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UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, ILORIN, NIGERIA
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

DR. A.A Abdullahi,
Ag. Head of Department
B.Sc.(Kano), M.Sc. (Ibadan), PhD
(Johannesburg)



P.M.B 1515, Ilorin
+2348069696844
E-mail:
triplea.k11@yahoo.com/bssabdullahi
@gmail.com

Our Ref.....

Your Ref.....

Date.....

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Abdulganiyu H. Mohammed,
Department of Social Work,
University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
&
Dr. Olufemi A. Fawole
Department of Sociology,
University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE

It gladdens my heart to inform you that your chapters, *Social Workers and Child Protective Services*, submitted as a chapter contribution to a proposed book project titled **CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK: AN AFRICANIST PERSPECTIVE**, has been accepted for publication. The book will be published by College Press, Lead City University, Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria. On behalf of the editorial team, please, accept my sincere congratulations.

Thank you for your commitment to advancing African scholarship. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely yours,

Abdullahi, Ali Arazeem, Ph.D.

SOCIAL WORKERS AND CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Abdulganiyu H. Mohammed¹ & Olufemi A. Fawole².

INTRODUCTION

In the world at large, many cases of child abuse and neglect have been recorded. According to a report, physical abuse is around six in ten children within 2-14 years of age; bullying is one in three children within age 13-15; forced sex is estimated to be 120,000,000 girls below 20 years of age; and intimate partner violence is one in three children around the world (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 2014). In Africa, the cases are more rampant, particularly in Nigeria. Therefore, many organisations at local and international levels have risen up to combat this menace. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), Save the Children, United Nations Organisation (UNO), United Nations' International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Morgan Hill Children Foundation, Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect are examples of organisations that have risen up to protect the children of the world from sexual harassment, physical abuse, emotional trauma, psychological abuse, bullying, castration, condemnation, neglect, and deprivation. In fact, UNICEF has collaborated with local governments and civil society organisations to combat abuse, violence, extortion, abhorring, exploitation and neglect of children at local levels (UNICEF, 2018).

The importance of child protective services (CPS) in every society and its indispensable activities render it very essential for social worker to understudy. Therefore, this chapter serves as a first step into this essential agency. The chapter provides social worker with background knowledge of the agency. Some social workers that are hoping to practice within CPS agency will find this work instrumental to their ambition. It will expose them to the background knowledge needed to be able to practice professionally in the agency and also serve as handbook for referencing in future when practicing. More so, student social worker that has issues with foundational knowledge on child welfare promotion and provision and as well as which agency to refer to on such problem will also learn about the rationale of the agency. Also, parents and children will be educated on procedures and processes to be taken when child abuse and neglect problems are perceived or felt.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The following terms and concepts are defined:

- **Child:** A child is a living being in a particular place and within age bracket of 0-18 years (Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989).
- **Child Abuse:** This is defined as an act of failure of parent and/or caregiver that may lead to death, physical impairment, sexual harassment, emotional harm, or other forms of exploitation to a child (Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) 1974, 2010).
- **Child Welfarism:** This is a process of maintaining ultimate social, physical, psychological, cognitive, and biological functioning of child. It is the traditional term for

¹Corresponding Author: Department of Social Work, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
Email: mohammedabdulganiyu@gmail.com; Cell phone: +234 9071248291

²Department of Sociology, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. Email: fawole.aa@unilorin.edu.ng or fawole.2010@gmail.com. Cell: +234 7030744918

the network of policies and programmes designed to empower families, promote a healthy environment, protect children, and meet children's need (Kirst-Ashman, 2010).

- **Child Protective Services:** It is an integrated system of intervention that identifies conditions that make children unsafe and/or put them at risk of abuse and/or neglect, then assure family services to make them safe and protected under healthy custody. It is a programme of state at ensuring safety of children from any form of child abuse and neglect (Liederman, 1995).

