

EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY

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ROLA PRACOWNIKÓW PEDAGOGICZNYCH W REALIZACJI POLITYKI PAŃSTWA W ZAKRESIE OPIEKI SPOŁECZNEJ NAD DZIEĆMI (NA PRZYKŁADZIE REJONU INDUSTRIALNEGO M. CHARKÓW)

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Adnotacja. Artykuł poświęcono zagadnieniu znaczenia roli nauczycieli we wdrażaniu polityki publicznej w zakresie opieki społecznej nad dziećmi. Przeprowadzono analizę danych statystycznych dotyczących liczby dzieci preferencyjnych kategorii, które kształciły się w instytucjach edukacyjnych rejonu industrialnego Charkowa w latach 2014–2021. Zbadano dokumenty regulacyjne i prawne Ukrainy, na których podstawie w instytucjach edukacyjnych tworzona jest baza danych kategorii preferencyjnych dla dzieci. Wykazano, w jaki sposób kryzys gospodarczy związane z działaniami wojskowymi na wschodniej Ukrainie i wdrażaniem środków przeciwpadaczkowych w celu zapobiegania rozprzestrzenianiu się zakażenia koronawirusem COVID-19 wpłynęły na liczbę dzieci kategorii preferencyjnych w instytucjach edukacyjnych. Przeanalizowano liczbę dzieci, które w latach 2018–2020 były w ewidencji Służby ds. Dzieci Rejonu Industrialnego. Sformułowano rolę pedagoga społecznego w placówce oświatowej i zaznaczono problemy w przypadku braku tego stanowiska. Określono rolę nauczycieli w organizowaniu towarzyszenia społeczno-pedagogicznego dzieciom kategorii preferencyjnych. Zaproponowano zalecenia dotyczące poprawy jakości świadczenia usług socjalnych dla rodzin, które znalazły się w trudnych okolicznościach życiowych w Ukrainie.

Słowa kluczowe: ochrona socjalna, dzieci, trudne warunki życiowe, instytucje społeczne, usługi socjalne, pomoc społeczna, pracownicy pedagogiczni.

EDUCATORS' ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING THE STATE POLICY ON SOCIAL PROTECTION OF CHILDREN (CASE OF INDUSTRIALNYI DISTRICT OF KHARKIV)

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Abstract. The paper discusses the importance of educators' role in implementation of the state policy on social protection of children. It relies on the analysis of statistical data on the number of children entitled to special benefits who went to educational institutions of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv during 2014–2021. It reviews the regulations of Ukraine based on which the database on children entitled to special benefits is created in educational institutions. It demonstrates how the economic crises due to the hostilities in Eastern Ukraine and the implementation of anti-epidemic measures to prevent the spread of coronaviral infection COVID-19 have affected the number of the children entitled to special benefits registered with educational institutions. The study analyses the number of the children registered with the Industrialnyi District Children's Service according to its 2018–2020 statistics. It sets out the main role of a social educator in an educational institution, and identifies the issues arising where no such position is in place. It defines the role of teachers in providing social and pedagogical support for children entitled to special benefits to help them avoid difficult life circumstances. It proposes recommendations for improving the quality of social services provided to families facing difficult life circumstances in Ukraine.

Key words: social protection, children entitled to special benefits, difficult life circumstances, social institutions, social services, social and pedagogical support, educators.

РОЛЬ ПЕДАГОГІЧНИХ ПРАЦІВНИКІВ У РЕАЛІЗАЦІЇ ДЕРЖАВНОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ У СФЕРІ СОЦІАЛЬНОГО ЗАХИСТУ ДІТЕЙ (НА ПРИКЛАДІ ІНДУСТРІАЛЬНОГО РАЙОНУ М. ХАРКОВА)

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Анотація. Статтю присвячено питанню важливості ролі педагогічних працівників у реалізації державної політики у сфері соціального захисту дітей. Проведено аналіз статистичних даних щодо кількості дітей пільгових категорій, які здобували освіту в закладах освіти Індустріального району м. Харкова впродовж 2014–2021 років. Вивчено нормативно-правові документи України, щодо яких у закладах освіти створюється база даних дітей пільгових категорій. Продемонстровано, як економічні кризи, що пов'язані з воєнними діями на Сході України та впровадженням протиепідемічних заходів щодо попередження розповсюдження коронавірусної інфекції COVID-19, вплинули на кількість дітей пільгових категорій у закладах освіти. Проаналізовано кількість дітей, які перебували на обліку у Службі у справах дітей Індустріального району упродовж 2018–2020 років. Сформульована роль соціального педагога в закладі освіти та зазначено проблеми у разі відсутності цієї посади. Визначено роль учителів в організації соціально-педагогічного супроводу дітей пільгових категорій. Запропоновано рекомендації щодо підвищення якості надання соціальних послуг сім'ям, які опинились у складних життєвих обставинах в Україні.

Ключові слова: соціальний захист, діти пільгових категорій, складні життєві обставини, соціальні заклади, соціальні послуги, соціально-педагогічний супровід, педагогічні працівники.

Introduction. Children are the future of every nation and state. The younger generation determines the success of political, economic, intellectual and cultural progress. Social protection of children, especially those entitled to special benefits, is one of the supreme values of each country. Social protection of children remains one of the priorities in the work of city leaders.

Let us look into the matter of social protection of student children using the case of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv. Today, the educational institutions of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv provide educational services to a good few children who are entitled to special benefits and need additional social support. It is the teaching staff of the educational institutions who are responsible for compliance with the legislation on social protection of students. That is regulated by Article 2 of the Law of Ukraine “On Education” (Про освіту, 2017), which reads that it is the State that ensures statutory social protection of students and equal educational opportunities for socially vulnerable groups.

Timely identification of children entitled to special benefits at educational institutions and redoubling social and pedagogical attention devoted to those children help improve the microclimate in the student environment and boost students' motivation to and interest in learning. As a matter of fact, social protection of students means creating proper conditions for their physical, intellectual and spiritual development, as well as preparing children for an independent life.

Hence, increasing teachers' competence as regards social protection of children entitled to special benefits is the key to improving social protection of students (including orphaned children, children deprived of parental care and those in difficult life circumstances), solving problems of child neglect and homelessness, and exercising their right to family upbringing and healthy development.

Problem Statement. The paper aims to determine the educators' role in implementation of the State policy on social protection of children within the framework of the implementation of the new Law of Ukraine “On Social Services” (Про соціальні послуги, 2019) and to review the state of keeping records of students who need additional social support.

The adoption of the Law of Ukraine “On Social Services” (Про соціальні послуги, 2019) changed the procedure for provision of social services, with the main focus on preventing difficult life circumstances rather than overcoming them. Therefore, the study of issues associated with the implementation of the above Law in terms of the educators' rights and responsibilities as regards social and pedagogical support of children during their education period is of relevance today.

