



Research Article

Russian Practice of Independent Quality Assessment of Social Services for People with Health Disorders and In Difficult Life Situations

Belozerova TB* and Agronina NI

Abstract

The public control system of social services for sick and disabled people is improving in Russia nowadays. It is connected with the formation of public and trusteeship councils under public authorities and social service organizations. They are supposed to regulate and control social services. Emerging studies on the independent assessment of the quality of social services in the regions of Russia must be summarized and comprehended. It is obvious that the public control system in Russia is just beginning to form. Its normative basis includes the number of Russian laws that created the basis of social services for citizens in Russia. On their basis, with the executive bodies and institutions of the social services system in Russia, public and trustees' councils with the functions of public control are created. The mechanism for implementing this independent assessment is generally defined in Russia today. The criteria for public quality control of social services in Russia are fairly transparent and provide an opportunity to compare the efficiency of single-type social services institutions. The analysis of independent quality assessment of social services in Russia shows that the quality assessment started in 2013 has produced positive results. Nowadays this procedure has been implemented in all regions of the country. In Russia there are still a number of shortcomings in methodological support for the implementing process of independent quality assessment of social services. There are many problems to solve for the heads of social service institutions. The assessment procedure has not been provided. There is no clear definition of the objectives of the entire procedure, no information on the mechanism. So the independent quality assessment system of social services in Russia is still developing.

Keywords

Social services; Independent assessment; Russia; Sick people; Disabled people

Introduction

Preservation of perceptible pathological complication in Russian society [1,2] is manifested by a large number of severe somatic pathology cases among elderly people [3,4] who need frequent and

sometimes constant nursing. The most frequent disease of these patients is cardiovascular pathology [5,6] the propensity to which is determined in many ways genetically [7,8,9] often appears after the age of forty [10,11] as a result of several factors [12]. The development of modern medicine has provided significant progress in understanding many mechanisms of pathology development leading to disability of the population and deterioration of self-service [13-15]. It stimulated an active search for biological mechanisms of weakening the functions of the human body with age [16] and effective options for its recovery aimed at the maximum possible recovery of physical activity [17,18] and minimizing the loss of optimal physical status [19,20]. At the same time, despite the medical progress, the number of sick and disabled people who need nursing and other social services remains quite high in Russia. That's why social services system should be improved as a significant tool for stabilizing the society. According to the program documents of the Russian government there should be modernization of social services in the country. The state refuses monopoly policy and gradually involves non-profit organizations in this sphere of activity. It is accompanied by a need to create a harmonious quality assessment system of social services provided by state and non-state suppliers [21].

In this regard one of the main issues is studying the opinion of recipients of social services as an important indicator of the qualitative changes. Today consumers of social services become full-fledged subjects of the social environment. They have a right to influence the formation of social services in Russia proceeding from their interests. The independent quality assessment of social services, introduced in Russia, allows you to examine the opinions of service recipients and track the dynamics of changes in the social sphere. This is a fairly new phenomenon in the Russian practice of social work, which has produced the first results [22].

A number of Russian authors analyze the world experience concerning functioning of quality assessment system of social services. Some authors show the process of public and trustee council's formation under the bodies of state power and social services organizations as instruments of public control over the quality of services, and a comparative characteristic of the forms of public participation in the activities of social service organizations in our country and abroad [23].

There are researches dedicated to the problems of forming the state policy in the sphere of independent quality assessment, as well as the process of creating assessment system and the experience of its implementation in the regions of Russia [24]. At the same time such data is still very fragmented and needs to be summarized and comprehended.

The purpose of the study is to summarize the aspects of the independent quality assessment of social services in Russia and in its individual regions.

