

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

Does the physical contact between Children's Social Worker and families' during the assessment and in-person response stage increase child safety in the Department of Children and Family Services of Los Angeles County?

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
For the degree of Master of Public Administration in Public Sector Management and  
Leadership

By  
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## Abstract

Does the physical contact between Children’s Social Worker and families’ during the assessment and in-person response stage increase child safety in the Department of Children and Family Services of Los Angeles County?

By

Jacqueline Lara

Master of Public Administration in Public Sector Management and Leadership

With an annual budget of \$2.2 billion, the County of Los Angeles, Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) is the largest locally administered child welfare program in America (“Department of Children and Family Services,” 2017). It is predicted that DCFS investigates approximate 150,000 child abuse cases and works with about 90,000 families each year (“Department of Children and Family Services,” 2017). This research study explores if physical contact between DCFS Children’s Social Worker and families’ increase child safety. Quality child welfare service is essential to providing effective services to families’ and increases child safety. The result of this study will contribute to the concept that physical contact between CSW and families’ increases child safety.

## Section 1: Introduction

As of April 2018, in the State of California, an estimated total of 59,662 children are reported to be in the foster care system as a result of child maltreatment. In Los Angeles County there are approximately 21,094 children in the foster care system (“California Child Welfare Indicators Project,” n.d.) According to Kesner (2007), child maltreatment “is the second leading cause of death of children in the United States” (p. 118). Child maltreatment is defined as, “Any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child” (“The Centers For Disease Control and Prevention,” 2008, p. 11). The California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP) University of California at Berkley, indicates that between the timeframe of April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018 a total of 128,243 cases were investigated for allegations of child abuse in Los Angeles County (“California Child Welfare Indicators Project,” n.d.) The contentions consist of eight-allegation types: “sexual abuse, physical abuse, severe neglect, general neglect, exploitation, emotional abuse, caretaker absence/incapability, and at-risk/sibling abused” (“California Child Welfare Indicators Project,” n.d.) The top three reported allegation type were physical abuse with a total of 21,590 reported cases, general neglect with 46,504, and at-risk/sibling abused with 26,406 cases (“California Child Welfare Indicators Project,” n.d.) According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2008), “Child Maltreatment can result in direct physical, behavioral, social, and emotional harm and disability and is a risk factor for a range of other health risk factors” (p. 4).

The child welfare system was initially designed to protect and ensure the physical and emotional safety of every child. According to Spratt (2001), “A Child Protection orientation is characterized by a primary concern to protect children from abuse, usually from parents who are

often considered morally flawed and legally culpable" (p. 943). The disposition of a child protection plan materializes as a system of intervention and implementation, which can deter the immediate restoration of a parent-child relationship. Its origins derive from the Social Security Act of 1935, which "established the Aid of Dependent Children program, which offered cash assistance to enable poor, single mothers to care for their children rather than lose custody of them" (Schene, 1998, p. 27). In 1974, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act was enacted after an increased report of child maltreatment. According to Schene (1998), "Between 1979 and 1993, the number of children officially reported as abused or neglected rose by more than 347%" (p. 29). The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) "developed standards for receiving and responding to reports of child maltreatment" (Schene, 1998, p. 28). With the establishment of public laws to protect children the number of children in the foster care intensified resulting in a modification of focus from child maltreatment interventions to the delivery of service entities.

When children are removed from their home, they are placed in foster homes and remain under the supervision of a child welfare system such as the Department of Child and Family Services ("Department of Children and Family Services," n.d.) According to Schene (1998), "The formal system through which this society responds to child abuse and neglect is now largely a governmental one" (p. 24). At the local level, a child welfare system adheres to courts and conducts concurrent investigations with law enforcement ("Department of Children and Family Services," n.d.) However, it is important to note that the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) functions are funded through, "state statutes" which implies that many of their functions are influenced by state and federal leadership ("Department of Children and Family Services," n.d.) This is important to identify, as the influence of state and federal

leadership administrative public policies will be taken into account when further examining the design of the DCFS child welfare policy.

