METHAMPHETAMINE IN CALAVERAS COUNTY: A COLLABORATIVE RESPONSE

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METHAMPHETAMINE IN CALAVERAS COUNTY: A COLLABORATIVE RESPONSE

A Project

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Abstract

of

METHAMPHETAMINE IN CALAVERAS COUNTY: A COLLABORATIVE RESPONSE

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The social issue of methamphetamine use in a rural community has created the need for social workers, law enforcement and probation professionals to address the issue from a multi-jurisdictional approach. As social workers attempt to address the safety needs of children raised in this environment, collaborative efforts can serve to leverage resources. This qualitative content analysis examines the perspectives of law enforcement and probation professionals serving on a multi-jurisdictional narcotics task force and the effect of joint response protocols. After interviewing ten participants, the following themes emerged: 1) Multi-jurisdictional task force and the protection of drug endangered children; 2) Joint collaboration; 3) Formation of narcotics task force; and 4) Joint response with law enforcement, probation and child welfare. Implications for social work policy and practice are discussed.

________________________, Committee Chair
Maria Dinis, Ph.D., MSW
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgments</th>
<th>v</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. THE PROBLEM</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Research Problem</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems Theory</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of Systems Theory</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse Consequences and Treatment Outcomes</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Abuse and Neglect when Parents Use Substances</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Welfare Response</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration and Drug Endangered Children</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps in Literature</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. METHODS ............................................................................................................. 43
   Introduction ........................................................................................................ 43
   Research Question .......................................................................................... 43
   Research Design ............................................................................................... 43
   Study Population ............................................................................................... 45
   Sample Population ............................................................................................ 46
   Instrumentation ................................................................................................. 47
   Data Gathering Procedures ............................................................................... 48
   Data Analysis ..................................................................................................... 49
   Protection of Human Subjects .......................................................................... 49
   Summary ............................................................................................................. 50

4. DATA ANALYSIS .................................................................................................. 51
   Introduction ........................................................................................................ 51
   Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force and Protecting Drug Endangered Children . 52
   Challenges ......................................................................................................... 54
   Benefits .............................................................................................................. 55
   Goal Obtainment ............................................................................................... 57
   Suggestions for Improvement ........................................................................... 58
   Joint Collaboration ............................................................................................. 60
   Formation of Narcotics Task Forces, Communication and Services.............. 63
   Joint Response with Law Enforcement, Probation and Child Welfare .......... 65
   Summary ............................................................................................................. 72

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ............................................. 73
   Introduction ........................................................................................................ 73
   Conclusions ........................................................................................................ 73
   Recommendations ............................................................................................ 75
   Limitations .......................................................................................................... 77
   Implications for Social Work Policy and Practice ........................................... 77
   Conclusions ........................................................................................................ 79
Appendix A. Interview Questions................................................................. 81
Appendix B. Consent to Participate in Research............................................. 83
References........................................................................................................ 87
Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Social workers are often called upon to assess the needs of individuals and families living in a drug environment. The children in these homes are often subjected to risks to their safety, including exposure to drugs and neglect by the parent who is suffering from addiction. Although social workers, law enforcement professionals and probation officers each have a specific jurisdiction and professional role in addressing individuals with social issues living in their communities, these professionals often work in isolation of each other. Yet they frequently have mutual clients. The level of collaboration between social services and law enforcement has typically been limited at best. Yet with new funding streams that allow for greater collaboration and co-location, these professionals can leverage resources for intelligence gathering, joint response, and in providing referrals for services to families. This chapter will address the background of the problem of substance abuse, statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, and research question. In addition, the theoretical framework that addresses the topic and definition of terms used are defined. The researcher will also discuss the assumptions, justifications, and delimitations of the study.

Background of the Problem

Methamphetamine use in the United States has become a problem that negatively impacts the lives of individuals and families, requiring a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach in addressing the problem. Methamphetamine is a highly
addictive substance that is associated with health, psychiatric problems, and impaired cognitive abilities. Treatment providers are faced with challenges in providing comprehensive services for those individuals using Methamphetamine. Children being raised by parents who abuse this substance are at significant risk of maltreatment or neglect. Parents abusing substances have difficulty in providing adequate supervision and in providing economic support. Children who have been raised by parents with substance abuse disorders are at greater risk of substance abuse, creating a multi-generational cycle of abuse and neglect. Child maltreatment has long term consequences on the emotional, physical, developmental, and educational aspects of a child’s life. A social worker’s role in addressing abuse and neglect is an assessment of the safety and risks presented to children raised in a substance abuse environment. In an effort to address this problem, multi-jurisdictional task forces are being established to meet the needs of drug endangered children. The role of the social worker as a member of the team is critical in providing appropriate interventions and services to children and families.

