

USING DISTANCE COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION TOOLS FOR GENERAL SOCIAL SERVICES

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Abstract. *This paper discusses the use of communication and collaboration tools in the delivery of social services, based on the results of a qualitative study. The research question is what kind of remote communication and collaboration tools are used by social workers in the provision of social services. The paper focuses on the use of telecommunication and collaboration tools by social workers in their service delivery and activities. The study involved 22 social workers employed in social institutions in different parts of Lithuania providing complex services to families.*

The study found that social workers use mobile devices and that the most convenient and acceptable means of remote communication and collaboration are learning environments, audio and video data storage (YouTube), conferencing and chat software (MS Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, Facebook Messenger, Viber, WhatsApp, Board Connect, Telegram), social networks (Facebook, Messenger), technical means (smart phone, computer, Internet connection).

Keywords: *communication and collaboration, distance tools, general social services, social workers.*

From the end of 2019 more than two years we are attendees of the Global pandemic Covid-19. Our daily life is all surrounded by information about the reasons, consequences, and ways of preventing this pandemic. Every day we see and listen to media, society around us discussing issues connected to this topic. From the beginning until now, we went through different stages and all of them were challenging for everyone no matter of the country, society group, age, sex, or profession. Each person has one's own story of how she/he is dealing with this problem. Since the day of declaring the Covid-19 pandemic around the globe, the World Health Organization is putting all of its effort to include other organizations, international agencies and philanthropists to work cooperatively against the pandemics. It is significant to note that for WHO not only pandemic by itself, but also spreading myths about this virus through social media was and still remains a big challenge (Amiri & Akram, 2020). In this conditions, it is very interesting to try to understand challenges that social workers face since this is

one of those professions when specialists usually have contact with the clients about their mental condition.

As it is known our world is facing one of the biggest challenges in our history and it is very crucial for everyone to stay strong during this time, overcome all problems and issues, face the reality which is already different from what we used to know, and it is likely that it will change even more as time passes.

Social workers are considered to be a group of professionals who often experience high levels of stress and burnout. There can be many reasons, the main being the nature of social work itself, since professionals in this field are working in human service and are involved in complex social situations (Llod, King & Chnoweth, 2011). Most of the people find it difficult to follow all the newly formatted rules and change their lives according to them.

There is an established opinion that despite the time and the main point of a crisis, all crisis situations share a similar characteristic in terms of healthcare professionals like social workers. Be it the influenza pandemic that has taken place in 1918 or the Covid-19 that is experienced today, there is a general assumption that all types of crises outline the vulnerability of individuals and importance of physical and mental health (Farakas & Romaniuk, 2020). Accordingly, social workers must be able to work remotely using various communication and collaboration platforms, such as audio and video storage (YouTube), conferencing and chat software (MS Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, Facebook Messenger, Viber, WhatsApp, Board Connect, Telegram), social networks (Facebook).

According to the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, social work is a term used to define professional activity initiated by social workers and their assistants. It is directed towards people's interpersonal connections, and the improvement of individuals' environmental conditions (2006). It aims to strengthen the receivers of services and is linked with providing help to communities for adjustment to outside changes more easily. Moreover, social workers put efforts into sustainability, adaptability, and integration of people into society. In this field of work practitioners promote social changes in society and provide an opportunity for people themselves to act in solving their problems, enhancing their own responsibility for the decisions they make, without infringing their sense of dignity (Qualification Requirements for Social Workers and Social Worker Assistants, 2006).

Challenges connected to digital tools and skills are also considered in terms of time when services were supposed to be provided according to the social distance reality. In some cases, social workers struggled to have access to essential services (Dauti, Dhëmbo, & Bejko, 2020). It is also important that for social workers it was and in some cases still is a big issue that not everyone is equipped with essential digital tools like computers, smartphones, laptops, etc., so they cannot receive the service needed. Another point in this regard is the knowledge

of these digital skills that is a must to know while working remotely from home (Cabiati, 2021).

“Social work is defined as a profession that, by promoting social change, improving the quality of life, and strengthening solidarity and social justice, enables individuals, families, groups, communities and society to solve interpersonal and social issues. In order to overcome the challenges of life, create prosperity and ensure human rights, social work mobilizes people and structures. The profession is based on the theories and context of social work, social sciences and humanities, is guided by a unique system of knowledge, skills and values, seeks coherence of the interaction between man and one’s environment” (Description of the Study Field of Social Work, 2021, p. 9).

