

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.

This thesis focuses on the practice of Czech social workers operating in the field of child protection at the municipal authorities with extended powers and on their approaches used to resolve parental disputes. The theoretical part is based on the conceptualization of practice from the perspective of a dynamic model of practice by Karen Healy, which builds on the interaction of several contexts, i.e. institutional contexts, formal professional base of social work, service users and their communities and framework for practice, and surveys them with regard to the agenda of parental disputes in detail.

The empirical part aims to identify the variability of approaches used by Czech social workers operating in the field of child protection to resolve parental disputes. The research combines both qualitative and quantitative methodology and identifies a typology of defensive practice, reflexive practice, and intuitive practice. Individual types differ in the attitudes the child protection social workers express towards recognized attributes of best practice, i.e. participation, multidisciplinary cooperation, transparency of processes and neutrality, professionalism and reflexivity.

Key words:

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