Experience of conducting an independent quality assessment of social services in Russia

Since 2012 Russia is actively forming the regulatory framework for an independent quality assessment of social services. The basic documents: the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation

*Corresponding author: Belozerova Tatyana Borisovna, Head of the Department of Social Work and Information Technologies in Social Sphere Kursk State University, Kursk, Russia, Tel: +7-910-315-42-56; +7-905-158-40-74; E-mail: tanya@kurskline.ru, agronina046@yandex.ru

of May, 7th, 2012 № 597 “About actions on realization of the state social policy”; Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 487-r of March 30, 2013 (Edited on 20.01.2015) “On approval of the plan of measures to form an independent system for assessing the quality of work of organizations providing social services for 2013-2015” [25]; Ministry order Labor of Russia from August 30, 2013 No. 391a “On methodological recommendations for conducting an independent quality assessment of organizations providing social services in the field of social services” [26]; Federal Law No. 212-FZ of July 21, 2014 “On the Basics of Public Control in Russia”; Order of the Ministry of Labor of Russia of December 8, 2014 No. 995n “On the approval of indicators that characterize the general criteria for assessing the quality of social service organizations” [27]; The procedure for forming the rating “Openness and transparency of state and municipal institutions” [28].

Decree No. 597 of the President of the Russian Federation of May 7, 2012, “On Measures for the Implementation of the State Social Policy” (subparagraph “k” of clause 1) requires that an independent quality assessing system of organizations providing social services be established before April 1, 2013, Criteria for the effectiveness of such organizations and the introduction of public ratings of their activities “[29].

The first experience of conducting an independent quality assessment of social services by social service organizations was received in Russia in 2013. By order of the Ministry of Labor of Russia No. 217 of May 24, 2013, eight were chosen as the “pilot” regions. Each region was given a special sphere of social policy for the development of an independent quality assessment of services - education, health services, social services, culture. The Samara, Irkutsk and Astrakhan regions were defined to create an independent quality assessment in the sphere of social services. The implementation of the Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation, connected with an independent assessment of quality, started in 2013, provided a new field for the study and application of innovative social practices.

At that time the first ratings of social organizations appeared. The need to create the ratings of social organizations was outlined in Presidential Decree No. 597 of May 7, 2012, “On measures to implement state social policy”: “by April 1, 2013, ensure the formation of an independent system for assessing the quality of work of social services organizations, including the definition of criteria for such organizations and the introduction of public ratings of their activities”.

During the monitoring of the Institute of Independent Assessment of the Russian Ministry of Labor, information about ratings was received and analyzed. Some information about assessing of organizations which provide social services in the Russian Federation in the field of education, culture, health, social services until 2013, is available on the website of the Ministry of Labor <http://www.rosmintrud.ru/nsok/regions/1>. The analysis of the information shows that the quantitative data of ratings in 2013, gives nothing accepts the information about starting of the independent assessment.

513 state (municipal) institutions took part in the pilot project, including 24 health care institutions, 30 social service institutions, 32 cultural institutions and 427 educational institutions.

As a result of the independent assessment, various performance ratings of institutions providing services in education, culture, health, social services were compiled in the pilot regions of Russia: consolidated ratings, ratings by activity criteria, types of institutions,

ratings (assessment) accessibility of telephone service, etc. Pilot project launched in 2013 gave the first results in this area, but the question was raised about improving the mechanism of independent assessment and its implementation [30].

In order to conduct an independent assessment in 2016-2018. The Ministry of Labor approved a departmental plan concerning organization of activities related to the functioning of independent assessment system in the field of social services. The plan contains measures of federal and regional level for the period 2016-2018, includes target indicators, the proportion of organizations covered by the independent assessment. The procedure for considering the results of an independent quality assessment is also approved.

Similar plans have been adopted in the sphere of social services in all regions of Russia. Within the framework of the departmental plan to coordinate work in the subjects of Russia on the practical implementation of independent assessment results concerning the quality of social services by social organizations, the Minister of Labor and Social Protection of Russia held field meetings with the participation of regional leaders, Heads of executive bodies of the subjects of the Russian Federation in the sphere of culture, social services, health care, education , the chairmen of public councils, representatives of public organizations: in Makhachkala, with the participation of the subjects of the Russian Federation of the North Caucasus Federal District (May 24, 2016), in Kaliningrad (May 31, 2016), in Magadan, Russian Federation of the Far Eastern Federal District (June 29, 2016), in Orenburg with the participation of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation of the Volga Federal District (July 6, 2016).

Based on the results of these meetings and taking into account the results of an independent quality assessment the heads of the highest executive bodies of state power of the subjects of Russia were given instructions to approve plans concerning improvement of social organizations` activities and improvement of social services quality, and it is recommended to monitor the implementation of these plans and inform people about the results.