THE CHILD'S RIGHTS ACT AND THE PROMOTION OF CHILD WELFARE

As a matter of concern, the world has recognised the risk children are exposed to in their day-to-day activities. The first conference that was organised was the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of Child in 1924. The first General Assembly on child rights was on the 20th of November, 1959. In 1978, a resolution was made by the United Nation on rights of the child on the 20th of December of the same year. Another resolution was established a decade after on the same issue on the 8th of December, 1988. These two resolutions along with Commission on Human Rights on the 8th of March, 1989 and the Economic and Social Council on 24th of May, 1989 were responses to request around the world on convention for the rights of the children. The Commission on Child Rights then decided to draft a convention on the rights of the child. Therefore, the 1989 United Nations' General Assembly adopted Convention on Rights of the Child, which was ratified by the Organisation for African Union (OAU) Assembly of Heads of State and Government in July 1990. Nigeria signed and ratified both Convention on Rights of the Child and African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 1991 and 2000 respectively (UNICEF, 2007).

More so, in Nigeria, the bill in response to rights of the child was also passed in 2003. The Nigeria Child's Rights Act of 2003 is still accessible and in use till present. The Act contains more than 270 provisions and protections of the rights of Nigerian child. According to UNICEF (2007) the basic provisions of Child's Rights Act of 2003 are the following:

- That the dignity of the child should be protected. The Act provides for child's freedom from any form of discrimination on the basis of sex, ethnic, culture, community, disability, political opinion, origin, religion, or circumstances of birth.
- The Nigerian child should be protected against any form of physical, emotional, or mental abuse, injury, or neglect, maltreatment, battery, torture, castration, or degrading punishment. Also, no one should attack his/her reputation or honour.
- Every Nigerian child should not be deprived right to leisure, rest, and enjoyment of the highest level of physical, psychological, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing and health.
- Special protection measures that relate to mental, physical, locomotion challenge or street children should be provided: they should be given protection in a way that will enable them achieve utmost fullest, possible social integration and reintegration, and full moral development.
- Child marriage and betrothing of child is totally prohibited by the Act. Any Nigerian child below the age of 18 year is not supposed to be forced to marry any adult.
- The Nigerian government at local, state, and national levels should strive to reduce infant mortality rate, improve medical and health care facilities, ensure adequate nutrition and safe drinking water, sanitised and hygienic environments, and tackle ill-health and diseases

- as well as malnutrition. Also, the available resources at local and community level should be used in enhancing primary health care for the Nigerian child.
- Immunisation of child below 2 years must be ensured by parents and guardians having legal custody. Nursing and expectant mothers shall also be catered for.
 - No Nigerian child should be exposed to pornographic materials, use of narcotic drugs, child trafficking, criminal activities, abduction, and transaction of child custody without legal backing. Also, cultural scarification such as tattoo, tribal or non-tribal mark, and female genital mutilation (FGM) are punishable under the law.
 - Abduction of child and forced exploitative child labour that is not light in nature is punishable under the Act.
 - Transaction of children in return for money for the purpose of using the child for begging, prostitution, hawking, or for unlawful immoral activities is said to attract long terms of imprisonment.
 - Sexual abuse, exploitation in all ramifications that can affect child's welfare, recruitment of child into armed forces and importation of children to harmful publication also are made punishable by long terms of imprisonment.

PHILOSOPHY OF CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE AGENCY

There is an established philosophy for operating in every CPS in the world. However, similitude will be found in every CPS, likewise, disparity in some because of the differences in value of the agency and the country constitutional provision. According to Diane & Marsha (2003) the following are the peculiar philosophy for CPS and what social worker can do:

- **Ensuring Provision of Vulnerable Child's Basic Needs:** The right to basic necessities of life is paramount for every child. CPS serves to promote access to emotional, social, cultural, financial, psychological, biological, sexual, health, and environmental needs of children in every family. The CPS agency does not involve in any family without request from the family or report of any child abuse or neglect from any members of the society. The rationale behind CPS's involvement in any case is basically to protect children from any form of abuse.
- **Family Institution is the Best Place for Child's Survival:** It has been noted by many social workers that, family is a unit of the society that is very crucial. Its crucial nature rests on nurturing the new members of the society into functioning members of the society. Thus, when family is perceived to be performing this role, then there is no need for CPS intervention. In practice, when CPS agency finds a problem in any family, it is its duty to maintain stability in that family. Most services provided are meant to increase the strength and assistance to maintain cohesion that will make the family a safe place for the child.
- **Parents Desired to be Good but Sometimes Need Support:** Capacity to rear children is unlike capacity to bear them. Thus, some parents love their children much up to indulgence. In other face, some suddenly start to hate their children due to demanding nature of children for emotional, social, and financial needs which they are incapable of at that moment. Thus, support from CPS agency in harnessing these burdens and educating them on how to cater for children can help in stabilizing the family and helping the child grow in a conducive environment. Social workers in CPS stand to provide parental education along with other services to family in ensuring that parents are good to their children.

- **Child Safety, Family Wellbeing, and Permanency:** As a governmental or state agency saddled with child welfare maintenance, CPS oversees safety and wellbeing of both family and children. According to Diane and Marsha (2003), "CPS must engage families in identifying and achieving family-level outcomes that reduce the risk of further maltreatment and ameliorate the effects of maltreatment that has already occurred" (p. 9-10).
- **Individualism is Paramount:** There is diversity in culture, structure, language, orientation, parental skills, religion, economic status, values, beliefs, and social class as well as lifestyles. Thus, when engaging with different clients, social workers working in CPS agency should be conscious of these differences and apply individualism towards the intervention process.
- **Active Participation:** As professionally enshrined in social work, principle of engagement provides for clients to be informed on every action to be taken in intervention. Also, CPS activity can only be successful when parties involved are actively involved in rehabilitation process. In fact, since major goal of CPS agency intervention is to reintegrate child back into family for permanence, then, it is inevitable to attain success without bargaining with parents and children.
- **Direct Intervention:** A direct intervention is necessary when child abuse and neglect is felt, provided that social workers working with CPS does not intervene into any child welfare issue when needs did not arise. Whereas, when attention of CPS is called for by neighbour or any citizen due to perceived case of child maltreatment, then, its social worker will directly get involved. In cases like this, family consent may not be required before intervening. As soon as the agency is notified, a family assessment response (FAR) will be conducted to investigate the case within specific period. This assessment mainly assesses child's safety and it encompasses family's environment and needs. After this thorough investigation, a credible and genuine evidence of abuse or neglect occurrence (termed as "indicated") or non-occurrence (termed as "unfounded") is documented (Thomas, 2013).
- **Reunification with Family:** It is believed that, taking custody of child away from his/her parents does not provide solution to child's problem except in a very dangerous situation. For example, parents who have psychological problem or any other severe problem that poses serious threat to children. Apart from this, CPS always prioritises re-unification of child back to the family found guilty of child abuse or neglect after rehabilitation process. The decision to reunite child with his/her family is a prerogative of the social worker handling the case from the onset within CPS agency.
- **Permanency:** Permanency is provided when re-unification is impossible. There are some conditions that may warrant total removal of the child from family as early noted. When such conditions are felt, there are certain forms of out-of-home cares that can be provided to that child. Foster care is most common care for such a child. Some may provide adoption while others may consider kinship care. Since the main goal of CPS agency is to maintain permanence within family and it seems not forthcoming, consistent and frequent visitation of parent to their child may be prioritised. Thus, foster or kinship care is usually encouraged and opted for in some situations.
- **Transfer of Complete Guardianship:** Some conditions may not provide for parents'-child interpersonal relationship again. Some of the conditions may have placed the parents into behavioural section in a hospital or where the child is left alone due to parents' death.

Here, permanent transfer of guardianship through adoption may be required for such a child.

