

The increasing role of social services for senior citizens in the structure of contemporary social policy: a case study of the Kurgan region

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Abstract. The article presents the main characteristics of the Kurgan region as a border region. The conclusion about the need for gerontosocial work in the region is made. The authors analyze the state of social services system for elderly citizens in the Kurgan region. More than that, its differences with the similar system in the Republic of Kazakhstan are determined.

Keywords: social services, senior citizens, elderly citizens, social policy

1. Introduction

Geographically, the Kurgan region occupies 71,488 km² and is bordered by the Chelyabinsk, Sverdlovsk, and Tyumen regions and the Republic of Kazakhstan. The population is 845,537 people [4].

The Kurgan region as a border region (as well as adjacent areas of the Republic of Kazakhstan) belongs to the category of regions with an unfavorable level of economic development and living standards of the population. In recent years, negative trends in population decline in natural and migration indicators persist. The number of retirement age citizens is 297.5 thousand people, which is one third of the total population [4]. Every fourth in the Kurgan region is an elderly person, while in Russia it is every fifth.

For senior citizens, the main objective problems requiring state social assistance, support, and provision of social services (social work in general) are: deterioration of health, increasing need in service, loneliness, and low income. Thus, gerontosocial work aimed at alleviating the problems of older people is a relevant and necessary direction of social policy in the border region.

2. Materials and Methods

In recent years, in the Kurgan region, the quality control of social services provided by subordinate social protection bodies and social services institutions has been systematized and improved. In general, the following control system is implemented in the General Directorate for Social Protection of the Population:

- Departmental quality control of services sold in accordance with the administrative and territorial regulations;
- Public (independent) control, in which the Public Commission for monitoring the implementation of social services of the General Directorate of Social Protection of the Population (GDSPP)

participates; Laboratory of Social Research, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Kurgan State University (KSU); media. In recent years, this type of control has become increasingly important.

An independent assessment of the quality of work of organizations providing social services is carried out in order to: (1) improving consumer awareness of the quality of work of organizations providing services in a particular social sphere; (2) establishing a dialogue between social organizations and citizens who are consumers of services (their legal representatives); (3) improving the quality of organization of services provided to the population in the social sphere.

In the study on the independent assessment of the quality of services conducted by the social research laboratory of KSU, the following methods were used [5]:

1. A questionnaire designed for service recipients. The toolkit (questionnaire) contains questions compiled in accordance with the criteria specified in the Federal Law of December 28, 2013 No. 442-FZ *On the Basics of Social Services for the Population in the Russian Federation* [1] and with the indicators specified in the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation *On approving the Rules for Collecting and Summarizing Information about the Quality of Conditions of Service Provided by Organizations in the Field of Culture, Health Care, Education, Social Services and Federal Institutions of Medical and Social Expertise* of May 31, 2018 No. 638 [2].
2. The method of observation. The Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation details the evaluation criteria for both the general improvement of the organization of social services (the presence of a comfortable recreation area, the presence and understandability of navigation within organizing the social sphere, availability and accessibility of drinking water, etc.), and the criteria for the accessibility of services for people with disabilities (the presence of handrails, extended doorways, the availability of dedicated parking for vehicles of persons with disabilities, etc.) [2];
3. Analysis of official social service sites.
4. Evaluating remote modes of interaction (telephone, electronic services, etc.).

The list of social service organizations for which we carried out an independent evaluation was determined by the public council. In the course of the study, 1,188 respondents in 17 of 42 institutions of the Kurgan region were interviewed.

3. Results

According to the results of the departmental control organized by the GDSPP of the Kurgan Region, the main remarks to institutions in the implementation of social services are the late updating of documents and the removal of obsolete, the absence of changes in local acts; a formal approach in organizing the work of the quality control commission, etc.

The advantages of the work of social service institutions of the Kurgan region with elderly citizens include the following facts [3]. In 12 organizations providing inpatient social services, 2,774 people received help and support, 2,075 (86%) of them have a disability group. Home social services were provided to more than 16.1 thousand people. Additional services were provided to more than 125 thousand citizens. Over 36.5 thousand senior citizens are covered with social patronage.

In accordance with the instructions of the President of the Russian Federation and the Governor of the region, an inspection of the living conditions of 14,814 (100 %) war veterans was conducted. According to the results, more than 3.2 thousand people received various types of services. 1,177 veterans enrolled in social services at home. In total, 2,243 veterans receive social services at home, 146 of them are participants and disabled people of the Great Patriotic War. Social services in all forms of social services are free for participants and disabled people of the Great Patriotic War. More than 16 thousand veterans are covered by the volunteer campaign “A veteran is waiting for you, volunteer”. Since 2016, there were volunteers of silver age in the Kurgan region.

Around 90 thousand people living in remote areas of the region are covered by mobile service forms. 7.4 thousand elderly people and people with disabilities received transport services of “social taxi”. About 3.3 thousand people were covered by the “brigade service method” at home.

The “Social Tourism” service was provided to over 3.4 thousand people. Educational services are provided as part of the “School of Nursing” activity (more than 7.3 thousand people studied), “Security School for the Elderly and Disabled” (3.9 thousand students), the “University of the Third Age” (3.8 thousand students). In addition, as part of the “Social Program”, 467 non-working pensioners were trained on co-financing with the Pension Fund of the Russian Federation.

