

A FAMILY WITH MANY PROBLEMS IN THE SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

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Abstract. *The contemporary family is subject to significant transformations, which forces its members to adapt in new conditions of social functioning. Changing socio-economic conditions, difficult financial situation, helplessness, occurrence of addictions and social pathologies often make families unable to properly fulfill their tasks and functions. Social support can refer to taking action in any difficult situation in which a person is - a family who can not cope independently under the circumstances. The family is one of the most important values in human life, therefore the possibilities of its support should be broad, varied and generally available. The aim of the study is to present selected aspects and forms of social support for the family, which experiences many problems in everyday functioning. Supportive activities concern, among other things: the form of social assistance that the family will receive in the light of legal acts, the types of benefits a family can get in a difficult life situation and diversified forms of assistance and support from specialists for working with family - social workers and family assistants. The study uses the method of analysis of existing data (desk research), the research has been given a diagnostic and descriptive character. In the presented article, the analysis covered the subject literature on the subject matter covered, applicable legal acts, statistics, government reports and reports on social assistance benefits. The collected material was supplemented by an expert interview conducted with social workers and family assistant. Undertaken assistance activities should support families not only in the traditional social role, but also be open to the dynamics of socio-economic and cultural changes and new areas requiring assistance. Therefore, when undertaking supporting activities, one should focus both on preventing negative phenomena that may threaten the proper functioning of the family and effectively eliminate the effects of their occurrence.*

Keywords: *family, social support, social assistance.*

Introduction

The functioning of the modern family is related to the impact of many various economic, socio-political, economic and cultural factors, the scope of which affects the conditions of everyday life to varying degrees. The result of these situations is undoubtedly the growing number of families in need of various forms of support from both aid institutions as well as specialists working with the family. The issue of social assistance is one of the most important issues both in the sphere of discussion and taking specific actions, and the forms of support and benefits provided are its inherent element. Problems and threats that

are associated with the functioning of the family thus become a platform for supportive, educational and assistance activities for aid sector employees. Granting benefits from social assistance to individuals or families is possible when there is a difficult life situation for people applying for help, while not being able to overcome this difficult situation with the use of resources and opportunities available to the family. It should be emphasized that proper implementation of tasks supporting families in a problematic situation is possible through coordinated actions of institutions that form part of the family support system in the local environment and whose actions are justified by the effect of official documents and applicable law. The aim of the study is to present selected aspects of social support that may be used by families who need multiple support in a problematic situation.

Contemporary family - changes, difficulties and threats

The family is considered the basic living environment of every human being. It has its own individuality, creates conditions for the child's development and upbringing. The family has first social contacts and mental ties between parents and children. The family has become the subject of interest for many scientific disciplines, including pedagogy, sociology and psychology, hence so much in the literature on the subject we find publications on the modern family (Tyszka, 2001; Ziemska, 2005; Kawula, 2006; Plopa, 2007; Szlendak, 2012). As Stanisław Kawula emphasized, "our interest in the family grows as a form of collective life that exerts a significant influence on the formation of attitudes, aspirations and life plans, systems of values, human personalities" (Kawula, 1999, 46). Jan Szczepański presents the family as "a small a primary group composed of people who have a marital and parental relationship and a strong inter-individual relationship, the parental relationship being considered in the broad social and legal meaning of the term, strengthened as a rule by natural law, customs and cultural context "(Szczepański, 1970, 70) In the view of other authors, "the family is the environment which, through its specificity, intimacy, individuality, and directness, creates conditions for development and upbringing." It is the place of the first interpersonal contacts, the first psychological ties of the child with parents and siblings "(Danilewicz, Izdebska, & Krzesińska-Żach, 2001, 58). Therefore, the family has specific functions and tasks for its members to fulfill, and through their proper implementation satisfies basic needs and provides a sense of security.