The research on the analysis of the use of technical tools enabled the researchers to find scientific sources (Guide to Distance Learning/Teaching/Education, 2020) that examine the use of technical means by educators when working with students; however, it was impossible to find research on the analysis of experiences of social workers using technical tools in providing social services. Therefore, it is appropriate to examine the kinds of technical means that are used by social workers in providing social services. It should be noted that the research was much broader and covered more groups of recipients of social services, but the following article analyses only the provision of general social services and the communication and collaboration of social workers and recipients of services in the provision of social services to families.

Research object: provision of general social services during the Covid-19 pandemic period (hereinafter: pandemic period), communication and cooperation of social workers with families by using technical and digital means when providing them with general social services.

This article overviews problematic question of the study: What real technical and digital means did the social workers use during the pandemic period to communicate and collaborate with families when providing them with general social services?

The *aim of the article* is to reveal what communication and collaboration tools were used by the social workers in the delivery of social services, based on the experience of social workers. The research question is what kinds of remote communication and collaboration tools are used by social workers in the provision of social services. The paper focuses on the use of telecommunication and collaboration tools by social workers in their service delivery and activities.

Research methods: academic literature analysis, document analysis, qualitative research type was chosen for the study. In the study, the method of a semi-structured interview, quality (content) analysis, summarizing method were used.

Methods

Research methods. In order to reveal kinds of technical and digital means of communication and collaboration used by social workers in providing social services to families, based on the experience of social workers, qualitative research type was chosen for the study. The method of a semi-structured interview was also used in the study. The obtained data were analysed by using the content analysis method. The qualitative content analysis was performed in the following sequence: the repeated reading of the content of transcribed interview texts, the distinction of meaningful elements in the text analysed, the grouping of the distinguished meaningful elements into categories and sub-categories, integration of the categories/sub-categories into the context of the phenomenon analysed and the description of their analysis (Žydžiūnaitė & Sabaliauskas, 2017). J.W. Creswell & J.D. Creswell (2021), P. Mayring & E. Brunner (2009) emphasize that content analysis is a valid method for making specific inferences from the analyzed text.

The sample of the research. A criteria-based sample was used in the study. The participants of research were chosen according to the following criteria: 1) social workers who have a degree in the area of social work; 2) social workers working with families; 3) length of service of social workers who provide services to families is not less than three years; 4) social workers who provided services during the pandemic period. The study was conducted in October-November of 2021. The study involved 22 social workers who provided general social services to families and worked in social service and social support centres and departments, care centres for children and adolescents, institutions protecting children's rights, hospitals and community homes for children in different parts of Lithuania.

Ethics of the research. During the research, the following essential principles of research ethics were complied with (Žydžiūnaitė & Sabaliauskas, 2017): **a right not to be vulnerable**, i.e. without making any negative impact on the physical, mental and social health; **a right not to be abused** by ensuring that participation of research participants and information provided will not be used against them; **usefulness of the research** – the research participants fully agreed to participate in the research because their participation in a specific research makes a positive impact on the development of society and knowledge, as well as the research of new opportunities in Lithuania; **respect for personal dignity** – the research participants were interpreted as independent persons, who were able to control their personal behaviour; every research participant had **a right to make a personal decision whether to participate in the research or not**; **justice** – such factors as the benefit, credulity or compromise was not used in order to involve the “necessary” persons in the research; the participants had an opportunity to ask about the research and receive comprehensive information; the

research participants were treated in a respectful and helpful manner; **confidentiality** – the research participants were assured that information provided during the research (the collected qualitative data) will not be disseminated; the unprocessed information will not be available to any person, who is not related to the thesis and, specifically, to the exploratory part of the thesis; **anonymity** – the research participants were assured that their provided accurate personal data will not be published without coordinating such possibility in advance. Names, surnames, locations, or other similar information that might help recognize research participants and/or identify the subject, were changed. In order to maintain confidentiality, research participants were encoded in letters A, B, C, D, E and etc. The following coding breaks the link between research data and the research participants who provided the data, in order to maintain anonymity, and for the research results not to harm the informants. The research is presented by interpreting and substantiating theory by information, statements and quotations obtained during the interview. The quotations of the research participants are authentic, the language was not corrected. Pauses, drawing of vowels and some consonants are marked in the transcription.

