

**An information kit for families affected by child sexual abuse and
reported to the East Rand Child Protection Unit**

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2010

ERRATUM

In the title of this dissertation reference is made of the word *Child Protection Unit (CPU)*. This term was formerly used by the South African Police Service and the broader community still refers to it as the CPU. Previously known Child Protection Units (CPU's) are now called Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit (FCS). The main reason for changing the name was because of the fact that the unit does not render services to the children only, but it also render services to the adults who are allegedly sexually abused and those who are experiencing family violence. Although the title refers to the term CPU, in the content of this dissertation this unit is referred to as FCS.

An information kit for families affected by child sexual abuse and reported to
the East Rand Child Protection Unit

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POTCHEFSTROOM

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DECLARATION AND FOREWORD

I, **Setlaiso Caroline Poppy Maleka**, hereby declare that the undersigned manuscript

*An information kit for families affected by child sexual abuse
and reported to the East Rand Family Violence, Child
Protection and Sexual Offences Unit*

for the degree Masters in Social Work: Forensic Practice is my own work. This manuscript is submitted in article format as described in Regulation A.11.2.5 of the Calendar (200) of the North-West University's Potchefstroom Campus. The article was written according to the requirements of the journal *Social Work / Maatskaplike Werk*.

SCP MALEKA

DATE

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SUMMARY

TITLE: An information kit for families affected by child sexual abuse and reported to the East Rand Child Protection Unit

Key words: Child sexual abuse, information kit, families, Child Protection Unit, forensic investigation, assessment

Child sexual abuse is a very sensitive issue that causes trauma and damage to the victims. This does not affect only the victims, but their families and the society at large. It is sometimes difficult for the society to support the victims of child sexual abuse. It then becomes a burden on the families because they lack information on how to deal with their sexually abused children. The families do not have knowledge of forensic social work and it becomes difficult for them to understand the process of forensic investigation.

The information kit for families affected by child sexual abuse will empower the families with knowledge on the process of forensic investigation. This will also help to prepare both the children and their families for what will happen after the case has been reported to the Child Protection Unit. They will also be able to know their expectations when it comes to the court proceedings. An improved understanding will help the child prepare for testifying.

Developing an information kit and reader-friendly guidelines will assist in relieving the stress on parents and strengthen them in giving their children the necessary support. Further research should be conducted on families' understanding of forensic investigation and the court proceedings involved when a child has been sexually abused. Currently there is little data on forensic social work in South Africa, due to the fact that forensic social work is still quite a new field in our country.

The researcher thus identified a need for conducting a qualitative study with the parents of sexually abused children whose cases had been reported to the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit for forensic investigation at the time of the study. The aim of this study was to develop an information kit for families who were affected by child sexual abuse in order to give them a better understanding of forensic investigations in such cases. An interview schedule was

developed with the purpose of confirming whether the families understood what they would be going through during the whole process.

From the research it was evident that forensic social work was something new to the respondents as it was difficult for some of them to give detailed responses to the questions. It became clear that the families of sexually abused children are in need of relevant and clear information on forensic social work, the nature of forensic investigations and associated procedures.

OPSOMMING

TITEL: 'n Inligtingstel vir gesinne geraak deur seksuele mishandeling van kinders, en wat dit by die Oos-Randse Kinderbeskermingseenheid aangemeld het.

Sleutelwoorde: Seksuele mishandeling van kinders, inligtingstel, gesinne, Kinderbeskermingseenheid, forensiese ondersoek, assessering

Die seksuele mishandeling van kinders is 'n uiters sensitiewe saak wat slagoffers getraumatiseer en beskadig agterlaat. Dit affekteer nie net die slagoffers nie; hul gesinne en die groter gemeenskap word ook daardeur geraak. Dit is soms vir 'n gemeenskap moeilik om die slagoffers van seksuele kindermishandeling te ondersteun. Die las op die gesin word dus swaarder, omdat hulle nie ingelig is rondom die hantering van die seksueel mishandelde kind nie. Hierdie gesinne het geen kennis van forensiese maatskaplike werk nie, en hulle sukkel om die forensiese ondersoekproses te verstaan.

Die inligtingstel vir gesinne wat deur seksuele kindermishandeling geraak is, sal die gesinne bemagtig met kennis oor die forensiese ondersoekproses. Dit sal ook help om die kinders en hul geliefdes voor te berei op hoe dinge gaan verloop nadat die saak by die Kinderbeskermingseenheid aangemeld is. Hulle sal 'n beter begrip hê van wat hulle van die hofverrigtinge te wagte kan wees. Hierdie kennis sal die kind help voorberei vir sy/haar getuienis.

Die ontwikkeling van 'n inligtingstel en lesersvriendelike riglyne sal ouers se spanning verlig en hulle in die ondersteuning van hul kinders versterk. Die gesin se begrip van die forensiese ondersoek en daaropvolgende hofverrigtinge behoort verder nagevors te word. Suid-Afrika het op die oomblik nog baie min data oor forensiese maatskaplike werk beskikbaar, aangesien dit nog so 'n nuwe vakgebied in ons land is.