Main Findings. The educational institutions had a database on children entitled to special benefits created in compliance with the Constitution of Ukraine (Конституція України, 1996), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Про права дитини, 1990), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Про права осіб з інвалідністю, 2006), the Family Code of Ukraine (Сімейний кодекс України, 2002), the Laws of Ukraine “On Child Welfare (Про охорону дитинства, 2001), “On Education” (Про освіту, 2017), “On Complete General Secondary Education” (Про повну загальну середню освіту, 2020), “On Preschool Education” (Про дошкільну освіту, 2001), “On Ensuring Procedural and Legal Conditions for Social Protection of Orphaned children and Children Deprived of Parental Care” (Про забезпечення організаційно-правових умов соціального захисту дітей-сиріт та дітей, позбавлених батьківського піклування, 2005), “On the Status and Social Protection of Citizens Affected by the Chernobyl Disaster” (Про статус і соціальний захист громадян, які постраждали внаслідок

Чорнобильської катастрофи, 1991), “On State Aid for Families with Children” (Про державну допомогу сім’ям з дітьми, 1992), “On State Social Assistance to Persons with Childhood Disabilities and Children with Disabilities” (Про державну соціальну допомогу особам з інвалідністю з дитинства та дітям з інвалідністю, 2000), “On Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence” (Про запобігання та протидію домашньому насильству, 2017), “On Amendments to Some Laws of Ukraine as to Providing Free Meals to the Children of Internally Displaced Persons” (Про внесення змін до деяких законів України щодо забезпечення безкоштовним харчуванням дітей внутрішньо переміщених осіб, 2020), “On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection” (Про статус ветеранів війни, гарантії їх соціального захисту, 1993), “On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons” (Про забезпечення прав і свобод внутрішньо переміщених осіб, 2014), Decrees of the President of Ukraine No. 1396/2000 “On Additional Measures to Strengthen the Social Protection of Large and Single-Parent Families” as of 30.12.2000 (Про додаткові заходи щодо посилення соціального захисту багатодітних та неповних сімей, 2000), No. 1086/2005 “On Priority Measures to Protect the Rights of Children” as of 11.07.2005 (Про першочергові заходи щодо захисту прав дітей, 2005), No. 5/2018 “On Priority Measures to Protect the Rights of Orphaned children, Children Deprived of Parental Care and Persons from among them” as of 12.01.2018 (Про першочергові заходи щодо захисту прав дітей-сиріт, дітей, позбавлених батьківського піклування, та осіб із їх числа, 2018), No. 376/2007 “On Additional Measures to Protect the Rights and Legal Interests of Children” as of 04.05.2007 (Про додаткові заходи щодо захисту прав та законних інтересів дітей, 2007), No. 1163/2011 “On Matters Related to Ensuring the Exercise of Children’s Rights in Ukraine” as of 16.12.2011 (Про питання щодо забезпечення реалізації прав дітей в Україні, 2011), No. 553/2016 “On Measures Aimed at Ensuring Respect for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” as of 13.12.2016 (Про заходи, спрямовані на забезпечення додержання прав осіб з інвалідністю, 2016), No. 113/2000 “On Additional Measures to Prevent Child Neglect” as of 28.01.2000 (Про додаткові заходи щодо запобігання дитячій бездоглядності, 2000), Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 453 “On Approval of the State Social Programme ‘National Action Plan for the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child’ for a period until 2021” as of 30.05.2018 (Про затвердження Державної соціальної програми «Національний план дій щодо реалізації Конвенції ООН про права дитини» на період до 2021 року, 2018). In this context, we conducted a pilot study on the number of children entitled to special benefits who went to educational institutions of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv during 2014–2021. The results of the study are presented below.

In accordance with the above regulations, the categories of children entitled to special benefits registered with the educational institutions are as follows:

1. Orphaned children and children deprived of parental care.
2. Children from low-income families.
3. Children whose father is on the records under Article 135 of the Family Code of Ukraine.
4. Children from large families.
5. Half-orphaned children.
6. Children with disabilities.
7. Children affected by the Chernobyl accident.
8. Children of military servicemen (including those serving in the ATO/JFO area) and of law-enforcement officers who lost their lives while in the line of duty.
9. Children of combatants in the ATO/JFO area (keeping records of this benefits-entitled category began in 2016 pursuant to amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection” (Про статус ветеранів війни, гарантії їх соціального захисту, 1993)).
10. Children affected by hostilities or armed conflicts (keeping records of this benefits-entitled category began in 2018 pursuant to adoption of the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 268 “On Approval of the Procedure for Granting the Status of a Child Affected by Hostilities and Armed Conflicts” as of 05.04.2017 (Про затвердження Порядку надання статусу дитини, яка постраждала внаслідок воєнних дій та збройних конфліктів, 2017)).
11. Children from the families of internally displaced persons (the registration of this benefits-entitled category began in 2016 due to the entry into force of the Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons” (Про забезпечення прав і свобод внутрішньо переміщених осіб, 2014));
12. Children to have found themselves in difficult life circumstances.

It should be noted that, according to the Law of Ukraine “On Social Services” (Про соціальні послуги, 2019), there can be difficult life circumstances in the families of children falling under any of the above special benefits-entitled categories, in one case or another.

The total number of children who were registered with the educational institutions of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv (students of general secondary educational institutions or preschool educational institutions) during 2013–2021 is presented in the diagram (Fig. 1).

The diagram (Fig. 1) shows that the trend of the growing number of children entitled to special benefits registered with the educational institutions of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv can be observed from 2015 to 2019 by a mean of 12.6% annually. It should be noted that this number decreased by 5.4% in 2020 compared to 2019, but increased again by 8.7% in 2021 compared to 2020. This is due to the following reasons:

– beginning of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which caused an economic crisis as a result of which Ukraine’s GDP decreased by 15% in 2014–2015 (Герасименко, 2021);

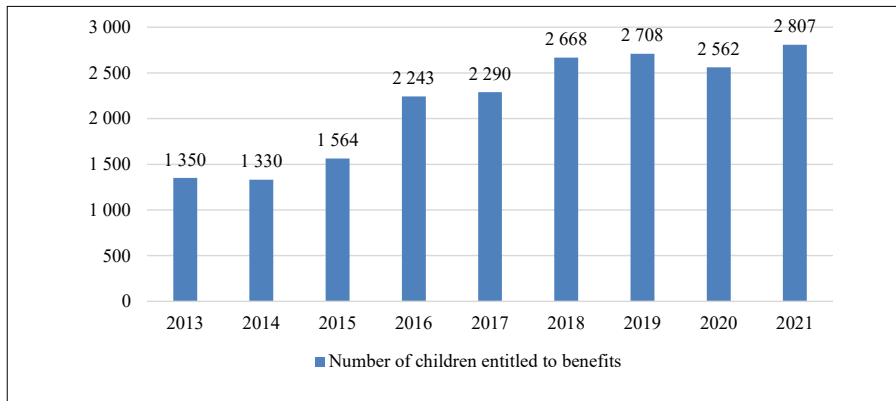


Fig. 1. Total number of children entitled to special benefits registered with educational institutions of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv in 2013–2021

– issuance of new regulations resulting in new types of benefits-entitled categories emerging, namely: children from the families of internally displaced persons (Про забезпечення організаційно-правових умов соціального захисту дітей-сиріт та дітей, позбавлених батьківського піклування, 2005), children affected by warfare or armed conflicts (Про затвердження Порядку надання статусу дитини, яка постраждала внаслідок воєнних дій та збройних конфліктів, 2017), children of the participants of hostilities in the ATO/JFO area (Про статус ветеранів війни, гарантії їх соціального захисту, 1993). These entitle children from these categories to free meals at educational institutions.

It is also worth analysing the percentage of children entitled to special benefits in relation to the total number of children receiving their education at the educational institutions of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv (Fig. 2).

