

Executive Summary



Crime Survivors Assistance Centers – Ośrodki Pomocy Pokrzywdzonym Przesłęstwem*

- Most of the surveyed organizations running OPPP carry out tasks financed by the Justice Fund (run by the Polish Ministry of Justice) for **no longer than 3 years**.
- The surveyed organizations differ in the profile of their beneficiaries. The activities of some OPPP are aimed primarily at helping children and adolescents, while others at supporting adults.
- The forms of support most often expected by their beneficiaries are **psychological help, legal aid, and financial or material aid**.
- The respondents declare that the institutions have the possibility to provide a **wide range of support** for children who are crime survivors and their guardians. Some OPPP offer their beneficiaries comprehensive assistance, and others focus on selected forms of support.
- Depending on the availability of services, support in OPPP is provided by first contact persons, psychologists, lawyers, and in some cases therapists, career counselors, mediators, or psychiatrists.
- The most accessible forms of support provided by OPPP are legal assistance and psychological assistance both for caregivers and the children themselves, as well as financial and material assistance.
- In almost half of the surveyed OPPP, the child does not have the opportunity to benefit from **sociotherapy, a psychiatric visit, or help with learning at all**. Every third center **does not carry out a diagnosis of sexual abuse**.
- The most common reasons for providing assistance are domestic violence, mental or physical abuse, and alimony problems.
- The main barriers to helping child crime survivors and their caregivers in assistance centers are **the lack of specialists, the problem of continuity of funding, the lack of funds to finance some forms of assistance, excessive bureaucracy, and the lack of cooperation between institutions**.

* (later in this summary referred as OPPP)

Cooperation between institutions

- OPPP evaluated the best cooperation with social welfare institutions. Cooperation with health care institutions, the prosecutor's office, and Municipal and Communal Offices was rated the worst.
- In the case of cooperation between various institutions at the local level, cooperation with social welfare institutions is rated the best, while cooperation with courts, the prosecutor's office, and health care institutions can be, according to respondents, sometimes difficult.
- Collaboration between institutions is often based on an informal network of contacts. Usually, it results from professionals' personal experience of working in the same area for a long time.
- Despite various difficulties in cooperation between institutions, it is perceived as a key element of the local system of child crime survivor assistance.

System of crime survivors' assistance evaluation from the perspective of helping children

- Barriers that hinder the operation of crime survivors assistance center system, from the perspective of helping children, are the lack of a sufficient number of specialists, centers and their too narrow offer, and the insufficient offer of assistance for children who have experienced sexual abuse, lack of comprehensive assistance in one place, and insufficient number of foster families, lack of quick court response and lengthy court cases, lack of financial stability, insufficient monitoring of the functioning of families, insufficient support of professionals and legal provisions limiting the possibility of helping children.
- Good practices include interdisciplinary collaboration, immediate system responses, and comprehensive help in one place.

Help and support offered during the COVID-19 pandemic

- The basic limitation related to the functioning of the institution during the pandemic was **temporary resignation from face-to-face contacts**. In most cases, they returned after few months. However, support groups and other forms of group activities have been suspended.
- Initially, the **cooperation between the institutions** was very **limited**, but after some time it was possible to recreate it. During the pandemic, **electronic communication between institutions** became more efficient.
- The **biggest problem** turned out to be **cooperation with health care**, which was overloaded with work, also with the **police** and with **courts**, which initially operated to a limited extent.
- Pandemic situation and related restrictions, including the introduction of remote learning worsened the **functioning of families from the risk group**.
- Due to the remote work, professionals could work **more flexible hours**, and also help **people from outside their area**.