

**KAPITEL 1 / CHAPTER 1 ¹****SOCIAL WORK WITH PARTICIPANTS OF COMBAT ACTIONS:
COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT AND LEGAL PROTECTION****DOI: 10.30890/2709-2313.2025-41-08-023****Introduction**

The military conflict between Russia and Ukraine led to an unprecedented mobilization and the formation of a powerful army of defenders. Millions of Ukrainians have gone through the crucible of hostilities, receiving not only physical but also deep psychological trauma. After returning to peaceful life, they face new challenges that go beyond personal difficulties and turn into a large-scale social problem for the entire country.

Combatants (CBD) are a key category of individuals defined by the Law of Ukraine «On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection» (Pro status veteraniv viiny..., 1993). According to Article 5 of this Law, combatants (CBD) include individuals who directly participated in combat missions to defend the Homeland as part of military units, particularly in repelling the armed aggression of the Russian Federation. This special legal status provides them with a significant scope of social guarantees and compensations from the state. These benefits include medical care, rehabilitation, utilities benefits, subsidized travel, land allotments, and the right to priority employment.

Participation in combat is closely linked to the concept of 'extreme experience.' In the scientific community, this term is viewed more broadly than just 'post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)' (Berezyuk, Filonenko & Kulakov, 2025; Karpenko, 2024; Chebotnikova, Dzhigurda & Muzychko, 2023). It encompasses the entire spectrum of profound psychological, physiological, and social changes that can leave an imprint on an individual's psyche and behavior. Below (Table 1) are the main signs that may indicate the impact of such an experience on combatants. It's important to note that

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these signs can manifest differently and with varying intensity, and their presence requires attention from specialists.

Table 1 – Signs of Extreme Experience in Combatants

Category of Signs	Description
1. Psychological	Intrusive memories (flashbacks, nightmares); avoidance of trauma reminders; negative changes in thinking and mood (detachment, loss of interest); alterations in arousal (irritability, sleep problems, hypervigilance); emotional numbing (anesthesia).
2. Behavioral	Aggressive/impulsive behavior; substance abuse; social isolation; employment/education problems; relationship difficulties.
3. Physiological	Chronic fatigue; sleep problems; somatic complaints (headaches, unexplained pains); changes in appetite/weight; increased sensitivity to noise/light.
4. Social	Difficulties with adapting to civilian life; problems with law enforcement; loss of social support; financial difficulties; stigmatization/discrimination.

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While a significant portion of research (Sopilko, 2025; Muzychko, 2024) focuses on the psychological problems of combatants, it's crucial to understand that these aspects are inextricably linked to social work. Indeed, many psychological difficulties faced by defenders have social roots. That's precisely why scholars (Arkhypova, Bik, Blinov & Timkin, 2021; **Krymchak**, 2024; Pavlenko A. & Stashuk O., 2025) rightly consider social work with combatants within the context of socio-psychological support.

Socio-psychological support is a comprehensive system of measures aimed at maintaining the social and psychological well-being of combatants at all stages – from preparation for service, during service, and especially after returning to civilian life. Key aspects of this vision include (Sotsialno-psykholohichna reabilitatsiia veteraniv, 2025; Sotsialni posluhy dlia veteraniv..., 2024):

– prevention and early intervention, which involves psychological preparation of the individual for participation in combat operations, early detection of signs of



maladaptation, and providing assistance directly in the conflict zone or immediately after rotation;

- diagnostics and monitoring, which includes the use of reliable psychological tools to assess the condition of combatants, predict risks, and track the dynamics of their condition;

- recovery and rehabilitation, which are aimed both at relieving symptoms and restoring personal resources, social connections, and forming adaptive behavioral strategies.

In social work with combatants (Bereziuk, 2025), their families play a crucial role. This view is based on the assertion that an individual's combat experience isn't solely a personal problem; it inevitably affects all their close relatives and family members. Accordingly, the family should be considered a full-fledged object of social work and a resource for the reintegration of combatants. Engaging the family in social work is a manifestation of systemic and family-oriented approaches to the socio-psychological support of combatants (Dzhyhurda, 2023; Pavlenko A. & Stashuk O., 2025), which focuses on the family's needs, its psychological state, and adaptation difficulties, thereby preventing the occurrence of:

- secondary traumatization of family members, which can manifest as prolonged stress, fear, and uncertainty;
- changes in family roles and functions, potentially leading to conflicts and misunderstandings;
- communication barriers, as it's often difficult for the veteran to share their experiences and for the family to comprehend their new reality, resulting in alienation and isolation within the family, among other issues.

Researchers (Sopilko & Filonenko, 2025) who study a holistic approach to the recovery, integration, and support of combatants emphasize that the focus shouldn't be limited to socio-psychological aspects alone. They also concentrate on medical needs, allowing this population category to be viewed not just as a group of patients, but as an integral part of society. Such a broad understanding necessitates systemic transformations within society for the successful reintegration of combatants.