Die navorser het vervolgens die behoefte geïdentifiseer aan 'n kwalitatiewe studie met die ouers van kinders wat seksueel mishandel is, wie se sake ten tyde van die navorsingstudie by die Kinderbeskermingseenheid aangemeld is vir forensiese ondersoek. Die doel van hierdie studie was die ontwikkeling van 'n inligtingstel vir gesinne wat deur seksuele kindermishandeling geraak is, om hulle in te lig oor die

forensiese ondersoekproses. 'n Onderhoudskedule is opgestel om vas te stel of die gesinne verstaan het wat tydens die proses met hulle sou gebeur.

Vanuit die navorsing het dit duidelik geword dat forensiese maatskaplike werk vir die respondente vreemd was, aangesien sommiges gesukkel het om gedetailleerde antwoorde op vrae te verskaf. Gesinne van seksueel mishandelde kinders het dus 'n behoefte aan uitdruklike en relevante inligting oor forensiese maatskaplike werk, die aard van forensiese ondersoeke en verwante prosedures.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE AUTHORS

SOCIAL WORK/MAATSKAPLIKE WERK

The Journal publishes articles, book reviews and commentary on articles already published from any field of social work. Contributions may be written in English or Afrikaans. All articles should include an abstract in English of not more than 100 words. All contributions will be critically reviewed by at least two referees on whose advice contributions will be accepted or rejected by the editorial committee. All refereeing is strictly confidential. Manuscripts may be returned to the authors if extensive revision is required or if the style or presentation does not conform to the Journal practice. Articles of fewer than 2,000 words or more than 10,000 words are normally not considered for publication.

Two copies of the manuscript as well as a diskette with the text, preferably in MS Windows, should be submitted. Manuscripts should be typed in 12 pt Times Roman double-spaced on one side of A4 paper only. If possible the manuscript should be sent electronically to hsu@sun.ac.za. Use the Harvard system for references. Short references in the text: When word-for-word quotations, facts or arguments from other sources are cited, the surname(s) of the author(s), year of publication and page number(s) must appear in parenthesis in the text, e.g. "... (Berger, 1967:12). More details about sources referred to in the text should appear at the end of the manuscript under the caption "References". The sources must be arranged alphabetically according to the surnames of the authors. Note the use of capitals and punctuation marks in the following examples.

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SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

An information kit for families affected by child sexual abuse and reported to the East Rand Child Protection Unit

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Child sexual abuse is a very sensitive issue that needs to be treated professionally, and that is why forensic social workers deal with these cases. According to Johnson (2004:462) child sexual abuse is a worldwide concern and it is an insidious, persistent, and serious problem that, depending on the population studied and definition used, affects 2-62% of women and 3-16% of men as victims. The East Rand Child Protection Unit (CPU) which is currently known as Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit (FCS) of the South African Police Services (SAPS) in the Gauteng province of the country, is but one role player in the fight against child sexual abuse. Of all the cases reported to this FCS since January 2010, 38% turned out to be rape cases and 16% were sexual assault cases. Sexual abuse is a common problem affecting children. National statistics in the USA indicate that more than 200,000 children are reported to child protective services each year for suspected sexual abuse (Kellog, 2002:571). Child sexual abuse does not often result in death, but its consequences to the child victim can be serious and persist through adulthood (Johnson, 2004:463).

The consequences of child sexual abuse can affect individuals on a physical, psychological and social level. Child sexual abuse can have both immediate and long-term adverse psychological effects that carry over into adulthood (Johnson, 2004:463). In most cases children suffer the effects of abuse because of the perpetrators' rationalization of their behaviour by suggesting that the victims enjoyed what was happening to them. It is estimated that somewhere between 21-49% of child sexual abuse victims appear asymptomatic post-victimization (Dominquez, Nelke & Perry, 2001:3). It is not only the child that is affected, but also the family. The parents of sexually abused children need to be supportive, caring, respectful and believing. A response involving panic, shock or disbelief or an overly emotional response can negatively impact on the child (Dominquez *et al.*,

2001:4). The families of sexually abused children need to have information on what is going to happen once the case has been reported. According to NCTSN (2009:1), if a person is involved in a legal action related to child sexual abuse, knowing what to expect can help the child or adolescent cope with stress. One can prepare oneself and one's family by learning more about the role of the legal system, common concerns about legal action and suggested strategies to cope with the legal process at different stages.

As an employee of the East Rand FCS of the SAPS, the researcher identified a need for families of sexually abused children to be supplied with information on forensic social work. The researcher deals with sexual abuse cases on a daily basis and in South Africa there are only a few trained forensic social workers. The researcher realised that the families of sexually abused children need more knowledge regarding forensic social work, because most families think that all social workers render counselling or therapy to the children. During forensic investigations, the parents of sexually abused children often want to know whether the sessions with the forensic social worker will help their children forget about what happened to them. The forensic social worker then has to explain to the parents that a forensic social worker primarily gathers the facts for the court and is not a therapist (APSAC, 2002:7).

Forensic social work is in the process of being registered as a speciality in South Africa, and both professionals and the public require further information on the field. Limited resources with regard to forensic social work and especially forensic investigations are currently available in South Africa. In the United States of America, forensic social work is already well established and people are well informed about it. South African social workers can thus gain a lot from the American literature and experience in this regard. This literature focuses on unique forensic social work terminology and procedures such as systemic evaluations, forensic investigations and expert witnessing. These terms can be confusing to professionals and even more so for families affected by child sexual abuse.

