

SUPPORT REGARDING STAKEHOLDERS (II)

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Nº36 – The perspectives of biological parents on the child protection System in Paris

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Presentation	All the authors

Objectives

The COPA75 project was conducted in 2021 with a group of 7 parents whose children are under child protection orders in Paris. The project was supported technically and financially by the City of Paris, as a means to contribute to the construction of the local scheme for Child protection for 2021-2026. The main objective was parents' participation in the co-construction of the Child protection policy in Paris. A second objective was to develop practice and knowledge on including service users in the process of co-construction of social policies.

Method

In order to capture parents' perspectives on Child protection we implemented two methods:

- Group work with a group of voluntary parents, 5 of whom have participated in monthly meetings from January 2021 until now.
- Questionnaire of 25 questions, developed with the group of parents, completed by 121 parents whose children are in child protection, in May and June 2021.

Parents were recruited through wide ranging information campaigns, including a dedicated website, mail address and phone number, posters, as well as three videoconferences attended by 10 parents and one which was attended by xxx practitioners.

Results

Together with the group, we identified two levels of results: (1) a diagnosis of the current Child protection scheme, and (2) recommendations for the next scheme.

1. In the current practice, parents experience issues:
 - A majority of the respondents lack information about how child protection works, what practitioners write about them, and about their children's daily lives, when they are in out-of-home care.

- Communication with practitioners is mainly oral, so there are no written proof of what has been said, and parents have to adapt to the practitioners' schedules, despite having to work themselves.
 - Several legal obligations are not implemented by child protection services, leading to the factual dismissal of parents' rights.
 - Half of the respondents feel that mutual trust is lacking between themselves and practitioners who are in charge of their child
2. Recommendations for the new scheme include
- making sure that the law is implemented
 - writing minutes after oral interactions, both practitioners and parents being able to review the minutes
 - having an independent third party that controls the child protection services
 - creating peer groups of parents to inform and support each other.

Conclusions

The COPA75 project is an innovative research and practice project which allowed parents to participate in designing a child protection policy for the first time in France. It also generated knowledge on participation and co-construction processes and methods to include services users in child protection.

Takeaway points for the audience

Participation of parents requires support from services, as well as great involvement from researchers and from parents. A range of ethical aspects need to be addressed. As a result, parents wish to continue to meet with each other and wish to attend work groups dedicated to the implementation of change, together with practitioners and decision-makers. Practitioners show a high level of interest in the results of this project.

Nº42 – The opinion of non-kinship care families and children about their formal and informal social support

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Presentation	Gemma Crous

Theoretical background

Social support has been studied for a long time from different disciplines and perspectives. From the social work perspective on the study of foster care families, social support is the process by which social resources are provided by informal and formal networks. Families seek help from these networks to cope from day to day, even when in a crisis situation (Lin & Ensel, 1989). It is known that foster care families are exposed to stressful situations and formal and informal social support can help them to reduce their vulnerability and promote resilience (Fuentes-Peláez et al., 2014).

Objectives

The main aim of the study presented is to identify the types of formal and informal social support received by non-kinship care families and children from Catalonia (Spain), considering both perspectives. Are there differences between which elements are social support networks for families and for children?

Methodology

A qualitative study was carried out with non-kinship care families and children. Interviews with children and also with families have been carried out. In total, 17 children and teenagers participated in the interviews. Eight of them were boys and nine were girls, aged from 6 to 17 years old. Considering families, a total of 29 families (47 carers) participated in the interviews. From these, 15 had a boy fostered, and 14 a girl. And taking into account, the age of the children in non-kinship care, 10 families with children from 0 to 5 years old collaborated (34.5%), 12 families with children from 6 to 11 years old collaborates (41.4%) and 7 families with children from 12 to 17 years old collaborates (24.1%).

A semi-structured interview was planned, with questions about different areas of their life. The interview was different for families and children. The one specific for children and teenagers was carried out using the Play&Talk tool.

