

# Good practices in family support and foster care system

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Miejski Ośrodek  
Pomocy Społecznej  
w Zorach





In accordance with Article 176(1) of the The Act on the Supporting the Family and System of the Foster Care of June 9, 2011, the municipality is obliged: to create and develop a child care system, including day care centers, and to work with families experiencing difficulties in fulfilling care and upbringing functions by providing support and assistance to families experiencing difficulties.

In the city of Żory, a constant and reliable analysis of the local environment is carried out, to identify families struggling with care and upbringing problems, in which minor children are raised. Equally, every effort is made to improve their situation using the resources of the family and cooperating with institutions involved in supporting the family.

# Family assistant as a form of support

In the city of Żory, one of the forms of family assistance offered by the Municipal Social Welfare Center is support of a family assistant. The function of family assistant has been introduced in the Municipal Social Welfare Center in Żory since 2012. The family assistant, in accordance with Article 17(2) of The Act on the Supporting the Family and System of the Foster Care of June 9, 2011, is employed within the framework of an employment relationship under a task-time system. Assistant help is assigned at the request of the social worker, but the need for this form of assistance may also be indicated by the court and other institutions such as a school. The support of an assistant can also be requested by the family itself when it needs it.

The law precisely indicates the requirements to be met by a person employed as a family assistant. In addition, the family assistant constantly improves his qualifications by participating in courses, trainings, seminars on issues of working with the family.

- ▶ **The family assistant** aims to work with the family in problems not only in upbringing, but also in everyday matters. The help she/he provides is to help overcome difficulties, improve the life situation, so that in the future the family overcomes its own problems independently.

# Profile of a family assistant

Increases the chances of returning children from foster care to their biological family

works with the family in the place where they live

Improves parents' parenting skills

accompanies in dealing with official matters

conducts household budget management training

educates on proper development

conducts cleanliness training

Supports the family in overcoming difficulties in life

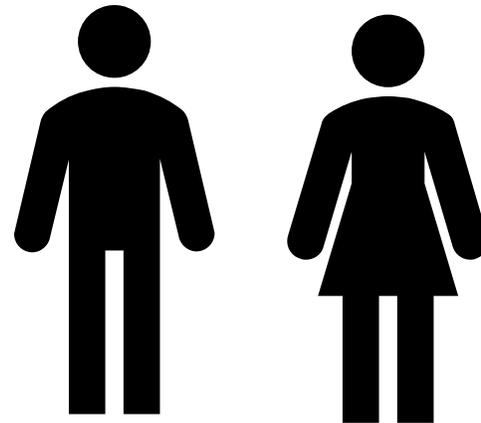
Informs about the possibilities of getting help from various institutions

organizes and participates in multiprofessional teams

Strengthens positive relationships in the family

on behalf of the family cooperates with various institutions

Doesn't do things instead the family, but points out, motivates and guides



# The rights and duties of the family assistant and social worker are regulated by:

- ▶ **Ustawa z dn. 9 czerwca 2011 r.  
o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej –  
Act of June 9, 2011 on family support and foster care system**
- ▶ **Ustawa z dn. 12 marca 2004 r.  
o pomocy społecznej (z późniejszymi zmianami) –  
Act of March 12, 2004 on social assistance (as amended).**



# Article 15 Tasks of family assistant

## 1. The tasks of the family assistant include, in particular:

- 1) development and implementation of a plan of work with the family in cooperation with family members and in consultation with the social worker referred to in Art. 11 (1);
- 2) developing, in cooperation with family members and the coordinator of family foster care, a plan of work with the family, which is coordinated with the plan of assistance for the child placed in foster care;
- 3) providing assistance to families in improving their life situation, including the acquisition of skills of proper household management;
- 4) providing assistance to families in solving social problems;
- 5) providing assistance to families in solving psychological problems;
- 6) providing assistance to families in solving upbringing problems with children;
- 7) supporting social activity of families;
- 8) motivating family members to improve their professional qualifications;
- 9) providing assistance in finding, taking up and maintaining gainful employment;
- 10) motivating participation in group classes for parents aimed at shaping proper parenting patterns and psychosocial skills

# Article 15 Tasks of family assistant

- 11) providing support to children, in particular, through participation in psycho-educational classes;
- 12) taking intervention and remedial actions in situations where the safety of children and families is threatened;
- 13) conducting individual parenting consultations for parents and children;
  - a) carrying out the tasks specified in the Act of November 4, 2016. on Support for Pregnant Women and Families "Za życiem" (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 1329);
- 14) keeping records of work with the family;
- 15) periodic assessment of the situation of the family, at least every six months, and providing this assessment to the entity referred to in Article 17 employment and work relationship of family assistant paragraph. 1;
- 16) monitoring the functioning of the family after the end of cooperation with family;
- 17) drawing up, at the request of the court, an opinion on the family and its members;
- 18) cooperation with governmental and local administration units, relevant non-governmental organizations and other entities and persons specializing in activities for the child and family;
- 19) cooperation with the interdisciplinary team or working group referred to in Art. 9a interdisciplinary team of the Act of July 29, 2005 on Counteracting Violence in the Family (Journal of Laws of 2021, item 1249), or other entities whose assistance in performing tasks it deems necessary.