At the same time, participation in combat changes an individual's value system, their social roles, and forms a unique worldview (Butylina & Buhai, 2022), which is not always understood by civilian society. The systemic barriers faced by combatants are not only individual medical, social, and psychological difficulties, but also external factors such as imperfect legislation, insufficient infrastructure, economic hardships, and social stigmatization.

Therefore, the foundation for social work with combatants is the responsibility of society and the state, which must be reflected in:

- the existence of a comprehensive, coordinated, and financially supported state veteran policy that covers all aspects of an individual's life.
- the formation of a "veteran culture," as society must understand, accept, and respect the experience of combatants, avoiding stigmatization, rather than merely declaring gratitude.
- the development of social capital and the facilitation of social support networks (both formal and informal), engaging public organizations, veteran communities, and volunteers, which serve as the foundation for overcoming alienation.
- the institutionalization of social work, the development of social services and institutions, and the training of qualified personnel who understand the specifics of working with combatants (Nakaz Ministerstva rozvytku ekonomiky, 2020; Profesiinyi standart «Fakhivets..., 2024).

However, a key role in the combatant support system is played by social work specialists (Krymchak, 2024; Nakaz Ministerstva rozvytku ekonomiky, torhivli..., 2020; Profesiinyi standart «Fakhivets iz suprovodu..., 2024). They act as «guides between the civilian environment and combatants», ensuring their social adaptation and reintegration into peaceful life. The activities of these specialists are multifaceted and cover a wide range of functions (Table 2), aimed at meeting the complex needs of defenders and their families.

At the same time, social work with combatants is characterized by a number of difficulties that hinder the successful reintegration of this population category. These include: society's unpreparedness to accept combatants with war-related trauma



Table 2 – Key Functions of Social Work Specialists in the System of Providing Social Services to Combatants

Functions	Content
Psychosocial support and accompaniment	Assistance in overcoming psychological trauma, adapting to civilian life, and forming new meanings.
Social adaptation and reintegration	Facilitating return to civilian life, restoring connections, and overcoming alienation.
Protection of rights and legal aid	Ensuring the rights and interests of combatants and their families, assistance in obtaining status, benefits, and payments.
Medical and social support	Coordination of access to medical services, rehabilitation, prosthetics, and health support.
Professional adaptation and employment	Assistance with reorientation, acquiring new skills, job searching, and supporting veteran entrepreneurship.
Working with the Combatant's Family	Support for families, assistance in overcoming stress, adapting to changes in the veteran's behavior, and strengthening family ties.
Coordination and cooperation	Establishing cooperation with state, public, medical, and educational institutions for comprehensive support.
Fostering a positive image of veterans	Educational work in society, breaking down stereotypes, promoting understanding of the needs and role of combatants, and engaging the community in support.

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(evident in a lack of resources); and the absence of a support and burnout prevention system for social work specialists (Butylina & Buhai 2022; Krymchak, 2024), which is critically important in the realm of service provision, as working with traumatized individuals is emotionally exhausting.

To ensure quality support for combatants and to overcome their adaptation barriers, social work must focus on a deep study of their urgent needs and challenges. Research conducted by the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation and the International Organization for Migration (Pavlenko & Stashuk, 2025) clearly indicates the priority of needs such as health improvement, provision and improvement of housing conditions, financial stability, access to educational services, and opportunities for professional development and employment. At the same time, typical challenges faced



by combatants upon their return include unemployment, substance abuse, and exacerbation of family conflicts.

1.1. Models and Approaches in Social Work

Current challenges related to the military conflict in Ukraine necessitate a profound re-evaluation of social work paradigms with combatants. Traditional approaches, primarily focused on the passive provision of benefits and social payments, prove insufficient given the unprecedented scale and intensity of psychological and social pressure experienced by individuals returning from military operations. In this context, Ukrainian researchers (Hordieieva & Lazareva, 2023) are actively developing new concepts and practical models aimed at ensuring comprehensive and effective support for Ukraine's defenders.

Among these, the service of social adaptation is critically important. This is a set of measures aimed at preventing difficult life circumstances, supporting and restoring social and family ties, and assisting in adjusting to new conditions. It focuses on eliminating limitations in daily life, maintaining social independence and activity, and providing opportunities for future planning and professional development.

The special characteristic of the social adaptation service is that it's provided in two stages (Pro zatverdzhennia Derzhavnoho standartu..., 2024):

- the first stage takes place in a recreational facility, where, within 6 months after demobilization, the defender (along with their family, if the service provides for it) receives one-time assistance. Here, a multidisciplinary team works on implementing an individual plan;
- the second stage focuses on individual social adaptation directly within the veteran's community of residence. At this stage, social work specialists and representatives from other services join in to help implement the tasks of the individual plan in everyday life.

