



# FINNISH FAMILY CENTER MODEL

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# Structure of the presentation

1. Introduction
2. Finnish family center model
3. Services and activities of the family center
4. Key factors for successful family center service provision
5. Conclusions



# Diversity of Finnish families with children

Population: 5,5 million inhabitants

Totally 571 470 families with children in 2015

Married couple	60 %
Cohabiting couple	19 %
Mother and child	18 %
Father and child	3 %

Families are all similar – but in a unique way:

Blended families - 52 000 i.e. 9 % of all families with children

Multicultural and refugee families - 32 000 refugees in 2015 (2014: refugees 3650)

Parents with same sex (registered) 550 /2015

Families with children with special needs

# Transition to parenthood

- Transition to parenthood takes place later than ever before in Finland .
- FIRST-TIME PARENTS (a new baby) are older than before. Average age of
  - FIRST-TIME mothers (of the first born baby) 29 years
  - FIRST –TIME fathers 30 years
- NUMBER OF BABIES born has decreased.
  - In 2015 only **55 040 children** were born
  - in 2010 still 60 980 babies were welcomed to Finnish families
- TOTAL FERTILITY RATE has decreased within five years from 1.87 in 2010 to **1.65 in 2015**.
- Reasons behind the alarming trend:
  - MORE WOMEN /COUPLES are unsure about childbearing and CHOOSE MORE OFTEN CHILDLESSNESS – a life without children.
  - More mothers /families decide not to get the SECOND BABY.

# Intergenerational transmission of risks in family environment

Childhood circumstances and conditions,  
like

- severe or chronic illness
- mental health problems
- long-term unemployment
- divorce
- poverty
- death

...have a strong impact on well-being of children...

...and low socio-economic status and lower education of the parent increase child's risk for exclusion. (Paananen et. al 2016)



# Use and access to services - families with small children

## Families use

- Maternity and child health clinics
- Early childhood education and care services
- Dental care
- Open kindergarten, family cafes

...and for the majority of the families access to the services is easy

Service	Use of services (%)	Easy access to services (%)
Early childhood education and care		
Open kindergarten, family cafes	74,00	94,00
Kindergarten	72,00	92,00
Health care services		
Child health clinics	94,00	94,00
School health care	41,00	89,00
Dental care	84,00	75,00
Speech therapy	19,00	66,00
Psychiatry services	5,00	62,00
Social services		
Family work	4,00	47,00
Child welfare	5,00	55,00
Family counselling	20,00	77,00
		(N=1125)



# Support provided insufficient and inadequate for some families

- One third of parents in need for intervention / more targeted support experienced they did not get support at all or support provided was inadequate in regard to their expectations.
  - Family counselling, child welfare services, school psychology
- Support provided in services was experienced as inadequate in case of
  - Single parent families
  - Families with low income
  - Families with health problems
  - Families with severe illness or death of a family member
  - Families with intimate relationship problems