According to Weyers (2001:15), a forensic social worker systematically evaluates individuals so that the resulting information can be presented in court or to the legal authorities. "One of the reasons that the preferred practice is to gather information about the child's background before talking to the child, is that such a practice

maximizes the likelihood of accurate understanding of any disclosures the child may make related to abuse’’ (APSAC, 2002:86).

According to Stern (1997:145), the expert may need to conduct a collateral interview with others such as the respondent’s family members, co-workers, teachers and friends. This is done to evaluate the information obtained from the child victim and is also called the forensic investigation. “The people who have dealt with child molesters have access to rich information that would greatly help investigators and subsequent decision makers better understand the patterns of misconduct and risks they present to children” (Van Dam, 2000:165) It is extremely important when assessing change within treatment that multiple sources of data be used and that offenders be confronted about any discrepancies (Murphy & Smith, 2005:175). According to Tjersland, Jensen and Reichelt (2005:297) little attention has been paid to effective intervention into the lives of families where intra-familial child sexual abuse is suspected but not conclusively confirmed.

This study had the potential to contribute to the field of forensic social work through the exploration of the kind of information these families need, and how professionals can engage family members in intervention conversations in order to protect the child from sexual abuse in future. “Triangulation interviews support the idea that a group may be the vehicle that supports first time recollection as well as the suggestion that group members somehow collaborate in making an environment that feels safe enough for first time recollection to be shared’’ (Gasker, 1999:85).

According to Kellog (2002:571), sexual abuse investigations rely primarily on the child’s statements since physical injuries and evidence are generally lacking. Trotter (2004:6) argues that most of the energy of child protection services is directed towards a risk assessment rather than treatment, and it is hardly surprising that families and children are not being helped. “Disclosure of abuse may lead to an environment that is conflictual and unsupportive or, alternately, a family that is conflictual and unsupportive may provide a context in which abuse is permitted to occur.” (Meyerson, Long, Miranda & Marx, 2002:401.) “It is important to note that not all the families experience clinically significant levels of distress following a disclosure of sexual abuse“ (Murphy, 1998:425). The families need to be given information on forensic investigation; they do not know the procedures and statutory processes involved in cases of child sexual abuse.

The aforementioned leads to the following research question:

What information do families need with regard to forensic investigation and associated procedures after reporting an alleged case to the East Rand FCS of the SAPS?

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overarching aim of this study was to explore the information needed by families affected by child sexual abuse, regarding forensic social work and associated procedures.

This aim resulted in the following specific objectives:

- To determine what basic information is needed by families affected by child sexual abuse.
- To develop an information kit regarding forensic social work, forensic investigation and associated procedures for the families.

3. CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

A basic information kit regarding forensic social work, forensic investigations and associated procedures in cases of child sexual abuse will be helpful to affected families.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology included a literature study, empirical investigation and the analysis and presentation of collected data.

4.1 Literature study

According to Fouché and Delport (2005:123) , a literature study “is aimed at contributing towards clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of the problem that has been identified”. The central focus of the literature study was on forensic investigations by a social worker in cases of child sexual abuse. The systematic library search included a repertoire of South African and international journals, social work abstracts and social sciences indexes. Databases like EBSCO Host,

Academic Search premier and Psych Lit were utilized to identify applicable literature.

4.2 Empirical research

4.2.1 Research Design

The Terminology Committee for Social Work (1995:53) defines research design as “the plan of a research project through which data is gathered in order to investigate the hypothesis or to realize the aim”. This qualitative study was both descriptive and exploratory in nature (Alston & Bowles, 2003: 34; De Vaus, 2001:1-3; Fouché & Delport, 2005:109). According to Neuman (1997:19) qualitative research data is frequently used in exploratory studies because the data-gathering techniques are less connected to a specific theory and are therefore more open to use a range of evidence in discovering new issues. An exploratory study has the purpose of gaining insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or person (Bless & Highson-Smith, 1995:420). According to Fouché (2005:269), a qualitative strategy differs inherently from the quantitative research design in that it does not usually provide the researcher with a step-by-step plan or a fixed recipe to follow.

4.2.2 Participants

The participants in this research involved the total population of the families of sexually abused children who had been referred to the researcher’s office for forensic investigation. The target group was the parents selected from the existing caseload. Purposive sampling (Strydom, 2005a:202) was used to identify participants. The following inclusion criteria was set:

- Cases reported to the forensic social worker of the East Rand CPU
-
- Families who were willing to participate in the study

4.2.3 Method of data collection

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, an interview schedule was used as data-collection instrument (Greeff, 2005: 297). Following the literature study, an

interview schedule was designed containing non-leading questions for families affected by child sexual abuse (see addendum 1).

The questionnaire was the most vital part of this study. A questionnaire is defined as a set of questions on a form that is completed by the respondent in respect of a specific research project (Terminology Committee for Social Work, 1995:51).

4.2.4 Research procedures

The researcher followed the following procedures to conduct this study:

- The FCS provided the statistics of the cases they had in hand.
- Identified potential families from child sexual abuse cases that were referred to the forensic social worker for forensic investigation.
- A consent form was given to the participants to be completed for voluntary participation (see addendum 2).
- Identified participants were prepared and scheduled for interviews.
- Questionnaires were distributed to the families to respond to during the interviews with the forensic social worker, and the forensic social worker explained the questions to the participants.
- Data was analyzed.
- A report was written in the form of a journal article.

