

The background features a gradient from light green at the top to dark blue at the bottom. It is overlaid with various geometric patterns: a large circular scale on the left with numbers from 140 to 260, several concentric circles, and dashed lines with arrows indicating movement or flow. The overall aesthetic is technical and modern.

Different aspects of homelessness threat – from girl to woman

Experiences of a streetworker

by Monika DOLIK

Streetworking with children as a form of work :

- care and intervention aimed at the most marginalized and socially neglected children from dysfunctional families, in which the whole complex of problems most often occurs:
 - ❖ parental ineptitude,
 - ❖ **numerous family,**
 - ❖ **poverty and unemployment,**
 - ❖ **alcoholism,**
 - ❖ **criminality,**
 - ❖ **domestic violence,**
 - ❖ **difficult living conditions,**
 - ❖ **low standards of hygiene.**

The street worker has an influence on:

The environment in which children live - problems of the districts of larger cities, often called "poverty districts", where social housing clusters are located and where social problems accumulate.

Effects of living in a degraded space, in difficult conditions, also emotionally, for children and adolescents:

- Such children do not use the offer of extracurricular activities conducted in day-care community centers and cultural centers
- They cannot follow the standards in force there.
- Deprived of proper care from adults, they spend most of their time “on the street”, in the closest living environment, and are exposed to various threats:
 - neglecting compulsory education,
 - minor offenses,
 - crimes,
 - drug addiction,
 - alcoholism.

They adopt "street" habits:

aggressive and vulgar behavior that excludes them from functioning without conflict outside the district in which they live.

Streetworker's tasks - work methodology:

- **establishing contact in their environment, where they spend most of their time (streets, basements, squares, gates),**
- **gain their trust,**
- **then building and maintaining a positive relationship,**
- **regular presence in their district and organization of their free time,**
- **conducting activities that break their social isolation by taking them in small groups outside their residential districts to places where access is difficult for them for various reasons (swimming pools, cinemas, sports halls, museums, galleries),**
- **the possibility of implementing their own ideas in the form of projects (art, music, cultural).**

Street worker and relations with the child's environment:

- constant contact with children's families,
- persons and institutions having an impact on their situation (Social Welfare Centers, probation officers, school educators).

If necessary, streetworker **intervenes**.

In crisis situations - he mediates and puts **children and parents** in touch with therapists, psychologists and other **professionals**, always with the child's best interests in mind.

The child's path to homelessness

- Very common: stay in institution: foster families, orphanages, and other institutions - for homeless mothers
- Mode of operation - away from home: younger children or adolescents periodically move (sometimes informing their parents about it) to their friends' apartments who are in a similar life situation; escape for longer

Care in institutions - doubts as to the appropriate dimension of support:

Children up to 18 years of age staying in institutions are secured, but they are **not trained in soft skills - independent coping**.

After leaving the facility or foster family to their own apartment (provided by the state), **they are characterized by helplessness, lack of everyday skills (for example in managing the household budget)**.

Without support - they lose their home, go into homelessness

Examples of the path to homelessness:

1. **MONIKA:** approx. 30 years; has been in a wheelchair for about a dozen years (she lost her leg as a result of a fire caused by a drunk mother, Sylwia - she was then a teenager); she quickly fell into addiction (glue), began to engage in prostitution; lives with partners (pimps); contact, communicative, sometimes begging, knows how to interact with the environment; rare episodes of her reporting to a night shelter or shelter, or consenting to be brought by the services
2. **SYLWIA:** some 20 years, - maybe 30 years; addicted to designer drugs; often beaten - by a man called "Drug Friend" and possibly others; does not want to enter into relationships, avoids them, does not get close to anyone; main occupation: begging, but over time, the deterioration of her situation, condition and that she is better identified by people in the city center, it becomes more and more difficult for her to obtain funds as a result of begging
3. **AMELIA** - 7 years old, living in a basement with her mother, after the interventions of various social workers, etc., found a place with her mother in a women's shelter, then they were given a social flat, but after some time the girl was taken from her mother to a foster family; her mother couldn't take care of her, couldn't take care of herself

Experiencing **TRAUMA** by children as one of the causes of life marked by the possibility of homelessness:

Neglects towards children - emotional, i.e. children not cuddling, malnourished or knowing the feeling of hunger, i.e. also without a sense of security at the level of biological needs - experience **trauma**

This is how their 'reverse capital' is created - that is, their inability to cope

This is a common reason for falling into a homeless crisis: a lack of social and personal skills to cope with

Solutions:

- Work of street workers in the of children' environment
- Working with children in community centers - education based on:
- Realizing that the Law of Cause and Effect is at work
- learning responsibility from the simplest level (the child is responsible for performing a task: e.g. washing up after himself)
- learning consequences
- sexual education: gives the opportunity to recognize emotions and knowledge about the functioning, reactions and needs of one's own body; allows you to build an image of your own body;
- making aware of issues related to gender-sexual orientation
- it is the basis for making more informed choices later
- Showing other social worlds (culture, art, etc.) -> thus building other experiences, other emotions, allowing for the creation of alternative ideas about life, other people and oneself - the way to discover yourself (such activities remain in the memory and create alternative emotional background of children is their positive capital).
- Creating a system of indirect support: places and networks where they can come back even as they get older for support and strengthening