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FEATURES OF SOCIAL COUNSELING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN TIMES OF CRISIS

У статті висвітлено соціальне консультування як одну з ключових форм надання підтримки особам з інвалідністю в межах сучасної системи соціальної роботи. Консультування розглядається як професійна діяльність, спрямована на сприяння особі у вирішенні життєвих труднощів, адаптації до соціального середовища, реалізації прав і можливостей, а також підвищенні якості життя. Підкреслено, що особи з інвалідністю потребують індивідуального підходу з урахуванням їхніх специфічних потреб, пов'язаних із доступом до освіти, працевлаштуванням, медичним забезпеченням, побутовою адаптацією, соціальною інтеграцією та налагодженням повноцінних міжособистісних зв'язків.

У статті проаналізовано основні напрями соціального консультування: психосоціальна підтримка, правове консультування, навігація в системі соціальних послуг, професійне орієнтування та консультації для батьків дітей з інвалідністю. Виокремлено роль соціального консультанта як провідника у світі соціальної допомоги, а також як емоційного підтримувача, який володіє техніками активного слухання, кризового консультування та здатний адаптувати комунікацію до особливостей клієнта.

Окрему увагу присвячено класифікації теоретичних підходів у соціальному консультуванні, таких як психосоціальний, когнітивно-поведінковий, клієнт-центрований, екзистенційно-гуманістичний, системний, емпатермент-підхід та інтегрований підхід. Надано детальний опис кожного з підходів, розкрито їхню мету, методи, сфери застосування та особливості роботи з різними категоріями осіб з інвалідністю. Підкреслено, що вибір підходу залежить від типу інвалідності, віку клієнта, його життєвого досвіду, психоемоційного стану та соціального контексту.

У статті також подано аналітичний огляд стану розвитку соціального консультування в Україні. Зазначено, що вітчизняна система ще перебуває на етапі становлення, хоча має суттєвий науково-методичний потенціал. Визначено ключові проблеми: нестача фахових кадрів, відсутність єдиної методології, фрагментарність законодавчого регулювання та обмежений доступ до послуг у сільських регіонах. Порівняно вітчизняну практику з міжнародним досвідом країн Європейського Союзу, США та Канади, де соціальне консультування розглядається як системна й комплексна діяльність, інтегрована в систему соціального захисту та гарантована на рівні державної політики.

Розглянуто також інституційні, етичні та практичні засади ефективного консультування, зокрема принципи конфіденційності, недискримінації, поваги до гідності та автономії особи. Наголошено на важливості впровадження мультидисциплінарного підходу, розбудови партнерства між державними та громадськими інституціями, а також розширення ролі недержавного сектору.

Матеріали статті можуть бути корисними для соціальних працівників, психологів, педагогів, правозахисників, представників державних і недержавних структур, які працюють з особами з інвалідністю, а також для студентів і дослідників, зацікавлених у розвитку інклюзивної соціальної політики.

Ключові слова: соціальне консультування, особи з інвалідністю, соціальна робота, професійна підтримка, підходи, адаптація, інтеграція, права людини.

The article highlights social counseling as one of the key forms of support for persons with disabilities within the modern social work system. Counseling is considered a professional activity aimed at helping individuals overcome life difficulties, adapt to their social environment, realize their rights and opportunities, and improve their quality of life. It is emphasized that persons with disabilities require an individual approach that takes into account their specific needs related to access to education, employment, medical care, domestic adaptation, social integration, and the establishment of meaningful interpersonal relationships.

The article analyzes the main areas of social counseling: psychosocial support, legal counseling, navigation in the social services system, career guidance, and counseling for parents of children with disabilities. The role of the social counselor as a guide in the world of social assistance is highlighted, as well as that of an emotional supporter who possesses active listening and crisis counseling techniques and is able to adapt communication to the client's characteristics.

Special attention is paid to the classification of theoretical approaches in social counseling, such as psychosocial, cognitive-behavioral, client-centered, existential-humanistic, systemic, empowerment, and integrated approaches.

A detailed description of each approach is provided, revealing their purpose, methods, areas of application, and features of working with different categories of persons with disabilities. It is emphasized that the choice of approach depends on the type of disability, the client's age, life experience, psycho-emotional state, and social context.

The article also provides an analytical overview of the state of social counseling in Ukraine. It is noted that the domestic system is still in its infancy, although it has significant scientific and methodological potential. Key problems are identified: a shortage of qualified personnel, the lack of a unified methodology, fragmented legislative regulation, and limited access to services in rural areas. Domestic practice is compared with the international experience of the European Union, the United States, and Canada, where social counseling is viewed as a systematic and comprehensive activity, integrated into the social protection system and guaranteed at the level of state policy.