# Problems of families under the support of a family assistant

- ▶ Addictions
- ▶ Violence
- ▶ Mental illnesses
- ▶ Neglect of care and upbringing
- ▶ Demoralization
- ▶ Inadequacy in life
- ▶ Professional inactivity
- ▶ Intellectual disability
- ▶ Poverty



# Introduction of the family assistant into the environment

- ▶ Before the first visit, the family assistant consults with the social worker to obtain detailed information about the family. The assistant also has access to family's documentation, including the community interview created by the social worker. Most often, the family assistant has no prior contact with the family, so he has to gain the family's trust, justify his presence and "enter" the family's environment in order to effectively help in a specific area.
- ▶ During the first visit, the assistant is accompanied by a social worker, who introduces his tasks to the family. The innovative nature of family assistantship means that at the first meetings with the assistant, families are often accompanied by fear, resulting from unfamiliarity with this instrument. Underlying the initial reluctance are usually factors such as:
  - ✓ Fear of interference by strangers in the private life of the family;
  - ✓ problems with alcohol or lack of resourcefulness in running the home and family life, to which many people are unable to admit;
  - ✓ negative stereotypes associated with the family assistant profession, particularly concerning the fear of having parental rights revoked.

As knowledge of family assistantship spreads, and as we work with families on a daily basis, fear gradually gives way to a positive perception, trust, and a desire for help.

# Stages of methodical action of the family assistant

**STAGE I**  
Diagnosis

**STAGE II**  
Develop a plan for  
working with the family

**STAGE III**  
Implementation of the  
action plan and possible  
modification of the work  
plan

**STAGE IV**  
Periodic assessment of  
the family's situation

**STAGE V**  
Termination of  
cooperation, evaluation

**STAGE VI**  
Periodic monitoring of  
the family after the end  
of cooperation

## STAGE I - diagnosis:

- ▶ Getting to know the expectations of the family and presenting the principles and possibilities of the offered support, deepening the knowledge about the situation related to the family's problem. To assess the analysis of the situation of the family with children.



## STAGE II - development of a plan for working with the family:

- ▶ When defining a plan for working with the family and setting goals, it is important to:
  - ▶ take into account opportunities, resources of the family and its environment, deficits and barriers;
  - ▶ adopt the principle of developing a plan for the whole family.

## STAGE III - implementation of the action plan and possible modification of the work plan:

- ▶ Active implementation of the actions set in the plan. If the situation requires it, the work plan can be updated due to changes in the family's situation and reported needs.

## IV STAGE - periodic assessment of the family's situation:

- ▶ The assessment is conducted together with the family. It is used to assess whether the action taken are bringing the family closer to its goals and improving the situation.

## V STAGE - end of cooperation, evaluation :

- ▶ It is important that at the end of the cooperation, the final summary should be attended by all members of the family. Compare with the family the situation at the beginning of the cooperation and show the changes that have occurred.

## VI STAGE - periodic monitoring of the family after the end of cooperation:

- ▶ On the basis of support, not control.





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## Asystent rodziny

### Jemu możesz zaufać...

—  
"Nie potrzebuję skrzydeł by latać,  
potrzebuję ludzi, dzięki którym nie upadnę."



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## Interinstitutional cooperation

The family assistant, while working with the family, contacts various professionals such as:

- ▶ Social workers;
- ▶ Family Violence Prevention Team;
- ▶ Commune Commission for Solving Alcohol Problems;
- ▶ Teachers;
- ▶ Pedagogues;
- ▶ Probation officers;
- ▶ Police;
- ▶ Health Centers.

## Some statistics...

In the Municipal Social Welfare Center in Zory, 10 people were employed in the position of family assistant on the basis of a contract of employment within the framework of task hours in 2022.

The number of families covered by support is steadily increasing. In the period from 2019 to the end of August 2022, 283 families benefited from the assistance of an assistant, of which 205 families on their own request, while 78 families on the basis of a court order.

As of August 31, 2022, 86 active communities were recorded.