The Department of Child and Family Services child welfare policy is composed of fourteen stages designed to ensure the safety of every child that attains the attention of DCFS (“Department of Children and Family Services,” 2017). Although each stage is primordial to the effectiveness of child safety, the immediate assurance of a child safety is during the assessments and in-person responses stage. Primarily, this stage is designed to process each case and determine if a case is "downgrading, upgrading, evaluating out, or re-mapping referrals for child abuse and neglect allegations” (“Department of Children and Family Services,” 2017). Most importantly, it is during this stage that the initial contact between DCFS Children Social Worker (CSW) and the child and family at risk is initiated. According to Bar-On (1990), “most social workers regard their craft as mainly involving personal, face-to-face relationship with clients through which they help these clients to develop independent need-meeting competencies” (p. 134).

Child abused reports are generated and categorized during the DCFS intake stage also known as the Child Protection Hotline (“Department of Children and Family Services,” 2017). When a suspected child abuse report is initiated, it is instantly categorized as an immediate response or a five-day response referral. Once classified the referral is immediately dispersed to the assessments and in-person responses stage where it is assigned to a CSW. When a referral is categorized as immediate response, CSW is required to make physical contact with child and family before the end of CSW shift to ensure child safety. A five-day response referral requires CSW to make physical contact with child and family within five days of its initiation (“Department of Children and Family Services,” 2017). It is important to note that DCFS

welfare policy stipulates the immediate contact of CSW with child and family; however, it does not stipulate the quantity of contacts between CSW and child and family require during this stage. Nevertheless, Ghaffar, Manby, and Race (2012) indicate that during a child abuse investigation, “outcomes improved whether agreement was reached about the severity of the abuse and, where workers were able to spend time with family members, understanding the families’ point of view” (p. 888).

According to Ghaffar et al., (2012) “the quality of the families’ experience may well be an influential factor in the ability of agencies to adequately monitor the well-being of vulnerable children” (p. 888). The notion that the extent of success and cooperation of a family with the child welfare system depends greatly on the treatment received by such entity appears to be of significance to further investigate. As specified by Drake (1994), due to the crucial outcome of a child abuse investigation it is considered imperative that a CSW "possess sensitivity to the feeling of parents and children and must have the ability to engage the entire family" (p. 595). Further exploration of the quantity of physical contact between CSW and families’ during the assessments and in-person responses stage will be critical to identify CSW possible aptitude to increase child safety.

## Section 2: Literature Review

The dramatic increase in the number of children placed in the foster care system can be considered one of the many motives that have drawn attention to child safety. Child abuse is defined as, "Repeated mistreatment or neglect of a child by a parent(s) or other guardian resulting in injury or harm" ("Department of Children and Family Services," n.d.) Respectively, child welfare authorities receive numerous reports each year of child maltreatment. A study conducted by Dawson (2001) indicates, "In Canada over 100,000 child protection reports are made and assessed annually" (p. 151).

Within the United States, concerns regarding child safety are referred to the child protective service of the child welfare system of each state. For the County of Los Angeles, such child welfare system is the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). According to Yamatani, Engel, and Spjeldnes (2009) "The goal of the child welfare system is to ensure safety, permanency, and well-being for all children who come to the attention of the child welfare system" (p. 361). McCroskey and Meezan (1998) stipulate "These public agencies can respond by removing the child from the home or by providing services to increase the safety of the family environment" (p. 56). Historically, studies have revealed that the child welfare system has focused on, "preventing maltreatment in high-risk families, whose children have already been maltreated" (Waldfogel, 2009, p. 195). This introduces the misperception of a broken child welfare system and its ability to increase child safety.

Since the introduction of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act in 1974, there has been exertion on behalf of the government to develop policies that will enhance the child protection culture and management. A study conducted by Spratt and Callan (2004) in the United Kingdom indicate "those child-care systems that attempt to both manage child protection

risks and meet the needs of children and families usually fail to achieve these dual goals" (p. 200). Base on this notation there was a "re-focusing of social work practice" by the government restating the duties of local authorities (Spratt & Callan, 2004, p. 201). Furthermore, Spratt and Callan (2004) study examined the "child-care system through an investigation of decisions made by social workers, their pattern of practice, and the impact of these decisions and practices upon families" (p. 201). Ultimately, Spratt and Callan (2004) study found that "the practice in child welfare cases is influenced by a concern on the part of social workers to address the risks inherent in such cases" (p. 201). Essentially, Drake (1994) indicates that the child welfare system is "complex and demanding" and that social worker and client relationship "skills and competencies have by no means been exhaustively identified" (p. 595).