Research results

Provision of general social services to families during the pandemic period. The research data analysis revealed that social workers who provide general social services to the family during the pandemic period use various technical and digital means for communication and collaboration with the family (Figure 1). Research participants noted that they keep in touch with the family by using Internet connection tools, they use computers, write emails, as well as communicate and collaborate by phone either by calling or writing SMS messages. The analysis of experiences of social workers who provide general social services to families showed that for communication and collaboration specialists also use conferencing and chat software. The research revealed that in order to communicate with families, research participants use MS Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, Facebook Messenger, Viber, WhatsApp, Board Connect, Telegram conferencing and chat software, because only in this way it is possible to *“Promptly provide necessary information to the clients’ relatives. An excellent mediation tool between the client and one’s relatives”* (L); *“Accessible organization, flexible communication of specialists, saves time and money. Clients receive help in a timely manner”* (M); *“There appeared an opportunity for other family members to connect and communicate with children: for grandparents, relatives, who are more distant from the place where the child is”* (B); *“Communication is constantly maintained, there is no gap”* (P). Moreover, the research showed that social networks are also used for the provision of social services. Research participants claimed that they use the social network Facebook.

The research highlighted that social workers also use the audio and video data storage YouTube.

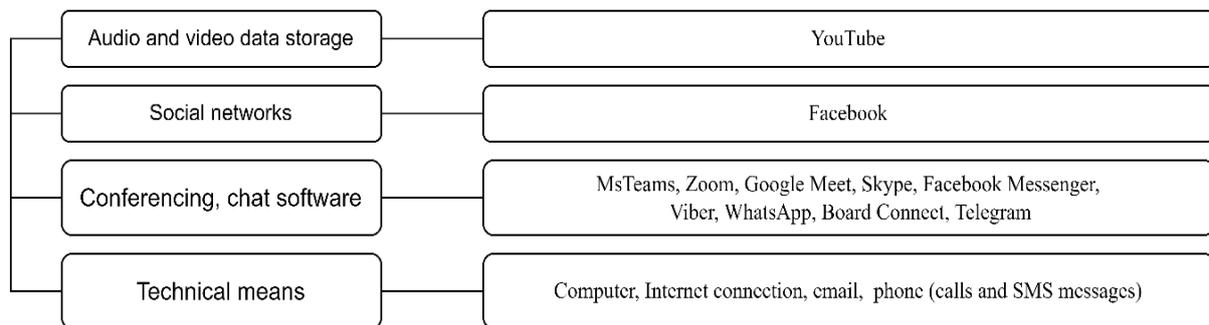


Figure 1 *The use of communication and collaboration means in providing comprehensive support to families during the pandemic period (created by authors)*

The analysis of research data showed that information services did not cease even after the beginning of the pandemic period. Specialists provide the families with the necessary information about social assistance by using technical means (phone and computer). The research revealed that specialists use technical means to address benefit issues, to inform the recipient of services about the health condition of relatives, and when it is necessary to renew information in the process of providing family support (Figure 2). Participants of the research stated: “Applicants are informed about benefits by phone” (G), “Communication with the client’s relatives and the provision of information about the client’s health condition takes place by email or phone by SMS messages when information about the client’s health condition is provided (deterioration or improvement)” (L), “Phone calls with parents of children to discuss events when help is needed” (T).

The research discovered that specialists also provided the information service during the pandemic period by using the conferencing, chat software (Zoom, Skype, Facebook Messenger, Viber, WhatsApp). Specialists used the mentioned software to provide information to parents. Participants of the research noted that they exchanged information in a shared parent group: “The necessary information and important issues were passed on to the parents using a shared parent group created on the Facebook platform. General information was provided there for everybody to see” (D). In addition, by using the mentioned platforms social workers exchanged information with the children’s relatives during the treatment of the child: “In order to gather necessary information and agree on the missing documents, coordinate consultations, communication with the patient and one’s family is carried out by video calls. Especially when families are self-isolating due to the Covid-19 disease and cannot enter the facility. Video calls are made with the help of Messenger, Viber apps, during conversations children have the opportunity to see their relatives” (E). Specialists pointed out that with the help of digital programs they made decisions concerning support,

benefits, use of e-diary at school, connection to remote lessons: “Various family-friendly and convenient devices are used (Zoom, Messenger, Viber, WhatsApp). Emotional support, information are provided. Various documents are sent, help is provided to children with their homework, and at the same time applications for benefits/allowances are completed in the SPIS system. It is taught how to use children’s e-diary or to connect to remote lessons, thus there are two computers on my table, one is used to talk to parents, the other – to show how to make something, to make it more visual” (N); “Applicants who apply for benefits are served remotely over the phone, by using Zoom or Skype” (G).

