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**SOCIAL ASSISTANCE UNDER THE SOCIAL CONTRACT IN LENINGRAD REGION: OPINIONS OF RECIPIENTS AND SPECIALISTS**

The state pays considerable attention to the development of state social assistance under the social contract. In accordance with the Order of the President of the Russian Federation Pr-622, p. 1b the Government of the Russian Federation monitors the effectiveness of measures to support citizens who lost their jobs after March 1, 2022, including the provision of social assistance under the social contract to such citizens.

Numerous works of Russian researchers are devoted to the analysis of state social assistance under the social contract: (Prokofieva L.M., Mironova A.A.; 2022). (Bobkov V.N., Dzhandosova F.S., Buchkova Ya.Yu., 2015), (Korchagina I.I., Migranova L.A., 2013), (Ovcharova L.N. et al ., 2013) and other.

Since 2021, the Leningrad Region has been receiving additional finance from the federal budget to provide social assistance under the social contract. This helps to expand the coverage of low-income households with assistance under the social contract, but leads to the extra workload on social protection specialists and the necessity for change in approaches to providing such assistance.

In this connection, the purpose of this study is to form the proposals for improving the process of providing state social assistance under the social contract in the Leningrad Region based on the results of a survey of recipients and specialists involved in providing such assistance.

The study was conducted in August 2022 in four districts of the Leningrad region: Vyborgsky Gatchinsky, Kirishsky and Lodeynopolsky districts. 12 focus groups were held, in which 52 people took part.

In addition, 7 in-depth interviews were conducted with 8 specialists from social protection centers directly involved in the social contract program.

The problems of awareness regarding the social contract program, bottlenecks in the process of obtaining assistance, including difficulties associated with collection of documents, verification of information about applicants, the formation of a social adaptation program and control over its execution were discussed during the focus groups and interviews.

Based on the results of focus groups and in-depth interviews conducted the bottlenecks in the process of providing social assistance under the social contract were identified and a number of recommendations were provided.