### **Children Social Workers**

The most crucial role in the field of child welfare and the protection of child maltreatment are children social workers (CSW). The standard services delivered by CSW to families include preventative services in stopping child maltreatment, case management/planning, in-home/out of home care, foster-care services/adoption, school, and education support, financial support, and court-related issues ("Department of Children and Family Services," 2017). As stipulated by Connolly (2007) "social work is rooted in a core set of values that give purpose, meaning and direction to the work" (p. 827). Social workers crucial goal is to "secure safety; to promote stability of care; and to restore or improve well-being" (Connolly, 2007, p. 827). This is fundamentally done through a physical interaction between children social worker and family. A study conducted by Yamatani, Engel, and Spjeldnes (2009) indicates that children social worker goals cannot be met "without sufficient time for child welfare workers to spend with families" (p. 361). Additionally, such analysis also stipulates that a study completed by The Children Bureau

(2002) indicate that "states where workers most consistently visited children best met performance standards" (Yamatani, Engel, and Spjednes, 2009, p. 361).

### **Time Spend With Families**

According to Munro (2005), an area of conflict for CSW in working with children is "spending time with families and completing paperwork" (p. 538). Public sector organizations such as DCFS delegate administrative tasks by management with the purpose of effectively meeting the organization's expectations and goals. Due to the vulnerable population served, DCFS participates in an intense audit system. Munro's (2005) study indicates that certain audit system "imposes a heavy burden of paperwork on front-line workers" (p. 538). Inadvertently, these types of audit systems are further inclined to measure the quantity of the worker rather than the quality. In supporting such audit systems, effective CSW are destitute of their time serving families and dedicate extra time and effort to completing administrative tasks (Munro, 2005).

Drake (1994) conducted a study that included nine focus groups of workers and clients; the purpose of the study was to list essential aptitudes of child welfare services. Although the study covered a range of essential aptitudes to the child welfare services the most relevant aptitudes mentioned throughout the study was CSW capacity to establish an appropriate relationship with the client (Drake, 1994). Drake's (1994) study revealed that "Clients stated that one way workers could communicate their respect was by spending time with them" and that although clients understood social workers intense workload and time limits they "viewed a willingness to spend time with them as a sign that the worker valued the family and was concerned about them" (p. 597). Ultimately, Drake's (1994) study revealed the importance of building an effective relationship with clients and those clients must be treated "with respect and as unique families rather than as files, cases, or numbers" (p. 601).

## **Assessments and Children Safety**

According to Dawson (2001) "Assessment is the foundation of effective social work practice" (p. 151). It offers social workers the aptitude to collect essential information to assist their decision-making regarding child safety further. Fundamentally, assessments guide social workers to make, "an educated prediction about the likelihood that a child will be maltreated, based on a careful consideration of relevant factors" (Dawon, 2001, p. 152). Assessments are base on the notion that social worker knowledge will assist in identifying risk factors and the occurrence and recurrence of child maltreatment (Dawon, 2001). The risk assessment process is primordial to social workers because it is through such tool that decisions are made to close, open a child abuse case, or remove a child from the home to ensure safety. Due to the complexity and dynamic of many families appropriately assessing a family can be difficult for social workers. According to Dawon (2001) other contributory factors to appropriately assessing a family are, "volume of referrals, workload, lack of cooperation resulting from families' strong emotional reactions to interventions in family life, and the requirement to make immediate decision regarding the safety of children base on limited data" (p. 152). Dawson (2001) further stipulates that although there are limitations to risk assessments, such limitations are superseded by social worker education background, values, viewpoint, and professional experience. Nevertheless, Dawson (2001) acknowledges the impact of the assessment and possible lack of accuracy.

Unlike Dawson (2001), Callahan (2001) indicates that risk assessments are "not a measure of effectiveness" (p. 157). According to Callahan (2001) "there is no research-based evidence that they actually predict risk" (p. 159). Occasionally child maltreatment is perceived as government mismanagement; this has resulted in "child welfare legislation changed, making more specific the reasons for removal of children from their parents" (Callahan, 2001, p. 158).