In all regions special sections about independent assessment have been created on the official websites of social protection authorities. These sections contain information about an independent assessment of services quality, which includes regulatory legal support; list of organizations for assessment in the relevant period; information about the public council and its activities; the results of the assessment. In a number of regions public councils are becoming active participants in preparation and discussion of normative legal acts aimed at improving the quality and accessibility of social services, and the practice of taking into account the results of independent assessment in terms of improving the activities of social organizations.

As an example of a socially integrated region the Kursk region is considered. An independent quality assessment of social services has been carried out there since 2014. Initially this procedure was carried out by public, guardianship councils at social service institutions, and general information was provided to the public council at the Kursk Region Social Security Committee [31]. The Public Council determines the group of institutions taking part in assessment procedure reviews the results and makes recommendations for improving the quality of work of institutions. In 2015 the procedure was changed. Instead of the boards of trustees, the assessment procedure was carried out by an independent operator organization, which was given the authority to collect and process information on the quality of the

work of institutions. An independent quality assessment was carried out for the institutions of social assistance to families and children by the Kursk State Medical University, in relation to 51 social services institutions of the region in 2016 [32]. According to the results of the electronic auction the Russian State Social University was chosen to be responsible for organization in particular the branch of the university in Kursk.

In the process of an independent quality assessment of social services provided by social services organizations of the Kursk region in Russia the heads of institutions were interviewed in order to identify their views on the issues of conducting an independent assessment. The heads of institutions commented on both assessment criteria and methods of collecting information. It should be noted that since the procedure is quite new for Russia, not all the heads of stationary and non-stationary social services in the region understand what kind of event it is and for what it is needed.

Russian problems in the operation of the procedure for an independent quality assessment of services

The rating of social services quality in Russia is uncertain among all heads of social services institutions. It is believed that the rating motivates the head to find reasons for rejecting rates proposed by the Ministry of Labor and stimulates the work of the whole organization. On the other hand, the rating generates competition between social service institutions, and this has its advantages and disadvantages. The positive aspect is to find new forms of work, to increase the competence of the personnel and as a result to improve the quality of work. Negative one is that the institution becomes more "closed" for colleagues, there is a reason not to share positive experience, effective technologies and this slows down the development of the entire social service system of the region.

The heads also have a question about what circumstances the establishment of a grass-roots position in the rating can have. If it is followed by taking action on the part of the governing body to change the terms of service, strengthening the financial base, allocating additional funds for training personnel, developing new technologies, then this is one subject for conversation, if not, then from their point of view the rating is meaningless.

The heads suppose that questioning of social services recipients is not a new procedure and does not always provide objective information. Social service institutions have fairly long experience of interviewing services recipients for their service purposes and receiving feedback. Most heads consider this method of getting information to be the most objective, since the recipients of services express their opinion knowing the system from the inside. But at the same time they note that for their clients questions formulation may be difficult for understanding (especially for elderly "homeworkers" and clients of stationary institutions).

It is also questionable whether the service recipients should assess the quality of information presentation on the institution's website, since few people use the site in inpatient facilities, and not everyone is familiar with the basics of computer literacy, and therefore they do not see the site either. Many also say that it is impossible to compare even the same type of institutions, without taking into account the number of serviced, "starting opportunities", indicators of financial activity. The heads are concerned about the apprehension and competence of experts conducting an independent assessment, since there are difficulties in understanding the quality of services

provided, increasing the risk of incorrect integration and comparison with other institutions in the same sphere and even institutions of the same type (for example, the centers for different groups have their own specifics and etc.). An objective independent quality assessment of social services should be based on the analysis of standards, protocols, regulations, but instead everything is still subjectively judged by consumers, members of the public council or specialists of the operator.

Criteria and indicators of independent assessment are also being questioned by the heads of institutions. In their opinion the criteria do not take into account the number of serviced, the range of services, the specifics of institution structure (the number and types of branches), financial performance indicators, the results of participation in professional competitions, the financial conditions for the services, and methodological work (and there are methodological centers among the institutions). Hence the doubts in objectivity of the criteria and indicators. The rating, drawn up without taking into account these aspects, according to the heads, does not reflect the real picture.

Most of the heads of social services organizations do not understand that the main purpose of an independent assessment is not to evaluate the results of services, but rather to assess the process of providing it. This is also noted by the researchers [33].