In addition, the research showed that during the pandemic period recipients of services were provided with timely **information services** by means of communication and collaboration technologies and digital means. Clients were provided with information about the provision of social support to families, feeding of children, activities in the day centre on the social network Facebook and by sending reminders using the FB Messenger application. According to the research participants: “Necessary information about the social support to the family, when food is to be delivered, what activities will be carried out for the children of the day care centre, etc. is provided by FB Messenger” (P). Participants indicated that informing of the children’s relatives about the activities in the day centre is also provided by Viber: “Information and visual materials were shared using Viber with the group of children attending the children’s day centre even before activities were restricted, and now when activities are no longer restricted, it’s a good thing” (S). Social workers employed in community care homes for children noted that during the pandemic period communication and collaboration with the child’s biological parents did not cease. The research revealed that provision of information to parents about the child is carried out by means of FB Messenger and Viber applications: “Communication with biological parents of the child is carried out through Messenger, Viber apps, information is provided to them” (V), parents are also provided with information about the child’s health, well-being, child development: “Communication with the children’s relatives through FB Messenger, Viber on the relevant issues concerning the children’s health, well-being, child development, etc.” (Z), “Information is provided, communication with the patient and one’s family is carried out by means of a video call, Messenger, Viber apps, in order to gather necessary information and agree upon the missing documents, coordinate consultations. Especially when families are self-isolating due to the Covid-19 disease and cannot enter the facility” (Q).

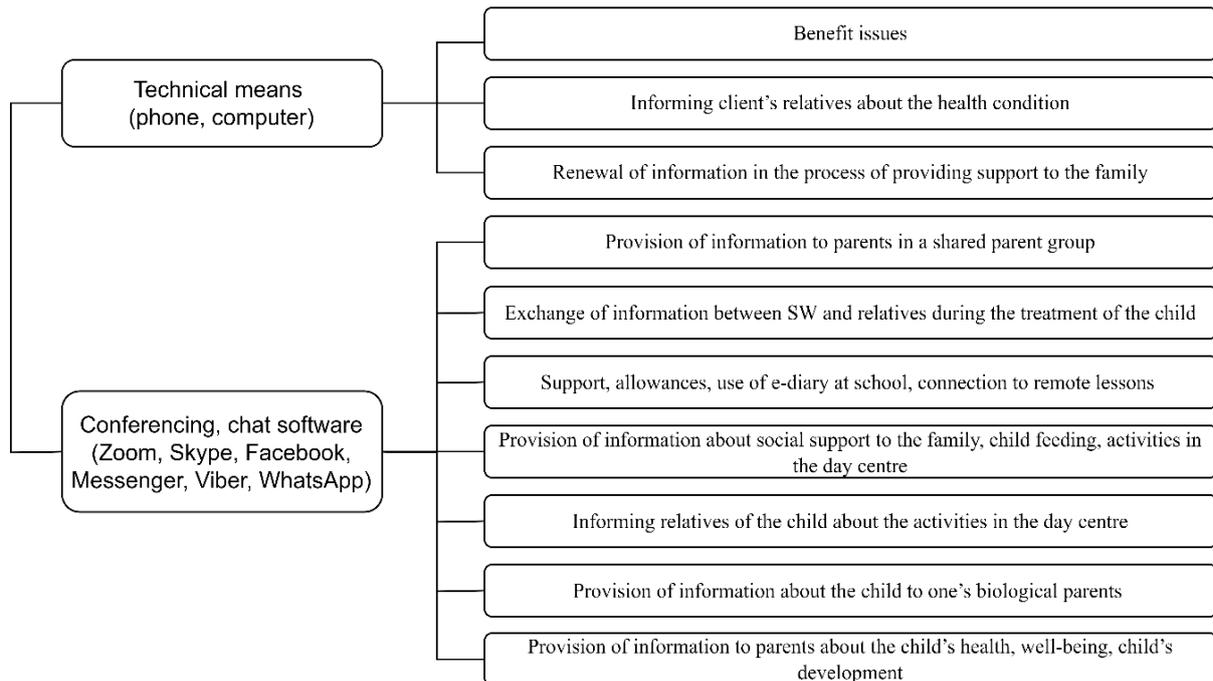


Figure 2 Provision of information services to the family during the pandemic period (created by authors)