Ironically, Callahan (2001) stipulates that risk assessments "permits government to reduce their responsibility while appearing to take action" (p. 160). Ultimately, risk assessments cannot reduce the risk of child maltreatment; however, it can guide children social workers towards a path of "evaluating present risk assessments, comparing them to other approaches, and generating new directions" (Dawson, 2001, p. 155). Nevertheless, the increase of the number of child maltreatment has resulted in the hiring of inexperienced CSW who "are charged with the responsibility of protecting children and serving families, without having the specialized educational background necessary to make these decisions" (Cash, Smith, Mathiesen, Graham, and Barbanell, 2006, p. 124).

### **Dual Roles**

There is a persevering predicament with the system of child welfare between supporting families and protecting children (Munro, 2005). A study conducted by Litzelfelner and Petr (1997) specifies that "Child welfare agencies are now charged with the dual role of providing services and protecting the rights of both children and their parents" (p. 398). This is conflicting for CSW and families' because the same individual designated to investigate alleged abuse and neglect, and possibly remove a child from their home to ensure safety, is also expected to make reasonable efforts to support the family and prevent out of home placement. Litzelfelner and Petr (1997) study revealed that due to the dual role "child welfare professionals often disagree about which priority is to take precedence for any individual child" (p. 398). This dilemma is significant because it establishes a conflict of interest between CSW, child, and parents, it hinders CSW ability to focus on children outcome exclusively, and conflicts with child welfare services mission and goals.

## **Performance**

According to Litzelfelner and Petr (1997) "Case advocacy in child welfare has been defined as speaking for or on behalf of the best interest of individual children by protecting them from services and systems that are injurious or that provide inappropriate help" (p. 398). Case advocacy is part of DCFS structure and purpose of CSW. However, reported high caseloads, high turnover, and staff burnout limits CSW ability to execute such mission effectively.

A study conducted by Yamatani, Engel, and Spjeldnes (2009,) on child welfare worker caseload suggest that failure to maintaining a reasonable workload or caseload can result in failure to meet federal and state standards, and most damaging it "can lead to workers making mistakes that harm children" (p. 361). A study conducted in New York further supports this notion where an "audit found that high workloads contributed to inadequate investigations and inconsistent case monitoring" (Yamatani et al., 2009, p. 361). Ultimately Yamatani et al., (2009), study finds that excessive caseloads "were commonly noted factors related to stress, job burnout, job dissatisfaction, and turnover of CSW" (p. 361).

According to Font (2012) "Annual worker turnover in child welfare agencies average between 20 and 40 percent nationally, costing agencies both financially, through recruitment and training cost, and qualitatively, through having an inexperienced workforce, staff shortages, and discontinuity in the relationship between caseworkers and families" (p. 636). High turnover is defined as "an annual turnover rate exceeding 25 percent" (Strolin-Goltzman, Kollar, and Trinkle, 2010, p. 47). Strolin-Goltzman et al., (2010) conducted a study with the child welfare system in the city of New York. Their study indicated that because CSW "are responsible for their safety, stability, well-being, and permanence" they affect children and families immensely

(p. 47). Ultimately, Strolin-Goltzman's et al., (2010) study implied that CSW's turnover results in children and families lack of stability and loss of trust.

Staff burnout is defined as “emotional exhaustion, diminished personal accomplishment, and depersonalization of clients” (Font, 2012, p.637). Employee burnout within a public setting can manifest in many different ways as well as have many negative and dangerous results. Such is the case for public sector employees working with high-risk cases such as child welfare agencies (Font, 2012). Base on Font (2012), study "burnout manifest in the workplace as work avoidance, apathy towards the wellbeing of clients, and feelings of cynicism and futility."

According to Font (2012), this can result in "failure to evaluate child safety and family needs appropriately and can put children at risk." It is suggested that workers with a high level of burnout in the workplace are unlikely to take ownership of their work and work at a fast-paced; this can ultimately result in easily overlooking the safety of a child or needs of an individual.

### **Challenges to Protecting Children**

Alaszewski and Harrison (1988) indicate that majority of the criticism about the child welfare system "was focused on the nature of administrative structures of welfare agencies" (p. 635).