To receive a social service at the expense of the budget or other authorized sources during a state of emergency or martial law, a combatant can submit a written



application anywhere, regardless of their place of registration. Among the main options are the Center for Administrative Services (CASP) and the Unified State Portal of Electronic Services («Diia Portal»).

According to Resolution № 587 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 01.06.2020, the social protection unit is responsible for making decisions regarding the provision or refusal of social services. Importantly, if an application is submitted not at the potential recipient's place of registration, the unit that made the decision is obligated to inform the relevant unit at the applicant's place of registration about it.

To understand the individual needs of a combatant and their family, a social work specialist, with the support of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teams, conducts a special assessment. This should occur within five working days of receiving the application. During this assessment, specialists (Bereziuk, 2025; Butylina, 2022; Hordieieva & Lazareva, Dzhyhurda, 2023):

- establish a trusting relationship with the service recipients, studying their history and current circumstances to determine the need for assistance.
- consider the family as a unified system, analyzing all aspects of its life (financial status, education and career, health, parental functions, family relationships, availability of support from relatives and the community), as well as their impact on the family as a whole.
- actively engage the defender and their family members in self-assessment and situation analysis through open questions and specialized scales.
- determine the level of motivation to resolve problems.
- identify priority issues that require immediate resolution.
- agree on the rules and sequence of further work (Pro zatverdzhennia Derzhavnoho standartu sotsialnoi posluhy..., 2024).

Based on the assessment, the necessary scope of the social service and the sequence of its provision are determined. Given the current conditions of martial law, the needs assessment can also be conducted remotely using information and communication technologies.

The process of assessing the needs of individuals who have participated in combat



and their families demonstrates the application of the bio-psycho-social model in social work. In the scientific community, this is considered a concept that recognizes that a person's health, illness, and well-being are the result of a complex interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors.

The bio-psycho-social model was developed in 1977 by American psychiatrist G. Engel (George L. & Engel, 1981) as a response to the reductionist biomedical model, which limited the understanding of health and illness to only physiological aspects. G. Engel emphasized the necessity of integrating psychological and social factors for a complete understanding of a patient's condition.

The main advantage of this model in social work with combatants is the application of comprehensive and multidisciplinary approaches (Hordieieva & Lazareva, 2023). In this context, the social work specialist acts as a coordinator («guide») for defenders, ensuring smooth interaction with other specialists.

An in-depth look at the bio-psycho-social model helps us understand its connection to social work aimed at adapting combatants.

For instance, assessing the «health status» of an individual and their family directly relates to the biological dimension (Filonenko, 2025; Karpenko & Krymchak, 2024). This can involve identifying physical injuries, chronic illnesses, consequences of concussions, sleep problems, or nutritional issues, all of which are direct results of an individual's combat experience and affect their daily life. While a social work specialist doesn't diagnose, they do document these aspects and refer the recipient of the social service to the appropriate medical professionals.

The psychological aspect is evident in several points (Kulakov, Pavlenko & Stashuk, 2025; Muzychko, 2023): establishing contact and building trusting relationships (the foundation of psychological work); actively involving individuals in self-assessment and evaluating their motivation level; and analyzing family relationships (psychological climate).

Returning from war is not just a change of circumstances, but also a complex psychological process that involves overcoming stress, adapting to civilian roles, and dealing with the consequences of PTSD. In this process, the social dimension is



critically important (Pro zatverdzhennia Derzhavnoho standartu..., 2024; Sait zhurnalu «ArmyInfom», 2023; Sotsialna pidtrymka viiskovykh perekhodyt..., 2023). It encompasses economic capacity, opportunities for education and professional realization, parental potential, and support from relatives and close ones. At the same time, active engagement with community resources serves as a clear indicator of successful reintegration and the formation of social capital.

Against this background, the application of the bio-psycho-social model not only ensures a deep understanding of the individual needs of combatants but also allows for the formation of holistic and effective social adaptation strategies, guaranteeing coordinated support across all important areas.

To implement these strategies at both stages of providing social adaptation services to combatants and their families, an Individual Plan (the Plan) is used (Pro zatverdzhennia Derzhavnoho standartu sotsialnoi posluhy..., 2024). This Plan is developed in cooperation with the defender (or their legal representative) using a prescribed form. It details tasks, specific actions, performers (specialist, family members), deadlines and location of execution, and, if necessary, involves the participation of other specialists from the interdisciplinary team.

