

ABSTRACT

The aim of the thesis was to explore how accompanying workers view their role and how they perceive its impact on the course of foster care. It was about elucidating the practical work of the accompanying social worker, which greatly influences the whole process of accompaniment and also the overall impact on the foster family.

The first part describes the development of foster family care from orphanages to the present day. The forms in this country and in the world are defined, as well as the legal ramifications. The chapter concludes with a text on the process of foster care placement. The second chapter introduces foster care within the system of social and legal protection of the child. The subchapters elaborate on basic topics related to foster care, which will help the reader grasp its specificities. The subchapters describe the rights and obligations of foster parents, define the types of foster care and the subjects of accompaniment, specify the Agreement on the Performance of Foster Care, as well as activities within cooperation with state entities, in particular individual support planning and the system of foster care benefits. The chapter concludes with an introduction to the long-awaited amendment to the Act on the Social and Legal Protection of Children, which came into force this year. The third chapter deals with the significance and function of the whole fostering system and its subchapters focus on both foster carers and looked after children. Areas such as the personality of the foster carer and their competencies, the needs of children and the specific needs of children not growing up in biological families are described. Attachment theory and the manifestations of children with early trauma are also important areas in the chapter. The last chapter of the theoretical part is the foster family accompaniment system, which is the main focus of this thesis. The subchapters define the basic concepts and principles of accompaniment and describe what the process looks like, and the role of the key worker in it. The role and position of the accompanying social worker is specified, as well as his/her competencies.

In the empirical part, research is presented in which semi-structured interviews were conducted with three female workers of a selected accompanying non-profit organization. All of the workers hold the position of key social worker, with one of the interviewees additionally holding the position of education coordinator. The research used the IPA method in the analysis of the interviews. Three main themes emerged from the analysis: perceptions of the impact of accompaniment on clients, legislation, and desired changes. Participants described their perception of the impact of accompaniment on clients in a mostly similar way, in that the degree of impact on the foster family is always individual and is mainly influenced by the setting and attitudes of the particular foster family. All participants agreed that there are also differences between the settings and competencies of accompanying workers, with the lack of financial remuneration of social workers also coming up in the interview. It emerged from the interviews that insufficient financial remuneration causes increased staff turnover and staff shortages, which in turn affects service delivery. During the interviews, all participants agreed that they perceived their role as primarily supportive and helping, not controlling.