

# CHILDREN'S OPINION ON DAY CARE CENTER

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**Abstract:** Day care centers are ways of alternative assistance to avoid institutionalizing children or removing them from the family of origin. They operate according to well-defined principles, offering several types of services, especially recovery/rehabilitation and leisure for vulnerable people. Day care centers for children unfold care, education, social work, counseling, school and professional guidance for children and support and counseling for their parents.

The study aimed to capture on the basis of a guided interview the views of the children about the conditions of the day center and the effect of its attendance on their behavior and school efficiency. The analysis of the answers to the ten questions of the guided interview demonstrates the good opinion of the children about the conditions and activities offered by the center and the school and social progress made by the children that are following the center attendance.

**Keywords:** children, day care centers for children, activities, behavior

## **Theoretical framework**

The Day Care Center is a child protection service that aims to prevent the abandonment and institutionalization of children by providing care,

education, recreation - socializing, counseling, developing independent living skills, day care school and professional activities for children, as well as support, counseling, education for parents or legal representatives, and for other persons who care for children.

The services offered by the day care center are complementary to the steps and efforts of their own family as they arise from parental obligations and responsibilities as well as services provided by educational establishments and other service providers to the individual needs of the child in its social-familial context (Miftode, 2010).

The Day Care Center is a social care unit in which more social services are concentrated, in particular the recovery/rehabilitation and leisure of vulnerable people by providing services according to the individual and group needs of the beneficiaries to whom they are addressed, constituting a form of active support, the main purpose of which is to improve their lives. The main objective of a day center, regardless of the category of beneficiaries targeted, is to facilitate the access to self decision-making (attitudes, motivations, feelings, thinking, career) by providing support for the identification and use of the potential needed to touch each individual's beneficiary purposes (Bodi, 2007, p.43)

The day care center carries out its activities taking into account the following principles: observing and promoting the best interests of the child; parental responsibility for the exercise of rights and the fulfillment of parental responsibilities, as well as respect and guarantee of the rights of the child; the family as a priority child care environment; providing individualized and personalized care for each child; ensuring stability and continuity in childcare, growth and education; listening to and viewing the child's view, taking into account age and maturity; celerity in making any decision about the child; valuing client capabilities and resources; community involvement and empowerment for the protection and promotion of child rights; confidentiality; the duty to prevent; partnership between the team of specialists and beneficiaries; teamwork.

The main role of the service is to provide free daytime assistance to children from families in distress (families with precarious material and/or disorganized families where mothers /fathers grow up their children alone), thus enabling parents to find a job, and to provide adequate material conditions for raising children (Buzducea, 2010).

The Day Care Center ensures the promotion of the right of each child to maintain family relationships by providing appropriate services to the family at risk of abandoning the child in order to be able to fulfill their childcare.

The creation of such centers aims to keep the child in the family, avoiding entry into the protection system from predominantly socio-economic

causes. The day-care center provides children with care, educational and fun programs, counseling - during the day, following that he returns home in the evening, in his environment, avoiding rupture with his family. The activities of the day center are complementary to those of other public services (education, health). The day center will in no case include school activities (Neamtu, 2016).

Within the beneficiaries we have direct and indirect beneficiaries:

a) direct:

- children at risk of family separation at risk of school dropout who have development problems and / or difficulties of integration into the family, school and the community they live in;

- minors from poor, disaggregated families (beneficiaries of various forms of social assistance), or incapable of providing them with the minimum necessary support for development and education;

- minors from placement centers for which, following the reassessment of the protection measure, the County Child Protection Commission decides their reintegration into the natural or widespread family;

- minors who are neglected and abused emotionally and physically in their own families;

- minors with mental and locomotor disabilities .

b) indirect:

- families of children in difficulty;

- extended or substitutive parents/families, which require childcare skills/abilities adapted to the new psycho-pedagogical principles in the field, whose children benefit from the services of the center.

The general objective is to set up a social service at local level for children in difficulty that prevents them from entering the residential protection system by engaging the local community, promoting the child's fundamental right to grow in their own family (Adams, Dominelli, Payne, 2009) .

