



Guidelines to Assist Social Workers to Prepare Children for The Children's Court

Elzahne Simeon De Jager ¹, Ernestine February ²

North West University

Abstract

The children's court aims to protect children by acting in the best interests of the child. Another function of the children's court is to determine whether a child needs care and protection (Children's Act 38 of 2005). Court proceedings can be stressful for the child, who is already abused, neglected, and removed from their normal environment. There are limited resources within the South African context regarding the preparation of children for children's court proceedings. This social work research study explored which guidelines could assist social workers in preparing children for children's court proceedings. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews by following a purposive sampling method with social workers from the Department of Social Development in the ZFM (Zwelentlanga Fatman Mgcawu) district with the purpose of exploring the views of social workers regarding the content of such a guideline. The findings exposed the lack of a guideline that would help social workers in preparing children for the children's court. Some guidelines/themes that were identified by the social workers include: a toolkit which is age appropriate, therapeutic techniques, understanding the need for the children's court, mock trials, and a discussion on what happens next.

Keywords: Children's court proceedings, guidelines, children in need of care and protection