4.2.5 Data analysis

Qualitative data was analysed according to themes by following Tesch's approach of thematic analysis (Poggenpoel, 1998: 343-344).

4.3 Ethical issues

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the NWU and the following ethical approval number was allocated: NWU-0027-09-51.

According to Strydom (2005b:57) ethics is a set of moral principles which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents. The following ethical issues were taken into consideration during this study:

- **Harm to respondents**

During the research process with the respondents, the researcher treated the respondents with respect in order not to harm their emotions: social sciences indicate that the respondents can mostly be harmed in an emotional way.

- **Informed consent**

Respondents were informed about all possible aspects of the study and they were also informed that, if they did not want to continue, they had the right to withdraw from the study. The respondents made a voluntary decision to participate in the study and they were not bribed for participation.

- **Violation of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality**

The privacy and confidentiality of respondents was safeguarded. The interviews were conducted by a registered social worker and all data is reported anonymously to protect the identity of the respondents.

5. TERMINOLOGY

Child Sexual Abuse

“Child sexual abuse is the involvement of children under the age of 18 in sexual or incestuous acts they do not fully comprehend, cannot give legal consent to, and that violate criminal sexual conduct laws or social taboos” (Sinan, 1999:15.). According to the Sexual Offences and Related Matters Amendment Act, 2007, rape is when the victim is a girl or a person under the age of 16 years.

Child protective services

“The child protection units of the South African Police Services identified during the first 6 months in 1996, 19805 cases of crimes against children less than 18 years, of which child sexual abuse were 7968 (40%)” (Madu, 2002:640). A Child Protection Unit (CPU) of the South African Police Service can be seen as the entry point through which child maltreatment cases are reported, investigated, and referred for intervention. “In the goal of protecting children from harm, child protective services workers are involved in the process of determining whether the reports of abuse can

be substantiated and if police or family court involvement is warranted.” (Sinan, 1999:15).

Information kit

“The kit is an information management system and child advocacy that includes strategies, tips and resources about giving, getting and organising information in an effective way” (Stewart, 2006:494).

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Forensic social work is still new in South Africa; therefore, limited information is available on the subject and it is difficult to procure the literature.
- It was also not easy to access the statistics at the FCS, due to the fact that the information is treated as confidential and only the unit commanders are allowed to access the information.
- Although the families agreed to participate in the study, it was difficult for them to be available for interviews at scheduled times.
- The respondents did not know much about forensic investigation and some do not understand English. Thus each and every question had to be explained or interpreted, which was time-consuming.
- The extent of this study was limited to only a small number of families affected by child sexual abuse in a specific CPU. The information gathered in this study can therefore not be generalized to the broader South African context.

7. STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The research comprises of the following sections:

SECTION A: Introduction and orientation to the research

SECTION B: The research article, written in accordance to the editorial guidelines of the journal *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*

SECTION C: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

SECTION D: Bibliography

SECTION E: Addenda

SECTION B: THE RESEARCH ARTICLE

An information kit for families affected by child sexual abuse and reported to the East Rand Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit [3455 words]

SCP Maleka is a master's student at the School of Psychosocial Behavioural Sciences at the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) and Dr AG Herbst is a senior lecturer in the subject group Social Work at the same university.

ABSTRACT

This article reports on an information kit for families affected by child sexual abuse who reported it to the East-Rand Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit (FCS). The design of the study was both exploratory and descriptive in nature and interviews were conducted with eight families affected by child sexual abuse. The questionnaire was used to establish whether the families had enough or relevant knowledge on forensic investigation or not. The results of the research indicated that most parents were not well informed about forensic investigation and court proceedings. It is therefore important for the forensic social workers to give information about the forensic investigation to the parents once the case has been referred to their offices.

Keywords: Child sexual abuse, information kit, affected families, Family Violence, Child Protection, Sexual Offences Unit, forensic investigation, assessment

INTRODUCTION

Globally, child sexual abuse is a very sensitive issue. This issue can affect both the victims and their families on a physical, emotional and social level. Some children do not immediately disclose the abuse to their parents, due to threats made by the alleged perpetrators even though this is not the reason that can lead to recantation. Once disclosed, it is difficult for the families to deal with the trauma and the shock. Some children become affected to an extent that they do not trust easily, even if they have the support of the family and professionals in the field of child protection. Gaining the trust of a sexually abused child is a challenge for the forensic social worker who has to obtain information from a child before the matter can go to court.

Family support is of the utmost importance in forensic investigations, but very often families have limited knowledge about the role of the forensic social worker and the process involved in the forensic investigation and court proceedings. If the families possessed accurate information, it would be easier for them to support their children as they would have an understanding of events. This would also prepare both the child and the family to be ready for court.

ORIENTATION TO THE PROBLEM

Child sexual abuse is a serious problem globally, and it is a very sensitive issue that must be dealt with professionally. According to Johnson (2004:462) child sexual abuse is a worldwide concern and it is an insidious, persistent and a serious problem. Depending on the population studied and definition used, it affects 2-6% of women and 3-18% of men as victims. Child sexual abuse is a serious matter that must be taken into consideration. Compared to the United States of America, South Africa has very few trained professionals who deal with child sexual abuse cases. That is

why it is important for the researcher to give the families of sexually abused children all the information they need pertaining to the role of the forensic social worker and the court proceedings.

