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COMMUNICATION IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS – THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC IN FOSTER FAMILIES. ORGANIZATION AND PRINCIPLES OF OPERATION

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Abstract. The article contains the results of research on the organization and course of communication (contacts) in emergency situations, e.g., the COVID 19 pandemic (border closure, quarantine, social distance, epidemiological supervision). The conducted research concerned the contact of children in foster families in emergency situations with their natural parents with the use of electronic communication, which has been standardized by Polish law. The diversified involvement of natural parents in contacts as well as the low use of electronic communication means for contacts was indicated. The obtained research results make it possible to recommend the use of children in foster families in emergency situations with natural parents from electronic communication means in emergency situations, such as pandemics, epidemics, long-term separation in the vast majority of cases. Such solutions should be legally established as alternatives. The conducted research and analysis of results supplement the knowledge in the field of communication, education and organizational solutions for communication in emergency situations. The author, analyzing the common phenomenon of the effectiveness of contacts between natural parents and children staying in foster families in emergency situations, analyzed the involvement of the natural family and foster family from the perspective of emergency situations and the possibilities offered by electronic communication means.

Keywords: communication, emergency situations, pandemic COVID -19, natural family, foster family.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a situation of limitations in direct contacts in connection with emergency situations (crisis situations), and such is probably the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, individuals and institutions, enterprises must efficiently adapt to the current situation, in particular in terms of forms of communication. It is the efficiency of two-way communication that ensures that social life does not die out. In situations where it undergoes dynamic changes in social relations, constant contact is crucial in the family (between parents and children). Information, very often messages should reach the recipients on an ongoing basis, no matter who they are, what role they play at the moment. Their reception makes people feel safe. Most often, information in emergency situations relates to the applicable rules of conduct, activities of: offices, institutions, kindergartens, schools, shops, premises, galleries, cultural institutions, sports, rules of public transport, rules of behavior in public space.

In the article, the authors focus on the contact of communicating in emergency situations, which is “How is communication between children staying in foster families with natural parents in the event of

pandas realized?" In the presented case, the contact may be carried out remotely online using electronic means in various forms in the context of legal regulations. The form of such communication is legally regulated in Poland by the Family and Guardianship Code. The legal provision guarantees the right of contact of the child staying in the foster family with the natural parents (Ustawa, 1964). Being in a foster family is a difficult time for a child, and direct communication with natural parents may be additionally hampered by a pandemic situation. The legal regulation has been in force for several years in Poland to respond to emergency situations generated, for example, by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Such contact can be made via a mobile phone (calls, SMSs), or communicators, e.g., Messenger, Skype, e-mail.

With the research, the attempt was made to find out how the communication process is implemented in practice in a crisis, a crisis situation, an emergency such as SARS-CoV-2, in special relationships (children in foster families, and natural parents).

2. CRISIS, CRISIS SITUATION, EMERGENCY SITUATION

Crisis and crisis situation as terms occur very often in contemporary dynamic reality and are used interchangeably. Therefore, it is worth noting that the crisis situation in terms of the Act of April 26, 2007 on crisis management means "situations that negatively affect the level of safety of people, property to a large extent or the environment, causing significant restrictions in the operation of competent public administration bodies due to inadequacy possessed forces and means".(Ustawa, 2007). On the other hand, the crisis is the culmination of a crisis situation (Grodzki, 2012. p. 19). In the opinion of Lawrence M. Brammer, a crisis is a state of disorganization in which a person experiences the destruction of important life goals or a deep disturbance of his life cycle and methods of coping with stressful factors. It refers to feelings of dread, shock, and difficulties experienced in relation to the disorder (Brammer, 1985, p. 94).

The extraordinary situation in Poland can be equated with the extraordinary measures. The Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Ustawa, 1997) provides that in situations of special threats, if ordinary constitutional measures are insufficient, an appropriate state of emergency may be introduced: martial law (Ustawa, 2002, Dz.U. 2022), a state of emergency (Ustawa, 2002, Dz.U. 201) or a state of natural disaster (Ustawa, 2002, Dz. U. 2017).

Each state introduced impedes the communication process carried out in a traditional face to face way. In Poland, in the situation of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the pandemic state was introduced on March 20, 2020 (Rozporządzenie, 2020, Dz. U. 2020). In our considerations, we define an emergency situation as a set of favorable or unfavorable conditions in which someone is or something is happening.

