<https://ss-cg.org/?p=4025>

“Help at home” service

Help at home is a community living support service. This service is intended for persons who cannot live independently in their own homes without regular support, care and supervision, and who deal with a lack of family support or have no family support at all.

Beneficiaries of this service are:

* *children and young persons with developmental disabilities and*
* *adults and older persons with disabilities.*

Providing this service aims to continuously meet the everyday needs of the beneficiaries in their homes, and also to prevent placement in institutions.

The Rulebook on detailed conditions for provision and use, normatives and minimum standards of support service for community living lays down standards for the provision of this service, according to which the service provider is obliged to provide:

* *adequate premises*
* *safe environment and*
* *development of a beneficiary’s potential and her/his empowerment.*

Given that the “Help at home” service aims to meet the needs of beneficiaries in their houses/apartments, standards regarding features and quality of these living spaces cannot be prescribed. Provider of this service is obliged to provide an adequate work space for employees in an urban environment, which has to satisfy specific standards.

When it comes to the obligation of the service provider in relation to providing a safe environment, the legislator referred to the protection of beneficiary’s personal data and the beneficiary’s complaint handling procedure.

The provider should provide activities aimed at developing of a beneficiary and her/his empowering to live in the community, as prescribed by the Rulebook on detailed conditions for provision and use, normatives and minimum standards of support service for community living.

Activities that the service provider offers to beneficiaries are:

1. Grocery shopping, help with meal preparation and feeding;
2. Mobility assistance;
3. Assistance in maintaining personal hygiene and keeping the living space clean;
4. Assistance with space heating;
5. Assistance in buying print publications and books, paying the bills for electricity, phone services, utilities, etc.;
6. Mediation in providing different services for maintaining of a house/an apartment and home appliances maintenance; and
7. Buying medicines and helping a beneficiary to visit a doctor.

The provider of the “Help at home” service can offer one or more of those activities, depending on the needs, capacities and characteristics of a beneficiary. The assessment of the needs of a beneficiary is carried out by an expert, and the service is provided by assistants, that is geronto-housewives or female caregivers. That is the reason why the service provider should have one professional worker to assess the beneficiary’s needs, and at least one assistant per 10 beneficiaries. In addition to assessment and care planning, the professional worker is responsible for coordination of assistant’s work. The above-mentioned Rulebook does not specify how the state ensures the provision of the “Help at home” service. The Rulebook defines only the provider’s obligation to ensure an adequate work space (that will be used for administration), to have one professional worker and at least one assistant per 10 beneficiaries, but it does not define in what way this right can be exercised, who can be a provider of this service (the state, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations or maybe all of them), who pays for the service, service price list, continuity and quality of the service provided, and many other issues that are important for delivering this significant community living service.

1 The Rulebook on detailed conditions for provision and use, normatives and minimum standards of support services for community living, Article 17. - <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/e70e615d-57b8-47a8-90c9-8883a38a21a3>.

In practice, this service is not provided by the state, but by individual local authorities. This means that the “Help at home” service is provided neither in all local communities, nor to all persons who need this service. In local communities with the existing “Help at home” service, the service is mostly intended for a small number of beneficiaries within one population category. In nearly all, or perhaps in all local departments of social welfare where this service is available, it is intended for older persons, mostly over 65, single persons who are not able to look after themselves because of their compromised health or poor financial situation. It is evident that there is a small number of geronto-housewives and caregivers who provide this service for a large number of beneficiaries. This service is provided several hours a day or a week.

The “Help at home” service was also implemented as a part of some projects carried out by centres for social work and organizations within the Red Cross in certain local communities. The older beneficiaries with compromised health and poor financial situation were even then the target group.

On the other hand, although the Law on Social and Child Protection and the Rulebook provide that children with disabilities, adults and older with disabilities have the right to the “Help at home” service, it remains unclear why are young persons with disabilities denied the right to this service. Except for occasional projects carried out by non-governmental and civil society organizations for providing “Help at home” service for children and young persons with disabilities, there are no government institutions providing this service to the mentioned population category. This practice represents discrimination against all persons having the need to exercise this right, but who do not exercise it. The right to this service should also not be conditioned by a beneficiary’s age or her/his family and financial status, but by the beneficiary’s need to maintain or improve the capacity for smooth functioning in own home, with the assistance and support of another person, who is not a family member. So far, several licensed providers have provided this service, two of which offer their services to children and young persons with disabilities.

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