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UNPLANNED DISCHARGE FROM OUT-OF-HOME-CARE. YOUTH PERCEPTIONS REGARDING CARE AFTER EXITING

Current studies offer a positive summary of the effects of out-of-home-care: For young people who have been looked after, international research findings indicate that there is a significant improvement for respective set of issues (Albus et al. 2010, Reid et al. 2002). These improvements are believed to be caused by the youth welfare services. However, these positive statements have to be qualified by the fact that about 35% of the episodes end with an unplanned discharge from out-of-home-care (Tornow 2008). Youth care episodes are terminated unplanned for a couple of reasons: For example the children's home may decide to end the placement parents may want their children to return home or the young people themselves want to leave the residential group care settings. To consider these facts from the perspective of child care workers, treatments terminated unplanned are less effective, because these young people are more likely to need residential care again. This is the reason why unplanned discharges may incur high costs for youth welfare services, while the emotional costs for young people suffering repeated terminations of relationships may be even greater.

In spite of these concerns, little is known about unplanned discharges. At the moment, uncompleted treatments are not systematically included in research projects and get insufficient attention.

Against this background, the aim of my dissertation project is to capture young people's perceptions regarding care and its unplanned discontinuation. The project focuses on the reconstruction of subjective evaluations of the conditions causing termination. The point of view of young people will be examined through qualitative methods using interview data. In total 15 face-to-face-Interviews with young people will be conducted immediately after they left care unplanned. By now, five interviews have been completed and preliminary research findings are available.

An initial theoretical consideration on explaining the phenomenon of unplanned discharge from out-of-home-care is that it could be worthwhile to concentrate on the practical dynamics during the care episode before termination. Against the backdrop of the successive procedure of qualitative research, a heuristic concerning the shape of practical dynamics resulting in unplanned termination of residential treatments will be discussed.

References:

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