In summary, during the pandemic period families were continuously provided with information services. Social workers informed families about the benefit issues over the phone and computer, clarified necessary information during the process of family assistance. Specialists provided information to parents in the shared parent group by using conferencing, chat software (Zoom, Skype, Facebook Messenger, Viber, WhatsApp), social workers and relatives exchanges information related to the child's treatment, health, well-being, development, informed recipients of services about benefits, support, use of e-diary at school, connection to remote lessons, provided information about social support to the family, feeding of children, activities in the day care centre. On the basis of the research participants' experiences, it can be stated that ICT helped to provide timely and high-quality information services.

The research found that recipients of services were consulted during the pandemic period. **Counselling** is help, during which an individual's (family) problem is being analysed together with that person and effective ways of solving it are being searched for (On the Approval of the Catalogue of Social Services, 2006). The research revealed that counselling employs a handy technical tool used by every 21st century-person, i.e. a phone. Research participants noted: "*During phone consultations, clients maintain a good mood and well-being*" (F); "*To reduce stress, calm down both the child and parents, encourage...*" (C) (Figure 3). Therefore, during the pandemic period counselling was also used to maintain good emotional health and well-being of the family members.

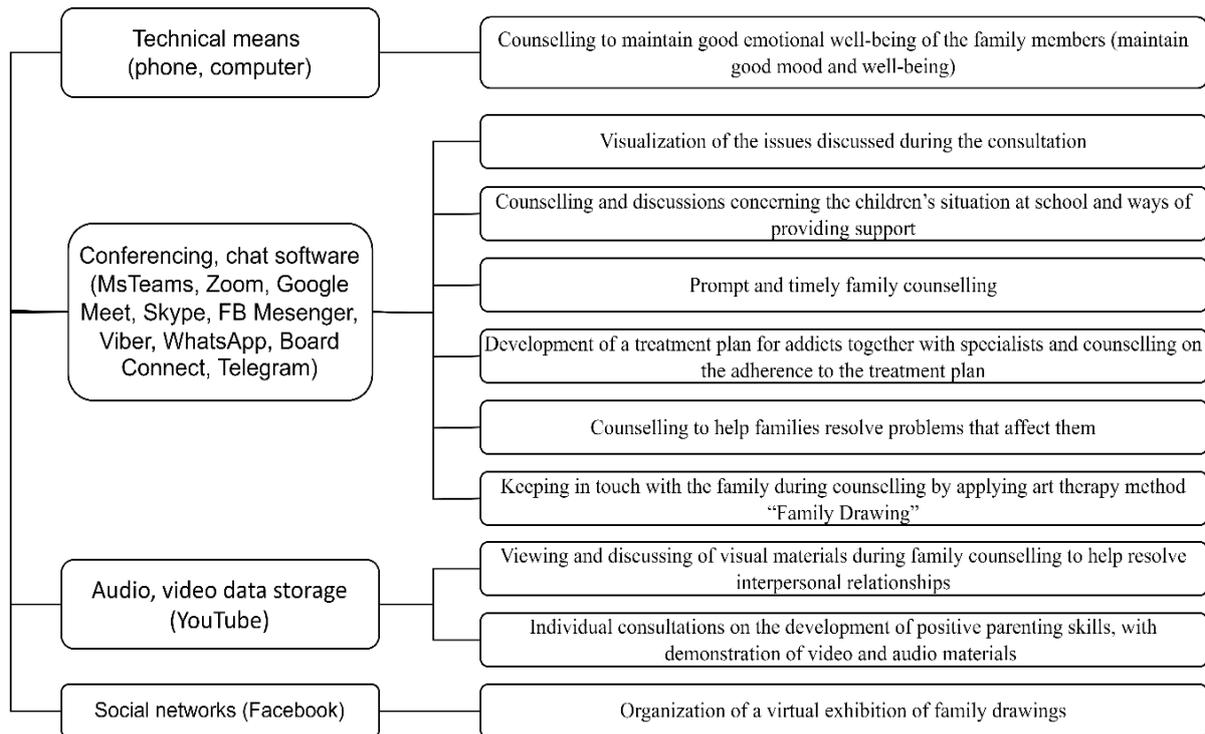


Figure 3 Provision of counselling services to families during the pandemic period
(created by authors)