As specific objectives we mention

- decreasing the number of children protected in the classical residential system;

- increasing the number of alternative services within the community offered to the child in difficulty, according to the number of classical institutions;

- improving the quality of care for children in the child protection system;

- increasing the number of children benefiting from services to prevent abandonment and institutionalization;

- preventing school drop-out and juvenile delinquency by integrating children into an educational and leisure program;

-developing a community model of assistance, education and socialization that responds to the needs of the child but also to the communities in which it belongs;

- participatory involvement of the community by applying and supporting programs for the benefit of its members,

- avoiding discrimination of the fewest poor in favor of the poorest;

- improving the partnership between the local community and the public administration institutions at the county and national levels;

- promoting a stronger partnership between the local community and civil society representatives;

- participation of the local community in financing from external funds the social protection and assistance (Buzducea, 2017).

The activities in a day center vary according to the age and health of the children assisted during this social service period. Thus, depending on age, we can catalog day centers in several categories:

- for children aged 0-2 years;

- for children aged 2-6;

- for children aged 6-14;

- for children aged 14-18.

Depending on the state of health - centers for children with disabilities.

Activities with children: education, socializing, hygiene and self-service training, preparation for school integration, homework preparation, recreational activities; for children with disabilities: recovery and therapy activities;

Activities with parents: information on raising and educating the child, parenting, individual and group counseling, hygiene, participation in support groups.

#### *Community information activities*

Information is given about the services offered, its role in the community, its access and functioning, as well as its benefits to children and their families. These activities take the form of annual community awareness campaigns on the prevention of family and school abandonment and the institutionalization of children, the realization and dissemination of promotional materials, leaflets and posters in the community;

#### *Collaboration activities with institutions*

Collaborates with relevant community institutions to identify potential beneficiaries, based on the existence of agreements and collaboration agreements with these institutions;

#### *Activities of active collaboration with children's families*

The day center team collaborates with the families of children attending the center by organizing regular, regular meetings to inform parents about the prospects for the current year, and occasionally before important events;

### *Elaboration of customized intervention program*

This is done for every child assisted in the day center, according to their needs and peculiarities. The services are provided on the basis of the written request of the potential beneficiaries, following their direct request at the headquarters, or by the referral from local government authorities, accompanied by the child abandonment and institutionalization service plan and the assistance contract signed by the the coordinator of the center and the beneficiaries; in case of direct requests or referrals from other organizations or institutions, the day care center announces the authority to prepare the service plan (Cojocaru, 2006).

The personalized intervention program is conducted in a team, in consultation with the child based on the conclusions and recommendations proposed in the detailed assessment report of the psychosocial situation of the child's family. The program contains long-term, medium- and short-term objectives, activities related to the objectives, the duration of the activities, the human resources involved in achieving the objectives.

### *Children's daily schedule*

Appropriate childcare on the basis of a daily program that includes activities that reflect their age, level of development, potential and availability, their individual nutritional, toilet and sleep needs;

### *Educational activities*

Learning situations are organized, as well as the development of independent life deprivations. These activities are carried out after an educational program for each child and is carried out individually or in small groups of children, taking into account the age and the purchases they have.

### *Recreational and social activities*

They are conducted alternately with learning activities, in order to maintain a physical and mental balance necessary for harmonious development. These relaxation and game activities, planned by the team of specialists, depending on the preferences and particularities of each child, include sleep and rest periods to avoid overstressing children;

### *Psychological counseling and school and professional guidance*

Depending on the age, level of development and the needs of the child, this is done on the basis of a program that contains specific objectives, psychological counseling offered to children who have been intimidated or discriminated against;

### *Counseling and support for parents*

It is provided on request or whenever specialized staff consider it to be of benefit to the child and his / her family. Counseling seeks to build a supportive relationship to solve the problems they face in terms of child psychological development and the various legal, administrative and medical

aspects. The counseling activity is conducted individually or in group; the organization of parental education programs for the formation and development of parental skills and abilities, and the issue of child protection against abuse, neglect and exploitation, known as "parent schools". These are conducted according to a program developed according to the legislation in force, specific to the educational, health or adult education system and according to the needs identified in the community (Dumitrascu, 2011);

*Collaboration activities with professionals in community and other institutions*

They are relevant in solving the problems faced by children assisted in the center and their families. Specialist staff assesses the needs of children and their families for other services they should benefit from and which the day center can not provide, and establishes collaborative ties with all professionals involved in the deployment prevention plan implementation, and institutionalization of children.

