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Svitlana SURGOVA

PhD in Pedagogy, Associate Professor, Associate Professor of the Department of Social Work, Pedagogy and Speech Therapy, Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University, 10 68 Desantnikiv str., Mykoliiv, Ukraine, 54003

ORCID: 0000-0002-3840-2924

Olena FAICHUK

PhD in Pedagogy, Associate Professor, Associate Professor of the Department of Social Work, Pedagogy and Speech Therapy, Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University, 10 68 Desantnikiv str., Mykoliiv, Ukraine, 54003

ORCID: 0000-0001-8889-0455

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SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT OF PUBLIC EXCLUDED CONVICTS IN THE STATE PENITENTIARY SERVICE OF UKRAINE

The study is devoted to the study of the problem of socio-psychological support for convicts of the category of “rejected from the general public” in the State Penitentiary Service of Ukraine. The purpose of the article is to analyze effective forms of socio-psychological support for convicts of the category of “rejected from the general public” as conditions for their successful adaptation in society. The research methodology consisted of a set of methods of theoretical (analysis, synthesis, generalization, interpretation) and practical (questionnaire, conversation, interview, direct and indirect pedagogical observation, pedagogical experiment, statistical methods for processing the obtained data) research.

An analysis of the psycho-emotional state of convicts on the eve of the experimental work was carried out. Effective forms of socio-psychological support and the role of a social worker in this process were highlighted. The results of the study on the positive dynamics of the psycho-emotional state of convicts of the category of “rejected from the general public” were analyzed. It was found that positive changes in indicators occurred during the application of effective forms of socio-psychological support, namely, psychological support groups, training programs, and mass events aimed at the creative development of potential in convicts, the formation of spiritual and moral values, ideals, and self-belief in them. In the process of working with the category of “rejected from the general public,” individual psychological personality traits were identified that affect the attitude towards others, the surrounding reality, and oneself. It was found that after the participation of convicts in the category of “rejected from the general public” in forms of socio-psychological support (50%) became calmer, more sociable, and more restrained. There was a decrease in the level of psycho-emotional tension, an increase in self-esteem, a decrease in the number of suicidal signs, a decrease in the level of aggression, and an increase in the level of adaptability in the social environment of the specified category.

The results of the study can be used for practical purposes by social workers and psychologists of institutions in order to improve the process of providing psychological support to this category of convicts, as well as by scientists studying the outlined issues.

Key words: convicted public excluded categories, social worker, subculture, forms of socio-psychological support, psycho-emotional state.

Світлана СУРГОВА

кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри соціальної роботи, педагогіки і логопедії, Чорноморський національний університет імені Петра Могили, вул. 68 Десантників, 10, м. Миколаїв, Україна, 54003

ORCID: 0000-0002-3840-2924

Олена ФАЙЧУК

кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри соціальної роботи, педагогіки і логопедії, Чорноморський національний університет імені Петра Могили, вул. 68 Десантників, 10, м. Миколаїв, Україна, 54003

ORCID: 0000-0001-8889-0455

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СОЦІАЛЬНО-ПСИХОЛОГІЧНА ПІДТРИМКА ЗАСУДЖЕНИХ КАТЕГОРІЇ «ВІДТОРГНУТИХ ВІД ЗАГАЛУ» В ДЕРЖАВНІЙ КРИМІНАЛЬНО-ВИКОНАВЧІЙ СЛУЖБІ УКРАЇНИ

Дослідження присвячено вивченню проблеми соціально-психологічної підтримки засуджених категорії «відторгнута від загалу» в Державній кримінально-виконавчій службі України. Метою статті є аналіз ефективних форм соціально-психологічної підтримки засуджених категорії «відторгнута від загалу» як умови їх успішної адаптації в соціумі. Методологію дослідження склали комплекс методів теоретичного (аналіз, синтез, узагальнення, інтерпретація) та практичного (анкетування, бесіда, інтерв'ю, пряме й опосередковане педагогічне спостереження, педагогічний експеримент, статистичні методи для опрацювання отриманих даних) дослідження.

