited abilities to be active and do independent actions, to shape an adequate parent and pedagogical role model (Kalinina et al., 2016; Tikhomandritskaya, 2016).

3. **Control**, making it possible to evaluate the work results.

**Methods of psychological correction:** group and individual corrective and rehabilitative classes-trainings that incorporate relaxation classes, the application of art therapeutic techniques, sand therapy, music therapy, holding «open mike» events for the purpose of discussing problems, sharing experience and getting professional psychological aid. Classes should be based on the principle of close mutual work of parents with children (Eksakusto & Istratov, 2014).

## CONCLUSIONS

In the course of psychological and pedagogical support the following results are expected:

- to get an overview of the needs, peculiarities of personal positions and mindsets of foster parents taking care of children with limited abilities;
- to expand a network of positive social contacts, to create favorable conditions of looking after the child and his /her development in the family.
- to form an adequate perception and assessment of capabilities in children with limited abilities;
- to form and raise foster parents' social competence, enhancement of their psychological literacy, a wish to cooperate with specialists;
- to harmonize and optimize the mental state of parents by means of implementing the offered model of psychological and pedagogical support, as well as increasing their resilience and activism in educational and teaching processes.
- to develop a verbalization ability of feelings and emotional states both in foster parents and in a foster child;

Timely psychological support for foster parents who look after children with limited abilities will give an opportunity to raise the level of social competence on all the issues of effective work with children, establishing social contacts through the increase of their psychological and defectologic knowledge contributes to the

improvement of the family psychological microclimate, the risk reduction of child abandonment, disadaptation and lack of well-being in these families.

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