

## Introduction

This issue focuses on different aspects in the field of youth care. The variety of subjects presented makes clear how broad this field is and how many problems are to be faced.

In the first place Shlomo Romi pays attention to the question whether there are differences in the level of burnout in youth care workers working with detached youth in comparison with the level of burnout in youth workers working with normal youth.

His research results confirm the hypothesis that the level of burnout in youth care workers working with detached youngsters is higher than the level of burnout in youth workers working with normal youths. He found no correlation between the years of experience in working and the level of burnout. His findings indicate a need for more-in-depth investigations into the causes of burnout characteristics youth care workers of detached youth experience. Such investigations will enable selecting the relevant and/or critical areas for developing effective programs for the guidance of youth care workers. Such programs could help prevent burnout in this field.

The second contribution deals with the allocation of care for juveniles 'at risk' for emotional and behavioural difficulties. Evert Scholte and Jan van der Ploeg present a model on how the right kind of care can be allocated in order to gain optimum performance. To this end the characteristics of the major residential care facilities in the Netherlands are analysed and linked to the psychosocial problems of the admitted children. Potential applications of the model are also discussed.

Han Spanjaard, Marie-Cristine Van der Veldt and Peter Van den Bogaart investigated the effects of an exit training (ET) program for youngsters in residential care in order to prevent homelessness. Research literature on homelessness amongst youngsters shows that an important number of them have been in residential settings before. ET is a feasible program for youngsters at risk of becoming homeless.

Evaluation of ET showed promising results. After the pilot phase, all four participating organizations decided to continue ET in their organizations and to integrate it in their regular

services. So, the consolidation phase started successfully. Using the research instruments of the pilot study a system for the routine assessment of the quality of ET has been assembled and tested in practice. The ET-method is now ready to be disseminated on a larger scale.

What do we know about the care for social orphans in Russia? Helene Join-Lambert describes the educational system for 'children deprived of parental care' as it was envisaged in the USSR between 1957 and 1991 and as it has developed in Russia, particularly in Saint Petersburg, since 1992. Changes in legislation and in attitudes towards children have been analyzed by reference to the law, to various articles and mostly especially to numerous interviews.

Agnes De Munter and Pol Ghesquière studied the behavioral and socio-emotional problems of children with learning disabilities. For a long time learning disabilities and behavioral problems have been studied as relatively separate phenomena. However, recent empirical research indicates that there is a certain comorbidity of both problem domains. In this article the authors present the results of their own research on this topic. They find a number of factors that influence the interaction of both developmental aspects and observe an evolution from exclusive attention to child-oriented variables to involving social context variables. Among the child variables the cognitive and metacognitive functioning takes a central position. Self-esteem, attribution of success and failure, expectation of success and failure and self-regulation turn out to influence to an important degree the relationship between learning and behavioral problems. Among the social context variables the school setting is an important factor.

The sixth article starts with reviewing European trends in the purpose and practice of foster care. In terms of purpose Matthew Colton stresses the increasing emphasis on family support, reunification and normalization is examined. With regard to practice, he emphasizes the growing tendency to place children with relatives whenever possible is discussed, along with the opposite trend towards the professionalization of foster parents. Consideration is then given to important issues concerning anti-oppressive practice. This is followed by a discussion of the contemporary meaning of foster care, which culminates in a definition of foster care that has relevance for most European countries.

Last but not least Corbillon draws attention to the international conference in Paris (1998) organized by the European Scientific Association for Residential and Foster Care for Children and Adolescents (EUSARF). A lot of interesting papers were presented during this congress that lasted three days. The articles of Romi and of Spanjaard and his co-workers presented in this issue are examples, as is the article of Colton, as these contributions were also presented at the Paris conference. However, most of the papers will be published in a scientific book edited by Corbillon and Durning from the Nanterre University, Paris X.