

Some solutions for implementing social assistance and functional rehabilitation for children with autism

Một số giải pháp thực hiện công tác trợ giúp xã hội và phục hồi chức năng đối với trẻ tự kỷ

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Abstract: Vietnam has a tradition of "helping each other in difficulties," but efforts to implement social assistance and functional recovery for children with autism in Vietnam are still lacking. In implementing social support and rehabilitation for autistic children, there are some practical barriers, such as the legal framework in the provisions of the Law on Persons with disabilities 2010 which still has certain gaps in social support and rehabilitation for autistic children. The Party and State's policies have initially paid attention to autistic children but there is still a lack of implementation conditions, and there is still some incomplete awareness of autistic children in general; stigma against persons with disabilities, discrimination against persons with disabilities, social work still has some unprofessional points. Internal barriers of autistic children such as the inability to live independently without a caregiver nearby. This article examines in-depth some solutions for implementing social assistance and functional recovery for children with autism in Vietnam today.

Keywords: *Autism; Functional recovery; Social assistance.*

Tóm tắt: Việt Nam có truyền thống “lá lành đùm lá rách”, “lá rách ít đùm lá rách nhiều”. Đảng và Nhà nước ta đã thực hiện nhiều chính sách, pháp luật an sinh xã hội bảo đảm cho quyền lợi của các nhóm dễ bị tổn thương. Trong việc thực hiện trợ giúp xã hội và phục hồi chức năng cho trẻ tự kỷ còn một số rào cản trên thực tế, như khuôn khổ pháp lý quy định tại Luật Người khuyết tật 2010 vẫn còn những khoảng trống nhất định trong việc hỗ trợ xã hội và phục hồi chức năng cho trẻ tự kỷ. Các chính sách của Đảng và Nhà nước bước đầu đã quan tâm đến trẻ tự kỷ nhưng còn thiếu điều kiện thực hiện và nhận thức về trẻ tự kỷ nói chung còn chưa đầy đủ; kỳ thị người khuyết tật, phân biệt đối xử với người khuyết tật, công tác xã hội còn một số điểm chưa chuyên nghiệp. Rào cản bên trong của trẻ tự kỷ như không có khả năng sống độc lập nếu không có người chăm sóc bên cạnh. Bài viết đi sâu nghiên cứu một số giải pháp thực hiện trợ giúp xã hội và phục hồi chức năng cho trẻ tự kỷ ở Việt Nam hiện nay.

Từ khóa: *Phục hồi chức năng; Trợ giúp xã hội; Trẻ tự kỷ*

1. Some barriers to implementing social assistance and functional recovery for children with autism

Firstly, structural barriers

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by difficulties in social interaction and communication, as well as repetitive behaviors. It affects

approximately 1% of the global population [1]. Autism is prevalent worldwide, affecting the socio-economic needs of individuals, families, and society due to autism spectrum disorders, developmental disorders, and related disabilities [2]. Children with autism display impairments in

communication and social interaction, and lacking flexibility [3].

The Dhaka Declaration on Autism Spectrum Disorders and Developmental Disabilities [4] emphasizes the need to enhance access to appropriate support services and equal opportunities for social integration for individuals with autism spectrum disorders [5]. In Vietnam, there is no national statistical data on autism; however, the number of children with autism tends to increase compared to other common disabilities in children. In the United States, autism is classified as one of the 13 disability categories [6].

According to the provisions of the Law on Persons with Disabilities of 2010:

“Article 3. Disability categories and levels

1. Disability categories include:

- a) Physical disabilities;
- b) Hearing and speech disabilities;
- c) Visual disabilities;
- d) Neurological and mental disabilities;
- đ) Intellectual disabilities;
- e) Other disabilities.”

In addition, Circular No. 01/2019/TT-BLĐTBXH dated January 2, 2019, of the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs stipulates the determination of the level of disability by the disability assessment council but does not specify autism as a special disability category, which may lead to the perception that autism is not a severe disability.

Up to now, our country has no legal document stipulating that autism is a disability category.