The institutional, ethical, and practical foundations of effective counseling are also considered, in particular the principles of confidentiality, non-discrimination, respect for dignity, and personal autonomy. The importance of implementing a multidisciplinary approach, developing partnerships between state and public institutions, and expanding the role of the non-governmental sector is emphasized.

The materials in this article may be useful for social workers, psychologists, educators, human rights defenders, representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations working with persons with disabilities, as well as for students and researchers interested in the development of inclusive social policy.

Key words: social counseling, persons with disabilities, social work, professional support, approaches, adaptation, integration, human rights.

Problem statement. In the current situation, where Ukrainian society is experiencing a protracted multidimensional crisis caused by war, economic instability, social inequality, and the deepening vulnerability of certain categories of the population, there is a growing need for effective social support tools. This is especially true for persons with disabilities, who in times of crisis face increased social barriers, limited access to services, psychological stress, isolation, and violations of their basic rights.

Social counseling in such conditions becomes extremely important as a means of emergency response, emotional stabilization, mobilization of internal resources, and establishment of access to support. It is not only a form of assistance, but also a tool for protecting rights, preserving dignity, developing agency, and preventing social exclusion. In the context of mass population displacement, loss of housing, work, and social ties, there is a growing need for crisis, remote, and mobile counseling for persons with disabilities.

Despite the existence of some experience and a regulatory framework, social counseling for persons with disabilities in Ukraine remains an underdeveloped and unstandardized field. In times of crisis, it is important to rethink its place in the social protection system, adapt methods to new realities, strengthen professional training, and create conditions for prompt, sensitive, and competent assistance. That is why research into the specifics of social counseling for persons with disabilities in times of crisis is extremely relevant in both theoretical and practical terms.

Social counseling is one of the key forms of social work with persons with disabilities. It is a process of providing professional assistance aimed at supporting individuals in overcoming life difficulties, adapting to the social environment, realizing their rights and opportunities, and improving their quality of life. It is especially important in situations where a person faces barriers - not only physical, but also social, emotional, psychological, or legal.

Analysis of recent studies and publications. In recent years, the issue of social counseling for persons with disabilities has been actively developed both in domestic and foreign scientific circles. Researchers are increasingly focusing on the integration of the social model of disability, which emphasizes not the limitations of the person themselves, but the barriers in society. This approach strengthens the position of social counseling as an instrument of social justice and human rights protection [6].

In particular, a number of recent publications have substantiated the importance of applying a multidisciplinary and person-centered approach that takes into account the individual needs of the client in the context of their social environment. The works focus on the need to create a safe emotional space for working with clients who have experienced trauma or are in a state of psychological vulnerability. Research studying the adaptation of persons with disabilities to changed living conditions as a result of war, displacement, and loss of social ties has become particularly relevant.

Recent works pay considerable attention to the issue of supervision in social work as a tool for supporting the specialists themselves who work with vulnerable populations. The importance of developing critical thinking in counselors, their ability to reflect and identify professional burnout, which is especially relevant in crisis situations, is emphasized [4].

A separate area of research concerns counseling in the educational environment. Works devoted to supporting students with disabilities highlight the need to implement adapted programs, develop inclusive support in educational institutions, and the role of social workers in overcoming educational barriers.

Foreign authors also draw attention to the involvement of persons with disabilities themselves in decision-making processes that affect them. This demonstrates a transition to a model of counseling based on partnership, recognition of the client's subjectivity, and expansion of their rights and opportunities. The experience of countries such as Canada, the Netherlands, and Finland, where the philosophy of self-advocacy is key to the organization of social services, is particularly relevant [10; 11].

Contemporary publications also systematize practical approaches to crisis counseling, particularly in conditions of military action, emergencies, and social instability. It is noted that effective counseling should not only respond to the client's needs but also contribute to their personal growth, social mobility, and inclusion in community life.

The purpose of the article. To conduct a theoretical analysis of the characteristics of social counseling for persons with disabilities in crisis situations.

People with disabilities often require an individual approach because they have specific needs that may relate to education, employment, access to medical and social services, domestic adaptation, communication with others, and establishing a full social life. Social counseling helps not only to navigate the existing support system, but also to teach people to make the most of their own resources to overcome life's difficulties [5].

The main areas of social counseling for people with disabilities include:

Psychosocial support - assistance in accepting one's condition, overcoming internal barriers, improving self-esteem, and motivating oneself to lead an active life.

