

Project Description

Empowering professionals working with children to best represent the utmost interest of the child

Hungary

Kék Vonal Child Crisis Foundation established the **Professional to Professional Line**, a consultation line for professionals working with children: an innovative initiative in the European Union.

The aim of the service is: to achieve that the utmost interest of the child is realized.

The way this is achieved:

- Providing information, up-to-date knowledge and professional supervision in order to help professionals in child- and family care and protection, in their work with children and families, in difficult situations or crises.
- To facilitate the realization of the right of the child to the type and measure of assistance described in the Child Protection Act.
- To establish the conditions for efficient care and protection for child and family.
- To use the full potential of cooperation among professionals in child- and family care and protection
- To further develop and strengthen the professional identity of professionals.
- To realize the principle of necessary cooperation in practice

Project implementation

Kék Vonal Child Crisis Foundation has been operating a toll-free, anonymous Child Helpline since 1993. Among the calls to this helpline there was an increasing proportion initiated by parents and professionals having trouble in fulfilling their duties with children, or in finding the right ways to help children. While consulting these callers on the Child Helpline, we had to commission professionals of child care and protection (doctors, social workers, child protection consultants, police) in order to be able to best answer the questions.

In 2004 the Foundation realized that the demand for such services was such that a new service line should be operated. This decision was reinforced also by a separate project of the Foundation, called Travelling Supervision, which provided free of charge professional supervision sessions for professionals working with children in the economically and socially most disadvantaged areas of Hungary.

In 2005 the Professional to Professional Line was launched, with seven professionals employed and trained to the job. Consultation is available on telephone and by e-mail. The telephone line operates 3 days a week. The members of the professional team possess high level of academic knowledge as well as professional experience. Among them there are lawyers, psychologists, social workers.

The members of the team participate in regular supervision, they are required to update their professional knowledge continuously by monitoring new publications, legislation, etc.

Key Aspects of the Project

The Child Protection Act in Hungary (1997) has established the framework of child welfare and protection, but the actual practice of child care and protection often does not use the full potential provided in legislation. The factors that make it difficult to cooperate in the interest of the child are:

- the Child Protection Act has only been in operation for 10 years,
- there are no established protocols to regulate the framework of cooperation in a clear, definite manner,
- the professional identity of professionals working in child- and family care and protection is not developed to its full potential.

The Child Crisis Foundation, throughout its 15 years of operation often witnessed that professionals dedicated to child- and family care and protection many times feel alone with their questions and responsibilities, that they do not have opportunities to consult, that local conditions, hierarchy often make it difficult for them to represent the best interest of the child.

Often the technical conditions are not provided (computer, internet connection, availability of text of legislation, etc.).

From the above situation grew out the need that a service should be provided for professionals in child- and family care and protection that is:

- independent, non-governmental, not part of the hierarchy, anonymous
- offers professional connection on an equal, partner-like set up
- provides high quality, up-to-date information and attitude
- supports and develops the professional identity of professionals
- low threshold: free of charge, available nationally by telephone and e-mail.

Result of the Project:

By the beginning of 2008 the Professional to Professional Line is known and used by professionals in child- and family care and protection. We receive positive feedback and encouragement from the profession.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour is advertising the non-governmental, non-profit service of the Professional to Professional Line on its website.

Child Helpline International accepted the operation of the Professional to Professional Line as good practice.

How the Project works:

- The Professional to Professional Line is available by telephone and e-mail
- At the telephone there are the professional consultants of the Line
- The consultant can either provide the help demanded by the callers immediately or offers to obtain all the information necessary or do the external consultation /organization needed and call back
- The consultant mobilizes all necessary forces
- The consultant supports the caller emotionally and professionally

- The consultant is independent of any hierarchy, highly trained and has significant experience in the field.

Method: Consultants highly trained in theoretical and practical aspects of child- and family care and protection consult professional working in the field of child- and family care and protection.

The service is characterized by:

- anonymity: both caller and consultant may choose to remain anonymous
- consultation, "thinking together"
- teamwork: the content of the consultation reflect the total knowledge represented by the team and outside consultants
- up-to-date information
- facilitating cooperation: it helps to establish relations among the representatives of different professions in the vicinity of the caller
- complex approach to each case
- supervision: the team works, with trained supervisor, on the consultation cases that cause difficulties
- ambition to change and develop attitudes
- extensive use of international knowledge and know-how: the Foundation is a member of Child Helpline International, Missing Children Europe and Eurochild); all knowledge gained through these relations is built into the services of Kék Vonal.

Annual Budget:

Fee of consultants	8.735 euro
Telephone	1.056
Office costs	1.440
Supervision	1.710
Other training costs	1.000
Total	13.941 euro