Nowadays, we are more and more often facing issues related to changes taking place in the family and difficulties and threats that the family experiences - among others, write about it: (Kwak, 1994; Tyszka, 2001; Ziemska, 2005; Kawula, 2006; Ładyżyński, 2009; Majkowski, 2010). These

phenomena are directly connected with changes occurring in society all over the world, because, as Zbigniew Tyszka emphasizes, "the family is a historical category, changing depending on the era. The basic factors that exert a significant influence on the family are: economic development of societies and their cultural transformations. (...). The family is transformed to a large extent by the processes taking place within it, but these processes are caused in large part by external reasons lying behind it, binding in the final instance with changes in the social macro-structure and the entire global society" (Tyszka, 1998, 329). It should be emphasized, however, that despite many socio-historical changes, which are reflected in the transformations of the organization and lifestyle, the family remains one of the permanent elements of human life and development.

The functioning of the modern family is often accompanied by various problems that negatively affect its structure, durability, performance of functions and the quality of mutual relations between its members. Difficulties experienced by the family are related, among others, to the material situation of the family resulting from a lack of employment - unemployment among others pay attention to this problem (Kwiatkowski, 2002; Kmiecik-Baran, 2009; Lubińska-Bogacka, 2011) or low income from work, poverty, rising costs of living and occurring in a family of phenomena referred to as the pathology of alcoholism - see the work (Sztander, 2009; Pospiszyl, 2009), domestic violence (Pospiszyl, 1994; Jarosz, 2001; Mazur, 2002; Szluz, 2007) and various addictions (Woronowicz, 2009). It is also worth mentioning the other difficulties that are more and more often affecting the modern family having their source in the lack of skills to run a household and care and educational ineffectiveness towards children, as well as the long-term absence of one or both parents of so-called "family separation" among others, write about it (Kaczmarczyk, 2005; Danilewicz, 2006; Kawczyńska-Butrym, 2009). A significant proportion of families who find themselves in a difficult situation benefit from social benefits and become beneficiaries of social assistance. S. Kawula believed that "the family is the internal world, but it is subject to influences from outside, which reach through there various channels and shape the social and individual system of values and norms of social behavior of individual members" (Kawula, 1999, 50). We perceive the phenomenon of increasing the number of families requiring multidimensional support from people and institutions that are part of the broadly understood social assistance system. Institutions that undertake supporting tasks come to the aid, simultaneously implementing the legal and statutory activities assigned to them.

Methodology

The information for the article was obtained on the basis of a literature analysis of the subject and collected research material. Taking into account the scope of conducted analyzes, the research has been given a diagnostic and descriptive character. The method of analyzing the existing data (desk research) was used. In the presented article, the analysis covered literature in the field of modern family functioning, legal acts in force, including the Act of 12 March 2004 on social assistance and the Act of 9 June 2011 on family support and foster care system, statistics of the Central Statistical Office, reports governmental ministries of the Family of Labor and Social Policy and reports on social assistance benefits. The aim of the study was to present selected aspects and forms of social support for families who experience many problems in everyday functioning. Research and analysis was carried out from September to December 2018. On the basis of the literature analysis of the subject and collected research material, the following is described: forms of social assistance in the light of legal acts in force can be obtained by the family, types of benefits that a family can get in a difficult life situation and various forms of help and support from specialists for working with family - social workers and family assistants. The applied methodology allowed for the interpretation of data contained in documents in the light of qualitative analysis.

Results - Family support system with many problems in Poland

Social support in a general context can refer to any difficult situation in which the individual is located. Nevertheless, in such a broad sense of the term, we can include all actions undertaken regardless of whether it is a temporary or a longer situation in which a person can not find himself or herself and should get support from both the nearest community and the assistance institutions. According to Helena Sęk, social support is an interaction that is initiated in a difficult situation, a kind of social interaction that is taken up by one or both participants in a problematic, difficult, stressful or critical situation (Sęk, & Cieślak, 2006, 18). The duty to support a family experiencing many problems within the scope set by the Act rests with local self-government units and government administration bodies. Different forms of support which depending on the existing situation may be covered by the family have their powers in particular legal acts. Families in a difficult financial situation are covered by various forms of support whose scope is included in the Act of 12 March 2004 on Social Assistance, in which we read "social assistance is an institution of the social policy of the state, aimed at enabling individuals and families to overcome difficult social life stories that they can not overcome, using their own