Contact, communication is of great importance for people in crisis as well as emergency situations.

The American Institute of Crisis Management distinguished four basic groups showing the origin of the crisis, they are:

- random factors (hurricanes, fires, etc.),
- technical problems (system failures),
- errors of human origin (incorrectly coded message),
- wrong decisions of superiors (Barton, 1993, p. 12).

Epidemics, pandemics are random crises. The crisis has a very strong impact on our psyche, often leading to stress (Bundy, Pfarrer, Short, & Coombs, 2017, pp. 1661–1692).

According to Matthew Seeger, Timothy Sellnow and Robert Ulmer, the crisis is characterized by specific and unexpected events that bring with them uncertainty and a sense of danger. They distinguish four basic characteristics of this event, they are:

- unexpected,
- causing a feeling of insecurity,
- perceived as a threat,
- causing a need for change (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 1998, pp. 231–275).

Thus, stress increases in the absence of contact - communication, both in a crisis of a crisis situation and an emergency situation, for which we can consider both random events related to the forces of nature and the error of human activities.

3. CONTACT AS A COMMUNICATION PROCESS

In the opinion of Tomasz Goban-Class, the division of epochs is more useful than the means of communication used as "basic instruments of the homo sapiens culture" (Goban-Klas, 1999, p. 15), than the archaeological category based on the materials used (the age of stone, bronze, iron). According to the means of communication, these are the era of: signs and signals, speech and writing language, printing and mass communication, telecommunications and computerization, and computers.

It is assumed that understanding of the term communication was influenced by the definition presented in 1909 by Cooley that "By communication we understand here the mechanism by which human relations can exist and develop, i.e. all symbols of the mind, including the means of transmitting them in space and behavior in time. It includes facial expressions, posture and gestures, tones of voice, words, writing, printing, more iron, telegraphs, telephones, and what else may be achievements in the conquest of space and time" (Cooley, 1909). The process of gradual separation of means of transport from means of communication allowed for the evolution of communication as an element of culture. The breadth of defining communication is made difficult as the process covers almost all aspects of social life and culture. It can be assumed that there are two or even three perspectives for defining communication (informational and semantic). In the former, communication is treated as the transfer of information from one place to another. In the second perspective, as a process of assigning meanings to broadly understood stimuli. The third perspective is related to the combination of the first and the second. Thus, "Communication is the use of information to create meanings" (Frey, Botan, Fridman, & Kreps, 1991, p. 28). According to Zbigniew Nęcki, communication is a conventional exchange of verbal and non-verbal signs (symbols) to improve interaction or sharing meanings between partners. Such an approach indicates the intentionality of behavior and the adoption of a specific set of signs and symbols (Nęcki, 2001). In Sperber and Wilson's approach, communication is any intentional modifying space in the recipient's perceptual field (Sperber, & Wilson, 1986).

All social situations refer to contact as a process of communication between people, where all our interactions take place (personal life, public life, individuals, social groups). This contact is related to information needs. The contemporary reality characterized by the interdependence of people and cultures places demands on the communication process. It is not about solving physical movement, although the technology in the field of transport is constantly improving, but about technologies related to the flow of information. The contemporary globalized world, in the process of communication, forces us to have intercultural competence in remote communication, it is forced by new technologies in communication, but also crisis and emergency situations. Remote contact speeds up the flow and increases the scope of information sent, until recently it eliminated the limitations of time and space. The current COVID 19 emergency is a striking example of this.

Contact with a person with a representative of an institution, organization, administration, social group, family is accepted as direct face-to-face contact. Such contact enables direct conversation, as well as simultaneous reception of verbal and non-verbal messages of interlocutors.

The communicated process is carried out on many levels and performs specific functions in terms of the 'needs' of the society and of individuals (Merton, 1957), (Luhmann, 2000). The levels are: intra-personal (communication with oneself), interpersonal (two or more people), group (communication based on social roles), public (recognition of the partners is not important). Among the functions Charles R. Wright added to the original list of functions (informative, interpretative, socializing, he added a fourth – entertainment (McQuail, 2010, p. 87). Peter M. Sandman, Dawid M. Rubin and Dawid B. Sachsman added another - economic function (Sandman, Rubin, & Sachsman, 1976).

