



People with Disabilities in the Russian Federation: A Century on the Way to Equal Opportunities

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In modern Russian society, social policy toward people with disabilities unites the efforts of state and culture. But it was not always this way. Historically in Russia the attention given to disabled people was on the basis of the formation of the social protection of population system, strengthening the social work role towards people with disabilities occurred during the last twenty years. On 1st of January 2014 there are 12,7 million people with disabilities in the Russian Federation. The number of disabled people is growing due to many different factors including the process of the ageing of population in Russia.

People with disabilities as well as the other citizens of Soviet Union from 1917 have been enjoying the rights of free services provided by public consumption funds including: health care, sanatorium resort therapy and rehabilitation, education and accommodation. At present mostly all of above privileges for disabled people are preserved.

The formation of the state policy of the Russian Federation as social state toward people with disabilities could be divided into following main periods:

1917-1935: Formation of the social welfare system for people with disabilities. The process was pushed forward on 1st of November 1917 by Government announcement, the introduction of social insurance and increase in disability allowances 100% from state budget. At the beginning state financing was organized through the social insurance system, and from 1918 – through the social security system. The medical assessment of work ability was established. The basis for health care insurance was formed by the Decree of Council of People's Commissars on 16th of November 1917 which transferred medical establishments, factories, and industrial enterprises to contribute to sickness funds. The system of the work ability assessment was also integrated into social insurance system. Health Control Commissions were set up inside the structure of contributory sickness funds. Disability assessment guaranteed the right on disability living allowance. Pension provision of military staff of Red Army and members of their families was regulated by the Decree of Council of People's Commissars of 7th of August of 1918. In this year, functions of financing state policy toward disabled people were transferred to the social security system. The Decree of Council of People's Commissars of 8th of December 1921 introduced so-called "rational" six-level disability classification, which was replaced by

three-level disability classification in 1923, which generally exists nowadays.

The beginning of formation of special and vocational education system was started during this period of time. In 1918 the first courses for teachers working with children with abnormal development were set up in Petrograd and Moscow. In 1918-1920 faculties of defectology were established in higher educational institutes of Moscow and Petrograd and Institute of Special Pedagogy, established in 1929, conducted systematic activity on education of disabled people. In 1934 the structure for the teaching of deaf people was set up in Moscow Higher Technical College named after Bauman.

1941-1956: Increase in number of people with disabilities. After the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) a new wide contingent of disabled people appeared – discharged soldiers, mainly young or middle aged people with injuries of the musculoskeletal device. The share of injuries increased from 8% to 42%. Many of war veterans, severely injured in military battles, came back to their career without noticeable decrease in their professional abilities. In 1956 new Guidance on work ability assessment was introduced.

1960-1990: System of employment for people with disabilities. At the beginning of 60th of 20th century several documents were approved to influence positively on pension provision of disabled people. The state system of the employment of disabled people was formed, allowing them working conditions which fit to their health state. Nevertheless there not so many disabled people in the streets and public places. Barriers of inaccessible environment and barriers of society relationship put the obstacles on the inclusion of disabled people.

A system of special boarding schools provided access for all disabled people to education. Generally all disabled people were involved in secondary education. Boarding schools were adapted for people with certain type of disability and equipped with special teaching technologies, text books and education materials. Highly qualified teachers familiar with peculiarities of illness as well as special trained staff also worked in the boarding schools.

1990-2006. Legislative provision of principle of equality rights for disabled people. In 1990 Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union approved Convention on State policy toward disabled people and

the Bill "On Basic Principles of Social Protection of the Disabled in USSR". Decrees of the Russian President "On Measures on Formation Accessible Environment for People with Disabilities" (1992), "On Measures of Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of the Disabled" (1993, No. 394) pushed forward the reconstruction of environment according to disabled people needs. The standards rules take into consideration disability needs in engineering and construction, social infrastructure design. These documents for the first time put focus on importance of rehabilitation and integration of the disabled in society. Absence of mechanism obliged to take adequate measures put the obstacles in the way of law implementation.

1995 was the rotary year in defining the status of disabled people in society; the Russia Federal Bill "On Social Protection of The Disabled in the Russian Federation" was adopted. For the first time the goal of state policy means not direct support to disabled person, but "provision of equal rights and facilities for the disabled in realization of civil, economic, political and other rights and freedoms guaranteed by Constitution of the Russian Federation", formulates new definition of disability and disability rehabilitation.

Historical transformation of the Russian state order of the end of 20th century and the deep economic crisis significantly affected people with disabilities; the system of social protection of population literally provided the survival of vulnerable groups of population. Nevertheless state activity of legislative provision of equal rights for the disabled continued.

In education sphere during "perestroika", parents of children with disabilities enjoyed the right to choose boarding-schools according to their requirement. But lack of these educational institutions and their targeted specialization narrowed the possibility to choose educational trajectory for a child.

2006 – 2012. In 2006 Russia signed The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (further – Convention) and ratified it in 2012. At this period Russia officially recognized a policy toward people with disabilities. The following measures took place to raise the quality of life for the disabled: formation of system of disability benefits and allowances; development of juridical and administrative mechanism of disability rights implementation; progressive disability discrimination legislation; establishment of the institutes of national coordinating policy. The network of NGO's of people with disabilities was created. The process of maintaining access for disabled people to endow civil and political rights, including rights on employment, education, family life, confidence and private property was started. Society became more tolerant toward disabled persons.

At the beginning, inclusive education was developed as experimental model, but since 2011 has being implemented on regular basis. Children with special educational needs have an access to mainstream schools, obliged to provide conditions based on child focused pedagogical principles in order to respond to certain needs. The number of inclusive schools will grow to 10 thousand by 2016.

There were many discussions concerning the educational services for children with disabilities based on special education institutions or mainstream schools and classes, where children with special needs learn together with their regular peers. In 2015 the mixed approach is applicable allowing parents to choose the educational scenario.

2011-2015: In December 2014 a Federal Bill was adopted to implement UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the frame of legislation of the Russian Federation. The Bill made amendments to 25 pieces of legislation, regulated legal relationship in main social, juridical and economic spheres.

Effective mechanism of the Convention implementation is a governmental program of the Russian Federation, "Accessible Environment" 2011-2015 (further –Program), with total budget amount of 183,6 billion rubles. The Program pushed forward the real practical work on the creation of accessible environment in Russia. The goal of the Program is to create possibilities aimed to provide access for disabled people to priority objects and services and improve the mechanism of service provision in rehabilitation and to promote social inclusion.

This period of time was marked by a significant scale of work around the country to create accessible physical environments, these include: adapted public transport and social important buildings, schools, accommodation for disabled and low mobile groups of population, as well as development of technical rehabilitation means. The effective measures were taken to maintain equal access for the disabled to employment, participation in political, sportive, cultural life of the society. Inclusion education has also been developed and 10 thousand inclusive schools were established. The information network became more accessible, particularly state on-line services; sign language translation was introduced in mass media. The most important component of this policy is social advertisement which influences the formation of positive images of disabled people and their families in the society, as well as popularization of Paralympic achievements etc.

One of the Program priorities is the professional development of specialists working with disabled people. The Institute of Professional Development of Social Sphere Employees took part in the program implementation and hold information seminars on accessible environment in all subjects of the Russian Federation.

Implementation of Rights-Based Disability policy and Social Inclusion is the goal of social policy development in the Russian Federation. In order to fulfill this task Governmental Program "Accessible Environment" has been prolonged till 2020.

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