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Foster Family Care.

Theoretical Aspects of Foster Family Functioning

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Rodzinna piecza zastępcza.

Teoretyczne aspekty funkcjonowania rodzin zastępczych

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A family represents a fundamental environment of every person. It is the family that significantly affects person's development, shaping of their personality, and introducing to a child a system of values, standards and customs. With passed standards, parents are obliged to provide their child with all skills enabling their independent functioning in the future life. Furthermore, they should teach their offspring an appropriate attitude towards life and fulfilling of relevant social functions.

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Facing all choices and challenges, families of the present times struggle with various problems and difficulties, which frequently end in a failure and lead to children being neglected by adults. Then, when a family does not fulfil correctly its specific tasks and functions, specialist foster care, of a family or institutional character, try to replace it in these tasks. Development of new solutions in the area of child care resulted in an assistance provided to families when a child temporarily, due to justified reasons, cannot be raised in their biological family. An attempt to collect and present in a structured way all knowledge and information about foster family care led to creation of a book by Józefa Matejek *Rodzinna piecza zastępcza. Teoretyczne aspekty funkcjonowania rodzin zastępczych* (Foster family care. Theoretical aspects of foster family functioning) published by Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, Kraków 2020.

This publication consist of four chapters, which present the most important aspects of the foster family care functioning. The first chapter *Rodzina zastępcza jako forma opieki i wychowania dziecka* (Foster family as a form for providing care to and rising a child) consists of three subchapters. At the beginning, they discuss issues of foster family care against its historical background; then, in the second subchapter, the term 'foster family' is defined in detail and types of foster family care are presented. Furthermore, it contains statistical data for 2012–2018 on the foster care structure, a number of entities maintaining family forms of foster care, a number of children covered by foster family care, and of people maintaining foster families in 2018 by age groups. The first chapter closes with a discussion of statements related to a foster family in the child care system, with functions and tasks of foster families presented.

Chapter 2, entitled *Funkcjonowanie rodzin zastępczych – aspekty prawno-socjalne* (Functioning of foster families – legal and social aspects) helps to better understand formal conditions for functioning of foster families. Furthermore, it describes in a great detail requirements for people being candidates for foster parents, as well as issues related to placing a child in a foster family environment. The third subchapter focuses on financial benefits and issues related to financial support provided to a foster family. Finally, the chapter focuses on the foster care organisation, taking into account functions and tasks of its organisers and coordinators.

Chapter three is entitled *Dziecko w rodzinnej pieczy zastępczej* (Child in a foster family). It includes information concerning orphanhood, including its types and classification. Furthermore, its second subchapter presents a number of reasons for placing a child in a foster care environment, as well as risk factors and hazards to which children are exposed in foster families. The last subchapter presents in a structured way an issue of transition into independence of children leaving a foster family. Definitely, an independence guardian and an individual

programme for that transition play a very important role in this process, as described at the end of the third chapter.

Functioning of foster families requires the institutional support, as it was described in the last, fourth chapter. It contains a general analysis of the family support issue, and forms of assistance provided to children and to foster families.

The monograph ends with a general conclusion, an extensive list of references containing both the latest and the classic items, and a list of legal acts and regulations related to the discussed subjects.

In my opinion, the publication *Rodzinna piecza zastępcza. Teoretyczne aspekty funkcjonowania rodzin zastępczych* by Józefa Matejek is a compendium of knowledge about foster families. Not only it can be of assistance to persons involved in creation and support of foster care environments, but also contains useful guidelines for teachers, social workers, family assistants, sociologists, and psychologists, so in their work they can effectively help natural families and their children placed with foster families. Furthermore, the knowledge concerning foster families is necessary, and may prove very important for people who create or want to create a foster family environment. The book will provide interesting and up-to-date guidelines also to all people (for example, students at education studies or social work courses) who want to expand their knowledge on foster families.

The language of this publication is easy to understand and concise, so it can become a source of information for every reader interested in the discussed subject. It should be particularly emphasised that in our country studies containing such extensively and comprehensively presented knowledge on foster families are very scarce.

This study can become an inspiration for further research, discussions of scientists studying the described subject, as well as for improvement of the social care system intended for foster families.

I strongly encourage all people interested in issues of foster family care to become acquainted with this publication.