## Key conclusions of recent research

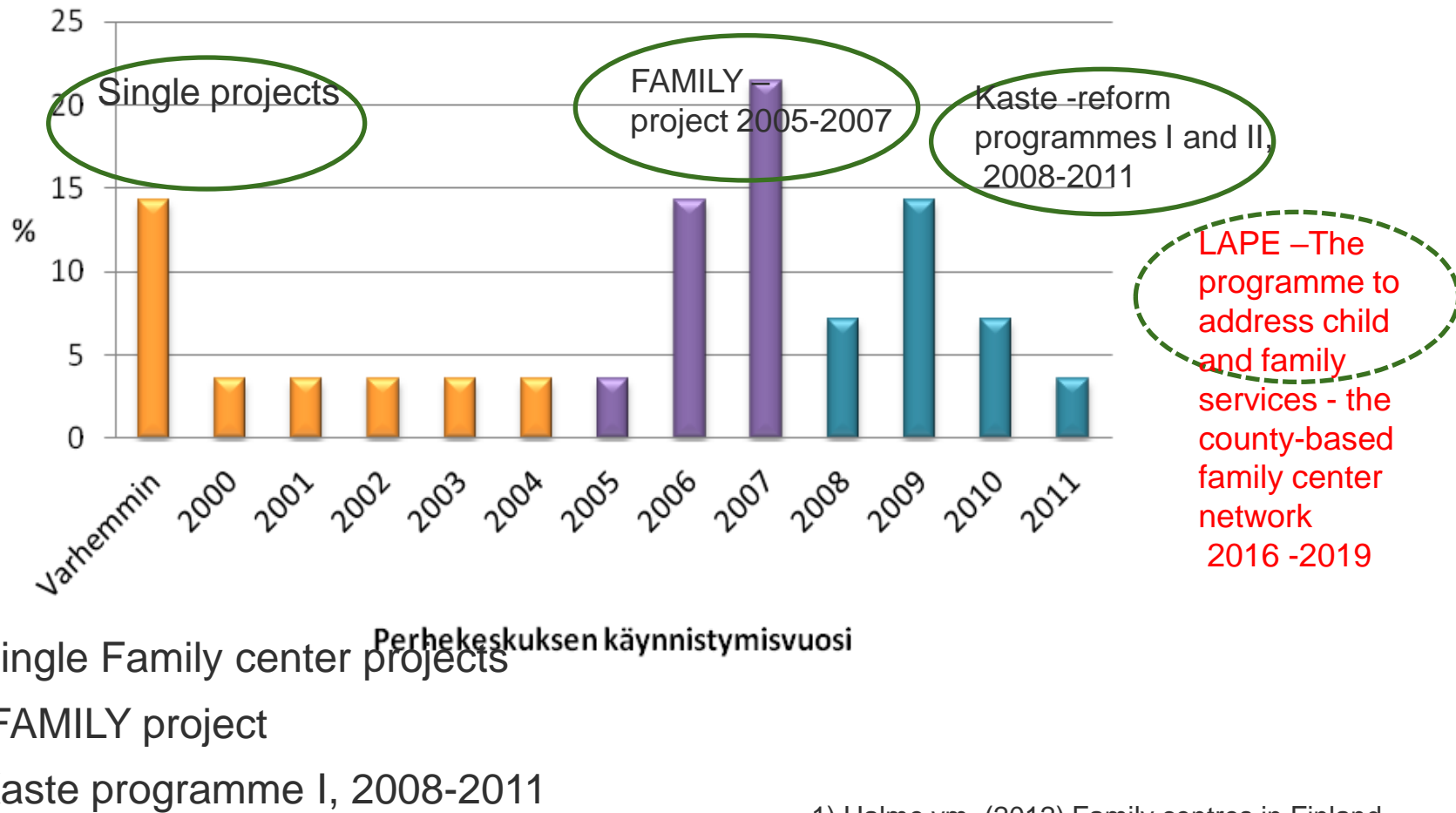
- Majority of the families are satisfied with basic services
  - mostly free of charge and relatively easy to access
- However, access to more targeted services, provision of extra help, care and support do not meet needs of all families
- Service system is sector-based, cooperation of services is insufficient and integrative service management non-existent
- There are differences between municipalities



# Finnish family center model



# Some steps of Finnish family center development 1)



1) Halme ym. (2012) Family centres in Finland. Services, cooperation and management.

# Number of family centers

Municipal family centers: 62

NGO-based family houses: 25

Family cafes, family clubs run by  
NGOs and others: over 500

Number of family centres is  
increasing.



# Multidisciplinary family center

Family centre survey (2012):  
Five types of family centers:

1. Multidisciplinary family center in same location
2. Multidisciplinary family center, network-based  
- Combines all key services and actors
3. Welfare health care clinics
4. Open ECEC –service –based
5. Specialized family support center

Multidisciplinary  
family center,  
network-based

Mother health  
care clinics

Child health  
care clinics

Open day care  
center/services

Preventive  
social and  
health care  
services

NGO and other  
community  
actors

(Halme, Nina; Kekkonen, Marjatta; Perälä, Marja-Leena (2012). Family centres in Finland.

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# Some findings about the multidisciplinary family center

Of all family centre models, multidisciplinary family centre is the most effective ...