The Plan is a dynamic document that is subject to continuous monitoring (through personal meetings or team sessions) and revision. This allows for changes, the addition of new tasks, or the adjustment of current ones based on progress made or new needs that arise (Sotsialni posluhy dlia veteraniv..., 2024; Sotsialno-psykholohichna reabilitatsiia veteraniv, 2025). A key feature is that it becomes an integral part of the service agreement, and its signing by both the recipient (combatant/family) and the service provider solidifies their partnership and shared responsibility.

Thus, the Individual Plan embodies client-centricity and partnership in social work. Its development isn't a one-sided process; it's formulated in cooperation with the service recipient (or their representative). Such a dialogue ensures the Plan maximally corresponds to the combatant's individual needs, values, and capabilities, thereby strengthening their motivation and responsibility for their own adaptation.



Moreover, the clear and understandable language of the Plan contributes to its effectiveness, and legally formalizes consent and shared responsibility. This definitively establishes the individual's status as an active participant in the process, rather than merely an object of assistance.

Currently, the Individual Plan is a practical reflection of the stages and principles of case management. Case management is a coordinated approach to providing assistance that focuses on the needs of a specific combatant, ensuring access to a wide range of services and resources at the necessary time and in the appropriate volume (Arkhypova, Blinov & Timkin, 2021; Bereziuk, 2025). The advantages and disadvantages of case management for combatants, their families, the service system, and society are presented in the table (Table 3).

Table 3 – Advantages and Disadvantages of Case Management for Combatants, Their Families, the Service System, and Society

Categories	Advantages	Disadvantages
For Combatants	Comprehensive, individualized support; reduced bureaucracy; efficient access to services; a sense of reliable support.	Dependence on the case manager; potential over-control; risk of stigmatization.
For Families	Reduced burden; informational support; assistance in conflict resolution; access to resources for the family.	Interference in private life; dependence on the specialist; potential misunderstanding of the veteran's family specifics.
For the Service System	Effective resource coordination; avoidance of duplication; improved quality and consistency of services; data collection.	High cost of implementation; need for qualified personnel; bureaucratic barriers and resistance to change.
For Society	Reduced social tension; rational use of funds; increased trust in the state; improved image of combatants.	Need for significant investments; potential stereotypes; expectation of quick results; limited resources.

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Despite potential drawbacks, case management is indispensable for effective



support of combatants, as it maximally contributes to their adaptation and reduces the negative consequences of military experience. The Individual Plan serves as confirmation of this, acting as a key tool of case management. It implements the principles of partnership and client-centricity, ensuring a systematic and flexible approach to social adaptation services for combatants and their families. Importantly, the provision of such services begins with the conclusion of a written agreement (Pro zatverdzhennia Derzhavnoho standartu..., 2024; Sotsialni posluhy dlia..., 2024), which is a direct embodiment of the advocacy and rights protection model for service recipients.

A written agreement is a legal document that clearly defines the rights and obligations of both parties: the service provider and the service recipient. This serves as a form of rights protection for the combatant and a tool of advocacy, as it acts as a guarantee regarding the scope, terms, and conditions of service provision. Without such a document, their rights would be less protected, and the service could be provided under undefined terms.

War fundamentally alters lives, and returning to a peaceful environment for combatants and their families is a real challenge. In this context, social adaptation transforms from simple assistance into a powerful tool for «empowerment» (Popovych, Novak & Shcherbyna, 2023). This model focuses on developing the client's internal potential and their ability to solve problems independently, as it's based on the idea that every person has hidden resources and is capable of self-help. Instead of viewing a combatant as a «victim» needing «rescue», the social work specialist acts as a partner and facilitator, helping them realize their own strengths, develop new skills, and take responsibility for their lives (Blinov & Timkin, 2021; Dzhyhurda, Hordieieva & Lazareva, 2023). This is especially relevant for individuals who, despite experiencing trauma, often maintain a high level of independence and a desire for control over their own lives.

The «empowerment» model isn't just applied to the defender, but to their entire family as well. By teaching family members new communication models (Kulakov, 2025), conflict resolution, and understanding traumatic experiences (Muzychko,



2023; Pavlenko & Stashuk, 2025), specialists help them become stronger and more effective in supporting each other. This creates a resilient support system where everyone understands their role and potential.

In social work, the crisis intervention model (Baltazar & Bang, 2025) takes on special significance. This is a short-term, intensive approach in social work and psychology aimed at providing immediate assistance to an individual or family experiencing an acute crisis. The model focuses on stabilizing their condition, restoring functionality, and preventing long-term negative consequences.

The crisis intervention model developed in the mid-20th century in the USA (Guo, Wang & Bloch, 2025). One of its key founders and pioneers is considered to be E. Lindemann, a psychiatrist who studied reactions to grief and trauma after the tragic Cocoanut Grove nightclub fire in Boston in 1942. His works, published in 1944, were among the first to systematize the understanding of crisis and the need for immediate intervention. N. Gerson (author of the «six-step crisis model») and D. Kaplan, who focused on the preventive aspects of psychiatry and crisis interventions in communities, also made significant contributions to the model's development.

