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The role of the social worker in the team for the protection of the child in the situation of abuse

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Abstract: The main purpose of all agencies and institutions involved in the management of crimes against children is to ensure their safety and well-being. A multidisciplinary team approach enables a coordinated response to child victims and creates a system for investigating and prosecuting child abuse, thus reducing the trauma of abuse. Professional multidisciplinary teams identify and treat child abuse, and a social worker is often the team coordinator.

The social worker is the glue that holds a team together. He is adept at working at multiple professional levels to direct team efforts. Most importantly, the social worker ensures effective communication throughout the diagnosis and treatment of child abuse cases, especially when the family is not comfortable with the abuse situation.

Each discipline obviously brings specific skills, and through the effort of an effective multidisciplinary team, the result of the vulnerable child in a situation of abuse can be greatly improved.

Keywords: social worker, multidisciplinary team, abuse, responsibility, coordination.

The role of the social worker in the multidisciplinary team

The development of social assistance led to the fragmentation of services. Ever since the end of the 19th century, periodic efforts have been undertaken to establish appropriate methods of collaboration between the various social agencies existing at the level of a community. At the beginning of the 20th century, social workers began to be employed in different hospital units and thus the problem of collaboration necessary for the practice of social work exceeded the boundaries of the profession. Despite the efforts made to establish optimal collaboration conditions, specialists do not always understand well enough how they can be respected in practice. A social worker spends between 25% and 30% of his working time in various activities carried out together with other specialists.

Working in a team is essential for a social worker. We often hesitate when it comes to learning the skills of collective activity. Compton and Galaway refer to a story to illustrate this hesitation. It is said that a pedestrian crossing the street is injured by a truck. The other passers-by rush to see if they can help. To their surprise, the injured pedestrian cried out to be left alone,



trying to move away leaning on his hands and one knee, dragging the other injured leg. Someone says to him: "Where are you going? Don't you realize you were injured? To which the victim has the following reply: "Please let me go. I don't want to be involved!" Similarly to this case, social workers become hesitant when the problem arises that they should get involved in team activities and interdisciplinary collaborations. Basically, the assistant's participation in a team's activity would have the meaning of a mutual exchange of help, as important as the direct contact with the assisted one.

The theme of the protection of minors is a particularly delicate argument, which involves collaboration between different professional figures with attributions and different skills, including: social workers, doctors, psychologists, educators, lawyers, etc. Social services for minors and families they assume the exercise of significant responsibilities in the plan deontological-methodological from these specialists.

In a society of rapid and uncertain change, social work remains a profession based on empathy and commitment, on unconditional acceptance and respect, so that beneficiaries can honestly communicate information with regarding the problematic situation they face (Buzducea, 2017, 18, 39).

As social workers, the main purpose of the activity is to help clients and support them, personalized as needed. Service is just one of the values that social workers must uphold. "The main objective of social workers is to help people in need and to address social problems." (NASW, 2021). Sometimes this involves professionals from multiple fields (law enforcement, social services, therapy, etc.) coming together and deciding what is best for a client. This also allows them to be competent in their work. "Social workers practice in their areas of expertise, develop and improve their professional expertise." (NASW, 2021).

Social work is not an individual effort, it is a team effort. Multidisciplinary teamwork is definitely necessary. In the multidisciplinary team, the client's best interest is pursued, putting the client first.

The social worker profession has a long tradition of involvement in child protection within the system, working to support thousands of children and their families who are victims of child abuse and neglect each year. In 2001, more than 903,000 children suffered from abuse or neglect, representing a rate of 12.4 maltreated children for every 1,000 children in the general population, and nearly one-third of these children they were less than three years old (NCCANI, 2003).

The service system has long been stretched beyond capacity and child protection agencies are not serving all abused and neglected children in their caseloads.

Social workers know that working with the child means working with the whole family and other environmental factors in a culturally competent way. In fact, social workers have been fighting child maltreatment for more than 100 years, and we bring a unique body of knowledge to the fight. Social workers and other professionals help families by identifying and addressing individual, family and community challenges. Social workers draw on a wide range of theories, knowledge, research and skills to provide a comprehensive and holistic analysis of the client's situation. Social worker assessments range from targeting and brief analyzes of specific needs to comprehensive holistic psychosocial and risk assessments of the full range of social issues and psychological needs, strengths and stressors. These assessments form the basis of needs-based goals and interventions to address social and emotional issues that impact an individual's health, development, and well-being.

Child protection systems respond to children who have suffered or are likely to suffer significant harm as a result of abuse and neglect. While social workers practice within a



legislative framework, legislative policy and practice frameworks for child protection are particularly complex.

Moreover, the phenomenon of child abuse and neglect is complex in itself; socially, psychologically and ecologically. Working in this role is also emotionally demanding and on rare occasions can be dangerous for social workers.

