

CHILD PROTECTION BEYOND THE BOUNDARY: INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION EXPERIENCED BY CHILD WELFARE WORKERS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

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ABOUT ME:

- Born and raised in the Central Valley
- Raised in law enforcement/criminal justice family
- BA of Sociology from UC Santa Cruz
- Fresno State Social Work 2022
- Title IV-E
- Currently employed with Madera County CWS



MOTIVATION: WHY

- Working in CWS as an aide // being a fly on the wall
- Hearing the social worker side of the cross-field collaboration
- Desire to hear both sides
- Interest in the parallels between law enforcement and child welfare institutions
- Feeling that regardless of one's personal feelings, working with law enforcement as a child welfare worker is important//a relationship that should be fostered

CHALLENGES TO INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

- Responsibility of child protection: Social Work, Education, Medicine, Mental Health and Law Enforcement
- Interactions between child welfare and law enforcement
- CWS worker reliance on law enforcement for Welfare & Institution Code (WIC) 300 holds
 - PC 11165
- Differing professional philosophies, goals, and approaches to social issues: friction, delayed intervention, fragmentation of services
- Consequences: further harm or death of a child, public distrust of child welfare institution, blame, and outrage



PURPOSE: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Purpose: To understand the experiences of both child welfare workers and law enforcement officers when working together.
- (1) What are the experiences of patrol officers and Emergency Response social workers in their interactions with each other when protecting children?
- (2) What can the experiences of Emergency Response workers and patrol law enforcement officers explain about interagency collaboration?



LITERATURE REVIEW

- Communities of Practice (CoPs)
- The Children's Advocacy Center & Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub model
- Organizational Theory
- Social Work vs. Police Culture

METHODOLOGY

Grounded Theory:

- Developing theory by examining participants' experience (data) of a social phenomenon
- Qualitative

Interviews:

- Snowball Sampling
- Took place over video-conferencing application, Zoom
- Recorded, transcribed using Otter

PARTICIPANTS

- Child Welfare social workers (with Emergency Response experience)
- Tulare County (7)
- Fresno County (8)
- Law enforcement officers (with patrol experience)
- Fresno Police Department (8)
- No names were recorded

INTERVIEWS

■ Interview questions:

- What is your understanding of the role of (law enforcement/ER workers) in the investigation of child abuse allegations?
- Tell me about your experiences interacting with (law enforcement/ER workers) while attending to child abuse and neglect referrals. (Positive/negative interactions)
- What would improve your interactions with (law enforcement/social workers)?
- How familiar are you with the laws that govern responding to child maltreatment?
- How effective do you think these policies are?

FINDINGS

Child Welfare Worker participants:

- Positive experiences working with LEO:
 - Willing to work with worker (take worker input)
 - Nonjudgmental with families
 - Wanting to make safety plans

- Negative experiences:
 - Officers having a “my way or highway” attitude
 - LEO unwilling to listen to workers’ point of view
 - Differing views of imminent risk
 - LEO appearing apathetic/not wanting to be there

FINDINGS CONT.

Law Enforcement Officer participants:

- Positive experiences with Child welfare:
 - Feeling on the “same team” as workers
 - When workers work with families to create safety plans
 - When workers had understanding of LEO role

- Negative experiences:
 - Perception of workers as “lazy”
 - Wanting a 300 hold to avoid having to do more work
 - Lack of urgency
 - Disagreeing with officer about how to proceed

NEXT STEPS

- Work toward better understanding and communication between professionals.
- Work toward respect for the knowledge and expertise of the other professional.
- Build rapport (co-location, specialized units)

Implement:

- Joint briefings
- Joint trainings (W&I, SOP)

LIMITATIONS

- Limited findings of police philosophies that guide practice
- Limited amount of time to complete study
- Did not account for how identity markers would impact responses
- Each department & its culture are different

THANK YOU, CCASSC MEMBERSHIP! 😊

I feel honored and am grateful for this opportunity. Thank you for allowing me to present my research to you all and for providing me with the CCASSC stipend. I will never forget this experience.

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