The social adaptation service for veterans and their families in Ukraine, especially given the unprecedented number of demobilized individuals after the full-scale invasion, often begins precisely with crisis states (Pro zatverdzhennia Derzhavnoho standartu..., 2024; Profesiinyi standart «Fakhivets iz suprovodu..., 2024; Sotsialna pidtrymka viiskovykh ..., 2023). Currently, the table (Table 4) illustrates the aspects of the interrelationship between the crisis intervention model and social work aimed at combatants.

The integration of the crisis intervention model into the social adaptation service for combatants and their families is critically important. It allows social work specialists not only to provide comprehensive support but also to effectively respond to acute crises that inevitably arise during the reintegration process. Thanks to rapid assessment, stabilization of condition, focus on resources, and the family system, this synergy helps combatants and their families overcome the most difficult moments of adaptation, restore internal balance, and successfully return to a full life.



Table 4 – Aspects of the Interrelationship between the Crisis Intervention Model and Social Work Aimed at Combatants

Aspect	Description
Immediate Response and Stabilization	Prompt detection and stabilization of acute crisis states (flashbacks, panic attacks, aggression, suicidal thoughts) in combatants, preventing their escalation.
Safety and Risk Assessment	Rapid assessment of the threat level for the combatant/surroundings (suicide, violence, addictions) and identification of available resources for overcoming the crisis.
Restoration of Control	Helping combatants restore a sense of control over their lives and emotions, using grounding and relaxation techniques, which is fundamental after combat experience.
Activation of Social Resources	Mobilization of the client's internal strengths and engagement of external resources (family, friends, veteran communities) for support during a crisis period.
Link to long-term care	Serves as a «bridge» to further, systemic support (case management), directing individuals to specialized services for comprehensive and long-term assistance.
Coping skills training	Helping combatants develop healthy stress coping strategies (problem-solving, anger/anxiety management) to prevent future crises.

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In social work with combatants, community-oriented models (Hordieieva & Lazareva, 2023; Sopilko, 2025) and veteran hubs play a key role. They shift the focus of support from the individual client to the community, creating safe spaces and developing local support networks. The innovativeness of these hubs lies in their organization and management by veterans themselves, turning them into focal points for information, peer support, and participation in joint activities. Complementing this approach, mobile multidisciplinary teams (psychologists, social workers, lawyers) are fundamentally changing the paradigm of assistance provision. They move from passively awaiting requests to actively identifying needs and providing «door-to-door» support. By traveling to remote communities, these teams offer crisis assistance, conduct needs assessments, and integrate veterans into the service system, effectively reaching those combatants who, for various reasons, cannot or do not want to seek support independently.



Social work with individuals returning from war in modern crisis conditions requires innovative forms and methods that are not merely desirable but critically necessary to ensure their effective and human-centered reintegration.

Innovations in social work with combatants encompass both fundamental approaches and specific tools (Arkhypova & Bik, 2021; Bereziuk, 2025; Chebotnikova, 2023).

The use of digital technologies and telemedicine (online platforms, mobile applications) significantly increases the accessibility of consultations, psychological support, and some types of therapy for defenders (Blinov & Timkin, 2021), especially those living in remote regions, with limited mobility, or who feel uncomfortable with in-person visits. Mobile applications can offer self-help tools, condition tracking, and direct connection with specialists. Additionally, virtual reality technologies are effectively used for controlled exposure therapy and social skills training (Hordieieva & Lazareva, 2023; Filonenko, 2025).

Parallel to this, adaptive sports ("Invictus Games") and creative therapies (art therapy, music therapy, dramatherapy, ecotherapy) integrate non-traditional yet scientifically proven rehabilitation methods (Karpenko, 2024; Sotsialno-psykholohichna reabilitatsiia veteraniv, 2025). Such methods work through physical activity, creativity, and play, contributing not only to physical recovery but also to psychological rehabilitation. They help process traumatic experiences through non-verbal forms of expression, reduce stress, develop emotional regulation, and restore connection with the outside world in a safe and creative space.

Thus, effective social work with combatants in Ukraine today is based on the synergy of comprehensive, client-centric approaches such as the bio-psycho-social model and case management, the integration of crisis interventions, and the active implementation of innovative forms and methods. This multifaceted approach is the key to the successful adaptation and reintegration of defenders, contributing to their full return to peaceful life and strengthening the resilience of all Ukrainian society.



1.2. Regulatory and Legal Framework in the Context of Providing Social Services

State policy related to social work and support for combatants in Ukraine is based on an extensive regulatory and legal framework, which is constantly updated and supplemented in accordance with the challenges associated with the military conflict. This framework includes Laws of Ukraine, Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, orders from relevant ministries, and other regulatory acts.