The particularities of the child's life imply the observance of some principles and values by the people who are responsible for his growth, care, protection and education. Consequently, professionals who intervene in situations of violence against children and family violence must to comply with the following specific principles:

1. respecting the best interests of the child in all actions and decisions that concern him this one;
2. avoiding and combating interventions that revictimize the child;
3. the participation of the child and the parent or, as the case may be, the caregiver, as well as a to the adult victim and, as the case may be, to the guardian in the process of resolving the situation of violence;
4. multidisciplinary teamwork, in an inter-institutional network and in partnership with the family;
5. ensuring a unitary and specialized intervention for the child and/or adult victim, the alleged perpetrator/aggressor from within or outside the family and family members;
6. ensuring and facilitating access to support and specialized services for all children from the family (victims, witnesses, brothers of the victim);
7. ensuring stability and continuity in the care, growth and education of the child;
8. supporting the adult victim in keeping the domicile until the completion of the legal procedures;
9. respecting confidentiality and professional ethical norms, without prejudice to the activity of reporting situations of violence or the activity of implementing cases.

The identification of situations of violence against the child is carried out by the professionals who interacts with the child in various fields of activity, in the public or private system: protection children, social assistance, health, education, police, justice etc.

There are a number of signs and symptoms that can be observed by any qualified professional and formed in this sense and which raise an alarm signal, especially when they cannot be explained sufficient or justified by the parents, the care person or the legal representative. Examples of such signs:

- Behavioral disorders (apathy, irritability, impulsivity, aggressiveness, lying, running away from at home, theft, consumption of alcohol, drugs, etc.);
- Sleep disorders (insomnia, drowsiness, restless sleep, nightmares, etc.);
- Eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia);
- Self-stigmatization, self-blame;
- Tics (blinking, red nails, etc.);
- Enuresis, encompresis;
- Negligence in the performance of tasks and inability to comply with an imposed schedule;
- Difficulties in relationship and communication;
- Decrease in school performance, absenteeism and school dropout;
- Depressive state, sometimes with suicide attempts;
- Persistence of obsessive olfactory or skin sensations;
- Rapid change in affective mood.



The development of social assistance led to the fragmentation of services. Ever since the end of the 19th century, periodic efforts have been undertaken to establish appropriate methods of collaboration between the various social agencies existing at the level of a community. At the beginning of the 20th century, social workers began to be employed in different hospital units and thus the problem of collaboration necessary for the practice of social work exceeded the boundaries of the profession.

These characteristics of social work practice are found in work with children and their families, the social worker needing, in addition to specialized theoretical and practical training, a series of qualities to be able to support the beneficiaries in the process of solving problems.

To understand the role of the social worker, it must also be addressed in relationship with reconciliation, in the sense that the social worker is concerned with negotiating the interdependent relationship between the individual and society, "in a maintenance strategy", which has two important aspects: first, to employ social workers to observe and control deviant behaviors; the second, that of mediation, is represented by the attempt to improve the quality of life (Davies, 1981, 138-141).

In general, the social worker profession is based on certain records practical and involves the observance of certain ethical values and principles. The basic value and the "necessary condition for any value" here is respect for the person, i.e. "the recognition of the value and dignity of every human being, regardless of social status, origin, sex, age or religious denomination" (Tompea, 2003, 453; BASW, 2014).

Respecting the values and principles of social work, the social worker supports the beneficiaries in the process of change and adaptation, therefore, he must have knowledge about human, behavioral and organizational development, as well as notions about the social, economic and cultural contexts (Buzducea, 2017, 12).

The integration of children into foster homes or adoptive families is due, for the most part, to the professionalism and involvement of social workers, therefore, knowing the profile that the social worker must have in order to carry out an effective intervention is very important.

Intervention in cases of child abuse involves collaboration multidisciplinary between different professional categories, the role of the social worker becoming essential in this case. Thus, any process of investigating a situation of child abuse must include several stages: 1) notification; 2) investigation (observation and ensuring child protection, interviews with close people, evaluation of physical records, evaluation of the family environment, etc.); 3) emergency interventions (where applicable); 4) completion of reports (Buzducea, 2009, 104).

In the field of child assistance, practically any type of intervention is aimed at the protection, valorization or restoration of rights that ensure the child's development and self-determination. The professional roles of the social worker they are extremely diverse, from individual-centred to social policy interventions, strategic management and social development. Thus, the social worker can fulfill the role of counselor and consultant (when he tries to initiate changes in the attitudes of the individual in difficulty, so that he has the ability to find solutions to the problems and situations he faces), the role of advocacy (when when he defends the interests of those assisted in front of various institutions), the role of manager or case director alongside a multidisciplinary team (a role encountered more and more often in social assistance services for children), the role of liaison between people and services, the role of trainer and educator (given the fact that the social worker supports the beneficiaries in personal, family and social development), as well as the role of planner of social policies, which supports initiatives that promote social change (Roth&Rebeleanu, 2007, 57; Buzducea, 2009, 67; Raiff, Shore, 1993).



Conclusion

Summarizing what has been stated regarding the professional roles exercised by the social worker, we find that they are characterized by three functions: consultancy, resource management and education, functions that are found at all levels of systems (Milet et al., 2006, 37).

Identifying child abuse is sometimes challenging due to its various presentations. Multidisciplinary teams comprising professionals from law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, medicine, counseling, and related fields have proven to be highly effective in responding to reports of child abuse and neglect. The inter-agency cooperation, coordination, and collaboration effected through an Multidisciplinary team ensure a timely and appropriate investigation with the least possible trauma to children and families.

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