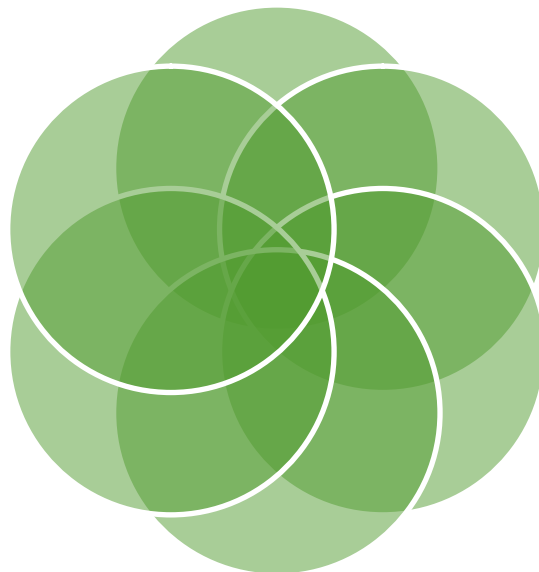
...and the role of parents, families and children is vital and involvement one of the key principles.

...where NGOs and other partners are involved – NGOs and parishes are vital partners of the family centre

..in form of parental involvement and peer support...

...low- threshold meeting places and social networks..

...as well as in integrating universal services with early support services nearby families and children..



# The Programme to address child and family services (LAPE)

## Structure of reorganised child and family services

### Low-threshold services

#### Family centre model

- maternity and child health clinics, family work
- early childhood education
- digital service possibilities
- services provided by organisations, parishes and peer support
- support to parenting and couple relationships
- divorce services

#### School supporting children's and young people's wellbeing

- student welfare services:
  - school and student healthcare
  - psychologists and school social workers
- peer student and tutor schemes
- KiVa School antibullying programme

### Specialised services

Child protection  
Specialised healthcare  
Services for people with disabilities



### Demanding services

Demanding specialised services in child protection

Demanding psychiatric services for children and young people

Services for people within the scope of criminal sanctions

Demanding services for immigrants and asylum seekers

Demanding services for intoxicant abusers

### Examples of services

# National Guidelines for Finnish Family Center Model



- I. Definition of services in family centers
- II. Open meeting place for children and families
- III. Agreements of roles and tasks of NGOs and parishes in family center network
- IV. Main tasks and functions
- V. Operational principles
- VI. Easy access to services, assessment of service needs and help and support provided
- VII. Management, coordination and cooperation
- VIII. Integrative practices with schools, study health care and special services
- IX. Coordination of county-based family center development structure



# National guidelines for Finnish Family Center Model



**The family centre model refers to a body of local services comprising services for children and families that foster growth and development and provide early support and care. Family centres provide services for all children and families, including diverse forms of families, families with a disabled child and immigrants.**

# National guidelines for Finnish Family Center Model

Family center involves a new way of networking the currently fragmented services for children and families and coordinating them in a child and family-oriented way so that every child and family receives the support and help they may require.

Family centre model coordinates

- 1) health and social services of children and families provided by the (future) counties
- 2) Early childhood education services and other services provided by the municipalities as well as
- 3) the activities of NGO organisations and parishes.

# National Guidelines for Finnish Family Center Model

## Family center service network

Support from special services, consultations and outreach services

**Social services for families with children**

- Family work, home help, social work for families with children, child guidance and family counselling

**Health services for families with children**

- incl. maternity and child health clinics, doctor's and psychologist's services, physio and speech therapy

**Meeting place**

**Child and family**

**Meeting place**

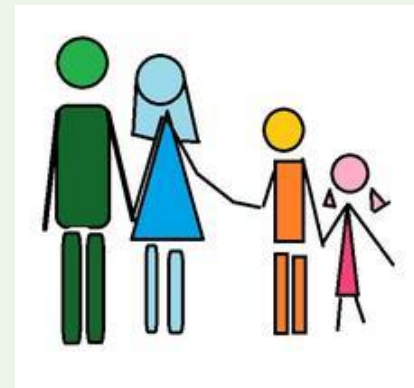
**Activities and services of NGO organisations and parishes**

**Early childhood education, other activities fostering health and welfare in the municipality**

## Guidelines: Goals

- Strengthen resources and involvement of all children and families
- Provide help and support at an earlier stage
- Build a child and family-oriented body of services that fosters wellbeing and health
- Provide meeting places for everyone to attend.
- Network and coordinate public social, health and education services, activities of non-governmental organisations and parishes as well as volunteers
- Combine professional expertise and resources
- Reform the operating service culture