Nowadays, we are increasingly departing from traditional communication in favor of remote online communication, both in the public, professional and private sphere. The extraordinary situation related to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic meant that entire sectors of activities based on communication in the world, e.g., education, switched to remote communication for a few months. This also applies to the entire service sector, e.g., logistics, trade, e-administration, contact between relatives and charges in the field of care.

4. METHODOLOGY

From an initial analysis of Pope Francis' speeches on education, it was possible to extract recurring The content of the article contains an analysis of the results of the second stage of quantitative research (Babbie, 2001) conducted in 2019-2020 in Poland. Due to the conditions, characteristic of contacts during emergency situations (COVID 19 pandemic), the last stage of the research was carried out in July - November 2020 in foster families. The first stage of quantitative and qualitative research was carried out in 2015-2017 in Poland in N = 115 foster families and concerned the legal regulations of foster families in Poland. The results of the study are presented in the book Karolina Walancik – Ryba, Foster family. Legal regulations and court practice, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN. Warsaw 2019. In the second stage of quantitative research, the semi-structured interview technique was used (Denzin & Lincol, 2005). The research involved foster families, men and women. 80% of these families were spouses and 20% single persons. The age of the respondents ranged from 30 to 45 years. All respondents were Polish citizens. The research was conducted in the Silesia Region. The region is inhabited by approximately 4.52 million people. It is the voivodeship with the highest degree of urbanization and population density in Poland. The seat of the voivodeship authorities is Katowice. 60% of the interviews were conducted remotely using electronic means of videoconferencing. 40% of the interviews were conducted in foster homes with the epidemic indications (masks, distance gloves). The interviews were conducted with the consent of those running foster families. The rules of ethics were followed during the research and analysis.

5. COMMUNICATION OF CHILDREN IN A FOSTER FAMILY WITH NATURAL PARENTS IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS (COVID 19 PANDEMIC) IN POLAND. RESEARCH RESULTS

To learn about the process of communicating children in foster families with natural parents, foster families in the Silesian Region in Poland were examined. The research was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, in 2015-2017, 115 foster families were tested in the Silesian agglomeration. Concentrating on the legal regulations of foster families. The data are included in the monograph (Walancik - Ryba, 2020). It is worth mentioning that in the case of the studied foster families, children referred to as natural orphans are extremely rare (less than 2%). In the second stage of the research in the years 2029-2020, the last stage of the research was carried out during the COVID 19 pandemic, conducted in July - November 2020, focused on the main problem: How is the contact of children staying in foster families with natural parents, with the possibility of using instant messaging electronic, as permitted by Polish law, in an emergency (COVID-19 pandemic)? In the presented case, the quantitative strategy was used (Babbie, 2001), the technique of partially structured interview (Denzin & Lincol, 2005) with foster families was used. The interviews focused on such detailed issues as: What was the frequency of contacts before and during the COVID-19 pandemic? Who initiates contacts between children's meetings with natural parents? What is the quality of the meeting? What is the impact of the meeting on children's behavior?

Children whose parents have been permanently or temporarily deprived of parental rights or whose authority has been limited are placed in foster families. Therefore, it should be assumed that the educational process, childcare in these families was disturbed, not implemented. If the biological parents are deprived or limited of their powers, they have the right to contact the child. Maintaining contacts with natural parents is conducive to the upbringing and proper development of a child in a foster

family. Contacts with a child are not only the parents' right, but the parents' responsibility. It is the natural parents who should provide the child with the needs of belonging and love. Today, they can be implemented with the help of modern mobile phone technologies, the Internet, and in particular in emergencies, such as COVID-19.

Below we present examples of statements in the surveyed families regarding the frequency of contacts between natural parents and children in foster families:

"In the family we run, there are children up to 5 years old with the FAS and RAD team. FAS fetal alcohol syndrome is a fetal alcohol syndrome, a condition that results from the effects of alcohol on a fetus during the prenatal period. RAD is a result of the lack of interest of immediate and distant caregivers, which makes the child vulnerable to the bond disorder syndrome. As a consequence, it causes a child to be shy and oversensitive, and to be emotional. We establish the rules of conducting contacts at the first meeting with natural parents. We listen to natural parents, their expectations, we adapt to their expectations and proposals when it comes to contacts with children".

