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## **CHALLENGES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING OF DEAF ADULT REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE**

### **ВИКЛИКИ ПСИХОЛОГІЧНОГО КОНСУЛЬТУВАННЯ ГЛУХИХ ДОРΟΣЛИХ БІЖЕНЦІВ З УКРАЇНИ**

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The full-scale military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine caused a large wave of refugees from Ukraine. Governments and communities that have accepted Ukrainian refugees are trying to help them mostly by solving the issues of accommodation, treatment, education, and employment. These are definitely urgent problems that often require considerable effort and resources. However, focusing attention on these aspects of settling the lives of refugees relegates the problem of providing them with psychological support to the last place.

The severity of the problem of providing psychological support to Ukrainian refugees is different for different categories. In particular, the most vulnerable category of refugees is deaf. If hearing refugees from Ukraine usually know at least one foreign language or quickly learn the language of the host country, the level of proficiency and speed of learning a foreign language by the deaf is extremely low. In addition, online psychological consultations with psychologists who speak Ukrainian spoken language are available for hearing refugees.

The fact that deaf refugees are one of the most marginal categories of refugees was pointed out by N. Sivunen [6]. Among the reasons for the marginalization of deaf refugees, K. McAuliff singled out linguistic, communicative, and cultural factors, without an understanding of them, it is impossible to solve any problems of deaf refugees [4]. The most problematic aspect of access to psychological counseling services, according to E.T. Olsen, is the elimination of communication barriers between a deaf

refugee and a psychologist, because they must have and freely use a common means of communication and understand the peculiarities of the worldview and features of the Deaf culture [5].

However, in addition to these general problems related to the provision of services to deaf refugees, there are certain specifics that are specific to deaf refugees from Ukraine. First, it is inherent for Ukrainian deaf refugees to maintain a close connection and communication with the Ukrainian deaf community, both with those who have remained in Ukraine and with those who are also in the same host country. Therefore, Ukrainian deaf refugees learn information about certain services or specialists they can trust from each other within the community of Deaf Ukrainians. Secondly, deaf refugees from Ukraine are aware of the need to master the two languages of the host country – local spoken and sign languages, as one of the main ways of integration into the local community and access to services and information [1].

To explore the challenges of providing psychological services to deaf refugees, we conducted a survey of 55 deaf adult refugees who left Ukraine in the first month of the full-scale war invasion and have been abroad for a long time. It was found that only 6.98% of deaf adults have experience receiving psychological services [2]. Such a low percentage is explained by a number of factors: firstly, the fact that the respondents didn't need such services while they lived in Ukraine (41.82%); secondly, many deaf adults don't understand the role of psychological support (52.72%); thirdly, the extremely low awareness of the deaf regarding psychological services is also due to the existence the barriers that make access to such services impossible for this category of clients, in particular, the shortage of specialists (52.73%).

At the same time, 52.73% of respondents express the need for access to psychological services due to the experiences caused by the war and a sudden change of country of living [3]. One of the most common problems among deaf refugees is a long stay in a foreign country and the problems of adaptation to new living conditions, behavior norms, rules, requirements, features of community life, the culture of the host country, etc. (54.55%). The second common problem is related to the need to work through those experiences, memories, fears, horrors, emotions, etc., as part of post-traumatic stress, which the deaf refugee's mind couldn't solve on its own (49.09%).

Along with this, the biggest challenge of providing psychological services to deaf refugees from Ukraine is solving several organizational counseling problems.

Currently, several online psychological helplines have been opened in Ukraine, which are available in Ukraine and abroad too, however, online psychological help is not acceptable for deaf refugees, because 76.36% of our respondents indicated that they are ready to use the psychological help interacting directly with a specialist in the office only.

The next challenge that needs to be solved is that 61.82% of deaf refugees want to interact with a psychologist who knows Ukrainian sign language, while the rest agree to involve a sign language interpreter in the consultation process. The predominance of the deaf who seek direct interaction with a psychologist is due to the specifics of the problems they work with during counseling. After all, psychological work involves the formation of trusting relationships, which is much more difficult to build in the triad 'deaf client – interpreter – psychologist'. However, there are no training programs for psychologists with knowledge of Ukrainian sign language. In Ukraine, there are only several psychologists who have a psychological education and were born into deaf families, so for them, Ukrainian sign language is one of their native languages. However, there are very few specialists to help all deaf people who need psychological support. And even the involvement of sign language interpreters will not be able to solve this problem. Because in Ukraine there is no training for sign language interpreters at least at the level of bachelor's programs, it is extremely difficult to find an interpreter to work in such conditions, even in the online format.

Another important aspect of the problem is that for deaf refugees, the request for adaptation to the new environment is more relevant, which is often associated with the so-called 'culture shock'. To solve this problem, it is more appropriate to involve psychologists from the host country, who better understand the peculiarities of culture and lifestyle in their country. However, under these conditions, the question of establishing communication in the consultative process arises again. After all, finding a psychologist who speaks Ukrainian sign language, or an interpreter who speaks Ukrainian sign language and at the same time the host country's language at a level sufficient to participate as a mediator in the consultation process, is an extremely difficult challenge.

So, among the challenges of providing psychological services to deaf refugees from Ukraine, the following can be singled out: the need to involve psychologists with knowledge of Ukrainian sign language; provision of psychological services offline; availability of positive recommendations of a specialist from representatives of the Ukrainian deaf community;

the psychologist's understanding of the cultural characteristics of the host country.

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