powers, resources and opportunities" (Art.2.1 of the Act on Social Assistance). Supporting the family in a problematic situation in a broad context is a multifaceted activity both in terms of the possibilities and forms of action as well as the attitudes and expectations of the people to whom it is addressed. The main purpose of social assistance is to support people and families in their efforts to meet the necessary needs and enable them to live in conditions that correspond to human dignity. The Act of 12 March 2004 on Social Assistance in Art. 7 defines the most common reasons for providing support, assuming that the whole family is the subject of social assistance activities, therefore social assistance is given to people and families in particular because of: "poverty, orphanage, homelessness, unemployment, disability, long-term and serious illness, domestic violence, the need to protect victims of trafficking, the need to protect motherhood or many children, helplessness in matters of care and education and households, especially in single or large families, difficulties in integrating foreigners who obtained refugee status in the Republic of Poland (...), difficulties in adapting to life after being released from prison; alcoholism or drug addiction, accidental and crisis situations, natural or ecological disaster" (Art.7 of the Act on Social Assistance). Social assistance consists in particular of: "granting and paying benefits provided for by the Act; social work; conducting and developing the necessary social infrastructure; analysis and evaluation of phenomena generating demand for social assistance benefits; implementation of tasks resulting from the recognized social needs; developing new forms of social assistance and self-help in the framework of identified needs" (Art. 15 of the Act on Social Assistance).

Social assistance tasks in municipalities are carried out by organizational units - Social Assistance Centers, and the support provided is, among other things, that people using centers can apply for benefits in cash and non-monetary. For the purposes of the presented article on the types of support provided to the family, data from the Central Statistical Office in the area of social assistance in the years 2012-2017 were analyzed. As part of forms of social assistance, assistance is provided consisting in the provision of cash and non-cash benefits to persons fulfilling certain criteria and qualified to receive such assistance at their place of residence. The number of services provided and their types in individual years are provided in the tables below.

Table 1 Number of persons receiving benefits by type of assistance (based on decision) (in thousands)

Specification:	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Monetary assistance	1 634,6	1 723,0	1 639,6	1 544,6	1 397,6	1 300,3
Non-monetary assistance	959,7	986,6	928,1	896,5	812,6	710,7

Source: own study based on GUS data analysis in 2012-2018 (from the MRPiPS report)

Analyzing the data in table 1 we observe a decrease in the number of cash and non-monetary benefits provided.

The group of cash benefits includes, above all, benefits: "permanent, periodic, purposeful and special purpose allowance, allowance and loan for economic independence, help for becoming independent and for continuing education (...)" (Article 36.1 of the Act on Social Assistance). On the other hand, non-cash benefits include: social work, credited ticket, social and health insurance premiums, material assistance, including economic independence, making funerals, specialist counseling, crisis intervention, shelter, meal, necessary clothes, care services in the place of residence, support centers and in family support homes, sheltered housing, stays and services in a social welfare home, assistance in obtaining appropriate housing conditions, including a sheltered apartment, assistance in obtaining employment, help for development - in kind for people who are independent (Art. 36.2 of the Act on Social Assistance). Persons in need of support could receive assistance both in monetary and non-monetary form.

Table 2 contains data on the number of assistance provided depending on the specific family problem - here we also see a decreasing amount of support (it should be remembered that there may have been several reasons for providing environmental assistance in one family). Among the reasons for the assistance most often appear the following areas.