This notion originated from the lack of effective collaboration between public organizations and government policy makers. Alaszewski and Harrison (1988) analytical technique further clarify such lack of effectiveness. Rational technique refers to policy making as a top-down process where "policy makers at the top defining the broad parameters of policy and service-providers at the bottom of the organizational structure implementing the policy (Alaszewski & Harrison, 1988, p. 637). However, Alaszewski and Harrison (1988) also introduce a different approach by Lindblom (1959 and 1979), which argues, "incrementalism offers both a more realistic description of decision-making and a more effective way of making decisions" (p. 638). As

indicated by the concept of incrementalism, organization decision-making is not rational or realistic as "They do not start with a clearly defined goal, evaluate all the different methods of achieving this goal and choose the most effective way of achieving this goal" (p. 638).

According to Alaszewski and Harrison (1998), it appears that DCFS adopted a top-down approach to coordinating child welfare services. This approach can be considered unsuitable because it is based on the notion that during the decision-making process, decisions are created under great uncertainty by professionals that have limited information; however, are expected to assess the problem and develop suitable interventions appropriately.

### **DCFS Public Policy**

According to Walton (1993), public organizations policies process such, as DCFS is "dynamic and fluid, involving both institutional and intellectual activity" (p. 140). One of many challenges policy makers encounter is clarifying goals, obtaining and acquiring the goals, comparing them, and opting for the best solution that closely complements the goals (Walton, 1993). However, Walton (1993) indicates that Lindblom (1968) incrementalist approach disputes that during the policymaking process "limited number of solutions are considered, goals are not dwelt upon, and instead a range of manageable alternatives is investigated" (p. 140). When creating policies regarding child abuse it is important to consider the "nature of the processes involved, and that events and policy are largely crisis-driven" (Walton, 1993, p. 141).

In the United States, child abuse is corresponded by the government formulating laws. Walton (1993) indicates "When government attempts to regulate it usually does so via legislation and then seeks to refine the complex process by statutory instruments" (p. 145). However, it is essential to note that according to Walton (1993), "no statutory instruments specific to child

protection have ever been enacted to stipulate the type, frequency and quality of social work intervention” (p. 145).

### **Section 3: Methodology**

To understand child safety in the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) of Los Angeles County and the impact that physical contact between children social worker (CSW) and families' particularly during the in-person response stage of DCFS policy; a quantitative, survey questionnaire method will be used. Survey questioner will intend to expand awareness of CSW ability to effectively connect with families', risk assessments tools used to determine child safety, overall case outcome, and child safety attainment. The study aims to evaluate the experience of CSW to effectively increase child safety in the Department of Child and Family Services of Los Angeles County. Furthermore, and base on that notion this study intends to add to the topic of child safety the research design used is descriptive.

The county of Los Angeles is divided into eight service areas with a radius of 4,084 square miles. As of 2016, DCFS staff members consist of 8,800 with 4,000 designated positions for CSW ("Department of Children and Family Services," n.d.). As an effort to include all CSW's of the Los Angeles County in the study a sampling method of simple random example of cluster is utilized. A total of 125 DCFS CSW participates will be selected per service area, with a total of 1,000 participants. Base on our literature review, which indicates that "social work involvement is sufficient to prevent child abuse" (Walton, 1993, p. 149), and that CSW's are the gap between the formal discourses of the child welfare system, and its actual policies and practices; CSW's are important stakeholders for the study.

After receiving approval from the state child welfare review board, participants will be recruited through the distribution of flyers in DCFS facilities throughout Los Angeles County eight service area offices. Additionally, CSW's will also be recruited during the lunch hours of 12:00p.m-1: 30p.m, Monday-Friday for one week. Participants will be giving the option to

voluntarily complete the survey in person or online using [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). As an effort to encourage participation the importance of confidentiality will be reiterated a minimal of two times during the physical contact with participants.

A questionnaire containing twenty-five closed-ended and open-ended questions will be developed. The type of questions included will be factual; behavior; opinion; attitudinal; motives; and knowledge questions. The questions will aim to obtain the views of social workers ability to effectively connect with families, risk assessments tools effectiveness, case outcomes, overall social work process, factors that inhibit child safety attainment, and the number of physical contact with child and family will form part of the survey.

