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Evaluation research as a source of information - social work for the prevention of domestic violence

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to show the essence of conducting evaluation studies as part of social work to counteract domestic violence. The article raises an important issue which is the lack of information within the framework of conducted activities, which is visible on many levels of work with the family in which there is domestic violence. It seems that the Polish system of counteracting domestic violence appears to many practitioners as an area requiring a continuous evaluation process, implemented in such a way that on the local ground it is possible to "diagnose" the difficulties faced by specialists creating a local system of counteracting domestic violence. In the area of diagnosing local difficulties, it seems that too little reflection is devoted to many other important issues. Therefore, can evaluation be a response to the lack of reflection and reliable information?

Keywords: social sciences, social work, challenges in social work, domestic violence, social assistance

1. INTRODUCTION

The national system of counteracting domestic violence remains at the stage of continuous improvement. Its strong local diversity means that people experiencing or using violence to a lesser or greater extent can benefit from help in their place of residence. The practice of implementing assistance measures within the system of counteracting domestic

violence should be focused on the so-called an interdisciplinary approach, which is based on the value and assumption is continuous cooperation between services working in this area - it seems that no one wonders how this co-operation takes place not only in extreme situations when actions of many services are taken at the moment of health risk; human life, when things are publicized by local or national media, but also in everyday aid practice. In the area of diagnosing local difficulties, it seems that too little reflection is devoted to many other important issues: do specialists have knowledge about mutual professional competences?

What factors make it difficult to carry out efficient and effective action? Or in the local system of counteracting there are so-called black spots, manifested by the lack of local solutions for specific cases that appear as part of the phenomenon of domestic violence? or within the local action of the institution to counteract violence, no psychology, "hot potato transplantation" is practiced - the most complicated and intricate cases? [1]

Will honest evaluation research in this area not contribute to increasing cooperation within the local system of counteracting violence? No. The success is not only in the research itself, but in their use and implementation of recommendations in professional practice. Creating a document only to the so-called wardrobes will not improve the local system of counteracting violence. It is important that apart from the difficulties that appear in the local dimension, "diagnose" what is good and translates into the quality of work with a person who uses or experiences violence in order to continue these practices. The system of counteracting domestic violence is also the work of many entities operating on the local level. We include here primarily: organizational units for social assistance, communal commissions for solving alcohol-related problems, police, education, health care, non-governmental organizations. It seems that this is the second area within the system of counteracting domestic violence, which is a challenge for evaluation studies.

Are we analyzing the quality of services provided especially to people experiencing violence as part of local anti-violence systems? Do we have reliable information on the training needs in the field of counteracting violence occurring in individual entities in the local dimension? Does the lack of this information lead to a situation in which most specialists remain trained in the same area, not having the same staff also trained on other issues related to experiencing domestic violence? Finally, do the persons working in the entities creating the local counteracting system have adequate psychological and supervisory support? Are we not planning activities in the commune in the field of preventing ad hoc violence, by not thinking deeply about their meaning and accuracy? [2]

The system of counteracting violence is also the people for whom it was appointed, which is the most disturbing issue from the point of its implementation. When analyzing numerous communal strategies to counteract domestic violence, it is impossible to perceive a single sentence about the opinions of its users. Why? Why is this a situation? in which the activities carried out in the commune are evaluated in the field of preventing domestic violence, excluding one of the main "sources" of information, including from the following areas of the local anti-violence systems:

- contacts with institutions together with the evaluation of individual institutions; assessment of emergency and 24/7 help;
- evaluation of police interventions;
- forms of assistance with an assessment of their effectiveness;
- indication of the forms of the most-expected help;

- contact with an interdisciplinary team and a working group;
- evaluation of services executing the "Blue Cards" procedure;
- analysis of the barriers and advantages of the local system of counteracting violence.

The reasons for this situation can be seen in many issues, but it is important to note that very often the report on the implementation of such a program is the only source of information about the local system of counteracting violence, which is treated in terms of evaluation. Such reports are unfortunately limited to the presentation of dry facts about the scale of the phenomenon in a given commune, the number of working group meetings, initiated and closed "Blue Card" procedures, actions taken for people experiencing and using domestic violence, which is the third area for evaluation studies, thus raising the following questions. Are the local activities really adapted to the needs of people experiencing and using violence, if so, how do we have information on this subject?