Table 2 Number of families receiving benefits (based on decision) by reasons (in thousands)

Specification:	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Povert	708,0	754,7	724,3	694,4	640,5	568,1
Unemployment	640,5	686,0	635,5	574,7	499,7	422,0
Chronic disease or serious illness	412,3	429,7	430,8	430,7	430,7	436,0
Disability	396,5	412,9	408,7	399,3	393,9	384,9
Perplexity in care and educational affairs	235,9	241,7	227,3	213,2	189,2	165,3
Need of motherhood protection	119,4	127,2	126,3	127,0	113,1	98,4
Alcoholism	88,1	89,6	87,0	84,9	80,2	76,9
Homelessness	35,5	37,3	37,8	38,1	37,4	37,2
Domestic violence	18,7	20,2	20,5	18,8	17,2	17,4
Crisis situation	15,2	10,7	11,4	9,1	9,3	9,2

Source: own study based on GUS data analysis in 2012-2018 (from the MRPiPS report)

The support of a person - a family in a problematic situation in the operation of Social Assistance Centers takes the form of a specific activity of the

social workers employed in it. A social worker taking up cooperation with the family - diagnoses its situation and defines a plan of help that will enable it to return to proper functioning. It is important for a social worker to be able to discover in the family, despite the crisis situation, its strengths and abilities, and then skillfully initiate the process of recovering by the family some control and stability. A social worker accompanies the family in the course of changes, and his activity and participation in family life is adjusted to the possibility of cooperation between its members. The activities of a social worker can take on a different character - they include social work, which the legislator in Art. 6.12. of the Act on Social Assistance is defined as "professional activity aimed at helping individuals and families to strengthen or regain the ability to function in society by performing appropriate social roles and creating conditions conducive to this goal". Social work is therefore aimed at improving the situation of the family and focuses on solving problems and strengthening the activity and independence of people and families. It also plays an educational role consisting of shaping and expanding knowledge, facilitating understanding of many aspects of life, and consequently better coping with the difficulties of everyday life. "Social work is a professional, organized and purposeful pro-social activity conducted according to rules and methods specific to this profession" - emphasizes K. Wódz (Wódz, 1998, 13). Performing the profession of a social worker obliges people who fill it with high-class professionalism, proper education, and also requires certain personality traits, constant values' observance and adherence to them. The decision to grant or refuse a benefit is issued after a family environmental interview, which a social worker carries out at the place of residence of the person or family or in the place of stay in order to determine the personal, family, income and property situation of persons and families. The forms of help that a social worker takes with regard to the family result directly from the reason for the actions taken - because every phenomenon, every case with which a social worker works requires individual approach and professional help. "Working with families is usually difficult, requires knowledge, experience and delicacy. However, regardless of the circumstances, sources of knowledge about dysfunctional family, barriers, obstacles and difficulties, a social worker should diagnose each case in a professional way" (Mirowska, 2005, 136-137).

Based on the analysis of the GUS studies and reports, it was observed that in 2010-2017, all provinces in Poland experienced an increase in annual expenditure from the social assistance system per one beneficiary, „above the national average, which in this period amounted to 48.5%, found 6 voivodships, among them the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship with the highest increase in expenditure (by 94.1 %). The Pomeranian Voivodship was in the second place (increase by 61.7 %), and on the third - Wielkopolskie Voivodship (by 60.7 %)"

(GUS, 2018, 70). Additionally, when analyzing the forms of assistance provided to families with many problems, we can observe that in the years 2010-2017 the structure of expenditure on cash benefits changed. In the initial period, benefits (fixed, periodic, intentional) accounted for approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of all cash benefits, and since 2012 their share has increased to over 90 %, therefore in 2017 in Poland, they were allocated 93.4 % of the amount spent on all cash benefits in social assistance (from 2015 fixed benefit covers the largest part of financial resources allocated to cash benefits). In the analyzed period of 2010-2017, the registered unemployment rate dropped almost twice in Poland and the average monthly gross wage was systematically increasing.

