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# FINNISH FAMILY POLICY

- Provides parents the means to have and raise children
- Harmonizing work and family life
- Child benefit and day care for children even out the cost of having children and highlight the society's responsibility to support child welfare
- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
  - ✓ responsible for Finland's social and health policy
  - ✓ prepares legislation on social welfare and health
  - ✓ responsible for the planning, guidance and implementation of social policy



# CONSTITUTION OF FINLAND

- Includes basic rights for all citizens and residents in Finland
- Children have equal rights and right for protection

## **For example:**

Equality

Right for life and personal freedom

Right of movement

Right for privacy

Educational rights

Right of religion

Right for social security



# SOCIAL SERVICES IN FINLAND

- All residents in Finland are entitled to social services and social security benefits
- Local authorities (municipalities) are responsible for organizing social welfare and health service provision
- The services are funded by the municipal tax system and allocations from central government.
- Municipalities can purchase services from private service providers and non-governmental organizations





# SOCIAL WELFARE

## General, proactive and preventative services

- short and effective support
- aims to reduce the amount of customers in child protection
- includes right for home services for families with children
- includes for example family work, home services, family advice and counseling





# CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

- 1) Parents or guardians are primarily responsible for a child's upbringing and care
- 2) Child welfare services are obliged to help parents with the child's upbringing and care if needed
- 3) If parents are unable to take care of their children's wellbeing, Child welfare services are obliged to intervene

Activities and decisions of child welfare workers are based on the **Child Welfare Act (417/2007)**





# THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD

- All decisions concerning a child must be based on the best interest of the child
- Consideration must be given to the extent to which the alternative measures and solutions safeguard the following for the child:
  - 1) balanced development and wellbeing, and close and continuing relationships;
  - 2) the opportunity to be given understanding and affection, as well as supervision and care;
  - 3) an education consistent with the child's abilities and wishes;
  - 4) a safe environment in which to grow up, and physical and emotional freedom;
  - 5) a sense of responsibility in becoming independent and growing up;
  - 6) the opportunity to become involved in matters affecting the child and to influence them; and
  - 7) the need to consider the child's linguistic, cultural and religious background



# STARTING PROCESS IN CHILD WELFARE

- 1) An application i.e. a parent or a child contacts child welfare service
- 2) A request to evaluate the need for child welfare services made by a client and an official together
- 3) A child welfare notification
- 4) A child welfare worker has otherwise received information that a child is in need of protection.





# DECISION MAKING AND CO-OPERATION

- ✓ The municipal officeholder (social worker) or the municipal officeholder directing social services will make the decisions
- ✓ **Child's named social worker** is obliged to collect all relevant information and expertise about the child's growth and development, health care, legal and other issues relevant to child welfare work
- ✓ Specialist child welfare group will assist social worker in a case of child's placement into a care as well as planning and preparing such issues. The group will also help with other child welfare matters and give statements to support decision making in child welfare.
- ✓ Health care is obliged to give specialist support as well as organise monitoring and healthcare or therapy services.



# OPEN CARE AND PLACEMENT

- 1) Most child welfare work is implemented as support measures in **open care i.e. non institutional care**. (family work, a support person or family, open care placement)
  
- 2) If the problems are serious or have lasted for a long time, child can be **urgently placed in care** or **taken into care**
  - Urgent placement 30 days
  - Taking into care as long as the child needs it or till he/she is 18 years
  
- Decision must always be justified
  - Child's care or surroundings or child's own behavior threaten the health or growth of the child
  - Open care is not sufficient and alternative care is in the best interest of the child
  - Alternative care in a foster family, a professional family home or a child welfare institution (max 7 children per unit)



# PLACEMENT

- The decision about the child's living situation and placement has to be based on the child's best interest
  - ✓ Relatives, other important people who could look after the child
- The child's social worker is obliged to co-operate with the parents during the child's placement as well as with the representative of the place where the child is placed
- The child has a right to meet up with his or her social worker alone
- Child has a right to keep in touch with his or her parents and other close relatives or people and this has to be supported
- Restrictions during a placement regulated in the Child Welfare Act



# AFTER CARE

- Municipality is obliged to arrange social service support after placement till the young adult is 25 years old
- After care can include any child welfare open care service for the child/young person or his/her family or other carer
- For example financial support, housing, studying etc.



# CHILD WELFARE CHALLENGES

- 2018 children placed outside their home 18 554
  - urgently placed 4390 children (6,9 % more than 2017)
- Children in child welfare have multiple developmental, learning, social and health related problems and needs. 33 % of the parents have mental health and 26 % substance abuse issues.
- 40 % of children who are considered to be taken into care have needed previously at least 7 different services
- Many children in child welfare services and/or their parents do not have adequate access to mental health services
- Integration between different services is needed
- Old and even illegal practices in child welfare institutions



**Thank you**