A new event in the development of social work with older people, a zonal forum for the elderly “Silver Age”, took place from 2014 to 2018. The purpose of the forum was to attract public attention to the organization of life of the elderly. Objectives of the forum were the translation of contemporary approaches to gerontosocial work, aimed at increasing the age of active longevity; the creation of platforms for the presentation of new technologies and modern practices of social work in order to ensure a barrier-free living environment for senior citizens; to attract the attention of young people to people of the “silver age” with the aim of continuity of generations; generalization of the best experience of gerontosocial work; presentation of goods and services for the elderly offered by government, non-profit, and commercial organizations. The forum has covered more than 1,000 participants.

Public control, implemented through an independent assessment of the quality of work of social service organizations in the Kurgan region, revealed the following trends. In general, respondents highly appreciate the activities of institutions and the quality of social services provided. Depending on the specific institution, there is a slight difference in the quality of service estimates [5].

Table 1. Are you satisfied with the terms of service in the organization as a whole?

No	Meanings	Number of respondents	% of respondents
1	Fully	985	91.63
2	Partially	89	8.28
3	Not satisfied	1	0.09
Total:		1,075	100.00

Also, 99.8% of respondents are satisfied with the quality, completeness, and availability of information about the work of an organization placed on the stands in an organization, 0.19% are not satisfied. Service recipients showed less satisfaction when evaluating the websites of organizations. 4.6% of respondents are not satisfied with the volume of content of the websites, 17.9% are partially satisfied. The following criterion includes, in addition to assessing the presence or absence of the necessary conditions for the comfortable provision of services, also a subjective assessment by the recipients of how comfortable a service is, including the waiting time for receiving the service. 99.5% of respondents are satisfied with the comfort of service provision (89.3% of respondents are completely satisfied). 19.15% of respondents expected to receive services longer than the deadline. 80.8% answered that the service was provided on time.

Equally important is the criterion of the availability of services. Most respondents rated the conditions for providing services to people with limited mobility. The effectiveness of solving client problems depends largely on the specialists themselves, their experience, and personal qualities. In 2018, this indicator somewhat changed and appeared in the form of three criteria related to the assessment of the work of the organization’s staff at different stages of providing services to the recipient. This indicator included primary contact with the client, work with recipients using remote forms of interaction, and satisfaction with the staff directly providing this or that service. Recipients are less satisfied with communication using distance technologies (91.3%). This is confirmed by objective data (test calls, messages to the organizations website).

The next indicator is the conditions of service in the organization of social services. In addition to general satisfaction with the terms of service, this also includes the criterion of the opportunity to recommend the organization to relatives or friends. The majority of respondents (93.1%) would advise their relatives and friends to contact this organization for social services [5].

4. Discussion

Social service has been and remains a multifunctional industry. More than 370 thousand people, uniting all socio-demographic groups of the population of the Kurgan region, are in the sphere of its attention [3]. A significant proportion of citizens are the elderly. Departmental control revealed both weaknesses and dignity in the organization of social services for senior citizens. The merit of social service institutions for senior citizens is the wide range of services they provide from home services to social tourism.

Summarizing the results of the independent evaluation based on the survey results, in general, we can note a rather high degree of satisfaction of the surveyed clients of institutions. In general, our analysis of the websites of organizations showed their quite good occupancy, the presence of sufficiently actual rich content, and the sufficient compliance of sections with the legal requirements of 442-FZ adopted on December 28, 2013 [1]. When conducting control calls and emails, as well as in the form of getting feedback, we can mark fairly quick responses in most cases.

Thus, the results of departmental and public control showed that in the Kurgan region, an effective optimal structure of social institutions, actively influencing the alleviation of many social problems of older people, was created. Comparing the features of social services for the elderly citizens in the Kurgan region and in the Republic of Kazakhstan, we found a number of differences.

First, a range of services provided to senior citizens is not so diverse in the Republic of Kazakhstan. These are mainly services related to pension payments and the assignment of social benefits (services at the central level). Also, there are services at the local level, including “Providing special social services in the conditions of home care,” “Providing special social services in medical and social institutions (organizations),” and some other. Central level services are provided by the Ministry. Local level services are provided by district (city) departments, by the local authorities. According to the Ministry, services in the category “families with children” have been the most demanded ones in recent years [6].

Presumably, social services for older citizens in the Republic of Kazakhstan are less common than, for example, in the Kurgan region due to the effective functioning of cultural traditions that provide care for the older generation within the family.

Second, in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the criteria for an independent assessment of the quality of service provision are slightly different from the Russian ones. According to assessment results of the quality of public services in 2017, which was conducted by the Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Ministry received 72.17 points out of 100 possible. Basically, the loss of points was formed according to the following criteria: “a level of satisfaction with the quality of public services”, “measures to meet the deadlines for the provision of public services”, “ensuring the quality of public services”, “optimization of public services” [6]. Summarizing, we can say that the overall satisfaction of service recipients in the Kurgan region is higher than in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

5. Conclusion

Despite the existence of common political, economic, and social problems left over from the post-Soviet past of the Kurgan Region and the Republic of Kazakhstan, their solutions are different. A good example is the existing differences in the system of social services for senior citizens. The system of social services of the Kurgan region has been created and is functioning taking into account the demographic, economic, environmental, social features of the subject of the federation. In the Kurgan region, a high proportion of elderly citizens determines the increasing role of social services for this category of population in the structure of contemporary social policy.

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