The documents governing the organization and operation of a day care center are the rules of internal order; organization and functioning methodology; the code of ethics.

*The tools used* by the team of casework specialists are as follows: the initial evaluation sheet; the detailed evaluation report; the provision of starting a child's assistance in the day care center; Assistance contract; personalized intervention program; children's daily schedule; educational program; the school and professional orientation program; activity reports; psychological evaluation sheets for the child and his / her family members; counseling charts; business reports; monthly evaluation reports for the personalized intervention plan; re-assessment report on the socio-familial situation of the child assisted in the center; the service plan drawn up by the municipal case manager; the discontinuance of child assistance in the center; post-service monitoring plan; post-service monitoring cards; the closure report of the case where it is emphasized that the beneficiary's entitlement is no longer necessary; case record registry; counseling register; register of phone notices; register of suggestions and complaints (Coulshed, Orme, 2012).

*Working methods* used: conversation and meeting; psychological, social, administrative, educational and legal counseling; information; the survey.

## **Research**

The research aims to analyze children's opinions about day-center activities and their influence on their evolution. It is important to know the views of the beneficiaries (in our case the children) in order to permanently improve the conditions and activities of the day care centers and provide services that are as close as possible to the expectations of the beneficiaries.

### Studied sample

It contained 20 children from a day center in Arad. Of these, 15 were girls and 5 boys between the ages of 9 and 12. The age and gender structure of the sample studied can be seen in Table 1 and Figure 1.

**Table 1.**  
**Structure by age and sex of the studied group**

Gender	Age			
	9 years	10 years	11 years	12 years
boys	1	2	2	0
girls	2	3	6	4

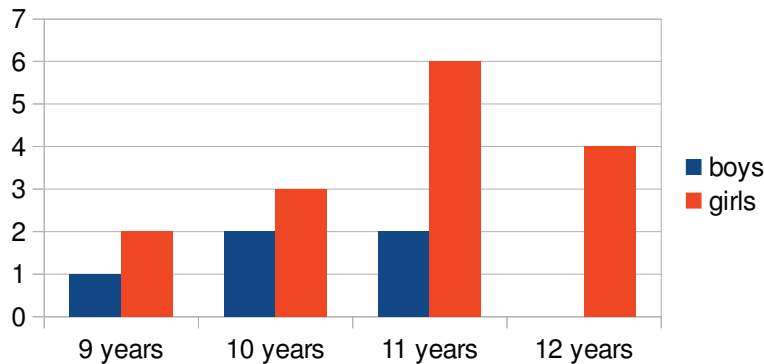


Figure 1. Structure by age and sex of the studied group

### Methods

It was used a guided interview based mainly on 10 questions that related to the conditions and activities in the center, the desired changes of children, the relationship with other children, the division of time between the themes and the play and the future plans of each of them. The children responded easily to the questions and no refusals of cooperation were registered. We mention that all children were informed that they can give up at any time and that the interview used was approved by the research ethics committee of our university.

### Results and discussions

Responding to questions provides information about children's opinion about the day care center and possible changes wanted by them.

All children consider the center conditions as good (11 replies) or very good (9 answers). Of those questioned, only four want a change to intervene in the center's program (see Table 2 and Figure 2).

**Table 2.**  
**Distribution of responses according to the desire to change**

	Want change
Yes	4
No	1

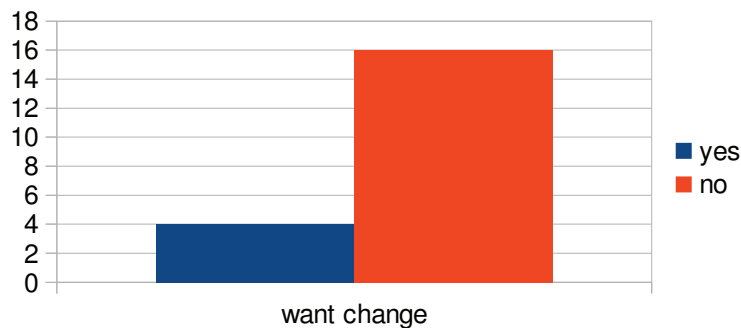


Figure 2. Distribution of responses according to the desire to change

The four willing to change motivate this desire: I want more activities (2 cases), want to do more themes (2 cases), wishes to learn tailoring (1 case).