Methamphetamine is a stimulant that affects the central nervous system (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2006). The drug can be ingested, smoked, snorted or injected. Methamphetamine causes an increase in the levels of dopamine in the brain, causing the user to feel pleasure, experience wakefulness, an increase in energy, and decreased appetite (NIDA, 2006). Chronic users experience symptoms of anxiety, memory loss, mood disturbances, paranoia, hallucinations, delusions, and aggressive or violent behavior. The impact of Methamphetamine on the body negatively impacts neurological,
behavioral and psychological functioning for extended periods of time after drug use has ceased (Methamphetamine Interagency Task Force, 2000).

According to a RAND Corporation Study released in 2005, 68% of state and local agencies in the western United States report Methamphetamine as their greatest threat with an estimated annual economic cost to individuals and society of $23.4 billion (The RAND Corporation, 2009). Child endangerment costs related to Methamphetamine that include children placed in the foster care system are estimated at $905 million. According to the National Drug Threat Survey of 2008, 87.3% of law enforcement agencies identified Methamphetamine as the greatest drug threat in the Pacific Region (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009). Officials also reported that most violent crimes and property crimes were Methamphetamine related. These sobering statistics are indicative of a national problem with the need for a systemic approach.

In California, Methamphetamine is the most commonly reported abused drug for individuals entering treatment (Rondero Hernandez & Noriega, 2008). Women with minor children account for the majority of individuals in treatment. Researchers report barriers to recovery and reunification are the competing interests and substance of child welfare, substance abuse providers and court systems. The recommendations include identifying the extent and use of effective interventions for parental Methamphetamine abuse, investing in efforts to measure the prevalence of parental Methamphetamine use, and supporting the development of collaborative practice models (Rondero Hernandez & Noriega).
To address the Methamphetamine problem in the United States, in 2003, the Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) provided funding for Drug Endangered Children programs (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2009). Children living in a Methamphetamine environment are at risk of health and safety hazards that include abuse and neglect. The program provides funding and training for community collaboration to address the needs of drug endangered children. Partner agencies can include law enforcement, social services, and medical professionals who each have a role in ensuring that children in Methamphetamine environments receive appropriate services and care.

In an effort to adequately address the Methamphetamine problem, the California Multi-jurisdictional Methamphetamine Enforcement Team (Cal-MMET) was implemented in California. Programs have been developed to coordinate efforts by law enforcement, medical services and child welfare workers to ensure that children found in drug environments receive appropriate attention and care (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2007). In the fiscal year 2001-2002, ONDCP dedicated $60 million to disrupt and dismantle Methamphetamine drug organizations. According to the Central Valley Cal-MMET website, the Cal-MMET program is administered by the California Governor’s Office of Criminal Justice Planning and works in conjunction with the Federal Government’s High Intensity Drug Trafficking Program (OCJP, 2007). The reduction of production, distribution, related criminal offenses, property damage, and heightened awareness of the issue through education remains the focus of the grant. The multi-jurisdictional task forces, also known as the Drug Endangered Children task forces,
are designed to allow for collaboration, the establishment of protocols, and joint assessment of the needs of children and families in drug environments.

The Cal-MMET task forces endorse interagency coordination, the pooling of resources, and the establishment of new systems to facilitate information sharing, intelligence gathering, and the improvement of access to special resources (OCJP, 2000). The enhanced communication between first responders initiates a comprehensive approach to investigations. Methamphetamine use has a disproportionate impact on women in childbearing years, negatively impacting children and families (LAO, 2007). Methamphetamine was cited as the primary drug of choice for 41% of women in California’s treatment system (LAO), compared to 30% of men. The National Association of Counties (2007) conducted a survey in May of 2007 in which 61% of Sheriffs reported an increase in the last three years of women using Methamphetamine. Sheriffs also reported an increase in Methamphetamine related crimes of child endangerment, domestic violence, robberies, and burglary.