Здійснено аналіз психоемоційного стану засуджених напередодні експериментальної роботи. Висвітлено ефективні форми соціально-психологічної підтримки, та роль соціального працівника в цьому процесі. Проаналізовано результати дослідження щодо позитивної динаміки психоемоційного стану засуджених категорії «відторгнута від загалу». З'ясовано, що відбулися позитивні зміни показників, в ході застосування ефективних форм соціально-психологічної підтримки, а саме групи психологічної підтримки, тренінгової програми, та проведення масових заходів, які направлені на творчий розвиток потенціалу у засуджених, формування в них духовно-моральних цінностей, ідеалів, віри в себе. Установлено в процесі роботи соціального працівника з категорією «відторгнута від загалу», індивідуально-психологічні риси особистості, які впливають на ставленні до оточуючих, навколишньої дійсності та самого себе. З'ясовано, що після участі засуджених категорії «відторгнута від загалу» у формах соціально-психологічної підтримки (50%) стали більш спокійнішими, комунікабельними, стриманими. Спостерігалось зниження рівня психоемоційної напруги, підвищення самооцінки, зменшення кількості суїцидальних ознак, зниження рівня агресії, підвищення рівня адаптивності в соціальному оточенні зазначеної категорії.

Результати дослідження можуть бути використані у практичних цілях соціальними працівниками та психологами установ з метою покращення процесу надання психологічної підтримки даної категорії засуджених, а також науковцями, що вивчають окреслену проблематику.

Ключові слова: засуджені категорії «відторгнута від загалу», субкультура, форми соціально-психологічної підтримки, психоемоційний стан.

Introduction. Advanced penitentiary practice, international standards for criminal penalties execution prove that social activities with convicts is an objective necessity, since they create conditions for the implementation of their rights, restoration of social justice, prevention of further negative development of the personality, training in non-criminal ways to solve life situations and minimize the negative consequences of imprisonment, contribute to preparation for normal full-fledged social life of persons released from penal institutions (Yakovets, 2011). In recent years, Ukraine has been improving legislation, in particular, bringing it in line with international standards of life. As a result, the activities of the State Penitentiary Service of Ukraine are being optimized in accordance with generally recognized international standards for

the treatment of convicts, where a social worker is essential and the activities are aimed at providing social and psychological support to convicts and overcoming difficult life circumstances in which they appear. This issue is especially crucial for the convicts of the category of "excluded from the public". Public excluded are the convicts who have become victims of violence (including sexual violence) by other convicts, which led to their inclusion in this category. Such persons become objects of constant discrimination (including, unfortunately, by the employees of the State Penitentiary Service), which begins with the quarantine, diagnosis and distribution section. They are kept separately from others (as employees state, primarily in order to ensure an appropriate level of security and protection from violence, since information about

such persons is transmitted very quickly and all "newcomers" already know the so-called informal "status" of each other).

Analysis of recent research and publications.

The above mentioned issue has been considered in the works of many scholars. The relevance of social work in prisons is shown in the works of D. Smith (Smith, 1992), C. Mazza (Mazz, 2008), J. Matejkowski, T. Johnson, M. E. Severson (Matejkowski et al., 2014). The following works are important: devoted to the criminal subculture as a social phenomenon (Zamula et al., 2003); social work with convicts (Tretiak et al., 2013); issues of sexual violence against convicts (Austin, 2006).

Taking into account the rather broad historiography of the issue of social work with convicts, it should be noted that the issues of providing social and psychological support to convicts of the public excluded category remain relevant.

The article is aimed at analyzing effective forms of social and psychological support for public excluded convicts as a condition for their successful adaptation in society. This goal is realized against the background of the following research tasks: to characterize the forms of social and psychological support of the public excluded category; to carry out an analysis and identify their effectiveness.

Presentation of the main research material.

"Crime, like any social phenomenon, in addition to its external, objective indicators, has an internal (subjective) content, which is expressed in the foundations, norms, values, behavioral models prevailing in the criminal environment. In the most concentrated form, they manifest themselves in places of imprisonment. In science, these phenomena are called "social deviations", "antisocial lifestyle" and "criminal subculture" (Criminal Code of Ukraine, 2001).

Considering the category of convicts rejected by the public, we came to the conclusion that on the basis of criminal rules and prison traditions, self-regulation of relationships between convicts is carried out, who introduce inhumane methods of influence and oppress their human dignity, and in some cases demonstrate arbitrariness and cruelty by which a serious social problem is realized, which causes many other individual and social adversities. The awareness was formed that it is necessary not only to punish the culprits, but to socially and psychologically support and guide this category.

This group of convicts is in a kind of "double isolation": first they are rejected by society, and then expelled from their ranks by their own community. The convicts of this category are saved only by the fact that informal rules of conduct prohibit communication with them. They are untouchable. In the barracks, they lie down at the door, in the cell - near the toilet or under the bed. Sometimes they are forced to build screens in order to completely isolate from the prison outcast. There are "sex slave tables and benches" in the dining room, where only "those who are cut off from the public" eat (Zhygarenko, 2014).