A fundamental regulatory and legal act that defines the legal status of war veterans (including combatants) and establishes state guarantees for their social protection is the Law of Ukraine «On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection» (Pro status veteraniv viiny..., 1993). This Law serves as the basis for all other legislative acts in the field of veteran support, enshrining their rights to benefits, social services, and rehabilitation, thereby creating the legislative framework for all social work with combatants.

One of the main regulatory and legal acts (in the context of our research) that lays the foundations for the social and legal protection of all military personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, other military formations, and their family members is the Law of Ukraine «On Social and Legal Protection of Military Personnel and Their Family Members» (Pro sotsialnyi i pravovyi zakhyst..., 1991). For social work with combatants, this Law is crucial for several reasons:

First, unlike the Law «On the Status of War Veterans...», which focuses on combatants after they acquire veteran status, this Law regulates the social and legal protection of military personnel throughout their entire period of service, including the time of performing combat missions. This means that it creates a legal basis for social work with military personnel even before they receive veteran status, ensuring the protection of their rights and interests during active participation in hostilities.

Secondly, the Law directly extends its effect to family members of military personnel. This is critically important for social work, as families are an integral part of the combatants' reintegration process and often require psychosocial, legal, and material support themselves due to the consequences of the war. The Law enshrines



their rights to benefits, compensations, and other social guarantees.

Thirdly, the document defines such key aspects of social protection as:

- monetary support;
- housing rights;
- medical care;
- pension provision (defines the basics of pension provision and social payments in case of disability or loss of a breadwinner);
- employment (contains provisions related to facilitating employment after discharge from service).

The provisions of this Law serve as the basis for developing and providing specific social services aimed at meeting the needs of military personnel and their families. It defines the «field of activity» for social work specialists (Profesiynyi standart «Fakhivets iz suprovodu...», 2024), providing them with legislative arguments for protecting the rights and interests of their clients. Thus, the Law «On Social and Legal Protection of Military Personnel and Their Family Members» ensures continuous protection from the moment of enlistment, during participation in hostilities, and after demobilization, making it an indispensable tool for social work specialists.

One of the three pillars of Ukrainian legislation (alongside the Law of Ukraine «On the Status of War Veterans...» and the Law of Ukraine «On Social and Legal Protection of Military Personnel and Their Family Members») that forms a comprehensive system of social protection for military personnel is the Law «On Social Services» (Pro sotsialni posluhy..., 2019). It regulates the organizational and legal principles of social service provision, defines their types, content, procedure, and conditions, as well as the rights and obligations of both recipients and providers of social services. Combatants are one of the target groups eligible to receive social services.

The Law classifies social services by their content and scope (e.g., counseling, representation of interests, social support, mediation, crisis intervention, care, in-kind assistance, adaptation to living conditions). This list allows for the adaptation and



combination of services according to the multifaceted needs of combatants, facilitating comprehensive (holistic) rehabilitation – the simultaneous combination of medical, psychological, social, and professional support.

The principles enshrined in the Law (respect for dignity, confidentiality, voluntariness, individual approach) are the foundation for implementing a trauma-informed approach. They ensure the creation of a safe, trusting environment where veterans feel protected and heard.

The Law allows social services to be provided not only by state and communal institutions but also by non-governmental organizations, charitable foundations, and individual entrepreneurs. This opens the door for the involvement of veteran communities, which are actively developing «peer support» programs. Thus, veteran organizations can become legitimate providers of social services, integrating their unique experience into the overall support system.

The Law «On Social Services» establishes requirements for the quality of social services, licensing, and state control. This guarantees that combatants will receive qualified and effective assistance, which is especially important when working with trauma.

Despite significant advantages, the implementation of the Law in the field of working with combatants faces certain challenges:

- the need for a significant number of qualified social work specialists who possess specific knowledge and skills for working with combatants, particularly with a trauma-informed approach;
- ensuring sufficient and stable funding to expand the network and improve the quality of services;
- despite the law laying the groundwork, real coordination among various ministries and departments still requires significant effort.

However, the Law «On Social Services» opens up broad prospects for further development:

- development of public-private partnerships in the sphere of providing services to veterans;



- further digitalization of services to increase their accessibility and effectiveness;
- integration of the law's provisions with other veteran legislation to create a unified, coordinated system.

The provision of social services, including social adaptation for combatants, is regulated by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine «On the Organization of Social Service Provision» (Pro orhanizatsiiu nadannia sotsialnykh posluh..., 2020). This document translates general rules into specific practical steps, establishing how to apply for services (via ASCs or «Diia») and how long the needs assessment for combatants takes (up to 5 working days). Furthermore, this Resolution helps to understand the process of creating and implementing the Individual Plan, which is vital for effective case management. It is important that the Resolution focuses on the stages of providing social adaptation services (in recreational facilities, in the community) and the rules for concluding a written agreement, which solidifies the partnership and advocacy of combatants' rights.