Of all the charges laid at the FCS based at Brakpan SAPS in the Gauteng Province of South Africa since January 2010, a total of 38% turned out to be rape cases and 16% were cases of sexual assault and a total of 49% were false cases and the withdrawals. National statistics in the USA indicate that more than 200,000 children are reported to child protective services each year for suspected sexual abuse (Kellog, 2002:571). Child sexual abuse does not often result in death, but its consequences to the child victim can be serious and persist through adulthood (Johnson, 2004:463).

The consequences of child sexual abuse can affect individuals on a physical, psychological and social level. Child sexual abuse can have both immediate and long-term adverse psychological effects that carry over into adulthood (Johnson, 2004:463). In most cases children suffer the effects of abuse because of the perpetrators' rationalization of their behaviour by suggesting that the victims enjoyed what happened to them. It is estimated that somewhere between 21-49% of child sexual abuse victims appear asymptomatic post-victimization (Dominquez, Nelke & Perry, 2001:3).

The parents of sexually abused children need to be supportive, caring, respectful and believing (Meyerson, Long, Miranda & Marx, 2002:401). A response involving panic, shock or disbelief or an overly emotional response can negatively impact on the child (Dominquez *et al.*, 2001:4). The families of sexually abused children will experience significant levels of distress and must have information on what is going to happen once the case has been opened (Murphy, 1998:425). According to NCTSN (2009:1) if a person is involved in a legal action related to child sexual abuse,

knowing what to expect can help the child or adolescent cope with stress. They can prepare themselves and their families by learning more about the role of the legal system, common concerns about legal action and suggested strategies to cope with the legal process at different stages.

As an employee of the East Rand Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit (FCS) of the South African Police Services (SAPS), the researcher identified a need for supplying families of sexually abused children with information on forensic social work. The researcher deals with sexual abuse cases on a daily basis and in South Africa there are only a few trained forensic social workers.

The researcher realised that the families of sexually abused children need to be better informed about forensic social work: most families think that all social workers render counseling or therapy to children. During forensic investigations the parents of sexually abused children often want to know whether the sessions with the forensic social worker will help their children forget about what happened to them. The forensic social worker must then explain to the parents that a forensic social worker only gathers the facts and is not a therapist (APSAC, 2002:7).

Forensic social work is in the process of being registered as a speciality in South Africa and both professionals and the public need further information on forensic social work. Resources pertaining to forensic social work and especially forensic investigations, are currently very limited in South Africa. In the United States of America, forensic social work is already well established and people are well informed about it. South African social workers can thus gain a lot from the American literature and experience in this regard.

According to Weyers (2001:15), a forensic social worker systematically evaluates individuals so that the resulting information can be presented in court or to the legal authorities. “One of the reasons that the preferred practice is to gather information about the child’s background before talking to the child is that such a practice maximizes the likelihood of accurate understanding of any disclosures the child may make related to abuse.” (APSAC, 2002:86.)

According to Stern (1997:145), the expert may need to conduct a collateral interview with others such as the respondent’s family members, co-workers, teachers and friends. This is done to evaluate the information obtained from the child victim. “The people who have dealt with child molesters, have access to rich information that would greatly help investigators and subsequent decision makers better understand the patterns of misconduct and risks they present to children.” (Van Dam, 2000:165.) It is extremely important when assessing change within treatment that multiple sources of data be used and that offenders be confronted about any discrepancies (Murphy & Smith, 2005:175). According to Tjersland, Jensen and Reichelt (2005:297) little attention has been paid to effective intervention into the lives of families where intra-familial child sexual abuse is suspected but not conclusively confirmed.

AIM AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The overarching aim of this study was to explore the information needed by families affected by child sexual abuse with regard to forensic social work, forensic investigation and associated procedures.

This aim resulted in the following specific objectives:

- To determine what basic information is needed by families affected by child sexual abuse.

- To develop an information kit regarding forensic social work, forensic investigation and associated procedures for the families.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design followed in this qualitative study was of a descriptive and exploratory nature (Alston & Bowles, 2003: 34; De Vaus, 2001: 1-3; Fouché & Delpont, 2005:109). The descriptive design was utilized because there was a need for objectivity and comprehensive description of reality when doing the interviews. Data was collected by means of an interview schedule (Greeff, 2005: 297) in order to allow the participants to feel free to express their knowledge on forensic social work, forensic investigations and associated procedures, and allow them to feel free to ask questions where they did not understand. The population of this study consisted of the total case load of the researcher and purposive sampling (Strydom, 2005a: 202) was used to identify participants.

Qualitative data was analysed according to themes by following Tesch's approach of thematic analysis (Poggenpoel, 1998: 343-344).

This project was approved by the Ethical Committee of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) and the following ethical approval number was allocated to the project: NWU-0027-09-51. To oblige to the ethical rules in research (Strydom, 2005b: 58-61), the following procedures were followed to protect the respondents: participation was voluntary; they gave informed consent prior to the interviews; the names of children and their families were reported on anonymously and everything was done to prevent harming the respondents.

RESULTS

Biographical information of respondents

The biographical information focuses on the age, gender and relations to the children involved and are presented in tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1: AGE AND GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

Age	Female	Male
18-20	2	
20-29	2	
30-39	3	1
40-49	1	
59-59		
60 years and older		
Total	8	1

From table 1 it is clear that most of the respondents were female. This was due to the fact that most of the ladies were single parents and one of the respondents was fostering the child in question.