A content analysis was used to analyze data from the transcriptions of the interviews, codifying the information taking into account the formal and informal social supports.

Results

In interviews with the non-kinship care families, half of them (14 families) comment on having help and support from the foster care organization or the referral person. In terms of formal support, the families stated that they received support from different professionals and resources or services: psychologist, speech therapist, dentist, osteopath, homeopath or visits to a specialist if the child needed it. There are 5 foster families who have commented that they have not needed any support so far, and there are 3 foster families who say they have not asked for support despite needing it.

Participating families mention less informal than formal support. Informal supports include meetings with other families, extended family or close friends, documentary resources, leisure activities, the former emergency foster family, and pets.

In interviews with children, they were asked about the referrals of the foster care organization. More than half of the participants (12 out of a total of 17) mention that their relationship with the referents is neutral or good. There were 3 children who mention receiving help from a psychologist, some talk about a good relationship with teachers (2) or revision teachers (3). When asked for help when they need it, most of them say they can ask the non-kinship care family for help.

In terms of informal support, children express help from relatives (grandparents, aunts, cousins, etc.) and also from friends.

Conclusions

Formal and informal social supports are important elements in the life of both foster care families and children. However, some differences have been found and some questions arise

from the results. For example: should the social support of the non-kinship care families that offer to children be considered a formal or an informal support?

Nº44 – How to give effect to the right of children to appoint a lawyer in the absence of guarantees: The Chilean case

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Background

Until the year 2021 in Chile, children and adolescents (NNA), who are part of a family proceeding, only have legal representation granted by the judge through the curator ad litem², and only in case of conflict of interest. The recent Law of Guarantees recognized the right of children and adolescents to autonomous and specialized legal representation, but without consecrating the guarantee to demand it.

To overcome the omission of the legislator, a family court in Santiago decided to create a protocol that guarantees access for children and adolescents to an autonomous and specialized legal defense.

Method

The judges of the 2nd Family Court of Santiago agreed to generate a booklet and hold informative hearings on the rights of children and adolescents and, especially, to designate their lawyer, which allows the manifest interest of the children to be brought to the process. The foregoing was achieved by making alliances with specialized lawyers who act pro-bono and whose choice falls on the NNA, after review and curriculum vitae of each lawyer, so that, in a friendly way, the appointment is facilitated.

Outcome

The implementation of the protocol has evidenced the advantages of making children and adolescents visible in the process, has highlighted the substantial differences between the representation appointed by the judge versus that chosen by the child himself and highlights the characteristics of autonomy, specialization and free choice. as values inherent to the child's advocate. At the same time, the intervention of NNA in the process, in an effective way, has given greater force to their opinion and manifest wishes that are considered in the sentence.

Conclusion

It is essential that children and adolescents know their rights in the process and that they are considered in all the decisions that affect them, so that a truly autonomous legal defense that represents their manifest interest ensures a better standard of control of the judicial decision and relieves best way the particular interests of children and adolescents.

The State must quickly provide the guarantee of the right to legal representation through the offer of measures to which it is obliged and generate an autonomous and specialized legal defense institution that allows overcoming the judicial appointment. of children's rights in the process.

Nº45 – Good and emerging practices of foster care in Italy. A qualitative research

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This work aims to present the preliminary results of a research starting from the interest of UNICEF and of the Italian Ministry of Labor and Social Policies to analyse some practices of foster care that show to be good and/or promising, in line with the criteria set out in the National Guidelines on Foster Care (MLPS, 2012). Indeed, in the context of development of the National Plan of European Child Guarantee, a process is underway to review and update these Guidelines. In order to support this review process, we carried out a qualitative research using Case study methodology to analyze 9 foster care experiences in 4 main areas: the area of foster care of children aged zero to three, of children with disabilities, of children and families involved in family reunification paths, of children and families involved in forms of light foster care.

We have carried out 61 interviews, collecting the testimony of 93 actors involved (birth parents, children, practitioners, foster family with their children, etc.) in the 9 case studies to deeply understand their experience, based on their own various voices.