According to our observations, convicts who are in this category are in a state of constant stress, oppression and discrimination, which as a result leads to giving up their individuality. For this category, conventional methods of social and psychological assistance will not be effective. The assistance for this category requires a special approach, systematicity, individuality and tolerant attitude, as well as the work to restore the mechanisms of self-identification, self-confidence, belief in one's dignity, the ability to take responsibility for oneself and one's life, which is possible in the process of social and psychological support.

To answer the question about the change in the psycho-emotional state of convicts of the public rejected category in the process of their participation in the proposed activities of social and psychological support, a thorough analysis of the data obtained during the ascertaining and formative stages of the experiment was carried out.

To determine the changes in the psycho-emotional state of public excluded convicts according to the criteria of reducing the aggressive reaction level, physical aggression manifestations, hostility reactions, hatred, anger, revenge desire, resentment, guilt and actions that can lead to suicide, the differences in the levels of these criteria before the start of participation in activities of social and psychological support and after its completion, were checked. To test the hypothesis, the Bass-Darka method (diagnosis of the state of aggression, hostility, auto-aggression), the Eysenck method (the study of individual psychological personality traits), the "Prognosis" method (identification of persons with signs of neuro-psychic instability) were used.

During the work, the effectiveness of the activities of social and psychological support

provided to convicts of the public excluded category by the NGO organization "Penitentiary Initiative" was assessed, according to changes in the level of indicators of psycho-emotional state: a decrease in the level of psycho-emotional stress, an increase in self-esteem, a decrease in the number of suicidal signs (thoughts, intentions, actions), a decrease in the level of aggression, an increase in the level of adaptability in the social environment; a comparative assessment of the psycho-emotional state of public rejected convicts at the beginning of the experiment and after their participation in activities of social and psychological support was provided.

Having analyzed the results of the research on changes in the psycho-emotional state of the public excluded convicts, in the process of socio-psychological support, we found out that at the ascertaining stage of the experiment, the level of physical aggression in the convicts was 70%, while at the formative stage it decreased to 40%, indirect aggression at the ascertaining stage was 70%, turned to 30%, the respective indicators in the course of the research showed that irritability

was 54%, at the end of the experiment it was 34%, at the beginning of the study, negativism was 40%, at the formative stage it changed to 20%. The given data indicate the positive results of the work carried out during the formative experiment to improve the psycho-emotional state of public excluded convicts (Fig. 1).

According to the results of the research, at the beginning of the experiment, the interviewed convicts of the category of "rejected from the public" had a high rate of resentment, guilt, that indicates that the surge of aggression was directed, first of all, at oneself, which may end in a suicide attempt, while after participating in forms of socio-psychological support, we see a decrease in these indicators (Fig. 2).

In the course of our work, we identified individual psychological personality traits that affect the attitude towards others, the surrounding reality and oneself, we conducted a survey, with the help of which we found out that among the public rejected convicts, 60% have a restless, changeable, impulsive, anxious, pessimistic, uncommunicative, passive, aggressive, restless,

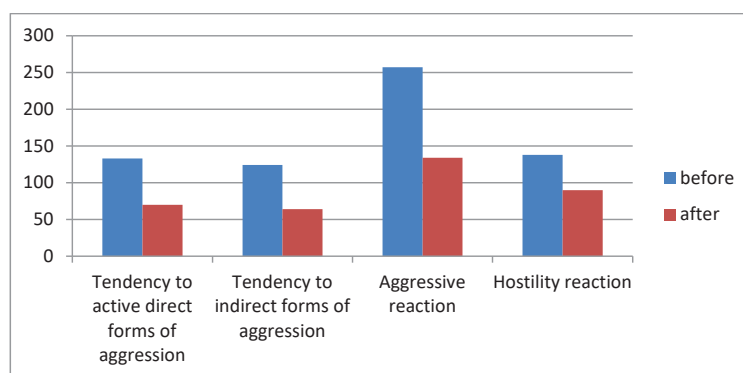


Fig. 1. Comparative data on changes in the psycho-emotional state of convicts according to the results (ascertaining and formative experiment)



Fig. 2. Comparative dynamics of changes in the scale of auto-aggression

closed personality type, 40% have a reliable, restrained, rigid, carefree personality type. After the participation of the public excluded convicts in the activities of social and psychological support, 50% became calmer, more sociable, restrained and reliable.