The research showed that during consultations specialists visualise the issues discussed with the help of conferencing, chat software (MS Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, FB Messenger, Viber, WhatsApp, Board Connect, Telegram). According to participants of the research: *“At first, due to lack of knowledge about means of distance communication, clients were consulted using the Facebook Messenger app. Later, we switched to the Microsoft Teams app and used the Board Connect app in order to visualize the discussed issues”* (B).

The analysis of social workers’ experiences revealed that there were a lot of consultations and discussions during the pandemic period about the situation of children at school and ways of helping them. Research participants pointed out: *“We teamed up with the student’s teachers on the MS Teams platform to discuss situations or ways of helping. During joint meetings of class teacher we discussed attendance or other issues, coordinated remote events and other activities”* (C).

Participants of the research indicated that recipients of services were constantly consulted during the pandemic period: *“It is possible to consult clients more often with the help of apps (Skype, Google Meet, Zoom, etc.)”* (I); *“Counselling of recipients of services on issues relevant to them is held using the Messenger app”*. The research showed that the following have been used: *“We used all possible apps that were comprehensible to us: MS Teams, Zoom, Viber, WhatsApp, Telegram apps”* (F). The provided illustrative statements prove that family counselling was prompt and timely even during the pandemic period.

The analysis of research data showed that during the pandemic period by means of communication and collaboration tools counselling services were also provided to addicts. They were consulted on the development of the treatment plan together with specialists and it was discussed what kind of plan it should be, how to get the recipients of services to follow the established treatment plan. Research participants indicated: *“For addicts, the consultation of a specialist and the development of a treatment plan were carried out through the Zoom app... we consulted with the specialists on how to achieve that the client adheres to the established plan...”* (M).

The research revealed that counselling was provided to help families solve issues relevant to them. According to the research participants: *“Consultations were provided through FB Messenger, Zoom on the problematic situation faced by the family to find various effective ways to solve that problematic situation; for example, not attending classes, running away from home”* (P). Moreover, specialists helped recipients of services to keep in touch with the family during consultations using the method of art therapy. As noted by the participants: *“The “Family Drawing” was applied to maintain connection with the family, during the consultation the family members were offered to carry out a personal work – a joint drawing of a family. During the process of drawing the family, the observation took place by means of the Viber app”* (S).

The research showed that during family counselling specialists also used viewing and discussion of video materials to help resolve interpersonal conflicts and improve interpersonal relationships. Social workers, who took part in the research, indicated: *“The screen, where video materials on the YouTube were shown, was also shared.”* (B). Therefore, specialists when providing counselling services to families during the pandemic period worked really creatively and used the audio, video data storage YouTube.

On the basis of experiences of social workers, individual consultations on the development of positive parenting skills with demonstration of video and audio materials by means of various communication and collaboration means were also provided during the pandemic period. Participants of the research noted: *“Individual consultations on the development of positive parenting skills were carried out. The YouTube platform is used for the transmission of video and audio materials during consultations”* (O). The research showed that specialists also used the social network Facebook for the organization of the virtual exhibition of family drawings: *“Drawn family pictures were photographed and published on “Facebook” – an exhibition of paintings was organized”* (S).

In summary, counselling services were provided to families during the pandemic period; families were helped to resolve issues that affect them and find effective solutions to their problems. The counselling took place over the phone to support the emotional well-being of the family members. Conferencing, chat software (MS Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, FB Messenger, Viber,

WhatsApp, Board Connect, Telegram) were used for a prompt and timely family counselling, during which issues related to the teaching and learning of children, ways of providing assistance were discussed, and adult family members were consulted on issues of addictions and treatment. During general family consultations, art therapy methods were used to maintain family relationships, while the drawn family pictures became the works of a virtual exhibition displayed on the social network Facebook. The video and audio data storage YouTube was used during consultations to show and discuss video materials this way helping to resolve interpersonal family relationships and demonstrate videos and audio materials during trainings in the development of positive parenting skills.