Rural communities are especially vulnerable as they often lack adequate resources to address this complex problem (OJP). In December 2005, the Governor’s Prevention Advisory Council admonished that rural youth are much more likely than urban youth to use amphetamines, and specifically Methamphetamine, with the user percentage rate of 104%. The formation of Cal-MMET task forces provides additional revenue and resources as a means of addressing these issues. Additionally, the Office of Justice recommends Methamphetamine-related law enforcement principles that include information sharing at the federal, state and local levels, as well as sharing information
between treatment providers, educators and law enforcement officers. The recommendations (OJP) include expansion of collaboration with social services agencies and public health officials. The need for research-based interventions has been identified, as well as the investment in training and outreach efforts (OCP). According to National Association of Counties (2007), the formation of interdisciplinary and multi-jurisdictional task forces has been effective in addressing the Methamphetamine problem at the local level.

The Methamphetamine problem can be further explored through information provided by Calaveras County law enforcement, child welfare, and public service agencies. In a report submitted to the Calaveras Enterprise by the Child Abuse Prevention Council (Bielstein, 2007), according to the Calaveras County Sheriff’s Department, the county rated eighth highest among the 58 counties for the number of drug lab incidents per capita during 2005. The number of inmates held in the county jail for Methamphetamine-related crimes was 40 percent higher than the national average during 2005. In 2007, 84.5% of Child Protective Service cases involved one or more parent with substance abuse issues. At least 63% of Child Protective Service placements in Calaveras County involved one or more parent who has a substance abuse issue. According to the Calaveras County Behavioral Health, Substance Abuse Program, 38% of clients report Methamphetamine as their primary drug of abuse. Statistics in Calaveras County show that 73% of adult Methamphetamine abusers began their use at age 15 (Bielstein).

These statistics illustrate the impact of Methamphetamine use on law enforcement and child welfare officials as well as public agencies providing services to clients within
rural Calaveras County. In order to fully address the issue, a Cal-MMET task force was established in Calaveras County with the assignment of a full time social worker. In the first year of operation, 62 children were removed from drug environments. Of the children placed in protective custody, thirteen were tested for drug exposure. Thirty-nine percent of the children tested positive for marijuana and/or Methamphetamine. Ten children, equaling 15% of this population, required medical and/or psychological interventions. Of the children placed in foster homes, 27% required educational interventions in the form of an Individualized Education Plan, in comparison with the state average of 12 to 15%. Twenty-four percent of these children were identified as being at least one grade level behind in school. Ten percent were diagnosed with a learning disability, and 12% had a school 504/Behavioral plan in place. The implementation of the Cal-MMET task force addressed these concerns and allowed for collaborative efforts to address the problem of drug use, child abuse and neglect. In addition, the joint response allowed for varying values of the separate agencies to be addressed in a collaborative manner, providing a systematic approach to the drug epidemic in the rural community.

Statement of the Research Problem

In an effort to address the issue of substance abuse in rural communities, social workers need to participate in a multi-jurisdictional effort to address the problem. Social workers must be able to identify the individuals and families in need of services and assess appropriate interventions to address their needs. Social work practitioners may not be knowledgeable about the benefits of collaboration with law enforcement, probation
and service providers to address Methamphetamine use by leveraging resources and providing families with services from holistic approach. This study explores the benefits and challenges of such collaboration.

**Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study is to examine, from a social worker’s perspective, the collaboration between law enforcement, probation, and child welfare as an effective means of providing interventions for families affected by substance abuse in a rural community. The secondary purpose of this study is to further the amount of research that exists on the topic of collaboration and joint response in addressing the issue of substance abuse and the effect on drug endangered children. This study will have effects on the micro, mezzo and macro level of social work.

**Research Question**

This study was designed to investigate the following question: What are the benefits and negative aspects of joint response and collaborative efforts to address the Methamphetamine problem in Calaveras County?

**Theoretical Framework**

In order to understand interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing a social issue, the theoretical framework of systems theory will be used. The researcher will explain systems theory followed by how this theory can be applied to the research.

**Systems Theory**

Systems theory originated in the 1940s as theoreticians evaluated structure and function, identifying items such as machinery and the human brain as being part of a
larger structure (Nichols, 2006). Ludwig von Bertalanffy combined the concepts of a systems perspective and biology into a universal theory of living systems, known as general systems theory. Von Bertalanffy identified the relationship among parts of an organization or system as greater than the isolated elements. Therefore, a small system can be identified as part of a larger system or jurisdiction. The focus of systems theory is to identify patterns in relationships and to provide an evaluation of interactions rather than personalities. Bertanlanffy identified an open system as constantly interacting with the environment (Nichols). These systems or living organisms are capable of adapting to change in order to reach identified goals in various ways. Systems theory is the basis of social construction that indicates everything is a structure of social relations that interact with each other. As one element changes, the subsequent reaction will cause a reaction with all other elements in the system. This is an important concept in organizational behavior.