# Reasons for securing children in foster care:

1. Directly endangering safety and health of children through improper care.
  2. Gross neglect of duties to a minor.
  3. Demoralizing behavior of parents that has bad influence on the development of the child.
  4. Progressive demoralization of minor children including, inter alia, failure to meet school obligations.
  5. Lack of response by the parent to the demoralization of the child.
  6. Violence against the child.
- Extreme causes: drunkenness of minors, starvation, abandonment, illness that makes it impossible to care for the child.

# Support of the social worker of the Foster Care Department

cooperating with biological families of children placed  
in foster care

## Tasks of a social worker of the Foster Care Department - working with biological parents of children placed in foster care.

1. Preparing every six months an opinion to the Court concerning the current life situation of biological parents of a child, placed in foster care, coming from our district and another district, (in accordance with Article 47(5) of the Act of June 9, 2011 on the Supporting the Family and System of the Foster Care).
2. Preparation of opinions at the request of other Social Welfare Centers, Children's Homes regarding the current life situation of biological parents or the possibility of returning the child to the biological family, (in accordance with Article 190 a of the Act of June 9, 2011 on the Supporting the Family and System of the Foster Care).
3. Assistance in completing documents concerning the determination of a partial fee for the stay of a child in foster care, coming from our poviat (in accordance with art. 193 et seq. of the Act of June 9, 2011 on the Supporting the Family and System of the Foster Care).

## Tasks of a social worker of the Foster Care Department - working with biological parents of children placed in foster care.

4. Preparing, filling in, at the request of other Social Welfare Centers, documents relating to administrative proceedings on determining the partial costs of maintaining a child in foster care, (in accordance with Article 193 and subsequent articles of the Act of June 9, 2011 on the Supporting the Family and System of the Foster Care).
5. Participation in meetings concerning assessment of the situation of a child placed in foster care, (in accordance with Article 130(1) of the Act of June 9, 2011 on the Supporting the Family and System of the Foster Care).
6. Participation in working groups on the „Blue Cards” procedure.
7. Drawing up a Plan of Work with the family together with the biological parents.
8. Coordination and control of contacts of the biological parent with the child in cooperation with foster family workers,

# Tasks of a social worker of the Foster Care Department - working with biological parents of children placed in foster care.

## 9. **Broad social work in accordance with the needs of the client:**

- ✓ assistance in completing an application for housing from the municipal resources, or its replacement,
- ✓ assistance in fulfilling an application for vacation, regular contact with the child, restoration of parental authority,
- ✓ assistance in completing various official applications,
- ✓ assistance in looking for a job, notification of job offers, referral to the District Labor Office,
- ✓ referral to social workers in the area for financial assistance in case of difficult social and living situation,
- ✓ entering the environment, checking the current social and living situation,
- ✓ referral to drug treatment (seeking a place in a drug rehab center), psychiatric treatment, meetings with a psychologist, therapist,
- ✓ writing applications to the Municipal Commission for the Solution of Alcohol Problems about the need for drug treatment,
- ✓ referral to a family doctor or specialist,
- ✓ motivating to take part in "School for Parents" workshops,
- ✓ motivation for constant contact with children, cooperation with foster family,
- ✓ constant monitoring of families, visits, supportive and motivational talks, counseling.

The social worker in charge of working with biological parents constantly cooperates with:

- ▶ district officers,
- ▶ probation officers,
- ▶ social workers,
- ▶ family assistants,
- ▶ coordinators of family foster care,
- ▶ psychologist.

Provides foster care coordinators and social workers with up-to-date information of the biological parent according to their needs, including for the purpose of drafting child support applications, regulating the child's legal situation and making periodic assessments of the minor's situation. Cooperates with Foster Families as well as foster care facilities, etc.



The number of biological families covered by the support of a social worker of the Foster Care Department in the city of Zory is a total of: 134 (of which 84 live in Zory, the rest outside the city - as of 09.09.2022). This number is moveable and constantly changing, as biological parents quite often move, are placed in penitentiaries, social welfare homes, etc. It should be mentioned that biological parents of children from other poviat are also covered. The number depends on the letters received from the Courts or Social Welfare Centers regarding requests to prepare opinions, reports on biological parents.



As part of her/his work, the social worker visits biological parents at their place of residence. Depending on the needs of the wards, he contacts them several times a month. In the event that their home address is unknown, she searches for that whereabouts. Requests about data on biological parents are also written to the City Police Station. The Municipal Buildings Administration, the Central Prison Service Administration are also asked for such data. The current financial and living situation of the biological parents is determined and their living situation is discerned, whether they are taking steps to regain parental authority and whether there are possibilities of returning the child to the custody of the parent. **The social worker cooperating with the biological parents is a so-called signpost for them, which indicates the direction of action. The wards decide which way they will go and to what extent they will change their previous lives, which led to the placement of their children in foster care.**



# Thank you for your attention!



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