The research showed that during the pandemic period technical means (computer, Internet connection, email) helped specialists to provide **mediation and representation** services to families. Mediation and representation is the provision of assistance to a person (family) in solving various personal (family) issues (legal, health, economic, household), handling documents, paying taxes, registering with specialists, organizing economic work, etc., mediating between persons (family) and their environments (other institutions, specialists, individuals) (On the approval of the Catalogue of Social Services, 2006). It should be noted that during the pandemic period mediation was conducted when documents were electronically processed for institutions providing public services (for benefits): *“We processed documents remotely. Teamwork takes place remotely when preparing documents, descriptors” (D). (Figure 4).*

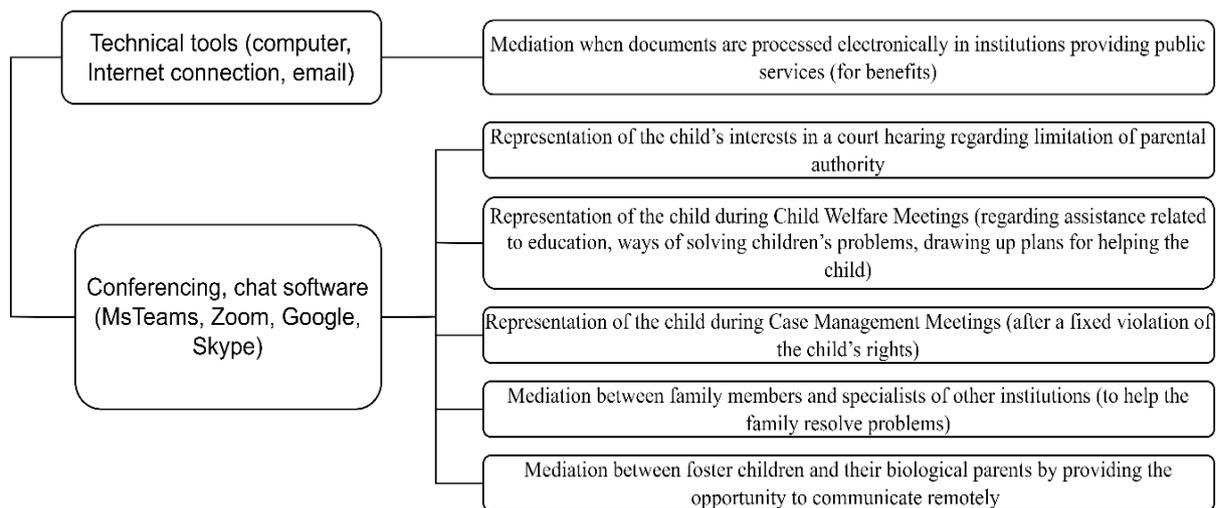


Figure 4 Provision of mediation and representation services to families during the pandemic period (created by authors)

Participants of the research mentioned: *“It is not necessary for the client to come to the institution if the documents can be submitted online. Clients learn to be more independent. During consultations, mediation, clients learn to use the Internet, relevant websites (Sodra, Employment Service). They generate emails,*

send relevant documents to the institutions” (F); “Through mediation, the social worker helps the recipient of services to submit the application electronically, collect necessary documents. The worker receives the documents during a family visit or the recipient of services sends them by email. Then the social worker sends them to the Benefits Department by email” (H).

The research revealed that representation of the child’s interests in a court hearing regarding the limitation of parenting authority takes place by means of conferencing, chat software (MS Teams, Zoom, Google Skype). Research participants pointed out: *“Video conferencing using the Zoom, MS Teams apps helps to properly represent the child’s interest outside the courtroom” (A).* Moreover, social workers mentioned the importance of the representation of the child during Child Welfare Meetings (regarding assistance related to education, ways of solving children’s problems, drawing up plans for helping the child). According to the participants: *“Meetings of the Child Welfare Commission were held on the MS Teams platform, during which problematic situations, forms of assistance, further actions and learning opportunities were discussed with the student, one’s carers, the class teacher and members of the Child Welfare Commission” (C); “Meetings on the Zoom platform with the members of the Child Welfare Commission and other specialists, with parents and social workers regarding ways of solving children’s problems, and a plan for helping the child was drawn up” (V).*