Systems theory incorporates the idea of open versus closed systems. Scholars have attributed the origins of systems theory to Aristotle, while the specific idea of holism, or the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, is attributed to German philosopher Hegel (Ansari, 2004). Systems theory is considered to be transdisciplinary as it provides meta-language to evaluate a problem regardless of the discipline, thus providing an evaluative tool across diverse fields of study (Ansari). With regard to an open system, the principal concept is that knowledge is contextual and requires integration of new insights into previous knowledge. Systems are described as the way in which human efforts and resources are organized to achieve a specific task
(Kitson, 2008). The behaviors within an open system change in response to threats or available resources and typically have more complex interrelationships (Ansari). The interdependence is adaptive, allowing the subsystems to compensate for weaknesses or deficiencies (Lemonides, 2007). In contrast, a closed system is a system that is considered isolated from its environment with impermeable boundaries (Lemonides). Closed systems are considered to have few variables and react to changes within internal boundaries, are self-contained with internal logic and predictability (Ansari, 2004; Kitson, 2008). Closed systems focus on stability while open systems seek continuous improvement, accommodating changes within a relationship, group or organization (Kitson).

Systems theory offers social work practitioners a means of understanding the relationship between people and their environment. Organizations exist within community contexts that affect an organization as a system (Lemonides). This description is important in understanding how systems theory is applicable to the research study. In establishing a narcotics task force, the individuals consist of representatives from various agencies. In order to effectively change the approach of response to a social issue within a community, changes in several systems had to take place. This included finding representation from law enforcement, probation and social services to respond together as one entity.

The establishment of the task force created a new system and environment in which the integrated and newly assigned individuals became one system, or subsets of larger systems. As this system was established, the task force members formed new
goals, communication methods, role identification, increased shared knowledge, and created procedural function to address the defined needs. This change in systems was a catalyst for change, creating motivation and structure that enables the assigned individuals to meet the organizational goals.

Social workers use systems theory in evaluating a client’s situation, as practitioners consider the family, community, and economic and political factors as impacting the client system. Individuals function as part of a system and are affected by change. A key principle of systems theory is the idea of partnership in the social worker’s effort to affect change. This focus is done in a holistic approach with the recognition of social connection. Within this context, a social worker can assess the possibilities of change and intervention within each system, seeking sustainability for change. An important measure of sustained change is the enhanced integration of individuals and systems.

Application of Systems Theory

Systems theory offers an explanation of the way in which individuals interact with others while adapting to new goals within the larger system. This theory is relevant to the research as it addresses individual, group and organizational behaviors. The application of systems theory provides understanding of the ways into the inter-relatedness of individuals in groups. Participants in this study vary by profession and duties, yet each has a vested interest in providing strategies for change. Based on the results of the interviews, the participants acknowledge the impact of leveraging resources in addressing a social issue within the community. In working as a system, the participants show
greater ability to gain a broader perspective of the issue of substance abuse that has negatively impacted individuals and families that they serve.

Systems theory is applicable to the research in that it provides a means of studying the benefits and negative aspects of joint response and collaborative efforts in a rural community. The theory offers insight into the interactions of the multi-disciplinary task force, and how the implemented changes affect the respective, larger systems. As members of the task force collaborate to address the Methamphetamine epidemic within the community, systems theory offers insight and perspectives as to the open-systems changes that occur. Systems theory offers a method of evaluating the interactions and changes that occur in relationships and organizational functioning due to the changes in joint collaboration and response.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used in this study:

General Systems Theory is a biological model of living systems as whole entities that maintain themselves through continuous input and output from the environment: developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (Nichols, 2006).

Interdisciplinary identifies professions who are willing and able to work with other disciplines in joint services to the client group (Streeter & Franklin, 2002).

Methamphetamine is a stimulant that affects the central nervous system (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2006).

Multidisciplinary identifies professionals that recognize other disciplines can also make important contributions to the client group (Streeter & Franklin, 2002).
**Systems Theory** is a generic term for studying a group of related elements that interact as a whole entity: encompasses general systems theory and cybernetics (Nichols, 2006).