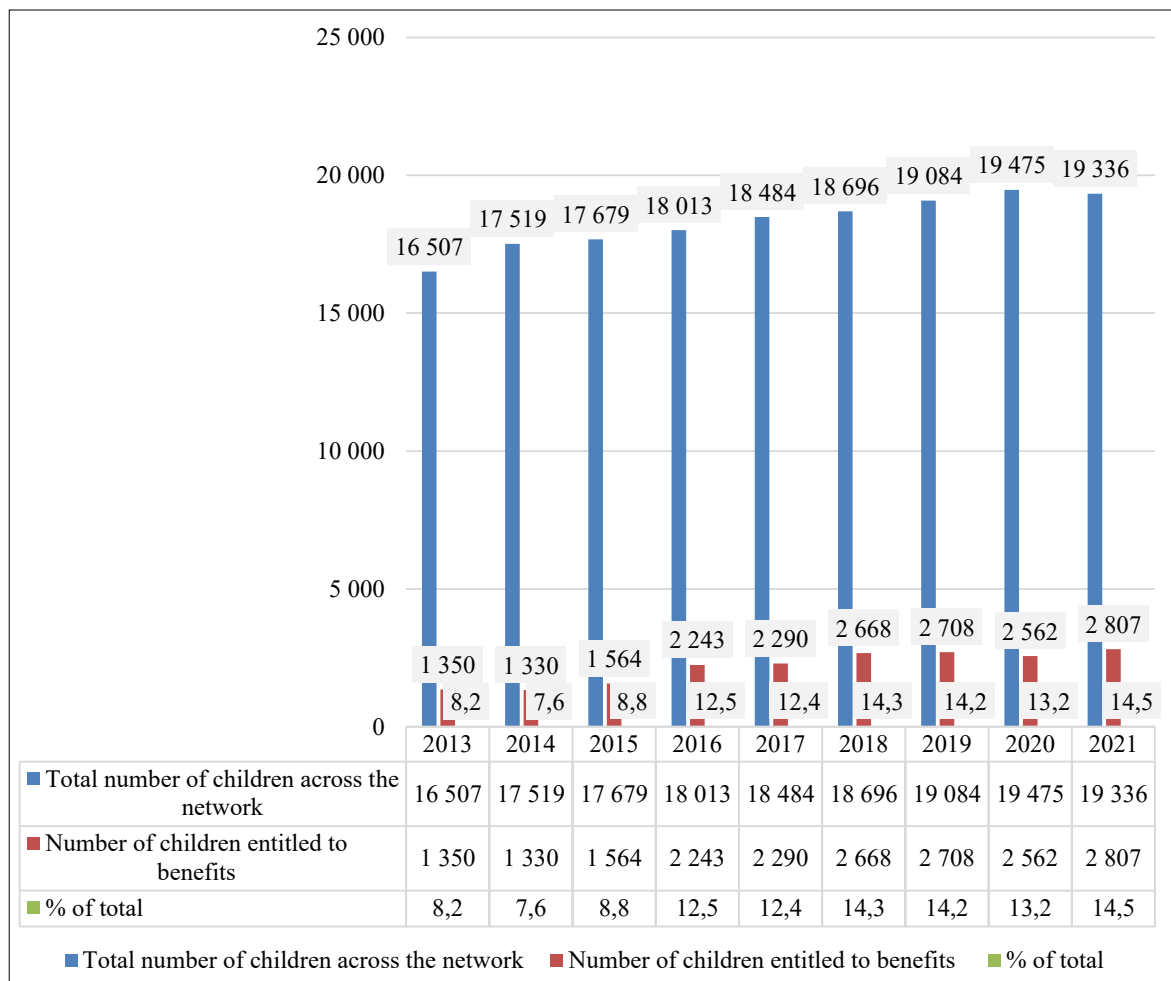


Fig. 2. Number of children entitled to benefits relative to total number of student children at educational institutions of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv

The diagram (Fig. 2) shows that the number of children across the network of educational institutions steadily increased by a mean of 2.3% during 2013–2020. As late as in 2021, the number of children off the network decreased by less than 1.0% due to the decrease in the number of students at preschool educational institutions. It should be noted that the percentage of the number of children entitled to special benefits relative to the total number of children across the network almost doubled in 2021 compared to 2013. This suggests a conclusion that to the volatile situation in the national economy, which was also significantly affected by the global spread of the coronaviral disease (COVID-19) since 2020, brings about an increase in the number of children in need of assistance, including provision with social services.

Benefits-entitled categories such as children from low-income families, orphaned children and children deprived of parental care, children with disabilities, children from the families of internally displaced persons (Про забезпечення прав і свобод внутрішньо переміщених осіб, 2014), children affected by warfare or armed conflicts (Про затвердження Порядку надання статусу дитини, яка постраждала внаслідок воєнних дій та збройних конфліктів, 2017), children of combatants in the ATO/JFO area (Про статус ветеранів війни, гарантії їх соціального захисту, 1993), and children whose parents lost their lives while in the line of duty (Ibid.) should be considered separately because those particular circumstances experienced by children can adversely affect a person's life, health and development, thereby causing difficult life circumstances, according to the Law (Ibid.).

These benefits-entitled categories can be notionally divided into two groups:

1. Those who are on primary record with the Department of Social Protection: children with disabilities, children from the families of internally displaced persons (Про забезпечення прав і свобод внутрішньо переміщених осіб, 2014), children of combatants in the ATO/JFO area (Про статус ветеранів війни, гарантії їх соціального захисту, 1993), children whose parents lost their lives while in the line of duty (Ibid.), children from low-income families.

2. Those who are on primary record with the Children's Service: orphaned children, children deprived of parental care, children affected by warfare or armed conflicts (Про затвердження Класифікатора соціальних послуг, 2020), and children who found themselves in difficult life circumstances (Про соціальні послуги, 2019).

It should be noted that the children classified under the above benefits-entitled categories are entitled to the following benefits:

- a monthly monetary aid – all of them, except for children who found themselves in difficult life circumstances (Ibid.) and children of combatants in the ATO/JFO area (Про статус ветеранів війни, гарантії їх соціального захисту, 1993);
- the right to free pass for public transport travels – children with disabilities, orphaned children and children deprived of parental care;
- the right to free meals at educational institutions – all of them, except for children who found themselves in difficult life circumstances;
- the right to priority rehabilitation and recreation at the expense of the budget funds – all of them;
- the right to receive social services – all of them.

In our opinion, it is unfair that children who found themselves in difficult life circumstances (Про соціальні послуги, 2019) have fewer benefits than those entitled to special benefits. First of all, it is the children of that particular benefits-entitled category who not only need financial aid and social assistance from the State, public and charitable organisations, but also need to have at least the right to free meals at educational institutions.

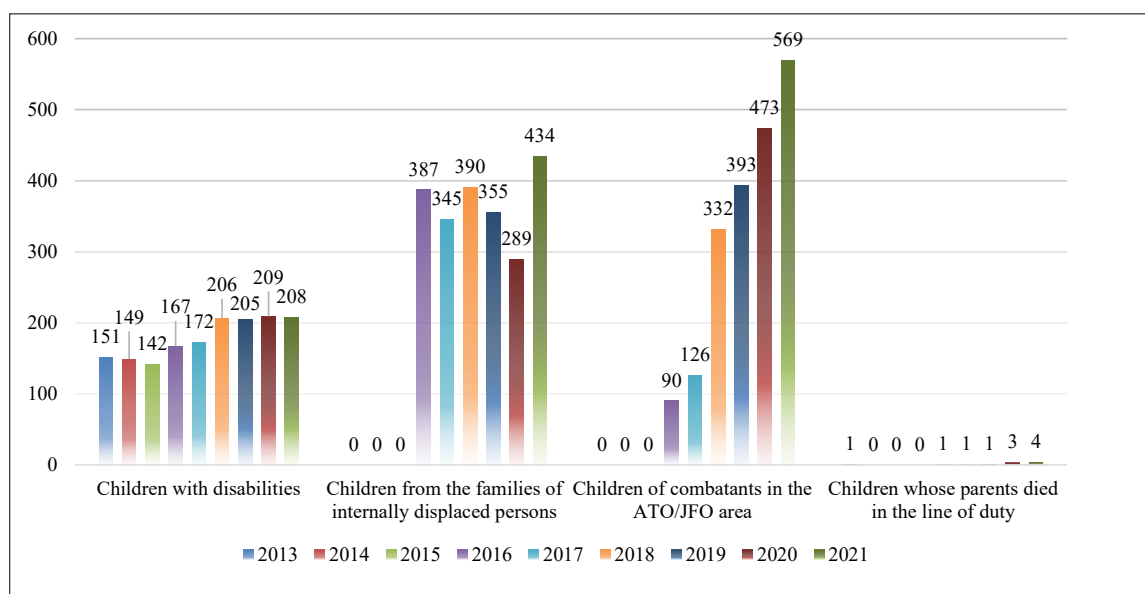


Fig. 3. Number of children entitled to benefits who are on primary record with the Department of Social Protection

The diagram (Fig. 3) shows that the number of children with disabilities who were students at the educational institutions of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv during 2013–2015 decreased by a mean of almost 3% annually, but from 2016 to 2018 the number of the children of that category increased by a mean of 11.4%. This is due to the gradual closure of special secondary schools (boarding schools) for children in need of correction in physical and/or mental development [8] and arrangements made for inclusive education for those children on the base of the educational institutions of Industrialnyi District. The number of children with disabilities has remained almost unchanged since 2019.

