

Description of the Situation

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Social services and social assistance are set of measures aimed at the satisfaction of the basic needs of those persons who have objective difficulties taking care of themselves due to old age or functional disorders, and includes services at the place of residence of the person as well as in long-term social care institutions. The purpose of the provision of social care services is to ensure that the quality of life does not deteriorate for a person who, due to old age or functional disorders, cannot ensure such through his or her own effort.

Social services are: social care, social rehabilitation, vocational rehabilitation and social work.

The Law on Social Services and Social Assistance prescribes that social services are provided only on the basis of an evaluation of the individual needs and resources of a person carried out by a social work specialist. Social services are provided at the place of residence of a client or as close thereto as possible and only if the scope of such services is not sufficient, social care and social rehabilitation at a long-term care and social rehabilitation institution is provided.

Services at the institutions of long-term social care are available for persons who are incapable of self-care because of their age or state of health, and also for orphans and children without parents' care. They are provided with shelter, full care and social rehabilitation.

State provides long-term social care and social rehabilitation services for following social groups:

- 1) orphans and children left without parental care up to two years of age,
- 2) children with mental and physical development disorders up to four years of age,
- 3) children with severe mental impairments from four to eighteen years of age,
- 4) persons with mental and severe mental impairments and
- 5) adult blind persons.

Services mentioned before are provided by five State social care centers (*hereinafter – social care centers*) subordinated to the Ministry of Welfare.

Already in 2013 the Cabinet of Ministers adopted „Guidelines for the development of social services 2014.-2020” (*hereinafter – Guidelines*), strengthening the three lines of action – deinstitutionalization, which includes closing of at least three branches of the State social care centers, development of community-based social services and effective governance of the system of social services.

The Guidelines promote that children up to the age of three years are placed in children's social care institutions for as short period as possible. The current version of the Law stipulates that for an orphan and a child left without parental care primarily applicable care in a familiar environment – in a foster family or with a guardian, care institution only where the care of a family environment is not possible. Under the current regulation significant part of orphans and children left without parental care receive institutional care from birth to the age of two years. The amendments in the Law on Social Services and Social Assistance proposed by the Ministry of Welfare (the bill supported by the Saeima in the second reading) foresees that the stay of

children up to the age of two years in institutional care cannot exceed six months.

It is provided by the state that the citizens have alternatives to long term care at home or in close proximity that would be more similar to family environment, namely, home care, services at day centers, service apartment, group home or group apartment, and others.

In order to receive services of alternative care, a person or their legal representative shall apply to the social office of their respective municipality. The services of crises centers and night shelters are available on the spot, without applying to the municipality.

The goal of the services of social rehabilitation is to ensure that persons re-gain their social status and integrate into society. Social rehabilitation includes services at person's home and/or institution of social care and social rehabilitation.

State provides social rehabilitation for:

children - victims of violence,

adults – victims of violence,

adults who have committed violence,

children and adults addicted to narcotic, toxic or other intoxicating drugs,

persons with visual or hearing disability,

working-age persons with functional disabilities,

victims of trafficking in human beings,

politically repressed persons,

persons involved in mitigation of the consequences of the accident at Chernobyl NPS and for victims of the accident at Chernobyl NPS.

Vocational rehabilitation is a complex of activities that allows the disabled persons to learn a new occupation. The training is designed appropriate to the kind and severity of the person's functional disability and to the level of education and qualification acquired earlier.

This service is available for the severely to moderately disabled persons of working age if their disability does not allow them to work at their previous job and if they have a recommendation of the Health and Working Capacity Medical Expert Commission to learn a new occupation.

The persons concerned have the opportunity to have a basic vocational education, vocational training, secondary vocational education or the first level higher vocational education. They are provided with the opportunities of vocational improvement and further education, also with the opportunity to renew their working capacity by combining the individual social rehabilitation with the elements of medical rehabilitation appropriate to the client's dysfunctions, abilities and level of development.

A test of vocational suitability is performed before the start of training.

Vocational rehabilitation is provided by the State agency –

The State Social Integration Agency

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If a family has difficulties with children education, relationships in general or other social problems, they may seek the help of a social worker at the social office of the municipality. The social worker specialized in the work with families with children would help understand the causes of problems, distinguish the tasks at hand and attract the necessary material and other resources for eliminating or solving the problem.

Social assistance is provided based on the evaluation of the material resources (income and possessions) of the client and their family, providing individual participation in improvement of their own social situation.

<https://www.lm.gov.lv/en/description-situation-2>