**Transdisciplinary** identifies professionals committed to teaching, learning, and working together with other service providers across traditional disciplinary boundaries (Streeter & Franklin, 2002).

**Assumptions**

The assumptions to be considered in this study include: 1) Interdisciplinary collaboration allows for increased communication and cross-training; 2) Establishment of a multi-jurisdictional task force facilitates collaboration in the protection of drug endangered children; 3) The presence of a multi-disciplinary narcotics task force increases client engagement in services; and 4) The participants in the study have self-awareness of their professional roles and recognize the influential factor collaboration has on addressing the needs of families affected by Methamphetamine.

**Justification**

An important ethical standard of social work is to help people in need to address social problems and to recognize the importance of human relationships (N.A.S.W., 2006). This includes developing relationships with other professionals with the purpose of enhancing the well being of individuals, families and communities. In keeping with this ethical standard, social work professionals can enter into collaborative relationships to leverage resources and provide support in a community effort to address social issues such as substance abuse.
The author’s professional experience of serving on a narcotics task force has provided the opportunity to explore the intricacies of an assignment with specialized duties. This includes exploring the perspectives of those who serve with common purposes yet varying perspectives, professional experience and training. While the issue of substance abuse is common in many communities, how to adequately address the problem yields questions. The establishment of a multi-jurisdictional task force in Calaveras County is indeed, one approach to the problem. As the collaboration continues, there are lessons to be learned in the social work profession about the importance of inter-agency collaboration, the perceptions of those “in the trenches,” and how to we can be of better service to other professionals as well as the individuals and families of whom we serve. The professionals in the study may provide a wealth of information that can be used as an effective means of providing comprehensive services to individuals and the community.

Delimitations

The study is qualitative in nature and does not provide extensive statistical information. The researcher gathered pertinent information and data from interviews, the literature review and personal experience. The interview subjects were limited to ten participants in the multi-jurisdictional narcotics task force in Calaveras County, and are therefore limited to a small number of law enforcement and probation professionals. In addition, data is subjective as to the participants experience while serving on the narcotics task force.
Summary

This project is comprised of the following chapters. Chapter One includes the introduction, the background of the problem, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, as well as the research question. Chapter One also contains assumptions, justification, and limitations of the research. Chapter Two includes a review of the relevant literature with sections describing the Methamphetamine problem, the effects of abuse and neglect on children living in a drug environment, the Child Welfare response, and multi-jurisdictional approaches to the issue of substance abuse. Chapter Three describes the methodology of the study. Chapter Four contains an analysis of the interview results. In Chapter Five, a summary of the findings is presented. Recommendations and implications for social work practice are also discussed.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This literature review will be organized in the following four sections. The first section will address the consequences of substance and evaluation of treatment outcomes. The second section will address the affects of child abuse and neglect on children whose parents’ abuse substances. The third section will describe the Child Welfare response to children being raised in drug environments. The fourth section will examine the history of collaboration and joint response involving drug endangered children. The fifth section and final section will address the gaps in literature.

Substance Abuse Consequences and Treatment Outcomes

Substance abuse by primary caregivers is associated with negative outcomes for children. In a study was conducted to identify the maternal risk factors for illicit drug use among women with children under the age of 18 (Simmons, Havens, Whiting, Holz, & Bada, 2009). The study found that 2% of female caregivers use illicit substances. These women were found to be younger, have less education, lower incomes, and were more likely to be single and unemployed. Participants were more likely to report poor health status, stress, and meet the criteria for serious mental illness. The study corroborated other studies that found commonality of comorbidity of substance abuse disorders and mental health disorders including depression, anxiety, stress and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Dyer & Cruickshank, 2005; Simmons, et.al., 2009). The authors suggest that
the information be used to develop screening tools for risk factors associated with maternal drug use in order to improve child developmental outcomes.

In 2006, researchers evaluated the extent and effect of Methamphetamine and other substance use during pregnancy (Arria, et al., 2006). The researchers found that 5% of the women in the study used Methamphetamine during pregnancy. In addition, women who were less educated and single were at higher risk of tobacco or illicit drug use (Arria, et al.). Researchers also found that women using tobacco or illicit drugs had fewer prenatal visits and were likely to use public assistance benefits.