As regards the children from the families of internally displaced persons (Про забезпечення прав і свобод внутрішньо переміщених осіб, 2014), it can be seen that the number of such children almost did not change from 2016 to 2018, and a significant trend of decreasing can be observed from 2019 to 2020, compared to 2018, by a mean of 13.8%. This is because their parents did not want to provide educational institutions with the documents confirming the right to benefits due to the lack of actual benefits at the educational institution. And in 2021 the number of the children of that category increased by 33.4% due to the entry into force of the Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Some Laws of Ukraine on Free Meals for the Children of Internally Displaced Persons” (Про внесення змін до деяких законів України щодо забезпечення безкоштовним харчуванням дітей внутрішньо переміщених осіб, 2020) whereby the children of that benefits-entitled category were granted the right to free meals at educational institutions.

The number of the children of combatants in the ATO/JFO area (Про статус ветеранів війни, гарантії їх соціального захисту, 1993) has been steadily growing by a mean of 28% annually since 2016. This is due to the warfare in Eastern Ukraine. Unfortunately, the number of the children whose parents lost their lives while in the line of duty is constantly increasing (Ibid.).

To see the real picture of how the economic crises in Ukraine have affected the financial support of families in Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv, a separate analysis of such benefits-entitled category as children from low-income families is needed.

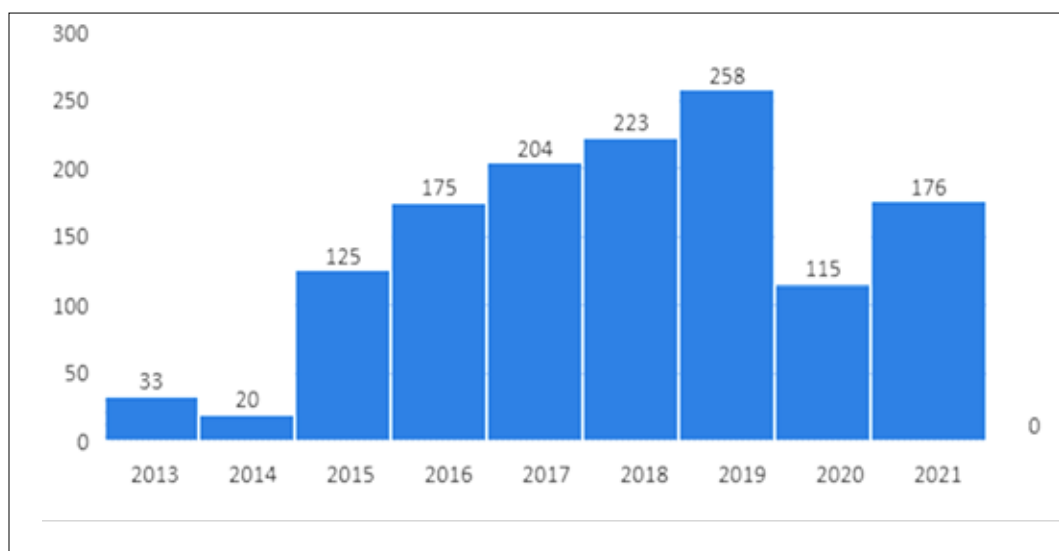


Fig. 4. Number of children from low-income families in Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv in 2013–2021

The diagram (Fig. 4) shows that the number of children from low-income families increased by a mean of almost 20% annually from 2015 to 2019. These figures clearly illustrate the financial uncertainty of those families that developed as a result of the armed conflicts in the territory of Ukraine, especially when comparing 2014 with 2015. In 2020, the number of children from low-income families decreased by almost 60%, this is due to stabilisation of the economy of Ukraine. But another economic crisis came upon in 2021. Yet, this time it was related to implementation of anti-epidemic measures. Hence, the number of children from low-income families increased by almost 35% compared to 2020.

The diagram (Fig. 5) shows that the number of children who found themselves in difficult life circumstances increases by a mean of 17.3% every year. That is, the number of children in need of social services (social support) has increased by six times compared to 2013.

The total number of orphaned children and children deprived of parental care remains at the same level over nine years. There were significant changes in 2020 – there was a decrease by almost 17.4% compared to 2019. This is due to the large number of the ninth- and eleventh-form graduates who left general secondary educational institutions and entered vocational and higher educational institutions. Also, all the children of the above category are under the care of their relatives (grandparents, adult siblings), with only two being in foster care in 2013, and one – in 2014.

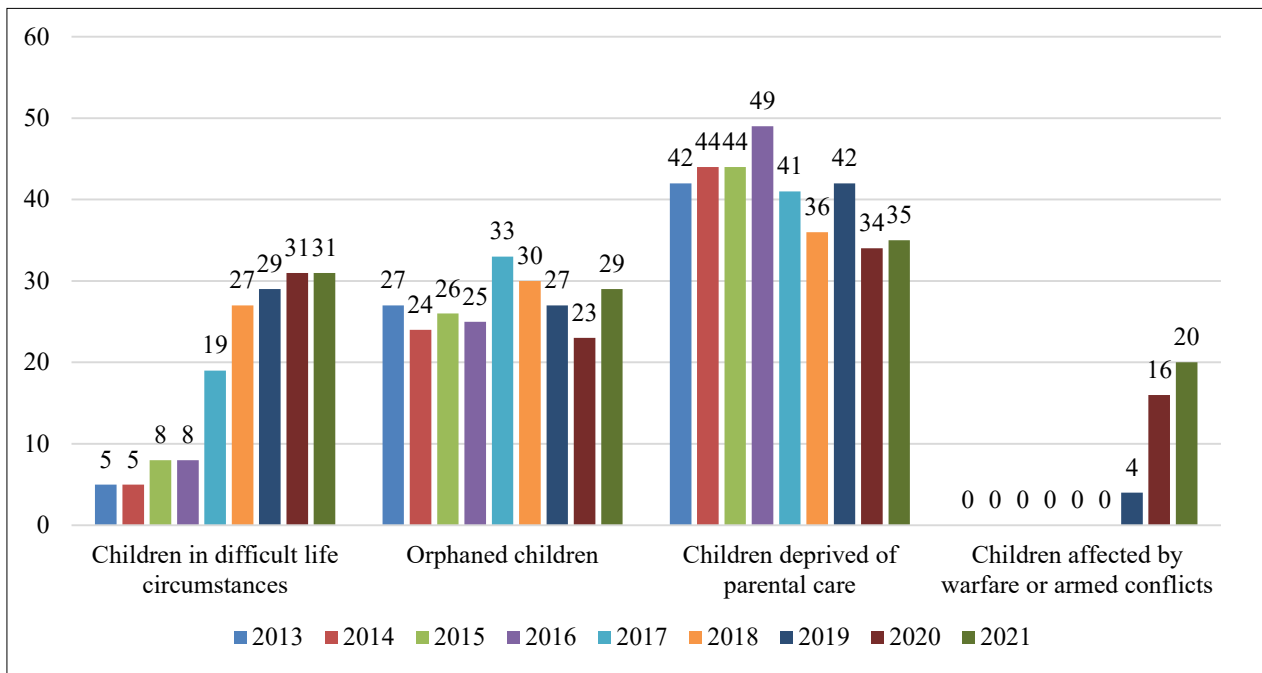


Fig. 5. Number of children entitled to special benefits who are on primary record with the Children's Service in Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv

Particular attention should be devoted to the ratio of biological and social orphans. Over nine years, the number of social orphans steadily exceeded that of biological orphans by a mean of 33.0%. But in 2021, the ratio between orphaned children and children deprived of parental care was almost equal, i.e. the number of social orphans decreased, but the number of children in difficult life circumstances increased at the same time (Про соціальні послуги, 2019). In other words, it can be observed that when the Law is adopted, more attention is really devoted to preventive work with families as to overcoming difficult life circumstances and the child's living in the family, provided it is safe for the child.