Depending on the situation under the law, families may be eligible for support, also in accordance with the Act of 9 June 2011 on family support and foster care which focuses, among others, on activities aimed at families with children experiencing difficulties in fulfilling care functions, as well as on the principles and forms of foster care. According to the Act, "supporting the family is carried out in the form of: 1) working with family; and 2) help in caring for and bringing up a child" (Art.8.2 Act on supporting the family). Pursuant to Art. 9 of the Act on supporting the family and foster care system, the family may receive support through the activities of: 1) institutions and entities acting for the benefit of the child and family; 2) daytime support facilities; 3) supporting families. The family is provided with broadly understood help, in particular in the form of family counseling, mediation, family therapy understood as psychological, pedagogical and sociological activities, aimed at restoring the family's ability to fulfill its proper tasks. One of the forms of support that the family can receive is the family assistant - among others, write about it (Krasiejko, 2011; Krajewska, 2012; Krasiejko, 2013), which can be assigned to a family experiencing care and educational problems at the request of a social worker or by a family court decision.

Family Assistant is a new profession in the field of social assistance, which appeared on the labor market from January 1, 2012 with the entry into force of the law on family support and foster care system. According to Izabela Krasiejko, "the assistantship is in the present state: it is a response to the deficits of the entire social assistance system in Poland, the assistant of the family is to be a social worker helper in performing in-depth social work with family with many problems" (Krasiejko, 2010, 92) defines the family assistant as a representative of "social services, which for a time accompanies and supports the family, in order to overcome the difficulties of life in the future" (Krasiejko, 2013, 43). The tasks that the family assistant has to fulfill come from the quoted law and are related, among others, to helping the family in improving her life situation, raising its professional qualifications and gaining the skills to properly run a household, helping in solving social, educational and psychological

problems, as well as supporting social activity of families, providing support to children in particular through participation in psycho-educational activities, and undertaking interventional and remedial actions in the event of a threat to the safety of children and families. The assistant's activities also apply to drawing conclusions and opinions for the needs of the Court about the family and its members. An important task of the family assistant is also the motivation of the family to actively cooperate in the implementation of the family work plan, as well as preventing the placement of children outside the family in foster homes or families (if the children are already in foster care, the role of the assistant is to act for them as soon as possible return to the family). All tasks undertaken by the family assistant are comprehensive and include work with the whole family, due to the fact that the problems of individual members are usually closely related to each other. The number of employed family assistants and the number of families who used the services of assistants in 2012-2017 are presented in the table below.

Table 3 Number of family assistants and families benefiting from their assistance in 2012-2017

Year	Number of family assistants	Number of families using family assistants
2012	2 105	18 947
2013	3 012	31 506
2014	3 393	37 876
2015	3 816	41 739
2016	3 905	43 390
2017	3 976	44 748

Source: own study based on the analysis of reports on the implementation of the Act of 9 June 2011 on supporting families and the foster care system in 2012-2017.

When analyzing the data in the table, we observe an annual increase in the number of assistants employed by municipalities to work with the family, we can also observe an overall increase in the number of families using family assistants in particular years.

A family experiencing difficulties in fulfilling care and educational functions can, with the help of a family assistant, be supported by a supporting family. The role of a supporting family is to help a family experiencing difficulties in caring for and raising a child, running a household, shaping and fulfilling basic social roles. The supporting family is established by the commune head (mayor, president of the city) competent for the place of residence of the supported family. The number of supporting families and the number of families who benefited from their assistance in 2012-2017 are presented in the table below.

Table 4 Supporting families in 2012-2017

Year	Number of Supporting families	Number of families using Supporting families
2012	44	43
2013	44	47
2014	44	49
2015	82	89
2016	66	77
2017	71	90

Source: own study based on the analysis of reports on the implementation of the Act of 9 June 2011 on supporting families and the foster care system in 2012-2017.

In families bringing up school-aged children (and especially families who have difficulties in fulfilling care and educational functions), a child can be cared for and raised in a day care facility. Daytime care facilities can be provided in the form of: general care, specialist and street work carried out by teachers - educators (Article 24.1 of the Act on supporting the family). A detailed list of the number of branches in 2012-2017 based on the analysis of data is presented in the table 5 below.