Researchers conducted a study on maternal depression and neurobehaviors in newborns prenatally exposed to Methamphetamine (Paz, et al., 2008). The researchers examined mothers who used Methamphetamine during pregnancy and evaluated newborns within the first five days of birth. Women who used Methamphetamine displayed depression symptoms upon entering drug treatment programs. The study found that neonates of mothers who are depressed during pregnancy are at greater risk of low birth rates and are small for their gestational age. These infants show increased aggressive behavior, impaired social adjustment, as well as long term emotional and behavioral dysfunction (Rose, 2008). Mothers that used Methamphetamine were more likely to be of lower economic status, showed a high incidence of depression, and experienced greater weight gain during pregnancy. Methamphetamine exposure infants had lower five-minute Apgar scores than unexposed infants. Infants showed lower arousal scores, higher excitability and increased stress. Common symptoms found in infants perinatally exposed to Methamphetamine include: hypertonicity, tremors,
irritability, poor self-regulation of feeding and sleep cycles, truncal muscle weakness, and possible neurological complications (Shah, 2006). Methamphetamine exposure was found to cause lower arousal and higher lethargy scores in newborns, and higher incidence of depressive symptoms in mothers. These findings indicate that maternal depression influences neonatal neurodevelopment.

An Infant Development, Environment, and Lifestyle Study (IDEAL) conducted was designed to evaluate developmental outcomes for infants associated with prenatal exposure to Methamphetamine (Derauf, et al., 2007). This study examined the psychological characteristics and environments of care for children prenatally exposed to Methamphetamine and the effects on child development. The researchers evaluated maternal demographics, maternal drug use during pregnancy and poverty, maternal, neighborhood and psychosocial characteristics. The use of Methamphetamine during pregnancy was associated with a high probability of developing a substance abuse disorder. Prenatal Methamphetamine use was associated with lower maternal perceptions on quality of life, greater likelihood of encountering family and social problems, increased risk of legal difficulties, and an increased risk of developing a substance abuse disorder. These women were more likely to have multiple, intertwined psychosocial risks that impact parenting and caregiving abilities. The risks include family conflicts, social isolation, chaotic home life, parenting alcohol and drug use, as well as physical, psychological interpersonal and economic difficulties (Boyd-Webb, 2003; Derauf, et al., 2007; Wouldes, LaGasse, Sheridan, & Lester, 2004).
An evaluation of treatment outcomes was conducted on patients that were coerced into treatment for Methamphetamine abuse (Brecht, Anglin, & Dylan, 2005). The study evaluated the effectiveness of treatment on patients who were mandated to participate in a program. Coerced treatment is often met with skepticism and controversy. The most common source of coercion for the patients in the study came from “court” and Child Protective Services. The respondents reporting pressure from Child Protective Services were predominantly female at 84%. The high rate of substance abusing parents has increased the need for interaction between Child Protective Services and substance abuse treatment providers. For women participating in the treatment, the rate of successful completion was higher, as the alternative was loss of child custody or incarceration. Approximately half of the participants did not complete the treatment. Of those who completed the treatment program, approximately half relapsed within six months of discharge, with 70% reporting relapse at the follow up interview that averaged 4.2 months (Brecht, et al.). Patients that reported pressure were younger and were more likely to receive outpatient treatment. Fifty two percent of the participants reported legal pressure to enter treatment and were less likely to report mental health illness. Respondents reporting coerced treatment had longer lengths of stay in substance abuse programs.

Women with dependent children at risk of abuse or neglect require the coordination of services with substance abuse treatment providers. In a study of mothers engaging in substance abuse treatment, researchers evaluated the differences in characteristics based on involvement with child welfare services (Grella, Hser, & Huang,
2006). Substance abusing parents are less likely to provide adequate care, experience impaired judgments and emotional dysregulation, creating a high risk of neglect and abuse. The association between parental substance abuse and child abuse and neglect reinforces the need to coordinate services to parents involved in both systems. Parents may be hesitant to enter treatment out of fear of losing custody of their children (Grella, et al.). The researchers evaluated demographics, addiction severity, psychiatric severity, criminal severity, economic stability, prior and current treatment episode and child-welfare involvement. The findings revealed that women involved with child welfare were on average younger and had never been married. They had more children or were more likely to be pregnant at the time of admission. These women reported the onset of substance abuse at a younger age and showed higher rates of Methamphetamine use as their primary drug of choice. No differences were identified regarding criminal severity and women involved with child welfare had higher economic instability. There were no differences found regarding prior or current treatment episodes. Women with a history of physical abuse had a 39% greater likelihood of being involved with child welfare services. Mothers with a greater number of children showed increased the likelihood of child welfare involvement by 50% per child. Outpatient treatment increased the likelihood of child welfare involvement by approximately 55%, in comparison with those treated in residential programs. Methamphetamine use was positively correlated with criminal justice involvement, less education, and was associated with younger participants. Mothers involved with child welfare had a lower addiction severity index but greater economic stability based on lower levels of education, lower rates of
employment and a greater reliance on others for economic support (Garella, et al.). The researchers suggest that mothers involved with child welfare may access treatment at a younger age and earlier in their addiction.