ROLES OF SOCIAL WORKER IN CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE AGENCY

Based on the research conducted by Whitaker, Reich, Reid, Williams & Woodside, (2004), most social workers in CPS perform different tasks. It was later classified under supervision, administration, direct services, and counselling. A survey conducted by Owl guru (2017) highlighted the following roles of social workers in CPS:

- **Data Gathering:** Clients are asked some essential questions concerning the perceived child abuse in order to provide solution to their problem. They are also asked about their needs, demographics, and progress.
- **Counselling:** In a case where parents of the child are found to be substance abuser, an extensive counselling session is organised for rehabilitation.
- (a) **Prepare Reports:** Social worker intervening in client's problem will have to report to the agency on the cases at hand, Progress experienced as well as challenges will be provided for proper follow-up by the agency. The agency will also have to report to the government on its achievements at the end of every reporting year for evaluation.
- (b) **Counseling Clients with Interpersonal Problem:** Clients are usually faced with variety of problems. It is one of the responsibilities of social worker working in CPS agency to counsel clients on how to overcome their interpersonal problem.
- (c) **Keeping and Maintenance of Records:** One of the important aspects of casework intervention process is record keeping. Therefore, CPS workers are expected to keep tab of their records. It is important to keep record in order to avoid monotonous and repetition while handling cases, as well as, to know where to continue intervention in every new session. Record keeping helps other social workers in understanding clients' previous problem encountered when they check their files.
- (d) **Sensitisation of Clients and General Society on Health Issues:** Social workers work with the whole society by sensitising on preventive measures they can employ to promote child welfare and to avoid child abuse within households.
- (e) **Counselling of Parents on Child Rearing Strategies:** Parents are usually encouraged to attend training workshops on parental education. This training also entails education on strategies for child upbringing.
- (f) **Provision of Support Services:** This includes prenatal care, child care, substance abuse treatment, parenting classes, homemaker services among others.
- (g) **Linking to Community Resources:** Clients that need services that require some resources will be linked to them. In a case where clients are unaware of available resources it is the responsibility of the social worker to link them up with these resources.
- (h) **Arrangement of Psychological Test:** Cases that require performing psychological test for some clients will be taken over by CPS worker. The CPS social worker will then make provision for the test rather than request the clients to provide a test result after doing it by themselves.
- (i) **Provision of Permanent Home for Child in Duress or at Risk:** Some children that have been abused by their parents or guardians may be provided with new home when reunification is impossible.

- (j) **Withdrawer of Custodian Right:** This means that, CPS worker supervise the activity with each household and whenever any act of child abuse is found and the parents are found guilty, they may remove the child from the family for proper protection under new custody.

PROCESSES OF DISCHARGING CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Generally, CPS agencies are to i) assess children safety, ii) protect children from any form of harm, iii) improve the family strength to protect its children' and ensuring reunification or source for alternative permanence when reunification is impossible (Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA), 1999, p. 7). Thus, to achieve these goals, CPS agency usually work with other agencies, which must be family-focused, child-centred, culturally responsive, diversity conscious, and ethically controlled (Kirst-Ashman, 2010). According to Gilberman (1995), social worker in CPS is constantly requested to testify in court for assessment report of child abuse for "indicated" or "unfounded" and to provide recommendation(s). Act of testifying in court is known as "adjudicatory hearing". However, the thrust of the activity is to achieve safety, permanency, and wellbeing of child, and as well general welfare of the family (Child Welfare League of America, 1999). To provide these services, CPS agency has processes it follows in discharging these responsibilities. These processes are in stages according to Diane & Marsha (2003):

- Stage 1: Intake process
- Stage 2: Investigation or Initial Assessment
- Stage 3: Family Assessment
- Stage 4: Case Planning
- Stage 5: Service Provision
- Stage 6: Family Progress
- Stage 7: Case Closure

Stage 1: Intake Process

CPS is saddled with the responsibility of receiving and conducting evaluation of reports on suspected or perceived child abuse and neglect. It then determines, based on investigation of reported data, whether it meets the requisite statutory and agency guidelines for indicated child maltreatment. More so, it ascertains the emergency and exigency nature of suspected case in terms of needed response from the agency. CPS also sensitises and educates members of the community who called for consent of it on allegations of child abuse or neglect and the roles and responsibilities of CPS (Diane & Marsha, 2003). The highlight of services to be rendered under intake process are:

- Amass information from primary source i.e. reporter and secondary sources (agency record and state's central registry): demographic data, information on clients' problem and parents' data should be gathered for intervention.
- Respond to emergency conditions of clients with acceleration: where some of the clients' problems require immediate attention, the social worker or the agency should take cognisance of it and respond immediately, such as, removal of child from permanent home until intervention is finished.
- Provision of encouragement, motivation, and support to reporter of suspected child abuse: Members of the society that report cases of child abuse should be given incentives for their actions to show encouragement for reporter.