Relation to the children involved

This question was included to determine the primary relation to the children reported to the East Rand FCS.

TABLE 2: RELATION TO THE CHILDREN INVOLVED

Relation	Female	Male
Mother	5	
Father		1
Foster parent	1	
Other: cousin	2	
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 9		

From table 2 the deduction can be made that in the cases this article reports on, it was mainly parents who were supporting their children in the reporting and assessment processes of the child sexual abuse.

Results from the interviews

REFERRAL TO THE FORENSIC SOCIAL WORKER

All the respondents indicated that they were referred by Warrant Officer X of the FCS. Warrant Officer X is a detective at the FCS who is responsible for investigating the sexual abuse cases that are reported. It is this inspector's instruction from the court to refer the cases to a forensic social worker to determine whether the alleged sexual incidents occurred and, if so, whether the child involved would be able to testify in court. According to the experimental evidence, it is likely that the jurors would consider the child to be an unreliable witness especially when the statements are inconsistent: jurors tend to consider child witnesses more credible when their reports are consistent (Ghetti, 2001:978). When the investigating officer refers a case to the forensic social worker, he/she states what is needed by the court and he/she completes a referral for the forensic social worker. This is pointed out by Sinan (199:15) as an important primary task in the protection of children.

KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT THE FORENSIC SOCIAL WORKER MUST/CAN DO

An equal number of respondents responded yes and the others responded no to the question of whether they knew what the forensic social worker must/can do. There was only one respondent who could explain that the forensic social worker investigates the matter, even though she/he could not elaborate.

UNDERSTANDING OF FORENSIC AND SYSTEMIC INVESTIGATIONS

A third of the respondents indicated that they knew what it meant even though they could not really give an explanation. The rest of the respondents indicated that they did not know what it meant.

UNDERSTANDING OF ASSESSMENT

Almost half of the respondents responded *no* and the others who responded *yes*, could not elaborate on their understanding of the question. Some of their verbatim responses included the following:

“Assessment means I think is found out the information to other people.”

“Dealing with matters.”

“Is to look with the environment of the child and tock [talk] with the child.”

UNDERSTANDING OF THE COURT REPORT

Most of the respondents realized that a report had to be written for the court although they did not know what it entailed. Those who responded that they knew about the report gave the following explanations:

“Yes, since the forensic social worker is finished with them the court will take over.”

“Yes for the court to know what happened and how.”

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF A COURT AND THE MANAGEMENT OF SEXUAL ABUSE CASES

Only a third of the respondents had previous exposure to a court situation, but their exposure was not related to sexual abuse cases.

PERCEPTION OF THE FORENSIC SOCIAL WORKER AS EXPERT WITNESS

Two thirds of the respondents did not know the answer and the others responded that:

“If there is any child who is abused.”

“After the child has confess the matter to the forensic social worker.”

KNOWLEDGE OF TRIAL PROCEDURES

Most of the respondents did not know what trial procedures are and a third responded that they knew, but they could not elaborate on their answers.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHILD WITNESS

All the respondents seemed to understand the fact that children must give testimony in court because they all responded that the children were the only ones who knew the truth about what had happened to them. The others responded that it was important for the children to give testimony in court because they knew better about the case and they were the ones who knew exactly what had happened to them and

would be able to tell the truth. One respondent said that this would help the magistrate to make a judgement.

**IMPORTANCE OF THE FORENSIC SOCIAL WORKER'S
RECOMMENDATION**

The respondents did not understand the meaning of “recommendation”, therefore it was difficult for them to give a relevant answer. Their responses included the following:

“ To get the information and to give that child the power and being negative”.
“To get the information”.
“The kids feel free to disclose to the forensic social worker than to the parents”.
“Because are the government witness”.
“The court may know how this experience affected the child”.
“To give them solutions”.

It is important for the forensic social worker to make a recommendation for the court, as it is sometimes difficult to get information from sexually abused children because of trauma. The formal courtroom environment is intimidating and alienating to children, often adding to the distress of the child; studies indicate that a courtroom negatively effects children’s recollection of events and that children provide information of a better quality when testifying in a private room (Waterhouse, 2008:4).

These findings are summarized in Table 3 which serves as a guideline for the compilation of an information kit for the families affected by child sexual abuse. Such an information kit is also advised by Stewart (2006:494).

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN AN INFORMATION KIT FOR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Level of intervention	Associated tasks/roles	Typical information needed in this regard
Primary intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to the forensic social worker by the court or the investigating officer • Forensic investigation through assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biographical information of both the child and the parents • Completion of referral form by the investigating officer • Completion of an intake form by the parents/guardian of the child
Secondary intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systemic investigation through interviews with the parents and other role players • Compilation of court report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation for child witnessing • Expert witnessing
Tertiary intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation on fact-finding and generic social work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral for therapeutic or other services

The primary intervention focuses on giving the respondents information on the roles of the forensic social worker once the case has been reported. It is important to inform people that, as soon as the case is referred to the forensic social worker by either the court or the investigating officer, the forensic social worker does the forensic investigation by means of an assessment of the child.

This is followed by information on the systemic investigation where interviews are conducted with the parents, the teachers, or any other relevant role-players. A first report is then compiled.