Legal counseling - providing information about rights, benefits, social guarantees, and opportunities to receive assistance in accordance with current legislation.

Navigation in social services - assistance in contacting the relevant institutions (Medical and Social Expert Commission, employment centers, social protection departments, etc.).

Educational and professional counseling - advice on education, obtaining a profession, career guidance, and retraining.

Consultations for parents of children with disabilities - how to care for, raise, and socialize a child; how to combine care with the personal development of parents. Counseling can be provided in state or non-state structures: social services, rehabilitation centers, educational institutions, public organizations. It is important that specialists have empathy, knowledge of legislation, active listening techniques, crisis counseling skills, and an understanding of the specific needs of clients with disabilities. Particular attention should be paid to confidentiality, a non-discriminatory approach, preserving the dignity of the individual, and respect for their autonomy [3].

In Ukraine, social counseling for people with disabilities often focuses on basic needs, such as applying for social benefits, helping them find housing or work, and registering their disability. However,

more and more specialists are striving to develop a comprehensive approach focused on the client's personal growth, their integration into society, and overcoming social isolation.

The issue of social counseling for persons with disabilities in Ukraine has become particularly relevant in recent decades due to the gradual transition from a medical to a social model of disability perception. In domestic scientific discourse, there is growing interest in studying the role of social workers, counseling as a method of social assistance, and the effectiveness of interaction between state institutions and civil society in this area [2].

At the present stage in Ukraine, the problem of social counseling for people with disabilities is considered in studies of social pedagogy, social work, psychology, and law. Significant contributions have been made by such scholars as I.D. Zvereva, L.K. Odinchenko, A.Y. Kapskaya, and I.B. Ivanova, who in their works analyzed the conceptual foundations of social support, adaptation, and integration of people with functional limitations into Ukrainian society [1; 8].

In practical terms, this problem is partially addressed through the activities of social service centers, particularly in the context of early intervention programs, support for families with children with disabilities, and the provision of counseling services for young people and adults with disabilities. In the 2000s, state programs aimed at developing social counseling were adopted (for example, the Turbota program), and social rehabilitation centers were created, where social counseling became one of the key areas of work.

Despite this, the social counseling system in Ukraine is still in the process of development. There is no unified methodology for providing counseling services to persons with disabilities, and there is a shortage of qualified personnel, especially in rural and remote areas. The training of social workers only partially covers the topic of counseling people with disabilities, which complicates professional practice. In addition, legislation does not yet clearly regulate the standards of social counseling as a social service [4].

Issues of interagency cooperation, the creation of an accessible environment for service delivery, and the introduction of innovative forms such as online counseling, mobile support teams, and crisis counseling centers remain relevant. The development of the non-governmental sector, in particular community and charitable organizations, which often act as intermediaries in the provision of counseling, is also gaining importance.

Thus, although Ukraine has established the scientific and practical prerequisites for the development of social counseling for people with disabilities, it is necessary to further systematize this activity, improve the quality of services, standardize approaches, strengthen the professional training of specialists, and more widely implement the best European practices in this field.

In global practice, the issue of social counseling for people with disabilities has long gone beyond the narrow practical sphere and is being actively developed both scientifically and institutionally. The modern approach is based on the social model of disability, which focuses not on the limitations of the individual, but on the barriers in society that prevent full participation in community life. This concept is widely implemented in the European Union, the United States, Canada, Australia, and a number of other countries.

In Western European countries, social counseling is an integral part of the state support system. It is provided through a network of social services, employment centers, inclusive educational institutions, health care facilities, and non-governmental organizations. Counseling there is comprehensive in nature and covers legal, psychological, educational, career, and rehabilitation support.

In the United States, social counseling is considered a specialized field of professional practice. There is a system of licensing counselors, accrediting programs, and standards for service delivery, including principles of ethical conduct. Counselors often work in multidisciplinary teams alongside psychologists, medical professionals, educators, and employment specialists. Considerable attention is paid to the development of an individual support plan, which is developed together with the client and their family.

In European Union countries, the development of social counseling is part of the overall social inclusion policy. For example, in Germany, France, Sweden, and the Netherlands, the provision of social counseling for persons with disabilities is guaranteed by law and often funded by the state. In these countries, great attention is paid to early intervention, family support, a gender-sensitive approach, and preparing persons with disabilities for independent living. The availability of such services is a key element of human rights compliance.

In Canada, social counseling is linked to the philosophy of self-advocacy, which means supporting the active participation of persons with disabilities in making decisions about their own lives. Civil society

organizations play an important role, offering support not only to the person themselves, but also to their relatives and caregivers, as well as working to change public perceptions of disability [10].