"We establish contacts with parents once a week by mutual consent, at a specific time. For the sake of children who have problems with collecting and using information, we try to make all the activities of the day repeatable, and the meetings not to disturb their rhythm of the day. Contact with children by means of communication can take place on a daily basis. Parents know our phone number. They can ring the bell to the children every day, please try to follow the schedule of the day unless there are exceptional circumstances. Due to the age of the children, my husband or I have the phone. During the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional contacts were limited due to the social distance in March - June 2020, telephone contacts remained at the level as before the pandemic".

"Traditionally, contacts are fairly systematic at first, but they fade away with time. Parents were not interested in the proposed solutions using the Internet, Skype. Telephone calls take an average of 10 minutes".

"The frequency of contacts depends on the family from which the child comes. At the first meeting, the parents express their will to contact. They declare regularity. Later it is different, the most common is instability in contacts. During the COVID pandemic - 19 traditional contacts were smaller due to social distance and limitations. During the holidays in July and August, contacts did not increase. They were not supplemented by contacts using electronic communicators".

"During our practice, the level of contacts varies [...] As an example, despite the Mother's declaration of systematic contacts, she was there once, maybe 2-3 times. Currently he is not contacting. She did not maintain telephone contacts, although she made such declarations. I don't want internet contacts".

"The father lives and works in Germany, keeps in touch with the child on a regular basis. He comes on the occasion of the world, or the so-called long weekends. During the pandemic, there were fewer arrivals due to the blockade of borders, quarantine, and social distance. In the period March 2020-January 2021 there were 3 times. Telephone calls are regular once a week. They remained at the same level during the pandemic. The mother contacted twice at the beginning. She did not maintain telephone contacts, although she made such declarations. I don't want to go online".

"In our practice, we quite often meet the parents' position", We do not want contacts by phone, you will be recording, now they are recording everything, "we will be coming. The contacts were, but often irregular. So do telephone contacts. During a pandemic, definitely telephone calls".

"Parents are contacted via Skype. We made the rules. It is different when it comes to keeping the time and deadline. During the pandemic, contacts are still available on Skype, despite the significant burden of lessons on the Internet for children. All lessons are conducted online".

"I organize meetings with natural parents at home. However, very often I take children to meetings with biological parents at the Municipal Social Welfare Center, in a room adapted for this purpose, to the Family Support Center. The COVID-19 pandemic has limited the number of meetings, but they are carried out in compliance with regulations, masks, distance. The number of telephone contacts has not

increased significantly”.

“Meetings with natural parents are held every weekend. We have two siblings, 7-and 9-year-old girls. Mom arrives on Friday afternoon and picks up the girls. In the months of March - June 2020, due to the pandemics, the girls were only with us. Then we returned to contacts for weekend trips. Mom followed the rules: masks, gloves, distance. In the month of June, she was in our garden every week. Contacts using electronic means of communication via Messenger, once a week, unless girls want more often, Talk time is about 10 minutes”.

“There was no contact with natural parents in the earlier period - 4 cases”

Therefore, it can be concluded on the basis of the interviews that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced the frequency of face-to-face contacts of natural parents with children, in particular in the period March - May 2020. The use of new means such as mobile phones and the Internet for contacts is varied. It did not increase significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. In our opinion, it may be influenced by the rite of traditional meetings in social culture, the need for classical vision and a personal embrace. In our opinion, there is also a phenomenon called culturally conditioned digital exclusion and the nature of a dysfunctional family. It is important that in the currently studied group the fact of lack of complete contact was not noted. However, it should be concluded from the statements that such situations occurred mainly before 2012, before the legal amendment. Today their level may be around 10% and may be characterized by longer breaks in the absence of contacts, 2-3 months”.

The quality of the upbringing, caring and educational process is significantly influenced by regularity and continuity of contacts with natural parents. The parties initiating the meetings can be foster families, natural parents or children. It can be concluded from the analysis of the interviews that practically in 100% of the respondents the parties initiating the meetings were foster families. The vast majority of it has been approved by natural parents. Children are the initiators of contacts mainly by telephone, so-called additional. It can be assumed that it is about 40%. The vast majority of children accept the agreed arrangements. About 10% are children who do not want contact with their parents.

In repeated opinions of foster families, this situation is as follows:

“The initiating party in the case of contact was us as a foster family, as a rule in our case, it was almost always the case. Except for one case in 15 years of running a family, where the adolescent mother definitely started the meeting from the very beginning with the will to visit traditional”.

“Basically, both my mother and we wanted to meet at the same time”.