Thus, the Law «On Social Services» provides legitimacy and strategic directions, while the Resolution «On the Organization of Social Service Provision» offers detailed instructions and operational procedures for their practical implementation. Together, they ensure a systematic, transparent, and effective approach to the social adaptation of combatants, allowing specialists to provide timely and high-quality assistance.

A fundamental role in the system of social work with combatants in Ukraine is played by the Order of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine «On the Approval of the State Standard for the Social Service of Social Adaptation of War Veterans and Their Family Members and Amending the Classifier of Social Services» (Standard) (Pro zatverdzhennia Derzhavnoho standartu..., 2024).

This document is not merely a formal act, but a tool that ensures the quality, systemic nature, and effectiveness of providing vital assistance.

Firstly, it unifies approaches, establishing uniform requirements for the content, scope, conditions, and procedure for providing social adaptation services. This guarantees that every demobilized individual, regardless of their place of residence,



will receive assistance of a certain level and quality.

Secondly, the Standard ensures professionalization. It clearly defines the qualification requirements for specialists providing services, their functions, and responsibilities. This contributes to raising the level of competence of social work specialists, psychologists, and other professionals involved in the adaptation process, which is critically important for working with such a vulnerable category of social service recipients.

Thirdly, the Standard is the basis for quality control. The presence of clearly defined criteria and indicators allows for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of service provision. This makes it possible to identify shortcomings, make corrections, and constantly improve the support system.

Fourthly, it enhances client-centricity. The Standard emphasizes an individual approach, the development of an Individual Plan for providing social services, and the involvement of combatants and their families in the decision-making process. This aligns with modern principles of social work, where the service recipient is an active subject, not a passive object of assistance.

Fifthly, the document promotes interagency cooperation, facilitating the coordination of efforts between various institutions and organizations providing services to combatants (social services, medical institutions, public organizations), ensuring comprehensive and continuous support.

Thus, the Order of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine on the State Standard for the Social Service of Social Adaptation is a cornerstone in building an effective, transparent, and human-centered support system for combatants and their families, which is an integral part of their successful reintegration into peaceful life.

It's clear that social adaptation is complex, and therefore, an inseparable part of social work with combatants is the Law of Ukraine «On Rehabilitation in the Healthcare Sector» (Pro reabilitatsiiu..., 2020), which regulates medical and physical rehabilitation issues and guarantees access to comprehensive assistance. Defenders, who often have multiple physical or mental injuries, must have the right to integrated rehabilitation assistance and the opportunity to receive rehabilitation services even at



the acute stage to prevent complications and accelerate recovery.

The Law «On Rehabilitation in the Healthcare Sector» ensures an individualized approach, which is manifested in the development of an individual rehabilitation program that takes into account the unique needs of each combatant. This allows for the most effective use of resources and the achievement of better results.

Crucial for overcoming the consequences of combat stress and reintegration into peaceful life is that the Law integrates psychological and social support, meaning it emphasizes the importance of psychological rehabilitation and social adaptation; it creates a legal framework for interagency cooperation, which promotes better coordination of efforts between medical institutions, social services, veteran organizations, and communities.

At the same time, existing problems in the field of rehabilitation, such as a shortage of qualified specialists, insufficient funding, and underdeveloped infrastructure (Chebotnikova, 2023; Sopilko, 2025), limit access to timely and quality assistance and overload existing social work specialists. Of course, the lack of funds and the absence of adequate rehabilitation centers in the regions not only hinders the expansion of services and the implementation of innovative programs but also creates logistical barriers for combatants. Therefore, the further successful implementation of the Law of Ukraine «On Rehabilitation in the Healthcare Sector», overcoming existing difficulties, and continuous improvement of the rehabilitation system are priority tasks for the state and society as a whole.

An extremely important regulatory and legal act that significantly impacts the system of social work with combatants in Ukraine is the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine «Some Issues of Providing Psychological Assistance to War Veterans, Members of Their Families, and Certain Other Categories of Persons» (Deiaki pytannia nadannia psykholohichnoi dopomohy..., 2022). The key role of this Resolution lies in expanding access to psychological assistance. The document clearly defines the categories of persons entitled to free psychological assistance, including combatants and their family members; it establishes uniform rules and mechanisms for providing psychological assistance, which allows for the unification of approaches



and ensures the standardization of service quality throughout Ukraine.

Crucially, the Resolution sets requirements for social work specialists who can provide psychological assistance, ensuring an appropriate level of professionalism, and mandates coordination of actions between various government bodies and institutions involved in the process of providing psychological support, ensuring a comprehensive approach. Currently, the Resolution regulates the financing of psychological assistance, creating the necessary conditions for its implementation and development.