Academic research on this topic abroad covers a wide range of issues: from practical counseling techniques and ethical standards to gender specificity, multicultural approaches, and the impact of inclusive policies on the quality of life of people with disabilities. Considerable attention is paid to the development of critical thinking, combating discrimination, and developing the social capital of persons with disabilities.

Table 1

Features and content of social counseling for persons with disabilities

Aspect	Content	Features
<i>Purpose of counseling</i>	Helping individuals adapt, overcome difficulties, and realize their rights and opportunities	Focus on independence, social activity, and improving quality of life
<i>Consulting subjects</i>	People with physical, mental, and sensory disabilities; children, youth, adults, families	Individual approach taking into account age, type of disability, and psycho-emotional state
<i>Types of counseling</i>	Individual, group, remote, crisis, support	Often requires long-term, step-by-step counseling
<i>Scope of services</i>	Psychological and emotional support, legal assistance, information provision, career guidance	Should include comprehensive assistance: legal, psychological, social
<i>Basic principles</i>	Confidentiality, voluntariness, partnership, non-discrimination	It is extremely important to adhere to the principle of respect for the dignity and autonomy of the client.
<i>Role of specialist the specifics of disability</i>	Social worker, counselor, psychologist, human rights activist	Must have specialized knowledge, empathy, and understanding of the specifics of disability
<i>Communication characteristics</i>	Active listening, adapted speech, nonverbal communication, communication support technologies	The need to take into account characteristics of perception, reactions, and possible limitations in expressing emotions
<i>Results of counseling</i>	Emotional relief, better understanding of the situation, decision-making, social activity	Strengthening self-confidence, reducing dependence on outside help
<i>Barriers in the process</i>	Social stereotypes, mistrust, legal ignorance, physical inaccessibility of services	The need to remove physical and psychological barriers to receiving counseling
<i>Conditions for effectiveness</i>	Comprehensive support, multidisciplinary approach, accessibility of services legislative framework	Cooperation between the state, community, family, and specialists; clear legislative framework

Social counseling for persons with disabilities is a multifaceted process that involves not only providing assistance, but also creating conditions for the development of autonomy, integration, and realization of the potential of such persons. As can be seen from the table, the content of this activity goes far beyond informational support - it covers psycho-emotional assistance, legal information, professional guidance, and emotional support [2].

The main goal of counseling is to help a person adapt to their social environment, overcome life difficulties, and support them in making decisions related to their personal and professional life. At the center of this process is always the person with a disability themselves - with their needs, feelings, and vision for their own life.

Counseling should take into account age characteristics, type of disability, level of social maturity, and ability to make independent decisions. Therefore, different types of counseling are used - individual,

group, remote, and crisis counseling. In many cases, long-term support is needed, covering not just one consultation, but the entire process of developing the client's personal resources.

The content of counseling is comprehensive: the counselor not only responds to requests, but also helps the client to better understand their rights and opportunities and gain self-confidence. The specialist must also work in accordance with ethical principles - in particular, respecting human dignity, maintaining confidentiality, and acting in the client's best interests.

Particular attention should be paid to communication. When counseling persons with disabilities, it is important to adapt language and use nonverbal methods or alternative communication technologies, depending on the client's needs. This ensures the full inclusion of the person in the interaction process. Successful counseling should lead to positive changes in the client's life: reduced anxiety, increased confidence, and more active inclusion in social processes. However, there may be barriers to achieving this—physical, psychological, and informational. Overcoming such barriers requires the efforts of both professionals and society as a whole.

The effectiveness of social counseling largely depends on the availability of a supportive environment, interagency cooperation, and legal support. It should not be just a formal service, but a real tool for change, with an emphasis on human dignity, opportunities, and the value of each individual.

In modern social work with persons with disabilities, increasing attention is being paid to an individualized approach to solving life difficulties [3; 7]. Social counseling is one of the main tools for supporting, adapting, and socially integrating such persons. It covers a wide range of areas, from emotional support to legal assistance, career guidance, and crisis intervention. In this regard, various approaches are used in counseling, allowing for flexible adaptation of assistance to the needs of a particular person. Each approach has its own philosophy, theoretical basis, goals, methods, and techniques. Their competent application allows avoiding stereotyping, overprotection, or imposing decisions. Instead, counseling becomes a partnership process where the client is recognized as a full-fledged subject capable of influencing their own life.

Psychosocial approach. This approach views a person with a disability not in isolation, but in the context of their social environment. The focus is on the interconnection between personal experiences and social living conditions. The main task is to overcome psycho-emotional stress and activate resources that will help the person adapt to their new life situation. This approach is particularly effective when working with people who have recently become disabled and are experiencing a loss of function, social status, or independence.