At the same time, about 20% of children who found themselves in difficult life circumstances (Ibid.) receive the status of children deprived of parental care.

Another aspect worth looking into is the criteria for evaluation of the activity of the Children's Service of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv (hereinafter referred to as the Service) for 2018–2020.

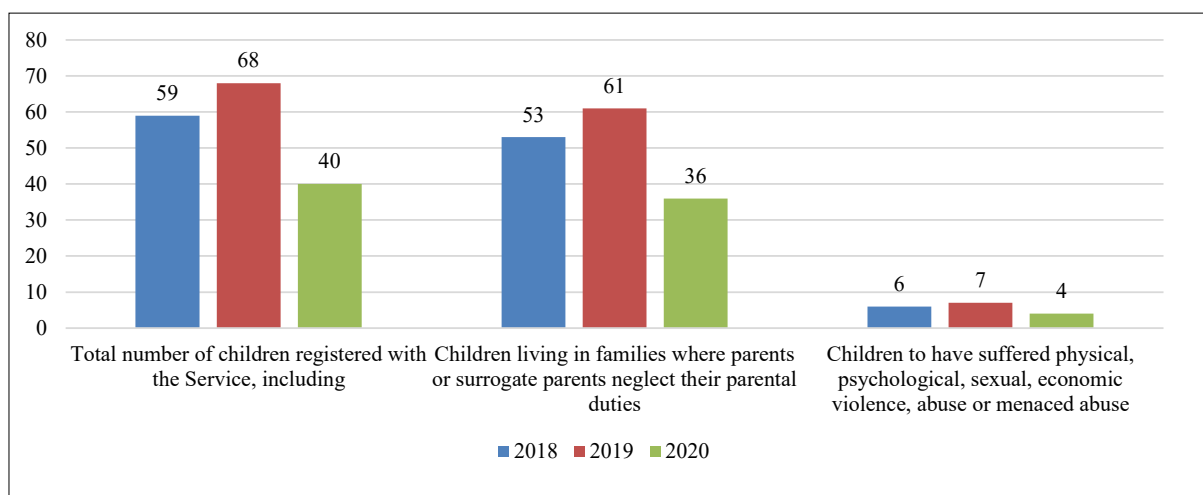


Fig. 6. Data pool of children registered with Children's Service of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv

It should be noted that the number of the children registered with the Service as children in difficult life circumstances varies greatly. This is due to the fact that the Service keeps records of children registered in Industrialnyi District.

As applicable to those children, the Service carries out the following activities, as shown in Figure 7. The information on the number of prepared lawsuits for deprivation of parental rights is shown in Figure 8.

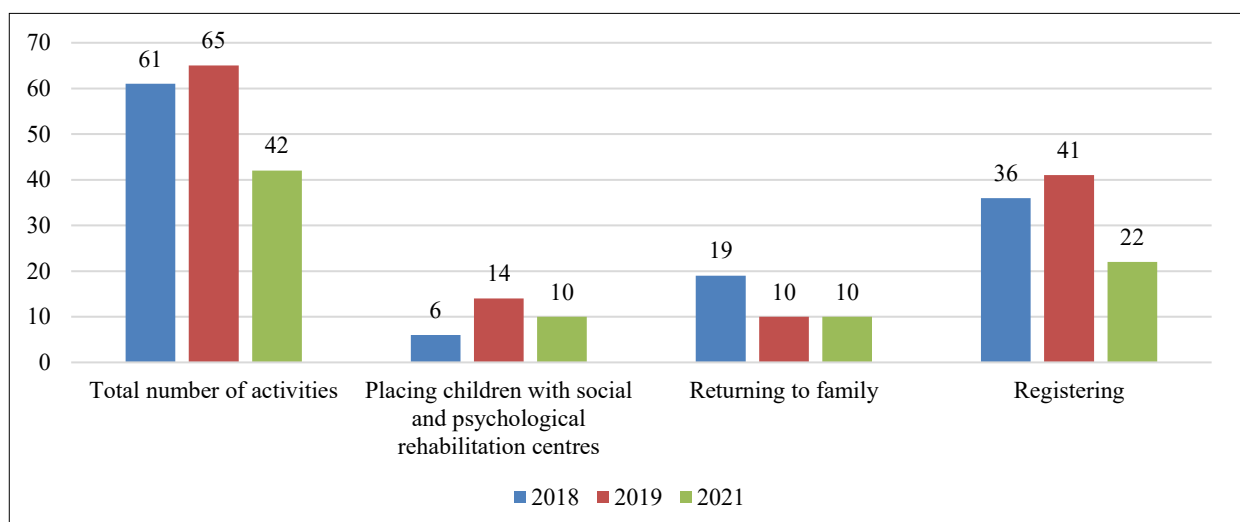


Fig. 7. Activities carried out by Children's Service of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv

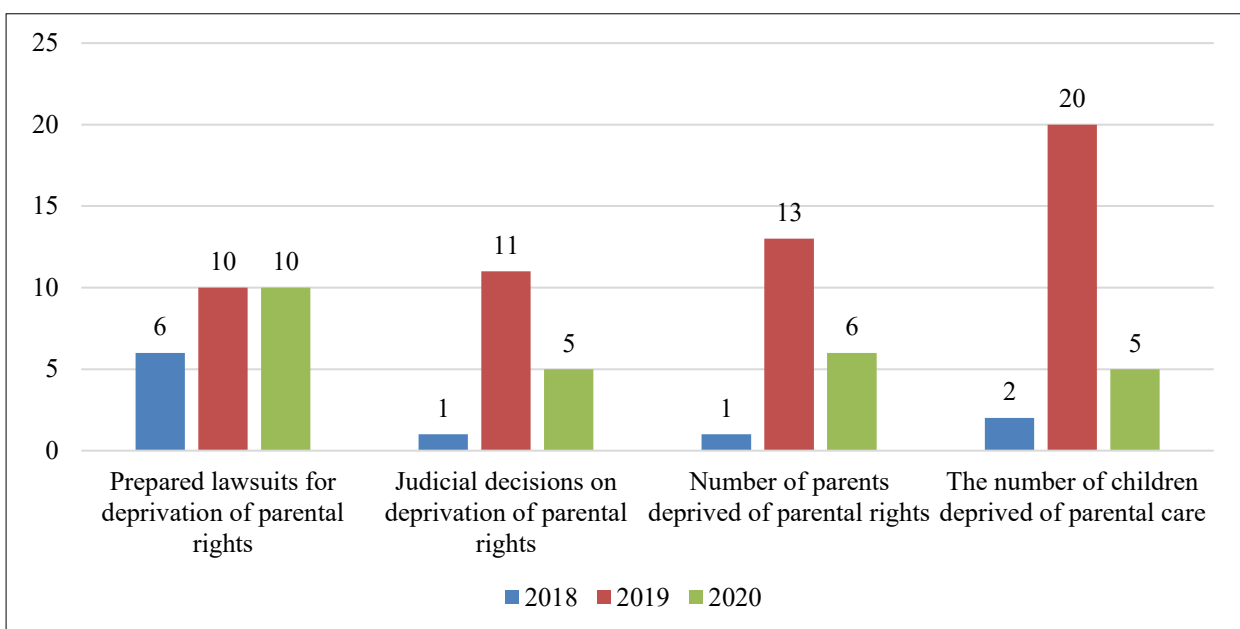


Fig. 8. Number of lawsuits for deprivation of parental rights filed by Children's Service regarding children in Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv

Figures 6–8 suggest the following conclusions:

- every year, on average 20% of children out of the total number of children in difficult life circumstances are placed in social and psychological rehabilitation centres, i.e. institutional establishments. It should be noted that these children are first placed in health care facilities for some time. The children stay in these institutions sometimes for up to six months due to the lack of available places at the institutional establishments;
- on average, only 24% of children in those categories return to their families. This indicates that the Service is too late to become aware of the difficult life circumstances in those children's families. This is mostly conditioned by the fact that neighbours generally prefer not to interfere in other people's private lives. This leads to catastrophic consequences for the physical and mental health of the children who found themselves in such circumstances;
- almost 100% of children to have been placed in social and psychological rehabilitation centres receive the status of children deprived of parental care.

A dramatic discrepancy can be seen from the presented data on the number of children deprived of parental care and the judicial decisions thereon. For example, only two children were deprived of parental care out of six lawsuits in 2018, and as many as 20 children were deprived of parental care out of ten lawsuits in 2019. This only shows that the decision to deprive parents of their parental rights can be made within two years, and even longer in some cases. That is, during that whole period, the child stays at institutional establishments, and the person who wants to take care of the child collects the documents required to do so. This situation, first of all, significantly affects the child's psychological and emotional health.

It should also be noted that 40% of orphaned children and children deprived of parental care out of the total number of children registered at the educational institutions of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv are children whose fathers are on the records under Article 135 of the Family Code of Ukraine (Сімейний кодекс України, 2002), children of so-called single mothers. That is, the probability for single mothers' children to receive the status of orphaned children and children deprived of parental care is very high. Therefore, it is appropriate to analyse the number of children who are registered with educational institutions and whose fathers are on the records under Article 135 of the Family Code of Ukraine (Ibid).

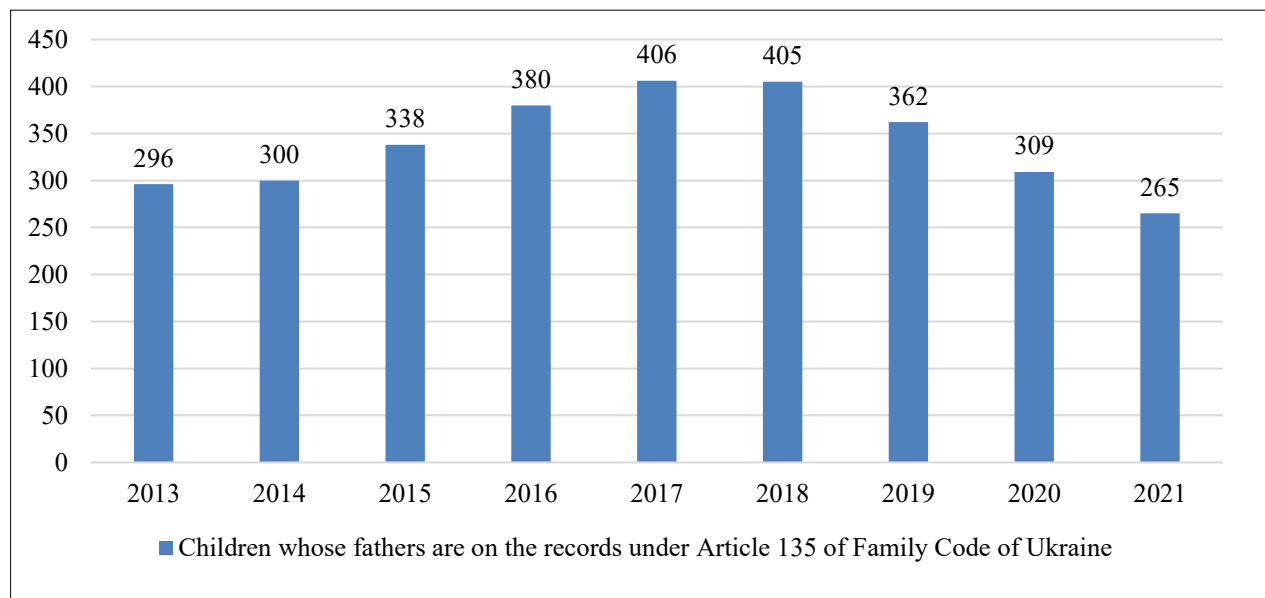


Fig. 9. Number of children who are registered with educational institutions and whose fathers are on the records under Article 135 of the Family Code of Ukraine (Про статус і соціальний захист громадян, які постраждали внаслідок Чорнобильської катастрофи, 1991)

The diagram (Fig. 9) shows that the number of single mothers' children increased by a mean of 7.5% from 2013 to 2017. The reason behind this increase in the number of children in this category is the additional financial aid received from the State (as of October 2021, this amount is UAH 2.013 for children under six, UAH 2.510 – for children aged between 6 and 18, and UAH 2.379 – children aged between 18 and 23 (Допомога на дітей одиницями матерям, n.d.)), as well as the unwillingness to register marriages so as not to have problems later should there be a divorce. From 2018 to 2021, the number of children of single mothers decreased by a mean of 10%. This was conditioned by the fact that this benefits-entitled category was transferred to a different benefits-entitled category – children from low-income families. It should be noted that children whose fathers are on the recorded under Article 135 of the Family Code of Ukraine (Сімейний кодекс України, 2002) do not have the right to free meals at educational institutions, so most parents do not provide evidence to confirm that status to the educational institutions.

It can be concluded from the above that the educational institutions of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv educate a good many children entitled to special benefits who need additional social support in order to prevent them from finding themselves in difficult life circumstances. The staff schedule of general secondary educational institutions includes a position of social pedagogue who provides social and pedagogical support to students, staff members and microgroups, and individuals who need care or find themselves in difficult life circumstances. When this position is vacant, school administrators issue a decree “On appointment of a social educator” according to which this position is generally filled with the deputy headmaster, who is responsible for educational work. However, the problem is that the appointed person does not have the competences required.

Unfortunately, according to the staff schedule, there is no position of social pedagogue at preschool educational institutions. This position was introduced in the staff schedules of newly established institutions, and there are two such institutions in Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv, but these positions remain vacant due to the budget savings. In this view, the headmasters of preschool educational institutions issue a decree on appointment of a social educator, with mostly methodologist educators or simply educators appointed to fill in this position. Therefore, the number of children entitled to special benefits who are registered with preschool educational institutions is much smaller than the number of those registered with general secondary educational institutions. Another reason for the small number of children entitled to special benefits who are registered with kindergartens is lack of motivation, which is true both for the parents to confirm their benefits-entitled status and for the social educators. That is conditioned by the lack of benefits at the educational institution, namely no right to free meals (this applies to the following benefits-entitled

categories: a half-orphaned child, a child whose father is on the records under Article 135 of the Family Code of Ukraine (Сімейний кодекс України, 2002), a child affected by the Chernobyl accident (Про статус і соціальний захист громадян, які постраждали внаслідок Чорнобильської катастрофи, 1991; Про статус ветеранів війни, гарантії їх соціального захисту, 1993)). This problem also exists at general secondary educational institutions, especially where the position of social educator is vacant. This is reflected in the diagrams below (Fig. 10–12).