“Parents met confirmed their will, after our proposal. It was agreed that we will meet once a week”.

“In our family, children initiate additional contacts. From the perspective of 7-year-old it was almost always like that”.

“We had a case of 2 times (we are a foster family for 12 years) that the children did not want meetings in the traditional form. Telephone calls, yes, but no joy”.

“After a few phone calls, the boy refused to talk to his parents”.

“Children asked to be contacted by phone due to the lack of traditional contact during the pandemic - in four families”.

The foster family provides temporary care, only for the period needed by the natural family to return to the state of educational efficiency. During this period, the foster family should constitute a similar care and educational environment as the natural family. Foster parents are required, among others: responsibility, proper preparation and maintaining contacts with the child's natural parents. Thus, the quality of a child's contact with natural parents is of great importance. The respondents' statements show that the quality of contacts varies.

“In our case, the girls' telephone contacts are currently short-lived. Very often they last up to a few minutes”.

“We have noticed that during traditional contact, parents cannot concentrate on what they say or talk about. You can see that they feel lost. The COVID-19 pandemic made it the main topic of the

meeting and it fulfills its content”.

“Very often their new partners, grandmothers, aunts and uncles come with their parents. They are often people with whom the child had contact in a distant time. Children feel lost”.

“During the meetings, parents declare personal contact, by phone, they show great interest in contact. They declare their commitment. In a situation of contact, the opposite is true”.

“Often parents go away for 2-3 months and children are out of touch. They ask if they can call. We call no one answers. We can see that they are sorry “

“During COVID - 19 more phone calls are made, they are not long Up to 10 minutes.”

“The child was noticeable anxiety, stress and emotional turmoil after the meeting. The situation was similar after the phone calls”.

“We noticed my father's frequent contacts, he came because it was calm and, above all, warm. The meetings lasted 2-3 hours”.

“The children don't pay attention to the fact that she was a mother. From the perspective of 11 years of running a foster family, it happened that a child cried with his mother once. It was 1 year old.”

“It doesn't happen that the meetings influence the emotions of children. I think that children feel safe with us, so there are no bad emotions after meetings and conversations with parents. In the COVID situation – 19 more calls are made, but they are not long.”

“My mother saw the baby regularly 4-5 days a week. She devoted 2 to 3 and sometimes up to 4 hours to the child. She also called the baby systematically. The child was waiting for contact.

“Meetings are varied. Currently, children during meetings will not show much interest. They answer questions casually. There is no joy and enthusiasm for visits from both parents and grandparents.

“The girls' joy at meeting their mother is enormous. We have the impression that the whole city hears us then. During the video by Messenger, the girls tell what they did, how it was at school. This conversation is a form of fun. We have meetings once a week, but sometimes every day. Temporarily they last up to 10-15 minutes.”

“The boys are ashamed of their parents. They rarely ask to contact their parents. We insist. They postpone parental meetings saying they don't want to talk. Messenger's video offer is not encouraging for them.”

“Parents cooperate at the beginning during meetings, they are interested, they ask about children. With time, the interest decreases, the activity decreases “

“Mum is very interested in contacts, she helps in the process of specialist treatment of girls”.

The above-mentioned examples of statements made during the interviews are not based on simple stereotypes and are not harmful to natural parents or foster carers. They are not an exception in the discussed discourse, but they reflect the reality as it is. In summary, it can be indicated that there is a willingness of foster carers to maintain contacts between children and natural parents, as well as the natural parents themselves at a good level. These contacts usually go well. The statements show that their quality varies. A very apt solution is the possibility of maintaining contact by means of electronic communication with natural parents. It is very helpful. In particular, in such extraordinary situations as the COVID 19 pandemic. As can be seen from the analysis of the first period, the so-called lockdown in Poland from March 15 to June 2020, electronic communication was one communication channel. It would seem that in the contemporary information society, the need to use ICT devices and technologies is normal. However, due to the fact that children go to foster families on the basis of a court decision, the vast majority of them due to an ineffective educational and care environment, their natural environment, we are dealing with digital exclusion of parents, natural guardians. Parents often report that they lose their phones and change numbers. They explain that they do not have Teflon, that they do not have Messenger, that they have lost their contact list. The phone offers great opportunities, but also obliges the owner to be active, reminds about the existence of others, including the closest ones.