An important part of counseling is creating an emotionally safe environment in which the client can openly talk about their fears, shame, and despair, and the counselor, in turn, helps not only to emotionally “unburden” the person, but also to see the starting points for further change.

Cognitive-behavioral approach (CBT). This approach is highly practical and focused on changing dysfunctional thoughts and behaviors. In the case of people with disabilities, it allows them to identify internal beliefs that limit their opportunities for self-realization: for example, «I don't deserve a happy life», «I am not capable of working», «no one will accept me».

Using cognitive restructuring techniques, the counselor helps the person change these attitudes and form adaptive and positive ones instead. Behavioral experiments (mini-tasks), situation modeling, and social roles allow clients to test new ways of interacting with society in practice.

Client-centered approach (humanistic school). This approach is particularly effective in situations where the client needs non-judgmental support, acceptance, and belief in their own strengths. According to C. Rogers' ideas, the counselor does not «treat» the client or impose any decisions on them - they create an atmosphere of deep empathy in which the client themselves comes to understand the causes of their difficulties and seeks internal resources for change.

This is particularly relevant in cases where a person with a disability has experienced discrimination, stigmatization, or long-term isolation. The goal is to help the person reconnect with their own values, needs, and desires, as well as to feel their own significance regardless of physical or mental limitations.

Existential-humanistic approach. A distinctive feature of this approach is its focus on profound questions: the meaning of life, death, choice, responsibility, and freedom. People with disabilities often experience an identity crisis, a loss of direction, and a change in their perception of the future. Existential counseling helps clients rethink their place in the world, find new meaning in everyday life, and focus on what remains rather than what has been lost. The psychological power of this approach lies in deeply accepting people as they are, as well as in facilitating inner transformation and spiritual growth, which can occur even in difficult life circumstances.

Systemic approach. This approach is based on the assumption that a person's behavior, emotions, and decisions depend on interactions within the family and social system. Applying a systemic approach to social counseling for persons with disabilities involves engaging not only the client themselves, but also their immediate environment - family, caregivers, and support specialists. This approach is particularly effective in counseling families raising a child with a disability or adults who require care. The work focuses on strengthening intra-family ties, improving communication, reducing emotional burnout among family members, and forming new models of support.

Empowerment approach. One of the most promising approaches in modern social counseling is the empowerment approach. Its goal is not just to help solve a problem, but to make the client an active participant in their own life, restore their self-confidence, and encourage them to take action, achieve self-fulfillment, and participate in public life. This approach rejects the paternalistic attitude towards people with disabilities as «victims» in need of care. Instead, the counselor sees the client as a partner capable of development, decision-making, and protecting their own rights. Effective tools include forming self-help groups, mentoring, and participating in volunteer and social projects.

Integrated approach. In complex social realities, it is often impossible to limit oneself to a single approach. Therefore, in social counseling practice, there is a tendency toward integration - combining different theoretical approaches and techniques that meet the needs of a specific client. This approach ensures flexibility, adaptability, and consistency in work. A specialist who works in an integrative manner not only combines techniques but also forms a comprehensive view of the client's situation, taking into account the social, psychological, legal, cultural, and existential aspects of their problem [4].

Conclusions. Thus, social counseling for persons with disabilities is a key support tool that helps overcome barriers, expand opportunities, and promote integration into society. At the center of this process is the person themselves, with their needs, rights, feelings, and aspirations for a dignified life. Counseling provides not only information, but also emotional, psychological, legal, and practical assistance, taking into account an individual approach and deep respect for the client's dignity. Modern practice demonstrates a wide range of approaches, from psychosocial to integrative, each of which has its own value in the context of a specific life situation. Of particular importance is the empowerment approach, which focuses on the subjectivity of the individual and supports their active life position.

Despite the positive dynamics of social counseling development in Ukraine, the system is still in its infancy. There is a need for professional training, implementation of quality standards, better interagency cooperation, and expanded access to services, especially in communities and rural areas. While global experience demonstrates stable institutional mechanisms and effective support models, Ukrainian practice requires further integration of international approaches, consideration of contextual realities, and strengthening of the role of the non-governmental sector.

Thus, the development of high-quality, professional, and ethically oriented social counseling should become a priority not only for the professional community but also for state policy on social support for persons with disabilities. Only with a systematic, interdisciplinary, and humanistic approach can counseling achieve its main goal - to promote independence, social participation, and improved quality of life for people with disabilities in Ukraine.

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