

CHILD ABUSE IN FOSTER CARE



Portuguese Good Practices

FAMILY

The natural environment
for children and young people

HOWEVER when

The vital conditions of, nutrition, protection and social, relational and individual development, as well as emotional nourishment, cannot be found

And, furthermore, the compromise that they're not victims of physical, psychological and sexual violence is not ensured

It often takes years to accomplish a slight yet significant change in a dysfunctional family structure and organization, and sometimes, no change at all

Children enter residential care, as they often cannot wait for the changes to eventually take place in their families

Placing a child in an Institution is a temporary, last resort measure

If Feasible, returning to family is always the first choice permanency planning to children under residential care

The strengthening of the social intervention teams, working close to the families, is crucial

Their social support and rehabilitation work are critical factors

PASSED PROGRAMS BY
PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT
TOWARDS FAMILY INTERVENTION
BEFORE AND DURING
THE RESIDENTIAL CARE PROCESS

Prenatal Family Benefit provides cash assistance to women as of the 13th week of being pregnant. In addition, meant to ensure specialised surveillance to women as early as possible into their pregnancy, so that any signs of violence are identified as early as possible

Born a Citizen Program created to promote the children's' right to having a name and to getting social protection, allowing early intervention in vulnerability

Integrated Project for Sexual Abuse Prevention
(PIPAS) the goal is to raise awareness amongst youngsters for health and responsible sexuality, by providing personal and social skills in this area

Parental Education Training Programmes the programmes include one-on-one and group training sessions to strengthen parenthood. Contents and subjects there in are tailor-made based on a prior assessment of problems and needs of both parents and children

The guidelines for intervention in cases of signs of sexual abuse allows for procedures to be taken when risk of sexual abuse is ascertained, but also, more specifically procedures to be carried out if and when abuse takes place in residential homes

INTERVENTION IN FAMILIES

Strong social intervention – Family centred

NON-JUDICIAL

Frontline Institutions in the area of childhood and youth

Report

Local commissions for the protection of children and young people at risk will work together with families and other services involved yet in a non-judicial basis.

These bodies can only intervene provided the parents of minors and the minors themselves – above 12 years old – agree. This action terminates if the families fail to comply with the terms of the agreements signed with the commission.

File sent to Court

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JUDICIAL BASED INTERVENTION

Intervention of **Social Security's Family Court Adviser Service** to assess the Court itself, and to work as well with the families and the whole network of services involved .

This Social Security's Family Court Adviser Service intervention happens in both residential or non-residential care cases.

The primary goal of this service is to assess the Court, as well as an including and participative managing of the whole net of services.

The institutional environment must be close to a natural setting conditions of a fully functional family

That's what the metaphor of an open aquarium, reproducing closely the natural environment conditions of fishes, and supported and balanced from the outside means

Sooner or later children are expected to leave but, as they enter residential care, the bond and the sense of belonging is of major importance for children to build up their strength

Adequate development conditions must as well be granted

THE IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION PLAN (PII)

“the Government is to submit annually to Parliament, before the end of March of each year, a report on the existence and evolution of each single case file of children or young people in care homes, temporary centres or staying with care families”.

By 2010 eight such reports had been produced

A crosscutting perspective is now possible, through data analysis, allowing to go further in the quest for solutions that better fit the needs of the youngsters and children

The implementation of Immediate Intervention Plan represents a turning point in residential care intervention methods and concepts

The inherent evaluation brought by PII has shown the importance and the need of a more accurate and structured requalification of residential care, opening doors to a main improvement plan settled up by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity – the DOM Plan

THE DOM PLAN

DOM (Latin) - special aptitude or skill, obtained as a gift.

In Portuguese, the acronym, stands for Challenges, Opportunities and Changes

This plan aims to provide incentive for continuous improvements in the way the rights of children in foster homes are protected, namely in outlining and carrying out permanency plans

The ultimate goal is to take children from foster homes, as quickly as possible, in a meaningful time living period of their lives

DOM Plan two main goals

Increase Multi Disciplinary Teams, matching the number of experts in each team to the number of children in foster homes

The qualification of the intervention and of the interveners, providing training to this experts working with foster homes

Thus, in addition to increase the number of technicians, the DOM Plan provides, in its second step, the qualification of the same

New and reviewed technical support instruments and methods

The allocation of an external case manager for each child under foster care, that should meet the child every six months, in order to be able to provide information to the Court and the Child Protection Board

The publication of a brochure based upon the “Children and Young people in care – Discover your rights” brochure, published by CoE, which has the same goal as the original brochure

Review foster home internal regulations or implementing them if previously non-existent, in accordance with legal, and ethical rules

The **Shift Occurrences Registration Book**, created to record any cases of conflict, abuse or any other relevant events during shifts, allowing proper measures to be taken

Making changes to the premises, allowing them to be refurbished and resized

“children are the best thing in the world”

Fernando Pessoa

“the best thing in the world would be that each child was the best thing in someone’s life”

Eduardo Sá

In fact, each child is different and each of them should be the most important person in someone’s life

The integrity of each human being must be respected and upheld to help raise human beings which are complete on themselves, able to integrate in society

Communication and relationships are the pivotal anchor point for formal intervention mechanisms, sustaining written instruments driving power, intent and meaning

communication must include the children in the foster home, their families and the host community

Family involvement is of the utmost importance both in the relationship of the child with his/her historical and time-space context

Family involvement is also crucial as a co-participant in the child's integral development path and on the child's future permanency plans

The community as a symbol of normality, regulation and integration

Children participation in local community

Participation and integration of community in the children's educational process diluting the impact of outsider with which an institution may be perceived by the community

The community reinforces the consciousness of their role

Good practices will always be on a constant evolution path with no finish line

Predicting as an attitude of intelligence and lucidity

Preventing clairvoyantly

Restoring as an act of justice and clearness

These are the conditions to which we are committed from a policy, civic and ethical point of view, in every action we carry out...

... and in every little gesture!

THANK YOU

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