Secondly, regarding awareness

In practice, in terms of medical awareness, some families still do not consider autism as a disease that needs special care and protection. With the inconsistent perception in some localities that autism can be cured rather than being a disability, most children with autism in our country have not received social security policies, social protection, educational privileges, and healthcare like other disabilities. Therefore, many children with autism, when not benefiting from the preferential policies of schools, lack the ability to self-care but do not meet the criteria for admission to social protection centers.

According to current laws, the objects to be nurtured in social protection facilities are implemented, specifically, according to the provisions of Article 45 of the Law on Persons with Disabilities of 2010:

Article 45. Nurturing people with disabilities in social protection facilities

1. Individuals with severe disabilities who have no place to rely on and cannot take care of themselves are admitted to be nurtured in social protection facilities.

2. The state allocates funds for nurturing people with disabilities as stipulated in clause 1 of this Article to social protection facilities, including:

- a) Monthly nurturing allowances;
- b) Purchase of clothing, and daily necessities;
- c) Purchase of health insurance cards;
- d) Purchase of common medicines;
- đ) Purchase of tools, means to support functional recovery;

e) Funeral expenses upon death;

g) Monthly personal hygiene for disabled females.

Therefore, according to current legal regulations, those with criteria for severe disabilities, no place to rely on, and unable to support themselves will be admitted to social protection facilities. Currently, only a few children with autism who are integrated with other types of disabilities receive attention and special care in local social protection facilities.

Thirdly, barriers to social assistance work

In our country, in the context of climate change and epidemics, many serious technical incidents can occur anytime and anywhere, so the state budget needs to be allocated for many different activities in society. Therefore, the state budget at the central and local levels allocated for social security activities and social assistance work for children with autism is increasingly limited. Besides, the team of officials and staff involved in social assistance work, educational work, healthcare, and functional rehabilitation for children with autism still has many limitations. Currently, most children with autism cannot live independently without family support, but very few social assistance facilities currently care for and nurture children with autism. Assuming there are centers for caring for and nurturing children with autism, the costs are very high, and not every family can afford it. In general, facilities for nurturing, caring for, and functional rehabilitation for children with autism are still lacking in both quantity and quality, with unprofessional functional rehabilitation care processes, and

physical facilities for caring and social assistance for children with autism still have many limitations. Some facilities have modern equipment, but the staff there have limited capacity and qualifications so they cannot utilize them.

2. Some solutions for implementing social assistance and functional rehabilitation for children with autism

Firstly, it is necessary to amend and supplement policies and laws

Vietnam is a country with a low average income; however, our state always has preferential policies and concerns for vulnerable groups in society.

“Article 42. Ensuring the care and nurturing of children

The state has policies of subsidies, assistance, issuing standards, regulations to implement care, nurturing of children according to age, and children with particular circumstances.

The state encourages agencies, organizations, families, and individuals to participate in helping and caring for children, children with exceptional circumstances; support land, tax, credit for organizations, individuals providing care, nurturing services for children as prescribed by law.”

According to the provisions of the Law on Children of 2016, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the International Convention on the Rights of Disabled Children states that children have the right to "integration," the state will create conditions to promote, create conditions for children to integrate and develop with the community. Therefore,

it is necessary to supplement autism as a "developmental disability" in Article 3 Disability categories and levels of the Law on Persons with Disabilities of 2010. That means defining autism as a developmental disability according to legal regulations so that disabled children can enjoy social assistance, care, attention, and unique functional rehabilitation conditions. This is an essential premise for the state to implement policies and laws for children with autism in the current period.

In addition, the state needs to enact specific policies and laws regarding inclusive education and unique health insurance for children with autism. It is necessary to amend the Education Law to ensure the integration of autistic children in schools, and the Health Insurance Law needs to be amended to include provisions for free health insurance for severely autistic individuals to ensure equality with other severe disability groups.

Central and local government agencies need to regulate social support subsidies, education support policies, medical support, and particular care policies for children with autism.