Do we analyze problems that arise during the implementation of specific actions, including support groups, corrective and educational programs. Do we take into account the variability of the issues raised - do the actions require any changes? If so to what extent? What can improve the implementation of, for example, preventive measures implemented in the municipality? [3]

2. EVALUATION RESEARCH AS AN ELEMENT OF MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

There is no doubt that the management of the social welfare structure in the national and local dimension requires adequate knowledge of the existing state of affairs that it wants to influence and the effects of the actions carried out, both those intended and unintentional. Taking a broader reflection, it is impossible not to mention the fact that the 21st century is called the information age, information becomes an indispensable element in the everyday functioning of society.

It is no different in the case of the development of social work for the prevention of domestic violence and social assistance, which is affected by numerous socio-economic changes - the development of knowledge or the growing violence of natural phenomena, which translates into a situation in which the social assistance system will be more and more demanded more - reacting to sudden, stormy events, but also long-term ones, observable.[4] The efficiency of responding to social assistance institutions depends on and will continue to depend on access to broadly understood information, which the system can acquire thanks to evaluation research. In turn, the developed efficiency of processing this information contributes to the adjustment of social welfare institutions to the ongoing changes and ever newer needs.

The role of evaluation in social assistance is not only related to the quality of services or the possibility of obtaining information. Also important is the concept of effectiveness in social assistance, which closely correlates with the management of social assistance in accordance with its objectives, i.e. in relation to satisfying the basic needs of people or entire families who are not able to satisfy them, but condition this situation with well-defined goals.

Evaluation will thus enable long-term management of broadly understood social assistance, providing premises for deciding and, importantly, data enabling verification of decisions made, establishing on the basis of various sources indicators of self-efficacy

evaluation in relation to decisions taken and determining adequate self-help role and assistance bodies, e.g. on the territory of the commune in other decisions required by the existing situation, which should constitute a kind of organizational basis in the management of social assistance [5].

In addition, we must not forget that the current form of evaluation is the result of social changes, which translated into the adaptation of evaluation to the existing social reality, and its social character is manifested first of all in the democratic, interactivity and dynamism. This democracy, in turn, manifests itself in numerous procedures of planning activities, techniques for collecting data or taking into account the evaluated entities themselves.

In the practice of social assistance, evaluation may also play a developmental role, signaling emerging problems, determining the degree of compliance of actions with the adopted objectives and enabling building support for the proposed change, which becomes crucial, among others from the point of action implemented as part of social assistance, which could not take place without the support of people who use them. In another case, people or entire families very often resist change, and the ultimate goal of working with them becomes very difficult to implement. This is very often because of a lack of support for the proposed change, which is usually crucial to a successful change.[6]

2. 1. Counteracting domestic violence as a public intervention. The role of evaluation Research

It is obvious that many tasks must be carried out in the process of creating various public interventions within the framework of social assistance. Evaluation studies can be helpful here in the implementation of these tasks, at various stages of creating public intervention strategies.

The first task is to create a hypothesis regarding intervention, a task including activities related to the improvement of working hypotheses regarding the etiology of the problem, and thus the reasons underlying the problem, which constitute an attempt to understand the causal relationships.

Understanding the multiplicity of causes along with many views on what is important and applicable in the current situation. Evaluation studies can provide information on important concepts, issues and perspectives identified in the analysis of the problem and the population itself - the target group, where public intervention is planned. Importantly, evaluation studies can also help us here, with answers to questions about causal factors that explain the problem, and the types of results or effects of the identified causes. Based on the above, we can answer the question how to put the hypothesis regarding etiology?

As part of the task regarding the hypothesis of intervention, the second, also important, activity is the creation of a working hypothesis, which concerns this intervention, that is, which should present a clear set of beliefs.

About the nature of the intervention and the expected results or results. The conducted evaluation studies may help clarify the working hypothesis regarding intervention, trying to answer the following questions: What interventions does the hypothesis concerning the etiology of the problem involve? Will there be a reduction or elimination of the problem? What potential results can be expected after the intervention? Thus, creating a hypothesis showing the relationship between a specific intervention and the result or result. [7]

The second task within the framework of creating a public intervention strategy within the social welfare system is the question of defining the participants. Within the measure there are many important activities that can be implemented by means of evaluation studies.

