

Involving students: Cooperation promotes effectiveness in early support for families with children

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The future competence requisites for professionals in special services for families with children were described in [expert focus group interviews in Tallinn](#) in the spring and in Helsinki in the autumn of 2017. The importance of cooperation and networking skills were highlighted in the future competences for professionals. Effectiveness in early support services can be achieved through closer cooperation between different occupational groups.

Early support in the services targeted for families with children was considered to have great significance in supporting parenthood as well as in mental health services in Helsinki and Tallinn. Early support is very likely to reduce the need for special services for families with children.

The demands of today's working life and the reconciliation of family life pose challenges. Seems like there is not enough time to orientate to parenthood before the everyday life with children begins. In **addition**, there is also not necessarily enough time and energy for family life and the needs of a child. The lack of support networks also affects how families with children cope with daily life.

Support for parenthood should be noted early, even before becoming a parent. Risk factors require awareness and

early support before the child is born. The distance or lack of family support networks are today's challenges, and the services cannot fully replace their significance. Cooperation between different occupational groups might well be an opportunity to develop new forms of early support to parenthood.

Important mental health services

The congestion in mental health services was highlighted in both focus group interviews. Parents or children may not reach mental health or psychiatric services at an early stage. Attention should be paid to mood disorders, anxiety and uncertainty regarding parenthood. Observing the family as a whole and maintaining the family relationships are important issues in planning mental health assessment. In the future, there will also be an increasing need for trauma expertise among professionals in special services for families with children.

Common facilities support the convergence of basic and special services

Closer cooperation between different specialists is possible in common facilities for basic and special services for families. Extensive skills are needed to assess the family situation as a whole and to define the needed support. The construction of common facilities or so-called Family Centers has already started in Helsinki and in Tallinn. This construction of family centers and the relocation of services under the same roof may be a new kind of opportunity for early support for families with children.



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The [thesis is available in Finnish at the Theseus database.](#)