Thereafter families must be informed that, after the forensic investigation, the forensic social worker compiles a court report where all the information obtained will be presented to the court in order to assist with the prosecution. The family is then informed that the child might be called to testify once the report is submitted to the court. Other people involved in the case might also be subpoenaed to give testimony. It is important for the families to know that their children will not be questioned in an open court when the forensic social worker motivated the reasons in terms of section 170 A of Act 51v of 1977 and state that the child will suffer undue mental stress when testifying in an open court. In such cases children are interviewed in a separate room with one-way mirrors facing the courtroom. An intermediary is available to assist the child during testimony. This is important because the children will not be threatened by the presence of the alleged perpetrators during their testimony. The families should also be made aware that the forensic social worker might give expert testimony in court on the written report, should the court be unclear on any of the information. The case can be withdrawn or be thrown out of court for other reasons.

During tertiary interventions, change is facilitated by giving the families summarised information with answers to their unanswered questions. The families must understand that forensic social workers specialise in assessing sexually abused children; they do not offer therapy. Their duty is concentrated on obtaining information on cases.

CONCLUSIONS

- Child sexual abuse is a major and sensitive issue that requires the expertise of well-trained professionals.
- The respondents were aware that their children were going to be seen by the forensic social worker after the investigating officer had referred the case. From this study it became clear that most families do not know the difference between the forensic social worker and a generic social worker.
- The respondents lacked knowledge on what the forensic social worker can/must do. Some respondents responded that they knew the role or the duties of the forensic social worker. However, the information they provided displayed a faulty view of the role of the forensic social worker. There was only one respondent who knew that the forensic social worker had to do a proper investigation of the case.
- The respondents did not have enough knowledge on forensic investigation. They did not know the process of forensic investigation or that the forensic social workers do not render therapy to their children during the forensic investigation. Their duty is to obtain essential information to support the case in court.
- Parents and primary caregivers need more information on what an assessment entails; most of the respondents did not have full information on what to expect during the assessment. They thought of the assessment as something done by the generic social workers doing the visits.
- The respondents knew that a report would be written for the court but they did not know what it entailed.

- All the respondents that were interviewed had little knowledge when it came to the court proceedings, due to the fact that they had never been to court.
- The respondents did not know why the forensic social worker had to give expert testimony in court.
- The respondents had a vague understanding of why the children need to testify in court. They were able to give the main reason, that children are the only ones who know the truth about what happened to them.
- The respondents misunderstood the concept of the forensic social worker's recommendation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the abovementioned facts, the researcher recommends that:

- Forensic social workers have programmes to educate families about the forensic investigation and the court proceedings following the reporting of an alleged case of child sexual abuse in order for the families to have more knowledge on what is going to happen once the case has been reported.
- Families be informed about the non-therapeutic role of the forensic social worker, which requires a thorough assessment and investigation for the court. It is therefore important for the forensic social worker to inform the families that, when a sexual abuse case is referred to the forensic social worker, it is important for the parents or the caregivers to ensure that the child attends all the sessions with the forensic social worker.

- The forensic social worker explains to the families that the child will be referred to another professional person to assist with counselling and therapeutic services aftercourt proceedings.
- Families should be informed that the forensic social worker will write a court report on the information obtained from the child and the information provided during systemic investigation. This report serves as a valuable instrument during the court procedure.
- The child must be prepared to testify in court.

It is therefore suggested that a standard information kit be developed for utilization in all FCS's. Such an information kit should contain the essential information and should be presented in a child friendly way and should be written in a language which parents and care givers will easily understand. An example of such an information kit is attached as Addendum 3.

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SECTION C: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study explored the knowledge of the parents of sexually abused children on forensic social work, forensic investigation and associated procedures. The study was aimed at discovering whether the families knew and understood what to expect once a case had been reported to the FCS.

Identified families took part in the study and all of them were from Tsakane Extension 17, which is a newly developed RDP area in the Brakpan area of the East Rand, Gauteng. Data was collected by means of an interview and the questions were clearly explained to the participants. All the participants were given the opportunity to answer the questions according to their understanding. The method of investigation that was used was a literature study and empirical research.

2. CONCLUSIONS

The research reflected on the information needed by the parents of sexually abused children who were seen by the researcher. The researcher perceived the main problem to be the parents' lack of information about what happens once the case has been reported. This is probably because most of them have never attended court before.

2.1 Conclusions regarding objective 1: to determine what basic information is needed by families affected by child sexual abuse.

The researcher managed to achieve this aim during the interviews by:

- Realising that child sexual abuse is a major problem that requires the expertise of well-trained professionals.
- The issue affects most families and they do not have enough knowledge and information when dealing with this issue.
- All the respondents who were interviewed indicated that they did not have any idea of what happens in court during a trial.

- Most of them did not know why it is important for the forensic social worker to give testimony in court.
- The respondents also needed more information on the forensic investigation procedure from the point where the case is first reported to the child protection unit.

The findings of the research indicated that the families need information about child sexual abuse cases. The relevant information will assist them in being better able to deal with the matter. They will be prepared for the court proceedings once they have been informed about what to expect.

2.2 Conclusions regarding objective 2: To develop an information kit for families regarding forensic social work, forensic investigation and associated procedures.

In the compilation of the information kit, the researcher focused on the needs identified during data collection (See addendum 3).