Secondly, family and societal awareness

Social work plays a vital role in supporting children with autism and mainly helps families of autistic children overcome difficulties through activities that promote policies to help children and families develop harmoniously, leading to better lives, and also helps to enhance the capacity to encourage problem-solving and social issues prevention, contributing to ensuring social welfare [7]. In practice, regulations regarding policies, laws for

children with autism, social assistance work, and functional rehabilitation for children with autism are still inconsistent and uncoordinated. Therefore, it is necessary to raise awareness among stakeholders participating in social assistance work and functional rehabilitation for children with autism, which is highly essential.

It is necessary to increase awareness among family members, experts, state agencies, and those involved in social assistance work and functional rehabilitation for children with autism. Encourage active participation of individuals, agencies, and organizations in both public and private sectors in social assistance work for children with autism, especially emphasizing the role of specialists, psychologists, and volunteers in participating in the autism support network.

Encourage the use of modern media, such as the internet, newspapers, magazines, etc., to contribute to enhancing the position and role of social assistance work and functional rehabilitation for children with autism in the current period.

Thirdly, the need for enhanced coordination, sharing, and resource connection

Coordination means connecting and coordinating all activities of individuals and organizations. Coordination in social assistance work and functional rehabilitation for children with autism is mutual support, cooperation between subjects in ensuring legal rights, interests for autistic children according to plans, agreements, commitments among subjects to achieve sustainable development goals. It is necessary to

strengthen coordination between families with autistic individuals and those involved in social assistance work and functional rehabilitation for children with autism to help them overcome barriers in life. It is necessary to ensure coordination among subjects in implementing social assistance work and functional rehabilitation for children with autism to avoid overlap and inefficiency.

The Ministry of Labor - Invalids and Social Affairs should be entrusted as the lead agency in implementing state management on social assistance and functional rehabilitation for children with autism nationwide. Establish a database on the number of individuals and organizations participating in social assistance work and functional rehabilitation for children with autism. Annual reports on social assistance work and functional rehabilitation for children with autism should be prepared to evaluate the advantages and limitations of social assistance work and functional rehabilitation for children with autism. In addition, the Ministry of Labor - Invalids and Social Affairs will coordinate with the Ministry of Health in functional rehabilitation for children with autism and with the Ministry of Finance in budget allocation for social assistance work and functional rehabilitation for children with autism.

Local government agencies need to develop detailed plans and prioritize resources and budgets for social assistance work and functional rehabilitation for children with autism. It is necessary to review and evaluate the effectiveness of models for social assistance work and functional rehabilitation for children with autism

of individuals and organizations with practical activities to spread influence.

Thirdly, the need to enhance resource development

- Human resources: Policies are needed to attract and employ talents to work in state agencies implementing social assistance work and functional rehabilitation for children with autism. Criteria for selecting human resources to serve social assistance work and functional rehabilitation for children with autism, besides knowledge and competence, also include dedication to the profession. Continuous improvement of the qualifications of social assistance workers and functional rehabilitation for children with autism through training and capacity building for officers and staff should be emphasized regularly.

- Financial resources

There needs to be allocation of state budgets at both central and local levels at a minimum to implement social assistance policies in general and social assistance for the social work and functional rehabilitation of autistic children.

Fourthly, enhancing and encouraging private sector participation

Engaging the participation of stakeholders in social work and functional rehabilitation for autistic children in both the public and private sectors is essential. Currently, given the allocation of state budgets at both central and local levels for various societal activities, it is imperative to involve the private sector in social work and functional rehabilitation for autistic children in today's context. More decisive measures need to be taken to

promote the privatization of social work and functional rehabilitation for autistic children to enhance quality and effectiveness.

Lastly, there is a need to increase control

Enhanced control measures such as inspection, monitoring, and enforcement of administrative and criminal violations should be implemented against any abuse of legal provisions in social work and functional rehabilitation for autistic children.

3. Conclusion

Social work and functional rehabilitation for autistic children in some developed countries, such as the United States, Europe, etc., have established professional and effective legal frameworks, encouraging activities in social work and functional rehabilitation for autistic children. Thus, encouraging individuals and organizations to participate in practical social work and functional rehabilitation for autistic children, supported and facilitated by the state, promotes development. Vietnam, along with other developed countries, needs to research and propose comprehensive, feasible solutions for high-quality and effective social work and functional rehabilitation for autistic children.

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