Due to the topic, two sets of survey questions will be designed. The responses will be obtained on a 5-point scale of “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” and comment when appropriate. The first research questions will be pertaining to CSW’s aptitudes regarding their job duties and will include the following topics:

1. Amount of caseload and policy knowledge regarding excessive number of cases.
2. Ability to manage multiple projects.
3. Capability to meeting deadlines.
4. Level of support received by management.
5. Concerns regarding their performance and the hurdles associated to that topic.
6. Career fulfillment.
7. Career plans within organizations.

The second set of survey questions will be pertaining to CSW’s aptitudes regarding family engagement and increasing child safety. This set of questions will include the following topics:

1. Amount of physical contact with child and family during the assessment and in-person response stage.
2. Amount of successful closed cases and what CSW attributes its success.
3. Risk assessment tools and their level of knowledge and level of utilization.
4. CSW level of importance to building rapport with families.
5. Level of transparency between CSW and families and whether it has any impact when building rapport.
6. Improvements that policy makes can do to increase child safety.
7. Common used interventions to increase child safety.

Though this study focuses on the interaction between DCFS CSW's, children, families and DCFS CSW's ability to increase child safety, additional research questions derived from this study literature are as followed:

1. Does the level of trust between CSW and family increase child safety?
2. Does DCFS risk assessment tools increase child safety?
3. Does CSW's performance within the organization impact families' and CSW's ability to increase child safety?
4. Does DCFS excessive administrative task impact CSW ability to engage with family and increase child safety?

### **Ethical Considerations**

Eligible participants will be exclusively recruited from the adult staff of the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS). A permission to distribute study survey has been obtained from the agency. Study participants will be recruited by personal invitation (via email, and in-person request) by the study author. Participants will be given a consent form to read and

sign before the study is conducted. Study participants will be asked to participate in survey in-person, if unable to participate at that moment participants will be offered the option to completing survey via online survey site [SurveyMonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com).

There will be no deception. If the survey is completed in-person, participants will be given consent form before completing the form, if proceeding to online survey participants will not be able to complete the survey without completing the consent form. Possible risks in participating in this study include slight emotional uneasiness, weariness or indifference. The author of this study is a mandated reporter, and as such, it is her study to report any form of harm or abuse to others or themselves. Participants can feel free not to answer any question that may produce discomfort for them. In addition, participants can discontinue interviews at any point. Participants are encouraged to seek counseling services, at their own expense by contacting their work health insurance, if they experience emotional difficulty as a result of taking this survey.

Participants may not directly benefit from participation in this study.

Survey answers will be kept confidential, and the individual answers will not be shared with DCFS. Identifiable information may include employment and city of employment. These identifiers will be used for the demographic purpose in the methodology portion of the paper. All research data will be stored either electronically on a password-protected computer or in a locked file cabinet. The list that connects study participants to their identifying information will be kept separately in the author locked office in a locked cabinet. The only author of this study will have access to the survey data. Except as required by law; no identifying information of study participants will be voluntarily disclosed without separate consent of those participating in the study. Personal identifying information of participants will not be published or presented as

part of this or any other study. The author of this study intends to keep the research data until the research is published and/or presented, and then it will be destroyed.

## Section 4: Background

Public Policy is one of the oldest and most significant contributions to all kinds of political and administrative systems. Going as far back to the period where advising kings and emperors were a "traditional kind of public policy analysis, then the study of public policy is almost as old as the history itself (Yildiz, Demircioglu & Babaoglu, 2011, p.343). Base on the numerous interpretation of it and the lack of full autonomy defining public policy appears to be a hard task. Yildiz et al., (2011) define public policy as, "the behavior of some actor or set of actors, such as official, government agency, or a legislature, in an area of activity" (p. 344). According to Barthwal and Sah (2008), Dye (1976) defines public policy as "Whatever governments choose to do or not to do" (p.457). Comparably, Hecl (1972) defines public policy as, "a course of action intended to accomplish some end" (p.84). Ultimately, public policy is a complex system challenging to decode as there is no universal definition, it does not occur in clear stages, and its various elements are not self-governing.