Based on the results of interviews with the heads of social service organizations in Russia, it can be concluded that it is necessary to comprehend the relationship between the results of an independent assessment and the funding of institutions. The lack of financial incentives for the first places in the rating reduces the significance of this rating as a means of stimulating work. At the same time refusal in financial assistance to those who showed low results does not give them the opportunity to improve the quality of their work due to lack of resources. Apparently it is necessary to link the results of an independent assessment to the stimulation of social service organizations in terms of improving the quality of services, including the way of financial injections to develop the material and technical base of institutions.

The heads of institutions noted a number of shortcomings in methodological support of the implementation of the independent assessment. Many heads during the conversation noted that they were practically not educated about the essence of an independent assessment procedure. To their opinion the explanation of importance of an independent assessment procedure is either absent or not reported to institutions and recipients of services, potential respondents, there is no clear goal setting, complete information about the mechanism. In 2014, when the procedure was only introduced, and no one understood how to assess, social services took all responsibility without necessary explanations and developed methods for formal implementation and reporting. If some of the heads understood why the assessment should be done, then many ordinary employees did not (they became a force opposing the introduction of independent assessment institutions).

According to the heads, if the recommendations on the results of the assessment remain unfulfilled, the meaningfulness of these procedures will be lost both for the institutions and members of the public councils and the population. In many respects this situation is due to the fact that some recommendations are related to the conditions of provided services which do not depend on the capabilities of staff and the heads of institutions. Moreover in the

situation of optimization and budgetary constraints it is difficult to count on allocating additional funds for resolving any issues. If the assessment is truly independent, the institutions should not suffer from what they can't influence.

It is necessary to take into account that it takes time to understand assessment process for those who will be involved in the system of independent assessment and in the spheres where it is conducted. It requires training. The significant barrier is the shortage of experts who can provide methodological support to public councils under executive bodies, councils of institutions.

The capabilities of the Russian population to use the results of an independent assessment (for example, the final ratings) directly is also questioned. Only the most advanced part of the recipients of services can win, as it will probably use the rating information to select institutions (in all spheres), and the mass recipient will not do it. In those areas where the recipient of the service can choose institutions (schools, kindergartens, etc.), most likely the priority will increase, there will be many people who want to enter them, that in the end can negatively affect the recipients [34]. In many cases, there is no real choice for recipients of services: if the institution is only one in the territory (rural library, rehabilitation center for a certain type of disability, etc.); if there is a local (territorial) principle for attachment to the institution (social rehabilitation centers for minors, social service centers, etc.); if the choice of the institution is made by the commission (for example, referral to correctional kindergartens goes through a commission, and not at the request of the parent), the ratings of these services do not matter for the recipients [35].

In addition, the Russian mentality can prevent an objective assessment, in particular the fact that it is not typical in Russia to speak negatively about those whom you depend on (for example, about who provides you with social services). Moreover, the majority of the population does not know that there is some assessment, does not believe that it can be objective and does not have access to its results.

Conclusion

Based on the world experience, the public quality control system of social services is being improved in Russia nowadays. It relates to the formation of public and trustee councils under public authorities and social service organizations. They are to become tools for public control over the quality of services. Emerging research on an independent quality assessment of social services in the regions of Russia needs to be summarized and comprehended. It is obvious that the serious practice of public control system of social services is just beginning to form in Russia. Its normative basis is the Russian laws, which created the basis of social services for citizens in Russia. On their basis with the executive bodies and institutions of the social services system in Russia, public and trustees' councils are created with the functions of public control. The mechanism for implementing this independent assessment is generally defined. Its criteria are fairly transparent and provide an opportunity to compare the performance of social service institutions of the same type. The analysis shows that the quality assessment of social services started in 2013 has produced positive results. Nowadays its procedure has been implemented in all regions of the country. There are still a number of shortcomings in methodological support for the process of implementing an independent assessment of social services. There are many unclear points for the heads of social service institutions. There is no justification for the need of an independent assessment

procedure, no clear goal setting for the entire procedure, no complete information on its mechanism. So the quality assessment system of social services is still developing in Russia.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest to declare.

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Author Affiliations

[Top](#)

*Department of Social Work and Information Technologies in Social Sphere
Kursk State University, Kursk, Russia*