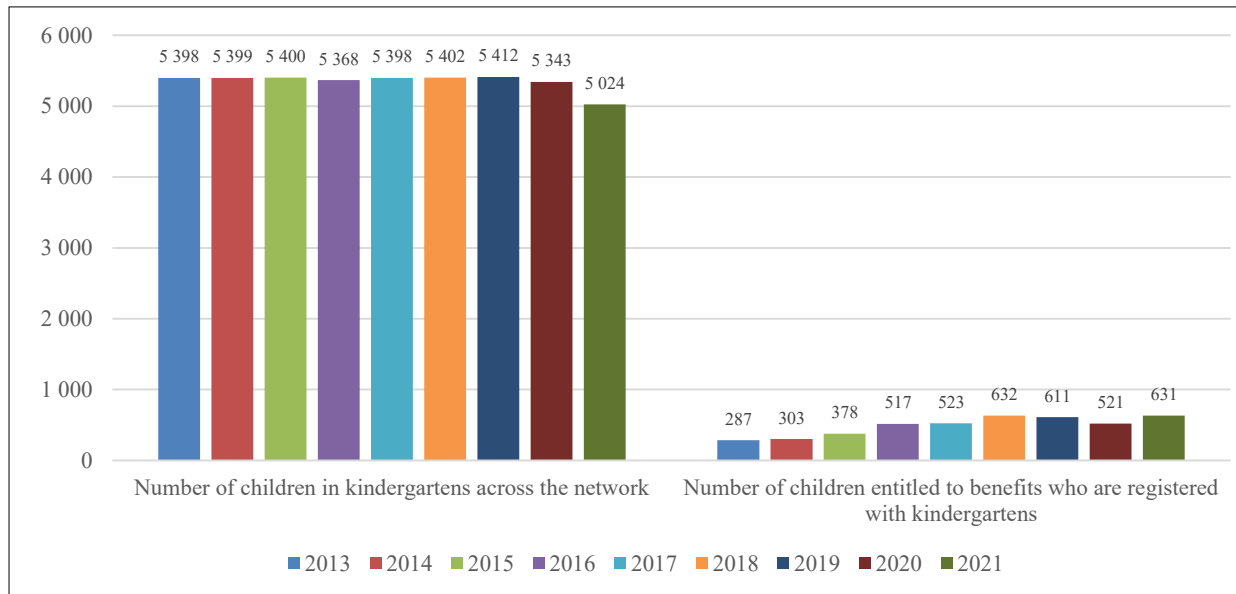


Fig. 10. Number of children entitled to special benefits who were registered with preschool educational institutions of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv in 2013–2021

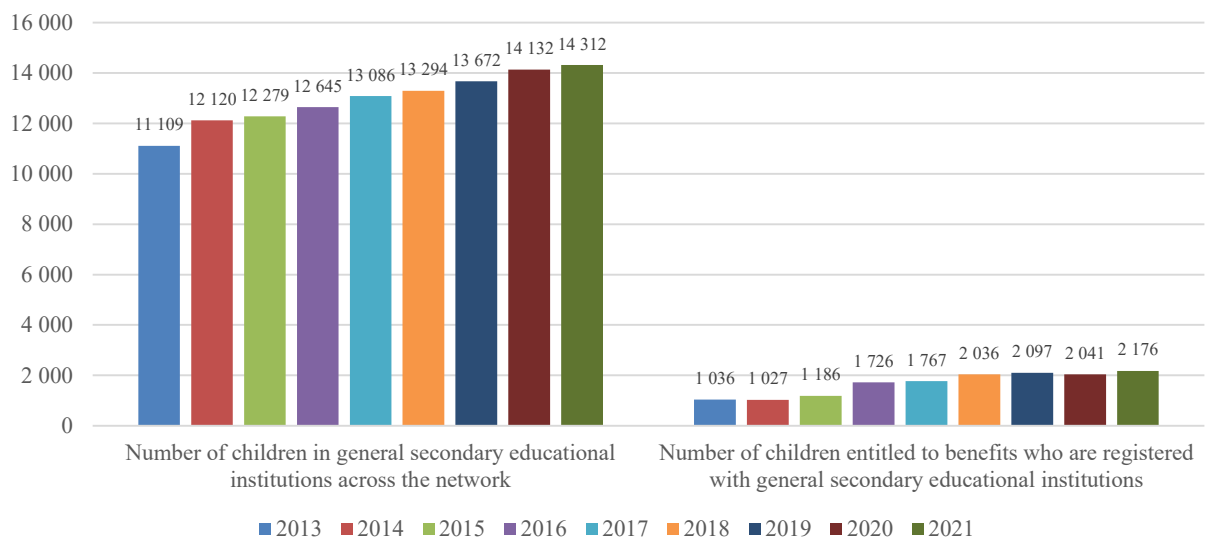


Fig. 11. Number of children entitled to special benefits who were registered with general secondary educational institutions of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv in 2013–2021

It can be seen from the above diagrams that the number of children entitled to special benefits at general secondary educational institutions exceeds the number of children entitled to special benefits in preschool educational institutions by a mean of 4%. This indicates that the state of keeping records of children entitled to special benefits at preschool educational institutions is worse than that at general secondary educational institutions due to lack of qualified social pedagogues.

In view of the above, the focus areas to work on at educational institutions in order to help students avoid difficult life circumstances can be singled out as follows:

- social and pedagogical support of students at educational institutions;
- close cooperation between educational institutions and state and public organisations in the district.

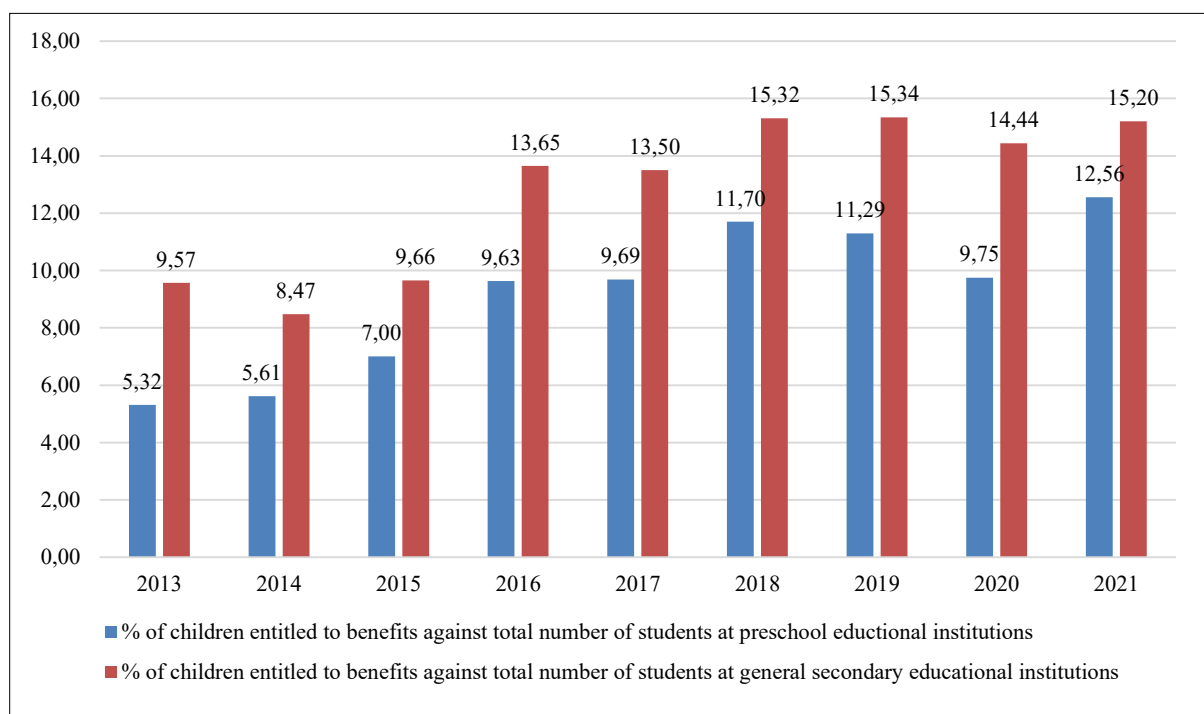


Fig. 12. Percentage ratio of children entitled to special benefits against total number of students at educational institutions of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv

The above suggests looking into these state and public organisations that can help educational institutions prevent children in Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv from finding themselves in difficult life circumstances. These organisations include:

- 1) the Children's Service of Industrial District of Kharkiv;
- 2) the Social Work Department of Industrial District of Kharkiv at "Dovira" Kharkiv Municipal Social Service Centre.