Relationships with other children in the center range from very good to bad as can be seen in Table 3 and Figure 3.

**Table 3.**  
**Type of relationship with other children**

	Qualifying				
	Very good	good	So and so	bad	Very bad
Number	6	8	4	2	0



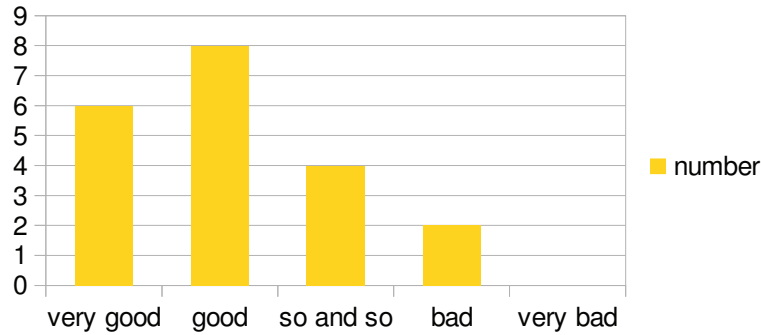


Figure 3. Type of relationship with other children

Children are not always able to establish good relationships with all the other children in the center. Everyone has one or two friends, but there are many dysfunctional relationships and even violence in their relationship. Six girls and a boy say they have quarrels with other children, and a girl says there are too many beatings among children. Usually the girls have problems with the boys and after their claims they quarrel but then they come together. Considering that we are dealing with a high-risk group, it is likely that what children have in their family affects their ability to relate to others. Perhaps they have witnessed quarrels, ugly words and violence, and this hampers their ability to trust other children, always places them in defense positions, and increases the difficulty of establishing friendly relations with the entourage.

Most children appreciate that their behavior has changed for good since they attended the center (14 children) and a number of 6 children feel they have not changed their behavior after attending the center. Usually, behavioral change is expressed by being better (3 cases) more polite (3 cases), or better understanding of things (2 cases). In contrast, the majority (18 children) agree that their marks have improved dramatically since they are at the center compared with only two children who say they have the same kind of marks at school. The attention and help of the center staff in conducting the themes (17 children receive help in conducting the themes) is reflected in the better marks obtained at school and the more appropriate understanding of the material to be taught. The other three say they are helping one another.

For most children (14 cases) it is more important to come to the center for the new things learned here, three (3) come to do their homework and 3 come for food and themes. Probably the three who appreciate the food and the new things equally come from poorer families with more children and who do not have enough food at home or it is not so diversified. It must be recognized

that giving children lunch is a great help for children but at the same time for families.

The aspect of time division between themes and play time is also appreciated by children (see Table 4 and Figure 4). Opinions are divided almost equally: 7 children prefer the time to do themes, 7 children prefer play time, and 6 children consider playing time and theme time to be perfectly divided. However, there are opinions that would require more time for themes or longer playing time.

**Table 4.**  
**Preference for time division in the center**

Preference	Number
for homeworks	7
for play	6
both	7

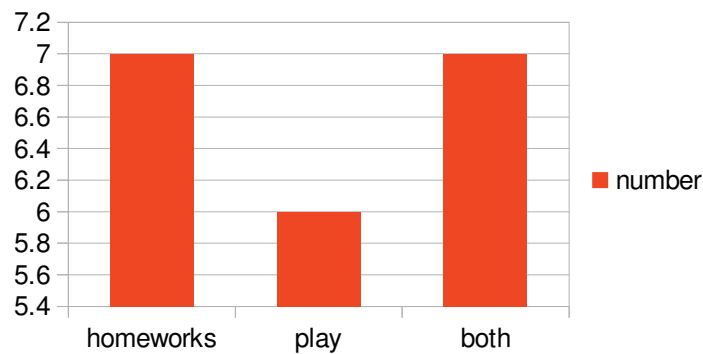


Figure 4. Preference for time division in the center

It is no surprising that some children prefer playing time or would like more time to play because children are still at an age where the game remains one of the main activities. The perfect combination of time for play and schoolwork has an influence on children's attitudes towards learning and helps maintain a relaxed atmosphere in the center.

