

## **Abstract**

Child protection is one of the most demanding fields of social protection and requires comprehensive solutions which have a major impact on the lives of children and their families. It also includes the agenda of parental conflicts and related child custody proceedings.

The thesis deals with the practice of child protection social workers at the municipal authorities with extended powers in the Czech Republic in solving parental disputes. The theoretical part introduces legal, educational and competence framework of child protection and sets it into the context of specific aspects and pitfalls associated with the profession and approach of child protection social workers to solving parental conflicts. It also provides recommendations on how to solve parental conflicts followed by a case study of child protection department at the Prague 8 Municipality District Authority. It identifies attributes of best practice that contribute to the best interests of the child, including participation of families, multidisciplinary cooperation, transparency of processes and neutrality, professionalism and reflexivity of child protection social workers.

The empirical part focuses on the understanding of working conditions and attitudes of child protection social workers at the municipal authorities with extended powers towards solving parental disputes. The mixed methods research combining both qualitative and quantitative methodology identified a typology of approaches to addressing parental conflicts - defensive practice, reflexive practice, and intuitive practice. The tendency of child protection social workers towards any of the types is influenced by the degree of resignation arising out of unfavourable working conditions, loyalty to the organization or employer, conservative attitudes and beliefs and prevailing approach in the workplace.

### **Key words:**

Child Protection; Best Interest of a Child; Child Custody; Parental Conflicts; Guardianship; Reflexive Practice; Defensive Practice