According to the results of the "Prognosis" questionnaire at the beginning of the experiment, we found out that 55% of respondents had unsatisfactory neuropsychological instability, a high probability of neuropsychological breakdowns, 45% had satisfactory neuropsychological stability, but neuropsychological breakdowns were possible, especially in extreme circumstances. After participating in forms of socio-psychological support, 70% have calmer behavior and a low probability of neuropsychological breakdowns.

The results obtained give us the opportunity to assert that the experimental work had a positive tendency to change the psycho-emotional state and social adaptation of public excluded convicts in the process of using effective activities of social and psychological support.

In order to identify effective activities of social and psychological support for public excluded convicts, an experiment was conducted, the purpose of which was to trace the dynamics of changes in the level of aggression, hostility, depression, nervous breakdowns in the process of working with them in various forms of social and psychological support, namely the work of a psychological support group, trainings, public events.

With public excluded convicts a survey was conducted, which made allowed to assess the level of influence of various forms of work with the target group on changes in certain psycho-emotional states of the persons who participated in the 5-point scale survey.

Our experience suggests that psychological support groups for inmates categorized as "rejected by society" provide a space of complete trust among the participants. This environment facilitates the exchange of emotional experiences and enables the resolution of specific issues that are difficult or impossible to address alone. The mechanisms involved in group sessions include: firstly, it is a social assessment and awareness of the problem; secondly, socio-psychological activation; thirdly, it is the exchange of socio-psychological information at the cognitive, emotional and behavioral levels.

The initial sessions of psychological support groups aim to inform inmates about the prevention of HIV, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. This information is no less important for convicts than psychological support, which will be provided to them in the future. This makes it possible to evaluate the group members during this time and gain the necessary level of trust from them, without which the group itself will not be able to progress.

In the course of the group's work, the facilitator makes sure that the mechanisms of social evaluation and awareness of the problem are involved; socio-psychological activation; exchange of socio-psychological information at the cognitive, emotional and behavioral levels. Based on the answers received after the survey, which made it possible to assess the level of influence of the psychological support group on changes in certain psychosocial states in convicts of the category of "excluded from the public", we found out that the level of psycho-emotional stress decreased by 100%, self-esteem increased by 80%, the number of suicidal signs (thoughts, intentions, actions) decreased by 90%, the level of aggression decreased, and the level of adaptability in the social environment increased by 90%. This indicates the effectiveness of this form of work.

Thus, a psychological support group is a source of valuable information and new knowledge, and most importantly, new experience in solving important issues. For public excluded convicts it is a safe place where each participant is given the opportunity to express their feelings and share their experience in overcoming difficult life situations. At such meetings, there is no assessment of "what are you", here the participants are accepted as they are, as self-disclosure is practiced, which allows to create a trusting atmosphere. The social worker motivates the group members to further sessions and does everything possible to build a safe environment of trust, in which the convict can open up and move from the situation of a victim to an active position of an actor who changes own life for the better.

The next effective form of socio-psychological support, in our opinion, is training, which ensures active participation and creative interaction of convicts of the category of "excluded from the public" between themselves and the facilitator.

This approach allows to believe in own abilities and solve many issues, and it also enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of psychological support groups. At the trainings, a set of necessary and sufficient for the implementation of psychosocial skills is mastered; the skills are practiced at trainings: communication skills; own decision-making mechanism, development of criticality, interpersonal interaction skills, the ability to defend own point of view, the ability to self-control, self-regulation skills in stressful and extreme situations, skills to solve the problem of bad mood, sadness, the problem of meaningful life.