One last aspect that has been analyzed is that of the profession that children want to choose in the future.

Although there are children who want to continue their studies, possibly attend a college, the majority (12 children) choose professions that do not

require too much training time and are well paid (like driver for boys or manicurist / hairdresser for girls) (see Table 5 and Figure 5).

**Table 5**  
**The profession chosen by children**

Profession	Number
driver	3
social worker	2
manicurist/ hairdresser	7
artist	4
professor/trainer	2
seller	2

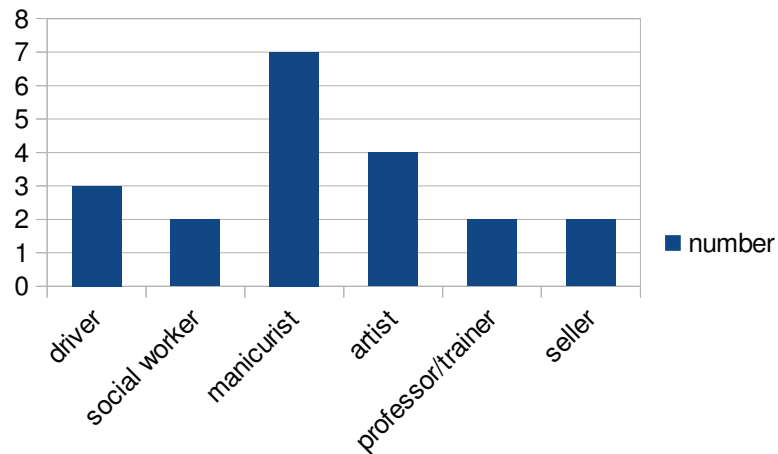


Figure 5. The profession chosen by children

It must be noticed that the level of aspirations of these children is lower than that of the other children of their age. If, at this age, most children without problems want to be researchers, formula pilots, aviators or other professions with an adventure aura, the children in the center are more pragmatic and want a fast-paced and well-paid profession. Thus, half of the children choose to be drivers (3 children) or work in beauty salons such as manicure 5, hairdressing 2 and make up 1. Truck driver courses last only 5 weeks after which they can be hired and actually work on a good salary. The manicure courses last about 3

months and in many cases have a safe place for work. For both professions mentioned above it is not compulsory to finish high school, 10 classes are enough to be able to attend the course. This means that at the age of about 16 and a half to 17 years they can earn their living alone and have their own sources of income. In addition, the cost of these courses is not as high as the cost of completing high school and attending a faculty.

### **Conclusions**

The study shows that the day care center for children is appreciated by them, both in terms of the conditions offered and the help they can get in the themes.

Children appreciate the atmosphere of the center, the food they receive, but first value the new things they learn here. Probably, in the families of origin, parents do not have the time or the necessary training to teach them new things that children are so excited about at this age.

Day center attendance meant for the 20 children interviewed not only good changes in their behavior but also a real improvement of marks obtained at school. Children learn not only to expect help from staff but also to help each other with their homework.

Children do not want any change in the center conditions, and the few changes they want are about the time spent on the game or the themes, or about learning new things in the center that are not usually learned in school.

It is important to note the pragmatic orientation of the children in the center (perhaps because of the material difficulties at home) who opt for fast-paced, low-cost jobs that guarantee well-paid jobs to help them stand on their own and handle alone in life.

**Acknowledgement:** We hereby state that the subjects involved in our research were informed about the voluntary character of participation in this research, about the understanding of information and of that fact that withdrawal from research is possible at any time without negative consequences upon the participant. The research complied with all ethical research standards, the research participants/participants` guardians giving their consent to participate in the research.

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