2. 2. 1. We can distinguish primarily

- Identification of the initiating system, the units that were the first to notice a given problem, paying attention to it. In this respect, the evaluation may be helpful in answering the following questions: Who was the first to recognize the problem? How can initiators be involved in change activities?
- Identifying the change agent system, examining leadership and coordination issues, answering the question of who will be responsible for the above issues.
- Identification of the client's system, which consists of units that will be directly or indirectly beneficiaries of changes, if it is introduced in life. The evaluation study can be used to identify groups that are the primary and secondary beneficiary of the change.
- Identifying the support system, examining potential units or groups that can support change efforts, identifying associations, partnerships, organizations that are particularly interested in this group / unit or the problem identified is very close to them.
- Identification of the controlling system, understood as a person or group of persons having the authority to implement the proposed change. The important issue here is the question of the formal authority and authority of approval and ordering the implementation of the proposed change and who has the final authority to approve the change.
- Identification of the host system, organization or unit with formally assigned responsibility for the area affected by the proposed change. The answer to the question, which organizations or organizational units will be responsible for sponsoring and performing activities related to the introduction of the change, remains a fundamental one here.
- Identify the target system, so individuals, groups, structures, policies or practices that need to be changed so that the original beneficiaries can achieve the desired benefits. When defining the target system, evaluation studies play an important role, allowing you to receive information on three main fields: What changes must take place so that the original beneficiaries achieve the desired benefits? Which individuals or groups must agree to change? What needs to be changed to make the intervention a success?
- Identification of the operating system, created when all other systems have been defined and the participants have been carefully selected. The operating system usually consists of units that are part of other systems that have played a significant role at the very stage of planning change and ultimately leading to its implementation [8].

2. 2. Evaluation as a tool for planning changes in the family with the problem of violence

Another activity within the framework of creating a strategy of public intervention within the social welfare system is very often overlooked, and how important element - to examine the ability of the system, individual, group to change.

The progressive aid process very often disregards the assessment of its participants in terms of broadly understood readiness to change, thus taking into account their openness, commitment and ability to strive for the proposed change; the availability of resources to change. Evaluation studies in this aspect may be useful, for example, in answering the following questions: What were the previous experiences with the individual, the group within the proposed change? What level of commitment to change is anticipated? Will an individual or group be able to cooperate with each other? [9]

There is no doubt that openness to change is one of the basic elements not only in the assistance relationship, but also involves a kind of informal assessment, which is based in the vast majority of cases on experience - whether and how the decision makers coped with previous proposals for changes.

A different and relatively important issue is the relationship between social welfare institutions and change. Evaluation studies addressing the subject of the analysis of previous experiences may contribute to increasing openness to change, thus determining which units are prepared for change and which are likely to be resistant in this respect. However, it should be remembered that the study of openness for change does not close to the question of decision makers whether they are open to change. It is important to extend this question to other, important elements: previous positions of the institution to the proposed change, earlier involvement of institutions in the change. [10]

In turn, the institution's involvement in change should be analyzed first of all in terms of its enthusiasm, even if there will be agreement on the issue that changes are needed - but we may have a situation where different points of view about the final shape of the change will appear. The use of evaluation studies to assess the degree of involvement in change and the assessment of the degree of consensus only give a full picture of the commitment of the institution. Evaluation studies using techniques such as focus groups within a given institution, for which the proposed change will have an impact, can give a strong sense of support and some kind of consensus. As part of the task of examining the system's capabilities, units, groups to be changed, we can additionally distinguish two important activities:

The first refers to the determination of the availability of resources to sustain change efforts, which turns out to be a key issue with regard to the efforts to change. At this point, we should mention the resources targeted at institutions that are to be changed in the future, usually they are related to the size of the institution's budget, often including staff, institutional equipment, and institutional space. Evaluation research and in this area may prove to be an invaluable aid, showing inventory of resources held by the institution and inventory of necessary resources needed to implement change.

The second relates to the examination and identification of the opposition to the proposed change, and thus to the answer to the question of who can potentially oppose the change being introduced and what are the possible scenarios that can be developed. The observation of broadly understood changes in the social welfare system shows that there is rarely any objection, which seems to correlate closely with the requirement to launch public funds in many cases (usually to increase them), which meets with particular resistance among those groups of clients that compete for these funds.

Accurately conducted evaluation studies in this area will provide strong data to support change, thus giving hard and logical arguments. [11]

The local system of counteracting violence is a series of activities that we can treat in terms of broadly understood public intervention, the aim of which is to bring about a positive change - in the case of violence, above all social change. Activities that are proposed in the local dimension should be a sequence of logical points, leading as a consequence to achieving the set objectives, solving problems that have been included, among others in local diagnoses of social problems.

Then we can only talk about the logic of intervention, a situation where in the most optimal way we engage our resources to implement measures to counteract domestic violence. It is therefore reasonable to claim that evaluation plays a significant role in the implementation

of public intervention, being a natural complement to any rationally planned activities within the framework of local anti-violence systems.