It should be noted that distance meetings have recently become a common practice that saves a lot of time for the specialist and family members. The following is evidenced by the statements of the research participants: *“Case management and court hearings were held and currently take place remotely, live in exceptional cases, and even now when there is no quarantine, we conduct hearings via Zoom, Skype” (G).* The research showed that representation of the child during Case Management Meetings after a fixed violation of the child’s rights is also carried out remotely on the Zoom platform. Research participants indicate: *“Meetings are organized after a fixed violation of the child’s rights or are scheduled after a certain time indicated in the plan. The measures in the plan are designed to help the family resolve problems and develop necessary skills. Meetings take place on the Zoom platform” (K).*

Specialists also use various apps to mediate between the family members and specialists of other institutions to help the family solve problems that affect them: *“With the help of apps (Skype, Google Meet, Zoom, etc.) it is possible to mediate more often between different persons, representatives of institutions (schools, elderships), share documents, photos, records” (I); “Social worker and the family participate in the meetings. In many cases, the teacher and representatives of other institutions are also present. Zoom, Skype apps are used” (I); “Mediation with specialists of the Employment Service is carried out during remote*

consultations through the Zoom app, thus enabling clients to participate in the labour market” (M).

The research showed that mediation between foster children and their biological parents provides them with an opportunity to communicate remotely: *“Communication with biological parents takes place through the Zoom app” (M).*

To summarize, during the pandemic period families were provided with mediation and representation services to solve various legal, health problems of the family members, process documents, register with specialists, mediate between the family and other institutions, specialists, help families solve problems. Computer, Internet connection and emails have helped with the electronic processing of documents in institutions providing public services. Social workers and child rights protection specialists used conferencing and chat software (MS Teams, Zoom, Google, Skype) to represent children’s interests during Child Welfare hearings, court hearings, mediation between foster children and their biological parents by providing an opportunity for them to maintain relationships by communicating remotely.

The research revealed that the **provision of catering services** during the pandemic period was also not interrupted. Catering is assistance to persons (families) who are unable to provide food for themselves due to a lack of independence or income (On the Approval of the Catalogue of Social Services, 2006). Catering can be organized by delivering hot food or food products to homes, by providing free meals in canteens, community facilities or other eating places, by providing food assistance. Research participants indicated: *“Every week, we reminded parents about the time of picking up the free meal or agreed on where and when to bring the meal to the family by calling them or sending SMS messages” (C).* Therefore, technical means (SMS messages by phone) served to ensure that the delivery of food to the family was completed on time during the pandemic period.

It was established that **other social services** were also provided during the pandemic period. According to the Catalogue of Social Services (2006), other social services are those that are organized by taking into account the specific needs of the municipality’s population, i.e.: purchase of food products, accompanying to various institutions, etc. However, in order for these services to be provided, the family’s home and living conditions must be inspected for determining the necessary social support to the family. Therefore, specialists used conferencing, chat software, Google Meet, and phones. Research participants claimed: *“The family needed social support, which required the Home and Living Conditions Inspection Act. Since the family was self-isolating, no one could enter the house. The family send photos to the social worker for her to assess the living conditions: Google Meet app was used to film inside the house. The social worker prepared the home inspection act, the family received social support. Such inspections of family conditions, “visitation” of the family are further applied if*

there are suspicions of sick persons in the family” (I).

In summary, during the pandemic period services were provided to families at home: catering was organized by notifying (calling or texting) the family of food deliveries to their home. The home and living conditions were inspected and the necessary social support for the family was decided upon with the help of the chat program Google Meet.

Conclusions

The analysis of experiences of social workers, who provided general social services to families during the pandemic period, revealed that social workers used various technical and digital means to provide general social services to families during the pandemic period. The research showed that in order to communicate and collaborate with recipients of services social workers use technical and digital means that require Internet connection, as they communicate via emails or use other Internet apps, and those that do not need Internet connection or a computer, i.e. specialists communicate with family members by calling or texting them. Social workers use the following conferencing, chat software to provide services: MS Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, Facebook Messenger, Viber, WhatsApp, Board Connect, Telegram, social network Facebook, audio, video data storage YouTube.

The research found that during the pandemic period with the help of technical and digital means social workers provided families with information, counselling, mediation, representation, organization of catering, home and living conditions inspection services on a continuous basis. Through a variety of technical and digital communication and collaboration means providers of services have been in touch with the families, provided information and counselling on a range of issues relevant to the recipients of services.

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