Essentially, policies are public in nature and are formulated and implemented by some level of authority within a political system. Public policies ultimate objective is to serve a specific society through the fulfillment of goals better. The process of policy-making is a complex process because it is during this stage that policies are being formulated, adopted, implemented and evaluated simultaneously. For example, organizations are often in a position of formulating new policies while implementing and adopting current policies and evaluating the existing ones. Walton (1993) argues that "new solutions are based upon previous ones and that change is marginal, and which demonstrates the complexity of the means-ends equation as decisions and choice merge, resulting in policy makers muddling through" (p. 140).

In essence, the evaluation of a policy will ultimately impact the implementation, formulation, and adoption of existing, new, or future policies. As specified by Dunham (1940), "Good policies as we all know, can only be if they are implemented effectively, and they must fulfill the objectives for which they were formulated" (p.458). Woodrow Wilson, the leader of the Progressive Movement, stipulated that "policy making was the function of the political executive and policy implementation was the concern of the permanent executive (Barthwal and Sah, 2008, p. 458). Undesirably to Woodrow Wilson, it was during the twenty-first century that the relationship between politics and administration was officially recognized and inferred that politics and administration could not be separated. In essence, such separation was impossible as long as the government contributed in any minimal formulation or implementation of policies.

## Section 5: Recommendations

The purpose of this study has been to examine a correlation between increase in child safety effectiveness and Children Social Workers physical contact with families'. Child safety is associated to extreme assumptions, practices, and expectations challenging to simplify. The forced connection between DCFS and the number of children in the foster care system has resulted in reformations to the entire child welfare system. As stipulated by Fazioli, Lawson, and Hardiman (2009) "The challenge for child welfare practice is to meet the needs of children and families more effectively" (p. 1462). It is base on this fundamental notion that children social workers are crucial to increasing child safety.

The quality of services provided to families is essential to increasing child safety. CSW's are the first correlation between a child welfare system and families. CSW's ability to effectively connect with children and families is pivotal to increasing child safety. Due to the impact that CSW's have on children, families, and the development of a case, it is essential to prioritize their workforce. According to Connolly (2007) by focusing on social work practices, values, principles and knowledge it increases their perception where they "better understand the impact of practice on the lives of children" (p. 835). Practical steps or measures that can be implemented should include:

- Prioritize engagement with families and reducing administrative tasks by the use of technology or reduction of paperwork redundancy.
- The policy should include a distinction between child maltreatment prevention and predictability.
- Reasonable workloads for CSW to help alleviate turnover and burnout.

- Policy makers should consider the frequency and quality of social work intervention.
- Weekly support and monitor by DCFS supervisors of CSW's disposition and create positive patterns of personal interaction.

Although the development and implementation of suggested practical steps materialize as difficult, attempting to apply some may give children and families the opportunity to improve their lives. Nevertheless, maintaining the status quo can result in higher turnovers, a steady increase in the number of child maltreatment, and the death of innocent children.

## **Section 6: Conclusion**

This study emphasizes the importance and challenges of preventing child maltreatment and the impact that children social workers' have with day-to-day cases. It is estimated that in 2014, 1,490 children died as a result of child maltreatment, and a total of 872,000 cases of child maltreatment were substantiated by DCFS (Asawa, Hansen, and Flood, 2008). The immediate consequence of child maltreatment can be physical; however, the long-term consequence can be emotional and behavioral. According to Asawa et al., (2008) child maltreatment can result in children developing "insecure attachments with caregivers, which often leads to interpersonal difficulties, aggressive behaviors, and low self-esteem" (p. 74). Additionally, the recognition of societal problems and the prevalence of child maltreatment have been significant through this study.

Initially, this study indicates that CSW's physical contact with families is essential to increasing child safety; however, the study literature indicates that although CSW's are essential to preventing child maltreatment, their overall ability to demonstrating a level of respect towards the families is fundamental. This study literature review suggests that the gap of CSW's and families was addressed through CSW's overall level of transparency, honesty, and time spend with families. Nevertheless, CSW's dual roles and pressure to produce and protect further fosters this study literature gap. Fundamentally, to further close this study gap it is imperative to shift focus from the prediction and prevention of child maltreatment and place emphasis on CSW's aptitudes, dispositions, and well-being.

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