- CPS agency's record should be verified for subsequent report of child abuse from it. If there is any or none, when applicable, the State's central registry should be checked.

Stage 2: Investigation or Initial Assessment

The terms investigation and initial assessment are often used interchangeably but differ in their applicability. Investigation is an effort of CPS agency aimed at discovering occurrence of child abuse or neglect based on report of reporter. However, initial assessment is meant to establish fact on child's safety and risk, and what, where, and when services of CPS agency is needed in order to alleviate, remediate, rehabilitate, or avoid child abuse and neglect. The investigation or initial assessment is about fact establishment about child abuse but not limited to that. It goes a long way in providing fact for future use or occurrence and serve as an instrument in determining children maltreatment in the family currently. It further aims at reducing the risk of potential future occurrence of child abuse or neglect from the family. Also, it determines the placement of child custody in terms of providing permanence through reunification into the family or provision of outside family care such as kinship care or subsidised guardianship. According to Tunnell and Edward (1999), effective investigation or initial assessment must involve the following features:

- Both family and children should be present when exploring allegation of child abuse to receive their perceptions. This will enhance active participation of all parties in the case of reported child abuse and their part of the allegation will be noted.
- Exhibit active listening skills. Every point being expressed needs to be understood and associated to the case in order to be able to solve the problem professionally. Loss of vital data may hinder intervention success.
- Highlights to clients CPS roles that are statutory. The active participation of social workers in their respective areas will ensure success in the intervention. However, inactive or negligence in statutory roles may affect the intervention process.
- Family's strength and resources should be focused on based on individualism. The ability of family to ensure adequate social functioning of children should be measured. Also, the family ability to provide basic needs should be focused on specifically.
- Be empathetic towards anxiety and grievances witnessed by both family and child. The agency, through the social worker, should always show that it understands the problem and how it feels by putting him/herself in the client's shoe.
- The interview should be flexible. The act of being rigid in the interview process may hamper freedom of expression of clients and may affect voluntariness of them to render needed data in the intervention.
- Professionally mediate between child and parents during assessment. In cases where child and parents have contrary information on the case being intervened, the social worker should use professional requisites to mediate effectively.

Stage 3: Family Assessment

When the evidence of child abuse or neglect has been discovered, the next process will have to be to carry out family assessment. This is a process of sourcing for the strength and needs. This is premised upon the assumption that family will not just move into abusing their child or neglecting him/her, there must be predisposing factor. Thus, a social worker within CPS will be appointed to assess the family. This process will only arise after safety has been provided for the child. The aim is to also reduce the risk of maltreatment within family for future purposes. This will include

identifying and recognising the factors influencing child abuse and neglect that is peculiar to the family. More importantly, family assessment needs to be effective. However, for it to be effective, the following prerequisites should be in place:

- The length at which family can procure safety within home for the children should be a yardstick for strength of the family.
- Families should be treated based on individualism as they differ in many orientations such as structure, ethnic, culture, familial cohesion, and social class.
- Assessment should be cultural-sensitive in order to provide care according definition of law.
- Belief in family transformation should be the cornerstone of family assessment strength itself.
- For empirical practice, CPS social worker should employ use of clinical tools and skills in assessing risk factors in child maltreatment assessment.
- Clinical tools like observational tools, genogram, ecomap, and self-report instruments should be used for family assessment (Diane & Marsha, 2003)

After ensuring these prerequisites are present, then, making decision that will be effective should follow. This can only be assured through effective interview of family members. Social worker should be competent in this aspect to yield outcome by involving them in partnership. He/she will have to gather information from each member and analyse in order to draw appropriate conclusion based on critical thinking.