As we can see, there are no public or private institutions or organisations in Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv that can provide social services to children or prevent children from finding themselves in difficult life circumstances (Про соціальні послуги, 2019). Moreover, two state institutions in the district are a catastrophically small number of institutions that can provide social services to about 20,000 children living in the district.

It should be noted that there is such a state institution in the district as the Territorial Social Service Centre of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv. According to its Charter (Деякі питання діяльності центрів надання соціальних послуг, 2020), the right to receive its social services is limited to:

- elderly citizens, persons with disabilities, patients (among persons of working age, for the period until their disability group is established, but not more than for four months) who are unable to take care of themselves and need constant external assistance, and were recognized as such in accordance with the procedure approved by the Ministry of Health;
- citizens who are in difficult life circumstances due to unemployment (and are registered with the State Employment Service as job seekers), natural disasters, catastrophes (and have dependent minor children, children with disabilities, elderly persons, persons with disabilities), if the average monthly total income of their families is below the subsistence level for a family.

According to the information provided on the official website of the Department of Social Policy of Kharkiv City Council (Каталог соціальних послуг 2021 р.), the Territorial Social Service Centre of Industrialnyi District of Kharkiv can provide the following social services: home care; palliative care; social adaptation; consultancy; representation of interests; mediation; social prevention; emergency (crisis) intervention; in-kind aid.

In other words, the Territorial Centre provides only four services out of the eight social services that are to be provided to families in difficult life circumstances (Про соціальні послуги, 2019), according to the Social Services Classifier (Про затвердження Класифікатора соціальних послуг, 2020). There are no such social services as "social support during employment and at workplace", "social support for families of persons who are in difficult life circumstances", "crisis counselling phone number" or "informing" (Про соціальні послуги, 2019). We believe that the Territorial Centre needs to expand the range of social services provided to persons who are in difficult life circumstances, at least by adding services such as "informing" and "crisis counselling phone number".

According to the information provided on the official website of the Department of Social Policy of Kharkiv City Council (Каталог соціальних послуг 2021 р.), there are 36 institutions and organisations operating in Kharkiv that provide social services, including eleven public or charitable organisations.

Analysis of educational and professional training programmes was also conducted for subject-specific teachers to reveal that the special competences of the school leavers listed in those programmes do not include acquisition of the competence to identify children who may find themselves in difficult life circumstances. It should be noted that the job descriptions for II–III degree teachers at general secondary educational institutions specify a number of tasks and responsibilities as regards ensuring social protection of students, from knowledge of the regulations and ensuring students' socialisation during the educational process to responsibility for processing, storage and protection of students' personal data within the scope of their competence. Those job descriptions provide for close contact of the teacher with the social pedagogue, the school psychologist and the parents to study the individual psychological characteristics of children, determine their inclinations, interests, personal makings, readiness for certain activities, as well as the level of class team development. However, as mentioned above, there is a problem related to staffing of secondary educational institutions with social pedagogues. In this regard, the heaviest load as to social and pedagogical support of children at secondary educational institutions falls on the class tutors, and it is the subject-specific teachers who are appointed to be class tutors. As a matter of fact, according to Decree No. 434 of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine "On Approval of the Regulation on Class Tutor at an Educational institution in the General Secondary Education System" of 06.09.2000, as amended (Про затвердження Положення про класного керівника навчального закладу системи загальної середньої освіти, 2000), it is the class tutor who carries out pedagogical activities with the class student team, individual students, their parents, arranges and conducts extracurricular and multicultural work, promotes cooperation between participants of the educational process in creating appropriate conditions for implementation of the tasks of teaching and educating students, their self-fulfilment and development, and their social protection. Therefore, there is a need to raise awareness of teachers at educational institutions, namely subject-specific teachers, as regards the organisation of social and pedagogical support of children in order to prevent the latter from finding themselves in difficult life circumstances, through cultivation of the relevant competence.

Thus, the analysis of statistical data on children entitled to special benefits who received their education at educational institutions in 2014–2021 reveals that the number of children entitled to special benefits at educational institutions constantly increases by a mean of 11% annually. This indicates an increase in the social and pedagogical support load on teachers assigned with classroom management. The analysis of the legal framework of Ukraine as regards social protection indicates that it is quite clear, but is currently being improved and reformed in connection with the adoption of the new Law of Ukraine "On Social Services".

Therefore, the study of the issues associated with the implementation of the above Law of Ukraine in terms of the rights and responsibilities of educators as regards social and pedagogical support of children during their education meets the essential needs of the present day.

Conclusions

Based on the findings presented above and in order to improve the quality of social services provided to families that found themselves in difficult life circumstances in Ukraine, we have come to the following conclusions:

1. As regards the legal framework, it is expedient to continue working on amending or creating new regulations (and repealing obsolete legislation) that will comply with the articles of the new Law of Ukraine "On Social Services" (Про соціальні послуги, 2019).

2. It is worth encouraging emergence of more private, public, charitable organisations that can provide social services by increasing financial support from the state.

3. The work of district territorial social service centres needs to continue to improve, namely as regards social and preventive work aimed to prevent persons/families from among the vulnerable groups from finding themselves in difficult life circumstances (Деякі питання діяльності центрів надання соціальних послуг, 2020) by amending the Regulations on Territorial Social Service Centres so that they should comply with Resolution No. 177 of the Cabinet of Ministers "On Some Aspects of Activity of Social Services Centres" as of 03.03.2020 (Деякі питання діяльності центрів надання соціальних послуг, 2020) rather than with obsolete Resolution No. 1417 of the Cabinet of Ministers "On Some Aspects of Activity of Territorial Social Services Centres" as of 29.12.2009 (Деякі питання діяльності територіальних центрів соціального обслуговування (надання соціальних послуг), 2009), which, unfortunately, is still in full force and effect while being based on the old Law of Ukraine "On Social Services" (Про соціальні послуги, 2019).

4. The position of social pedagogue need to be included in the staff schedules of all preschool educational institutions.

5. Work has to be done to raise awareness among educators at educational institutions as regards organisation of social support for children who may find themselves in difficult life circumstances through cultivation of the relevant competence. It is recommended to include an additional subject "Social protection of children who may find themselves in difficult life circumstances" in the educational and professional programme for students at higher educational institutions (future subject-specific teachers at general secondary educational institutions, preschool teachers at preschool educational institutions).

Prospects for further research

Further research may be aimed at developing an additional academic subject "Social protection of children who may find themselves in difficult life circumstances" to be included in the educational and professional programmes of subject-specific teachers in order to cultivate their competence as regards organisation of social and pedagogical support for students to prevent them from finding themselves in difficult life circumstances.

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