

Trauma-Focused Group Intervention for Refugee Minors: My Way (Mein Weg)

Acronym

MEIN WEG (my way)

Keywords

Trauma, Refugees, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Group Intervention, Youth Welfare Services

Project Management

Prof. Dr. Dipl.-Psych. Lutz Goldbeck, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry/Psychotherapy Ulm

Cooperation Partners

Cooperating youth welfare institutions: Sankt Hildegard Memmingen, Erzbischöfliches Kinderheim Haus Nazareth Sigmaringen, Eva Heidenheim gGmbH, AWO Augsburg, Paulinenpflege Winnenden, Jugendhilfe Aktiv Esslingen, Diakonische Jugendhilfe Region Heilbronn

Project Term

01.01.2016-31.08.2018

Link Project Website

treatchildtrauma.de/mein-weg

Background & Aim of the Project

Experiencing traumatic events such as physical violence, war experiences, life-threatening flight situations or abuse experiences can have serious negative physical and psychological consequences. After experiencing such events, children and adolescents often develop Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms (PTSS), depressive or anxiety symptoms, which are a severe psychosocial burden.

In this context, studies have shown that particularly minor refugees are strongly affected, which can lead to an increased risk of mental disorder. An international survey shows that about 60% of refugee minors are suffering from post-traumatic stress symptoms. However, only about 4% of the traumatized minor refugees currently receive psychological assistance due to various barriers such as inadequate access to health care, lack of funding for interpreters in therapy or culture and language problems. The development of effective interventions for young refugees is therefore essential.

Although, particularly minor refugees in Germany receive child and youth welfare care, so that in this context there are opportunities for trauma-focused support for traumatized refugees. The project MEIN WEG is dedicated to the development and evaluation of a trauma-focused group intervention for (unaccompanied) young refugees in youth welfare institutions.

The intervention aims at coping with the often stressful and traumatic experiences of the refugee minors and is offered to the participants in addition to their usual pedagogical care in the youth welfare institutions. The intervention will be implemented sustainably in the cooperating institutions upon successful evaluation.

Description of the Project

The contents of the group intervention were derived from evidence-based trauma therapies and adapted to the target group in terms of language. The main components include psychoeducation, relaxation, trauma narrative and cognitive restructuring. The intervention will be carried out by trained and supervised specialists of the youth welfare institutions. In a pilot phase, the intervention was developed in close cooperation with pedagogues and carried out and evaluated in six youth welfare institutions. This showed first promising indications of the effectiveness of the intervention. A total of seven youth welfare institutions from Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria were then invited to participate in a randomized controlled trial. After an initial screening, 99 young refugees from these institutions were allocated either to an intervention group or to the so far conventional, usually not trauma-focused, pedagogical care. Provided the evaluation shows positive results, the intervention program will be implemented in a sustainable manner in the cooperating institutions and disseminated to further youth welfare institutions in the final project phase.

Publications and created materials

Pfeiffer, E. & Goldbeck, L. (2017). Evaluation of a trauma-focused group intervention for unaccompanied young refugees: A pilot study. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, in press.

Contact Address

M.Sc.-Psych. Elisa Pfeiffer

Phone: 0731-500-62626

Mail: TCT.KJP@uniklinik-ulm.de

Funded by

World Childhood Foundation and Otto Käßbohrer Foundation Ulm