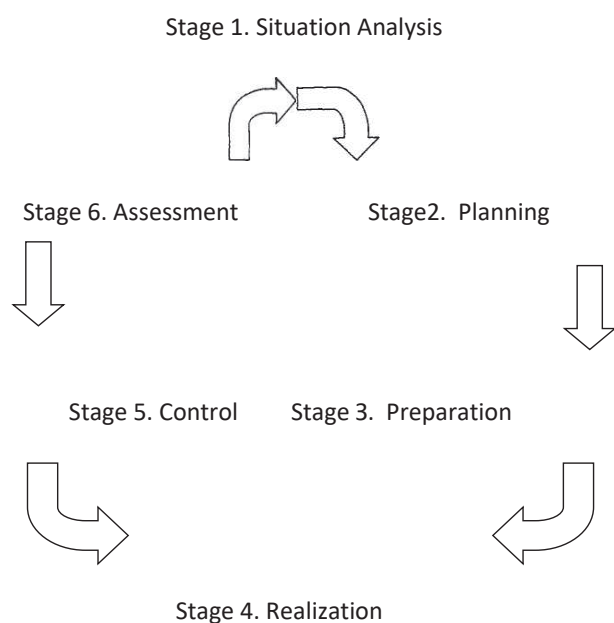


Fig. 3. Training Cycle Stages

This framework is effective for both a large 3-5 day training program and a 90-minute session. The primary goal set by the trainer was to draw the attention of inmates categorized as "rejected by society" to the idea that education should aim for more than merely providing information. It seeks to change attitudes of the convicted towards their problems and encourage them to reconsider their behavior. The support from peers equipped with sufficient knowledge can help inmates make positive decisions about preserving their own health. A crucial aspect of these sessions is training counselors using the "peer-to-peer" model. Since project staff cannot visit penitentiary institutions more than once or twice a month, and the group of the public excluded remains highly closed off, it is essential to have trained inmates at each institution who can provide accurate and

appropriate answers regarding health preservation in incarceration settings. Therefore, it was decided to teach the basics of counseling to the public excluded convicts, who expressed a desire to provide information assistance to their peers. For this purpose, trainings were held in each institution on the following topics: "Communication skills", "Counseling", "Active listening", etc.

For example, one training session focused on the topic "Peer-to-Peer Counseling." The event aimed to teach the participants of the group of the public excluded convicts the principles of individual and group counseling. Since many from this category are unable to attend training due to work obligations, it is vital that those present acquire quality counseling skills to build effective consultancy work and provide accurate information to those needing health safe guidance in imprisonment.

Our experience demonstrates that the core strength of the training approach lies in helping inmates discover and mobilize their own resources to set life goals, break the cycle of discrimination in which they occur, and regain the ability to take responsibility for their lives and well-being.

Thus, the participation in training fosters increased self-esteem, reduced aggression, and improved adaptability in social environments. This confirms that training is an effective form of socio-psychological support for changing the psycho-emotional state.

In our opinion, another effective form of social and psychological support for the category of "excluded from the public" is participation in public events. This form of work helps to solve a number of problems, namely the way to get rid of conflicts and strong emotions, an accelerator of the therapeutic process, a disciplining and controlling "force"; a means of developing attention to feelings, enhancing the sense of one's own personal value and increasing artistic competence. One of such forms can be considered the creation of a theater as a new interesting and effective form of work with convicts in places of detention. Such work is one of the forms of art therapy, which is actively recommended by psychologists as an effective way to get rid of conflicts and strong emotions, an accelerator of the therapeutic process, a disciplining and controlling "force"; a means of developing attention to feelings, enhancing the sense of one's own personal value and increasing artistic competence.

For some, this became a way to prove to their family that they are not quite a "lost person" and give a reason, perhaps for the first time in their lives, to be proud of themselves, many have significantly increased their self-esteem, as well as self-belief and belief in their own potential to change something in their lives for the better – to return to society after being released as a full member of it. The members of the public rejected group on their own initiative held an impromptu concert for their peers. In a friendly atmosphere, they recited their poems, sang songs to the guitar, and told parables. This form of work showed that the participants have reached such a level of trust and openness that they do not hesitate to open up to each other, to demonstrate their abilities. Such behavior is a great achievement for this category, and such impromptu events help to create a trusting atmosphere in the team and promote group unity.

A very significant event in the life of a psychological support group from one of the penal colonies of the Mykolaiv region was the final of the contest "Prison's Got Talent", which was devoted to December 1 "AIDS Day". The convict of the public excluded category took part in this competition on a general basis, and took the 3rd place among 10 finalists. The convict presented his own poem dedicated to his belief in love and justice. According to the jury and the audience, it was one of the most sincere and touching performances for the convict himself, such a high assessment of his work became, according to him, one of the brightest and most memorable events during the years of imprisonment.

Sports events such as, various sports competitions, football, tennis, chess, backgammon tournaments are held in places of detention. The goal is the formation of a healthy lifestyle, the ability to interact in a team, unity, positive emotions, especially after the presentation of medals and certificates. The participants perceive the competition with inspiration, they have a lot of positive emotions, this contributes to the unity of the group and raises the self-esteem of the participants. It was a surprise for the organizers of the competition when one of the participants, who took the first place in the table tennis competition, was moved to tears by the fact that he received the award. Later, he explained that he grew up in a large family and never received gifts, especially beautifully packaged ones. And the fact that he

was able to earn a gift with his talent became a real event for him.