Table 5 Day-Support Centres in 2012-2017

Specification	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
	centres	residents in thous.	centres	residents in thous.	centres	residents in thous.	centres	residents in thous.	centres	residents in thous.	centres	residents in thous.
General care	2370	94,0	2294	90,3	2364	91,0	2243	85,8	2202	79,9	2169	78,1
Specialised	365	19,5	376	21,3	414	21,8	421	21,3	428	21,0	416	19,0
Street work	7	0,3	14	0,5	11	0,8	35	1,8	76	2,3	132	4,7
In a combination of the forms	121	4,9	146	6,5	180	7,5	206	8,6	201	8,3	200	8,5
Total	2863	118,7	2830	118,6	2969	121,1	2905	117,5	2907	111,5	2917	110,3

Source: own study based on GUS data analysis in 2012-2018 (from the MRPiPS report)

The families also benefited from psychological support which in individual years changes as follows.

Table 6 Family suport in 2012-2017

Specification	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Families provided with specialistic guidance	142,6	143,4	138,8	132,091	113,596	108,485

Source: own study based on GUS data analysis in 2012-2018 (from the MRPiPS report).

Many families can not meet the challenges of the surrounding reality by their own forces and can not cope with fulfilling their functions. At that time, help from the state , which takes place "through the use of various instruments that the public can use, with the participation of many entities, referred to as family support institutions" (Krajewska, 2012, 102). These tasks are carried out in cooperation with the local community, courts and their subsidiary bodies, educational institutions, the police as well as churches and religious associations and social organizations. Working with families is a complex and long-lasting process, and its effects depend to a large extent on the activity of families, cooperation, openness to received support and willingness to introduce positive changes in their lives.

Conclusions

Identification and description of phenomena and social problems that families experience is possible based on the use of various methods used in the social sciences. One of them is the analysis of data in the institutions' bases, which allows, according to the research assumption, the presented work to acquire key knowledge about (beneficiaries) families experiencing many problems and forms as well as the amount of assistance and support they provide. Taking into account the amount of services provided in the study - (despite their decrease in particular years) - the following actions should still be taken:

- counteracting adverse effects of life difficulties experienced by families, as well as protection of dysfunctional families against social exclusion (preventive and supportive actions) by increasing the availability of specialized counseling for families (psychological, pedagogical, legal, vocational and social counseling);
- increase in the number of employees (more family assistants and social workers) - multifaceted family support (informational and promotional activities for people excluded and / or endangered by social exclusion);

- increasing the scope and forms of cooperation between institutions dealing with family support and developing local partnership for social inclusion and family support services;
- cooperation between social welfare units and the local community, to counteract emerging problems in families, and the need to increase the coordination of activities carried out by many institutions and entities in the field of activities for the benefit of the family (eg creating interdisciplinary teams).

Therefore, the effectiveness of the activities supporting the family depends on the accuracy of the description of the difficulties in a given family, the professionalisation of the supported actions and the attitudes of the people and their commitment to the assistance activities undertaken.

Summary

In a dynamically changing world, the development of scientific knowledge, technical progress of the transformation of the modern family, they concern not only its essence, model or function but also more and more diversified threats with which the family has to cope. The aim of the study was to present selected aspects and forms of social support for the family, which in everyday functioning experiences many different problems. Considering that the family is one of the most important values in human life, the possibilities of its support should be broad, diverse and generally available. In the area of supporting a family experiencing many problems, one should focus both on preventing negative phenomena that may threaten its proper functioning and effectively eliminate the effects of their occurrence.

A wide range of assistance activities should support families not only in the traditional social role, but must also be open to the dynamics of changes taking place in society and new areas requiring assistance. It is also important that the support addressed to the family is effective, provided in a professional and planned manner, directed at all spheres of the family's activity. Achieving this level is possible only with the cooperation and involvement of all entities responsible for helping and supporting the family, as well as being a challenge facing the social policy of the state and representatives of institutions dealing with work for the child and the family.

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