Stage 4: Case Planning

Recall that the thrust of CPS agency is to maintain three outcomes: child permanency, child safety, and child and family wellbeing. Thus, to achieve these goals, there must be a proper planning from the CPS social worker handling the case. A case well planned is a step to successful intervention. Since there are three outcomes, then, there are also three planning strategies and these are: case planning, safety planning, and concurrent planning. Case planning enhances the assessment of family reported in order to search for a way the family's strength and needs can be met; safety planning ensures that, child at risk is firstly provided with safe place from the maltreatment experienced; concurrent planning has to do with the provision of alternative permanency for child with a new family while rehabilitation continues on the faulty family. Meanwhile, the social worker working with family should however converse with them on setting goals that will ensure achievement of the set outcomes. According to Diane and Marsha (2003), case plan should have goal and the goal should follow the acronym **SMART**:

- **Specific:** The plan should be precise on what has to be done and reason for doing it.
- **Measurable:** It should be weighed so that, it has time and how to do it. It must be measured in such a way that, when it has been achieved, it will be known and processes will be understandable.
- **Achievable:** The goal should not be a mirage that cannot be realised. It should be feasible and proofed for its feasibility.
- **Realistic:** It should be realisable based on resources and services available for its achievement.
- **Time-limited:** It should be planned along with time and at a particular period, outcome should be expected by clients, CPS agency, and social worker. When the time elapsed, then

a referral should be made. Time-limited goal usually enhances social worker and client to evaluate their progress (Kirst-Ashman, 2010).

Stage 5: Service Provision

This is a stage at which stage 4 case planning will be implemented by the CPS social worker. The target clients that will be rendered with services here are family and child, in order to intervene into reported case of child maltreatment. However, the act of providing services along with planning for family issues is very critical. It is one of the panaceas to problem itself. Here, effort should be made in providing services based on practice wisdom or experience of social worker on similar case. An outline has been attempted by NAPCWA (1999) for selecting services to be rendered to families with similar case of child maltreatment. The outline is as thus,

- Services for family at high risk for child maltreatment:
 - Target: Severe injury, child abuse, and/or neglect;
 - Primary agency: Child protective services and Law enforcement
 - Goal or concern: Safety of the child
 - Strategy: Foster care, adoption, kinship care, court-ordered service, criminal prosecution, child removal, and intensive family preservation service.
- Services for family at moderate risk for child maltreatment
 - Target: Inappropriate medical treatment, severe and excessive discipline, neglect.
 - Primary agency: Child protective services and community partner agency.
 - Goal or concern: Family social functioning-related services to safety of child.
 - Strategy: Community agency support, family supported services that are formal, safety plan.
- Services for family at low risk for child maltreatment
 - Target: Problem of high stress within family; emotional and economic stress; and family dysfunction before incidence of maltreatment.
 - Primary agency: Community partner agency.
 - Goal or concern: Family and child wellbeing.
 - Strategy: Parental education, formal and informal service, counselling, shelter service, habilitation service, prevention service, advocacy from neighbour and community.

Stage 6: Family Progress

The assessment processes are stages that have to do with chronology. Similar to staircase, whenever a step has been taken, progress is assumed to have been made. Thus, at this stage, services needed by the family has been identified, planned, and provided, therefore, the progress should be evaluated. This evaluation entails checking the following in the case under intervention:

- Risk within family must have been alleviated.
- Safety of child must be ensured at specified rate according to policy.
- Successful solving of effect of maltreatment on child after intervention
- Family reunification or child removal as the case may be.
- Goals and outcomes must be correlated at the end of intervention
- All tasks must have been carried out professionally to attain the outcome desired.

However, before the final evaluation of progress, social worker should carry out case work evaluation within 3 to 6 months at least (Diane & Marsha, 2003). By carrying this assessment out,

in northern Nigeria is another evidence to establish the presence of child abuse and neglect. Therefore, there is the need for an accelerated response to child abuse and neglect problem in Africa to enhance a community-based intervention. This requires a synergy between all stakeholders, government, and Nigeria citizens to ensuring the smooth functioning of the society because a society that protects its children is assumed to be a peaceful society.