Participation in mass events allows convicts to be more successful, protected, adapt to the tense conditions of the institution, quickly go through the process of re-socialization after release, as well as take care of the health of people in difficult life circumstances in an interesting and understandable way.

The results of the survey indicate that 80% have reduced the level of psycho-emotional stress, 100% have increased self-esteem, 90% have decreased the number of suicidal signs (thoughts, intentions, and actions), 90% have reduced the level of aggression, and 100% have increased the level of adaptability in the social environment.

Based on the data obtained from the answers of convicts, we determined the levels of effectiveness of changes in indicators of psycho-emotional state due to participation in forms of social and psychological support. The results are presented in the table (Table 1.).

The diagnostics data of psycho-emotional state indicators after the participation in the activities of socio-psychological support at the formative stage of the experiment indicate that as a result of the participation in these activities, there is a change in all the criteria that were measured: a decrease in the level of psycho-emotional stress, an increase in self-esteem, a decrease in the number of suicidal signs (thoughts, intentions, actions), a decrease in the level of aggression and an increase in the level of adaptability in the social environment.

The data obtained indicate that it is impossible to give preference to any one method or technique, considering it a universal cure for any problems. The impact on the convict of the category of "rejected from the public" is most effective when various forms of work and methods are used, taking into account the conditions of the situation, the experience gained, the factors that strengthen the client's motivation for the result and have proven their effectiveness in the course of experimental work.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. In the course of our experiment, we found that socio-psychological support is a special space created for self-knowledge of the individual, disclosure of opportunities and resources, help and support in difficult life circumstances, providing effective social and psychological support to people

Table 1

**Dynamics of Changes in the Psycho-Emotional State of Inmates
in Socio-Psychological Support Activities**

Indicators of psycho-emotional state	Psychological support group	Training	Public events
Psycho-emotional stress level reduction	100%	80%	80%
Self-esteem increase	80%	100%	100%
Suicidal signs (thoughts, intentions, actions) reduction	90%	90%	90%
Aggression level reduction	100%	90%	90%
Adaptiveness to social environment increase	90%	100%	100%

serving sentences, and especially to convicts from the public excluded category, providing assistance in understanding the situation and choosing an adequate strategy of behavior.

We have analyzed and identified effective forms of social and psychological support. We found out that conducting psychological support groups helps to restore the mechanisms of self-identification, belief in oneself, one's dignity, the ability to take responsibility for oneself and one's life, as well as a sense of ownership of one's own life. The next effective form of providing social and psychological support is training, which helps in finding and releasing one's own resources for setting life goals and objectives, getting out of the circle of discrimination in which they are, as well as restoring the ability to take responsibility for their life and well-being. The experience of our work convinces that public events are also one of the effective forms of social and psychological support of this category, which are aimed at the creative development of potential in convicts, the formation of spiritual and moral values, ideals, self-belief in them through the creation of theatrical groups, preparation and conduct of theatrical performances on socially important topics (value, life, help, kindness, parents, love, life in society), training of consultants on the principle of "peer-to-peer" from among convicts, to conduct information and educational work in penitentiary institutions, promotion of a healthy lifestyle.

Having analyzed the results obtained on changes in the psycho-emotional state of public excluded convicts in the process of socio-psychological support, we found out that there were positive changes in indicators, in the course of the use of effective forms of socio-psychological support of public excluded convicts, namely (50%) became calmer, more communicative, restrained and reliable.

According to the results of the questionnaire at the beginning of the experiment, we found out that 55% of respondents have unsatisfactory neuropsychological instability, a high probability of neuropsychological breakdowns, 45% have satisfactory neuropsychological stability, but neuropsychological breakdowns are possible, especially in extreme circumstances. After participating in forms of socio-psychological support, 70% have calmer behavior and a low probability of neuropsychological breakdowns.

The study does not cover all the aspects of this issue. Further socio-psychological research involves the study of the theoretical and methodological foundations of socio-psychological support of public excluded convicts. The results of the research can be used for practical purposes by social workers and psychologists of various institutions, as well as by students studying in relevant specialties, by public workers when planning work in relevant public organizations on the territory of Ukraine, for the research purposes by scientists studying the issue of social and psychological support of public excluded convicts.

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