Thus, the Resolution allows social work specialists to rely on clear legal foundations, ensuring quality and timely assistance in a context where the psychological well-being of combatants is one of the state's key priorities.

It should be noted that the Law of Ukraine «On the Foundations of National Resistance» (Pro osnovy natsionalnoho sprotyvu..., 2021) plays an indirect but important role in social work with combatants in Ukraine. Although its main purpose is to regulate issues of defense and society's readiness to resist aggression, it creates a context that influences the needs of defenders and approaches to their support.

This Law contributes to shaping public understanding of the role of combatants. By recognizing the importance of national resistance, it emphasizes the significance of each individual's contribution to defending the country. It helps increase respect for these individuals and raises public awareness of the need for their support, which is fundamental for overcoming stigmatization and creating a favorable environment for reintegration.

Furthermore, the Law highlights the growing number of potential recipients of social services. The involvement of broad segments of the population in national resistance, particularly through territorial defense and the resistance movement, leads to an increase in the number of individuals who will have combat experience and require social adaptation. This necessitates that the social work system be prepared to scale up services and develop effective preventive measures.

Participation in national resistance, even in its non-combat aspects, can be associated with stress and psychological strain. Therefore, social work specialists must



consider this experience when assessing needs and providing psychological support, even if an individual does not have official combatant status but was involved in the resistance.

Finally, the Law of Ukraine «On the Foundations of National Resistance» emphasizes the importance of a community-oriented approach, as national resistance presupposes active community involvement. This correlates with the development of veteran hubs and mobile teams that operate at the local level, creating support networks and integrating combatants into community life.

Thus, adequate regulatory and legal provision is the foundation that allows for the construction of an effective, flexible, and humane system of support for those who defend our state at the cost of their own health and lives. Continuous improvement of legislation and its adaptation to the real needs of war and post-war recovery is a key priority for the state and society.

Conclusion

The military conflict in Ukraine has led to unprecedented mobilization, making the support of combatants and their families one of the most pressing and complex social issues. The extreme experience of war leaves a profound imprint, manifesting in psychological, behavioral, physiological, and social signs.

The monograph emphasizes that social work with combatants is inextricably linked to psychological aspects and must be viewed within the context of socio-psychological support. This is a comprehensive system of measures encompassing prevention, early intervention, diagnosis, monitoring, recovery, and rehabilitation. The combatant's family is a key object and resource of social work, as the combat experience affects all loved ones. A systematic and family-oriented approach helps prevent secondary traumatization, shifts in family roles, and communication barriers.

Effective reintegration of combatants demands a societal transformation and a clear understanding of state responsibility. This involves developing a comprehensive veteran policy, fostering a «veteran culture», building social capital through support



networks, and institutionalizing social work alongside the training of qualified specialists.

Social work specialists play a central role, acting as «guides» between the military and civilian environments. Their work encompasses a broad range of functions, including psychosocial support, social adaptation and reintegration, rights advocacy, medical and social support, professional adaptation, family engagement, coordination, and fostering a positive image of veterans.

Despite significant challenges, such as society's unpreparedness for war-related trauma and the risk of emotional burnout among specialists, social work must be focused on a deep understanding of combatants' needs. Research indicates that health, housing, financial stability, education, and employment are top priorities.

The monograph emphasizes the importance of innovative models and approaches. Specifically, the social adaptation service, which begins with a thorough assessment of individual needs, implements the bio-psycho-social model. This model allows the specialist to coordinate comprehensive support, taking into account biological, psychological, and social factors.

The Individual Social Service Plan is a key tool that embodies the principles of client-centricity and partnership. It's developed in cooperation with the veteran, is a dynamic document, and is legally formalized by a written agreement, which serves as a form of advocacy and protection of the service recipient's rights.

Case management is recognized as an indispensable approach that ensures coordinated and comprehensive assistance. Despite potential drawbacks (dependence on the specialist, high implementation cost), its advantages (holistic support, reduced bureaucracy, rational use of resources) significantly outweigh them, contributing to the successful adaptation of combatants and societal stabilization.

The crisis intervention model holds particular significance, providing immediate assistance in acute crisis states. It focuses on rapid safety assessment, restoration of control, activation of resources, and acts as a «bridge» to long-term assistance.

Finally, the monograph emphasizes the importance of community-oriented models, veteran hubs, and mobile multidisciplinary teams, as well as innovative



methods (digital technologies, telemedicine, adaptive sports, creative therapies). These approaches make support more accessible, effective, and human-centered.

The extensive regulatory and legal framework of Ukraine lays the foundation for effective social work with combatants. It allows for the construction of a robust, flexible, and humane system to support defenders, ensuring their comprehensive adaptation and reintegration into peaceful life.