2.3 Conclusions regarding the aims

In this study the aims were achieved as follows:

- The effect of knowledge and information about forensic investigation on the families who are affected by child sexual abuse were explored.
- An information kit containing the answers the families did not have was also formulated.

2.4 Conclusions regarding the theoretical statement

The theoretical statement was confirmed. The results of the interviews pointed out the information gaps in parental knowledge and enabled the researcher to discover what knowledge was needed and which information to include in the information kit.

2.5 Additional conclusions

The researcher had the opportunity of getting to know the uncertainty people experienced after reporting an incident: what happens after the child sexual abuse case has been opened? The researcher was able to identify the following:

- Most people do not know that there are forensic social workers who deal with child sexual abuse cases. They only know that there are social workers out there helping people.
- Research is therefore an important method in social work because it enables the researchers to identify loopholes in the field.
- It is important for the SAPS Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Units to treat all cases of child sexual abuse with respect because these cases are very sensitive.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings pointed out the families of children who have been abused have little knowledge and they are not well informed when it comes to forensic social work, forensic investigation and what to expect when they are called to court. It is therefore recommended that:

- An information kit (see addendum 3) containing the information on child sexual abuse and the consequent court proceedings be compiled and made available for families who come to child protection units for forensic investigations.
- The community and the families need to be taught about the difference between forensic investigators and generic social workers.
- Families need to be more careful and protective towards their children in order to decrease incidents of child sexual abuse in their communities.
- Children who have been abused must be educated about being careful about who they trust and avoid perpetrators' traps.

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SECTION E: ADDENDA

ADDENDUM 1: THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

An information kit for families affected by child sexual abuse and reported to the East Rand Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit

INSTRUCTIONS

- Please answer all questions
- All questions will be dealt with anonymously. It is therefore not necessary to include your name.
- The information will assist the researcher in determining whether families of sexually abused children have knowledge about the role of the forensic social worker and the court proceedings.
- The necessity for more skills will also be determined.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. Gender

Male	
Female	

2. Age group

20-29	
30-39	
40-49	
50-59	
60 years and older	

3. Relation to the child who was allegedly sexually abused:

MOTHER	
FATHER	
FOSTER PARENT	
OTHER FAMILY MEMBER Specify relationship: -----	



SECTION B: INTERVIEW

Who referred you to the forensic social worker?	
Do you know what the forensic social worker must/can do?	
Do you understand what a forensic investigation is? Do you know what a systemic investigation is?	
What do you think “assessment” means?	
Do you know that a report will be written for court? Do you understand what it entails?	
Have you ever been to a court? Do you know how cases of sexual abuse are dealt with in court?	
When and about what will the forensic social worker give testimony in court? Do you know what an expert testimony is?	
Do you know what trial procedures are?	
Why is it important for the child and the witnesses to testify in court?	
Why is it important for the forensic social worker to provide recommendations to the court?	

Thank you for your participation

SCP MALEKA

ADDENDUM 2

M.A STUDENT NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY, POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS

ADDENDUM 2: CONSENT FORM

An information kit for families affected by child sexual abuse and reported to the East Rand Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

**School for Psychosocial Behavioural
Sciences**

Enquiries: Alida.Herbst@nwu.ac.za

Tel (018) 299-1675

RESEACHER: SCP MALEKA, MA (FORENSIC
SOCIAL WORK) STUDENT

SUPERVISOR: DR. AG HERBST

SUBJECT GROUP: SOCIAL WORK

DATE: _____

PARTICIPANT'S NAME: _____

I hereby declare that I was informed about the aim of this study and the procedures that will be followed. I understand that it will be expected of me to voluntarily participate in answering the research questions compiled by Ms Maleka. I take note that the services rendered by Ms Maleka are free of charge and that I am entitled to feedback after the interviewing process is completed. I am also at liberty to withdraw from the research at anytime. I understand that there is no financial gain from participating in this study and the researcher will cover my transport costs if necessary.

I understand that the results of the interview be kept confidential unless I ask that it be released. The results of this study may be published in professional journals or presented at professional conferences, but all my confidential information will be used anonymously.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT: _____ **DATE:** _____

RESEARCHER'S SIGNATURE: _____ **DATE:** _____

WITNESS 1: _____ **DATE:** _____

WITNESS 2: _____ **DATE:** _____

ADDENDUM 3

INFORMATION KIT FOR PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS WHEN AN ALLEGED CASE OF SEXUAL ABUSE IS REPORTED TO THE FCS

What is going to happen?



1. The case is reported to a SAPS CPU



2. The case is referred to a forensic social worker who opens a case



3. A Doctor might examine the child



6. The child is prepared for court



7. The child tells the court exactly what happened



5. An investigation through interviewing all people close to the child



8. The social worker testifies



4. The child is assessed by the forensic social worker



9. The child can be referred to a professional for counselling

ADDENDUM 4

LETTER FROM THE LANGUAGE EDITOR

2010-11-15

Ek, Ina-Lize Venter, het die artikel getiteld *An information kit for families affected by child sexual abuse and reported to the East Rand Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit* in opdrag van die skrywer, Me. Caroline Maleka, taalversorg en opgeknip.

I, Ina-Lize Venter, proofread and language edited this article entitled *An information kit for families affected by child sexual abuse and reported to the East Rand Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit*, on the instruction of the author, Ms Caroline Maleka.



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