

Support services for families with children and children with disabilities

Slezská Diakonie

Slezská Diakonie is a faith-based NGO that **supports persons with different support needs**.

The organisation offers services to persons with **disabilities and mental health problems**, children, children with disabilities, and their families, elderly and homeless persons. It also offers **foster care programmes**, education settings for children with support needs and operates as an accredited educational institution providing training to both its employees and other organisations.

Beneficiaries of the service

Slezská Diakonie supports **families** who may need need tutoring in supporting their children or face challenges such as financial difficulties, or substance abuse disorders that could endanger the care provided to the child.



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The staff

Social workers, psychologists and auxiliary staff.
Part-time trainers (with fixed-term contracts) support the training of foster care families.
The organisation offers needs-based staff, which may be held by the internally or by external providers.

The approach

- 1 The social worker assigned to the family assesses the needs of the family and draws up an individualised plan.
- 2 The organisation provides a range of needs-based support services (psychological support, day care, respite care)
- 3 Values: Personal approach, respect towards users and staff, foster personal growth, and transparency.

The model

Slezská Diakonie operates the following family and children support services:



The Family Support programme

It includes services to support **families at risk** (referred by local authorities) in their natural environment. A social care worker visits the family and provides support (e.g. financial support, children tutoring, support to tackle substance abuse).



The foster care programme

It includes **short-term and long-term foster care**. Once children are separated from their biological families, they stay in temporary foster care for up to 1 year and then transition to a long-term professional foster care where they can stay until their adulthood. Each foster care family has a **dedicated social worker**, who visits the family once or twice per month and works with children to support the understanding of their life story and separation, and can facilitate contact with the biological family. Foster care parents participate in a mandatory training programme, courses, meetings, and receive psychological support and legal services, as required.



The Assistant worker programme

A **social worker supports a family** once they have received a diagnosis for their child (from 0 to 7 years old). The assistant worker mentors the family on **how to organise their life and support for their child**. They provide psychological support to the families and facilitate the creation of support networks by organising weekend retreats for parents of children with disabilities.



Strengths

- Staff willingness and commitment.
- Staff supported through training and coaching to develop skills.



Weaknesses

- Overall professional development may last longer due to short-term trainings.
- Lack of funding.
- Legal limitations that lead to lack of communication and difficulties in cooperating with the children's schools.