It is important that for many children, contact with the immediate family is and will remain very important. It gives a sense of natural safety for the child. Contact with the natural parents of foster

children should not be limited. Modern technical possibilities and legal regulations allow for maintaining such contacts. In the opinion of the authors, this situation has recently improved significantly compared to the one in the beginning of 2000 or 2010 (Arczewska, 2004, p. 83–94, Ruskowska, 2013, p. 93).

6. DISCUSSION

According to Adam Kamradt-Scott and Coin McInnes, diseases endanger life and the basics of maintaining the vast majority of our planet's inhabitants more than wars, terrorism, or other forms of violent conflict (Kamradt-Scott & McInnes, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2012.725752>). Diseases like Covid-19 carry the risk of a global pandemic that can kill millions of people. During the period 2002–2003, SARS killed 1,000 people and caused an estimated loss of 30 billion USD for the trade in Asian economies (Kamradt-Scott & McInnes, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2012.725752>). Due to the global/regional scope, the effects in the fight against pandemics must be subject to special measures based on legal regulations. Crises caused by pandemics are not weekend; they last for several months or years. They pose a threat to life, health, social and economic functioning. States adopt various measures in order to stop the spread of the disease and contain the epidemic. These measures include social distancing, closure of the frontiers, suspension of international communication. However, these measures, although justified, also have adverse consequences; namely, they interrupt society's normal life.

States approached the issue of the COVID-19 pandemic differently. They adopted different measures at different times, which was mainly conditioned by the spread of the disease in a particular state. The legal basis for the adopted measures also varies. Some countries have declared the state of emergency (Czech Republic, Switzerland, Belgium, Bulgaria, Portugal, Estonia, Finland, Spain, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxemburg, Italy). Other countries, e.g., Slovakia announced the emergency state in health care (<http://surl.li/lvabo>) (access: 10.06.2023). Greece, Slovenia and the United Kingdom did not introduce a state of emergency, while Hungary gave the executive power even broader powers than those provided for in the constitution (<https://eody.gov.gr/neos-koronaios-covid-19/>).

However, the main objective of the adopted measures was the introduction of social distancing – restrictions on contacts, gatherings, and personal relationships.

In these circumstances, both the authorities of Poland and Lithuania introduced numerous restrictions. State borders were closed, schools and universities closed, and public gatherings were limited; many services (hairdressing, dental, etc.) were banned. However, neither in Poland nor Lithuania, there was a general ban on moving within the country (except for Easter). It would seem that there should be no legal obstacles to keeping the child to contact the parents. However, this is only an apparent situation. In practice, however, it is difficult to guarantee a child's right of contact with parents in extraordinary circumstances, such as a pandemic (<http://surl.li/lvacv>) (access: 10.06.2023). Several situations can be distinguished here. First, these are purely domestic situations, i.e., when parents and children live in the same country. Secondly, these are cross-border situations, i.e., when the parents or one of the parents lives in a country other than the child (Puciłowska, 2008, pp. 21–27).

In national situations, problems may arise in cases when one parent does not allow another parent to contact a child. In this situation, the court will not be able to resolve the dispute because most of the court hearings have been canceled, except for urgent cases. However, given the fact that the issue of childcare and contact with children is usually resolved during the divorce process, it is doubtful that this would be considered an urgent matter. It seems that legal regulation, in this case, does not ensure sufficient implementation of the right to direct contact of the parent with the child.

In international cases, the issue is even more complicated. First, access to the court is limited in two ways: in different countries, the courts either do not work, or the cases are dealt with in writing. Moreover, interested persons cannot appear in court personally because of travel restrictions. For

example, in Lithuania, from March 14 to May 11, it was forbidden for Lithuanian citizens to leave the territory of the state (with few exceptions). Personal appearance in court, especially in matters relating to children, is crucial. It allows hearing the child in the presence of a child psychologist, so it is possible to limit the parent's influence on the child. In addition, personal appearance is also important for a parent seeking contact with a child, especially in cross-border cases (Mostowik, 2014).

However, if it is impossible to appear in court in person, one may need to hire a representative, which will result in additional costs. In cross-border situations, there is also the question of asking a court or other competent institution for help in ensuring the return of a child abducted abroad (under the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction or the EU Brussels Regulation IIa). In this case, it is not only about the possibility of contacting the competent authority itself, but also about the time limit, as the court should receive the application in less than a year of the time the child was abducted. However, after a year, it should be assessed whether the child has adapted to the new environment. Therefore, closing borders and canceling flights can have a significant impact on the return of a child abducted abroad. Notably, the states addressed the child abduction cases differently. For example, Canadian courts consider such cases urgent and may allow hearings also during a pandemic (Piche, 2020, pp.11-14).