Allowing you to assess whether the adopted theoretical assumptions work in a help reality. Often when implementing new solutions that are intended to strengthen the local system of counteracting violence, the key points that should be taken into account at individual stages of the undertaking are forgotten:

- before the implementation of new solutions, assessment of the accuracy of the planned intervention, its logic and the planned implementation method.
- during the implementation of new solutions, identification of factors that from the point of view of achieving the intended goals may hinder their implementation, assessment of factors conducive to the achievement of, for example, a specific action in the field of counteracting domestic violence.
- after the implementation of new solutions, a summary of the effects of activities, creation of recommendations for future undertakings under the system of counteracting violence.

The system of counteracting domestic violence, as already mentioned, is a series of actions undertaken, which, however, should not limit the freedom of people who are supported under this system. Assistance activities in the field of counteracting violence in a family they should take into account their assessment not only in terms of their scope, but whether the people themselves (people experiencing or using violence) participated in designing these activities and what is most important in their implementation - a person using the system of counteracting violence treated in a subjective or objective way? [12]

It is obvious that the system of counteracting violence may be evaluated in many other respects, although the dimension of effectiveness, relevance and usefulness for this group of recipients seems to be the most important. An important aspect when discussing the system of counteracting domestic violence as an area of evaluation studies is to draw attention to the fact that each of the approaches in this area may raise relatively large problems.

In the case of even examining the effectiveness of actions under the system of counteracting domestic violence, a lot depends on how the basic goals were formulated, how many of them are and in which mutual relations they have in relation to each other. In turn, the possibility of assessing the usability of the activities undertaken is closely related to the conceptualization and operationalization of the clients' good. In addition, it requires comparison of the objectives and effects of the intervention with the needs of people experiencing or using violence, which in turn requires a detailed, objective and reliable description. [13]

At the level of building local systems of counteracting domestic violence, it often refers to the concepts of need and satisfaction. If, therefore, the local system of counteracting violence takes the main purpose of meeting the needs of people experiencing or using violence, it is important to have reliable and comprehensive information on these needs, taking into account, among others, age, gender and material diversity of people using this system. Paying special attention to distinguishing needs from the desires of assistants.

Evaluation studies can significantly contribute to finding solutions in these areas, taking into account the fact that broadly understood social assistance is a constant search for solutions. [14]

3. CONCLUSIONS

Intentional, using the disproportion of forces, violating rights and personal rights, causing pain and suffering are just some of the terms by which the phenomenon of the occurrence of domestic violence is defined. A phenomenon that is a common problem of the modern world, requiring coordinated, interdisciplinary activities, causing, besides psychological effects, also economic ones, absorbing in a year's perspective several billion euros from the budget of the European Union Member States. A phenomenon with which many legal provisions, conventions, ordinances, definitions, theories, practices, regulations, research, discourses of specialists at the international and local level are combined. A phenomenon requiring constant recognition and searching for and building effective systems that would counteract it. Building these effective systems is possible only when people who experience violence in the family are involved in this process, and thus are the recipients of services that the system offers. The implementation of the principle with the client, and not the client, in this case seems highly justified. There is no doubt that evaluation studies allow to implement the above principle, increasing the chance of impact responding to the need.

When summarizing the considerations on the phenomenon of domestic violence and evaluation studies, it should be emphasized that the latter, carried out on a regular basis, allow creating standards in working with families with the problem of violence. In a situation when we focus on the meaning of social services only in the context of politics social, then we gain arguments to conduct standardization activities. First, the law defining citizens' access to certain services must be strictly observed, the diversity of services in their quantity and quality is subject to strong criticism. Another argument refers to the public purpose, which is the high quality of the services provided, which must be followed by a system of assessment and quality control tools.

In addition, the introduction of unified procedures brings significant savings in the public finance sector. Attention should also be paid to the situation in which many tasks in the field of social services are contracted by the state with non-public institutions, the definition of service standards, significantly clarifies the object of contracting. The introduction of evaluation measures and standards may also raise many doubts and reservations regarding the true disclosure of the quality of services provided (which can also be considered as a plus of standardization), standardization and evaluation can also contribute to a significant reduction of spontaneity in activities. The adopted evaluation activities will certainly not be able to predict all situations, especially in the context of services provided to persons experiencing domestic violence, which in turn may translate into too rigid implementation of actions, which may contribute to significant difficulties in achieving the objectives [15-22].

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