# Family centre helps all families to cope



# Support for parenthood and intimate relationship



Support for positive attachment and good interaction with a baby/ child

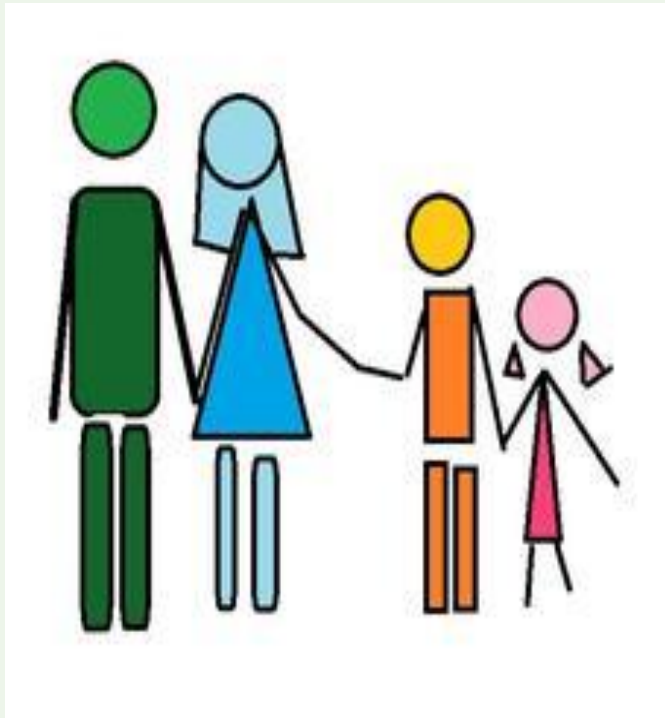
Support for parenthood throughout the whole childhood

Support provided in different environments, life-situations and tailored for diverse families

Digital tools; chats, net-clinics, Facebook –groups, game-based parenting support programmes

Evidence-based programmes and practices

# Support at home



- Home help at an early stage
- Home help in case of exhaustion, post-natal depression, illness or other unforeseen event
- Family work; counselling and guidance at home in minor everyday issues or psychosocial problems



# Early support for divorcing parents

Piloting preventive model for divorcing couples in order to promote mutually shared custody of children

Unite on local level family, relationship and divorce counselling services of municipalities, parishes and NGOs

Development of digital services, information, peer support services for divorcing parents

Parenting plan for divorcing parents = agreement concerning custody of children



# Support for multicultural and refugee families

Family centers

Function as information centers for refugee and immigrant families with children

Take into consideration special service needs of multicultural families

Take responsibility for planning, monitoring and updating the integration plan of refugee families



# Universal support for all families in open meeting places



- Open meeting place for anyone to pop up at any time
- Group-based parent support activities provided by professionals
- Play activities and ECE - environments for children
- Events, happenings, peer support arranged by organizations, parishes and volunteers

# Key factors for successful family center service provision

1. Written goals and action plan
  - vision
  - Operational principles
2. Crossectional cooperation structures
  - steering team /group
  - coordinator
  - multiprofessional team
3. Agreements and principles concerning cooperation
  - ECEC services vs. health and social services
  - Non-governemental organizations
  - multiprofessional cooperation as a whole



# Key factors for successful family center

## 4. Strategy of family center as a low-threshold service

- Involvement of families and children
- social network
- peer group activities and peer support



## 5. Target-group interventions and specialized services

- Good practices of early interventions
- multidisciplinary assessment of service needs
- facilitating access to services
- appointing a person in charge
- counselling and guidance



# Conclusions



Family centre strengthens those factors in families, which protect health and well-being of children. Family centre prevents and intervenes at early stage when there are signs of accumulation, continuation or intergeneration transition of riskfactors.



Family centre is a modern way to integrate health, social and early childhood education services and NGO actors in the united multidisiplinary service network.



Family centre is a place for families and children to play, engage, participate and get peer support as well as help, care and services on a low-threshold.



# Finland celebrates 100 years of independence in 2017





# Thank you for your attention!

We are developing family centres in Finland:

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# Litterature and more information

- [http://www.thl.fi/fi\\_FI/web/kasvunkumppanit-fi](http://www.thl.fi/fi_FI/web/kasvunkumppanit-fi)
- [http://uit.no/ansatte/organisasjon/artikkel?p\\_menu=28723&p\\_lang=2&p\\_document\\_id=139730&p\\_dimension\\_id=88117](http://uit.no/ansatte/organisasjon/artikkel?p_menu=28723&p_lang=2&p_document_id=139730&p_dimension_id=88117)
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- <http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publikationer/2012-701>
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