Based on the conducted analyzes, there seems to be a need to conduct long-term international research on legal regulations in the field of communication, for example, by children staying in foster families with natural parents, or other special groups in emergency situations, using, for example, electronic means of communication.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The child's welfare should be especially protected. It seems, however, that the "child's welfare" argument may be abused by a parent trying to hinder the child's direct contact with the other parent. This can happen in both domestic and international situations. Well, a parent may refuse a child's contact with the other parent if it may endanger the health or life of the child (HCCH, 2020). Well, the refusal to return the child under Art. 13 of the 1980 Hague Convention can only take place if such a return "would expose them to physical or mental harm or otherwise put them at a disadvantage". Therefore, sending a child to another country by plane may expose the child to the virus. However, the literature on the subject emphasizes that a given exception cannot be understood broadly (Reddaway & Keating, 1997). A similar example may also be the case in a national situation, where the parent does not want to allow the child to have direct contact with the other parent, because that parent is a doctor and has constant contact with infected people, or because of his or her job duties, the parent travels a lot and may expose the child to contracting the virus. In addition, the parent may be concerned about his own health if he or she belongs to the risk group.

In the opinion of the authors of the text, the need for contact-communication is essential for social functioning in general for all people, and in particular for children in the process of upbringing, care and education, especially in emergency situations. Such a special group are children in foster families who have the right to contact their natural parents, and an emergency situation is, for example, the COVID 19 pandemic. In the context of ensuring the safety of an individual, communication and contact with it seems to be crucial. Remote communication possibilities by electronic means is a universal, over-time development. It is worthwhile for legally regulated emergency situations to include provisions on the possibility of contact and communication with the help of electronic means as universally applicable, as in the presented example of natural contacts between parents and a child staying in foster families.

The organization of contact depends on the involvement of the natural family and foster family. The involvement of natural families varies. The involvement of foster families is high. There has been no significant increase in the use of electronic communication means to contact children with natural parents. Due to the introduced lockdown, parents were forced to use new technologies. However, there

is a natural phenomenon of digital exclusion among parents, which makes contact with the use of modern electronic tools legally designated for such contact difficult.

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Валанцік Кароліна. Комунікація в надзвичайних ситуаціях – пандемія Covid-19 у прийомних сім'ях. Організація та принципи роботи. *Журнал Прикарпатського університету імені Василя Стефаника*, **10** (3) (2023), 190-200.

У статті висвітлено результати дослідження процесу організації та перебігу комунікації (контактів) в умовах надзвичайних (кризових) ситуацій, зокрема пандемії COVID-19 (закриття кордонів, карантин, соціальна дистанція, епідеміологічний нагляд). Проведене дослідження стосувалося контактів дітей у прийомних сім'ях у надзвичайних ситуаціях з їхніми рідними батьками з використанням електронних засобів зв'язку, що було стандартизовано польським законодавством. Виявлено диверсифіковане залучення рідних батьків до контактів, а також низький рівень використання електронних засобів комунікації для такої взаємодії. Отримані результати уможливають вироблення рекомендацій для використання дітьми, котрі виховуються у прийомних сім'ях і перебувають в екстремальних ситуаціях, з рідними батьками шляхом використання електронних засобів зв'язку в надзвичайних ситуаціях, як: пандемії, епідемії, тривала розлука та ін. Доведено необхідність законодавчого закріплення таких рішень як альтернативних. Проведене дослідження та аналіз його результатів доповнюють знання в сфері комунікації, освіти та організаційних рішень щодо налагодження контактів у надзвичайних ситуаціях. Обґрунтовано поширений феномен ефективності контактів між рідними батьками і дітьми, які перебувають у прийомних сім'ях, у надзвичайних ситуаціях; представлено специфіку залучення рідної сім'ї та прийомної сім'ї з погляду кризових ситуацій і можливостей, які надають електронні засоби комунікації.

Ключові слова: комунікація, надзвичайні ситуації, пандемія COVID-19, рідна сім'я, прийомна сім'я.