*Child Abuse and Neglect when Parents Use Substances*

Children and infants exposed to Methamphetamine are at risk of abuse and neglect. In 2006, researchers conducted a longitudinal study on prenatal Methamphetamine exposure, polydrug exposure and poverty on intrauterine growth (Smith, et al., 2006). The researchers found that the Methamphetamine exposed group had 3.5 times decreased birth weights than the unexposed group, leaving children at risk of fetal distress and growth impairment. Mothers in the study were younger, had fewer prenatal care visits and were likely to seek prenatal care later in the pregnancy, creating issues in long-term health and neurodevelopment for these infants.

The risk of harm to infants and children raised in a drug environment exposes them to trauma, which can occur at critical developmental stages, impacting memory, learning abilities and emotional response. Researchers evaluated the prevalence of trauma exposure and the response to the events between drug endangered children and non-drug endangered children involved in the child welfare system (Sprang, Staton-Tindall, & Clark, 2008). Trauma exposure was based on the criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Children living in drug environments face unique challenges and are at higher risk for maltreatment including exposure to direct and indirect toxic substances, physical abuse and chronic neglect. Children who experience trauma may experience helplessness, shame and terror (Sprang, et al.). A random sample of children involved in
child welfare agencies showed that a higher percentage of drug-endangered children (DEC) were exposed to trauma including child endangerment, physical violence, and chemical exposure. The study revealed that 59.9% of the DEC group met the criteria for trauma compared to 27.3% of the non-DEC group. The DEC group were 3.37 times more likely to have experienced polyvictimization, providing greater understanding of the role of parental substance abuse in the process. The study specifies the need for child welfare and mental health professionals to provide trauma assessment and treatment approaches to maltreated children (Sprang, et al.).

Children who live with substance abusing parents are known to be at risk of adverse health and developmental outcomes, including the risk for intergenerational substance abuse (Thornberry, Krohn, & Freeman-Gallant, 2006). Researchers recently explored the associations between maternal, paternal and both parents’ substance abuse on childhood outcomes (Osborn, & Berger, 2009). Researchers evaluated the impact of parental substance abuse on poor health and behavioral outcomes for children. The study evaluated how the associations between substance abuse, child health and behavior differ as to which parent abused substances, or whether both parents had substance abuse problems. Researchers further studied the association between these factors and the father’s presence in the home. The study found that children living with either parent identified with a substance abuse problem have more health and behavioral problems than children living in families with neither parent abusing substances (Osborne & Berger). Parents involved in substance abuse were younger and had lower levels of education. Fathers involved in substance abuse were less likely to be present, suggesting
mothers were exercising protective capacities for their children. Children of substance-abusing parents were more likely to have health and behavioral problems, including higher levels of aggression, ADD and Oppositional Defiant Disorder, anxiety, and depression. Children were at risk of health and behavior problems when either parent had a substance abuse problem, but the risk increased when both parents abused substances. Children were 24% more likely to have poor health when both parents abused substances and showed increased behavior problems associated with externalizing behaviors when either parent had substance abuse problems. Children with fathers who had substance abuse problems reported aggressiveness, ODD and ADHD behaviors regardless of whether the father resided in the home. The children with fathers coresiding in the home that had substance abuse problems, showed more anxious and depressive behaviors.

Child neglect has adverse effects on developmental outcomes for children. These children experience a higher risk for psychiatric problems and psychosocial dysfunction. Parents who abuse substances often fail to provide adequate parental supervision or to satisfy the basic needs of children who may experience harm. Women who abuse substances share personality characteristics consistent with neglectful parenting, egocentrism, impulsivity, low self-esteem and often experience a sense of helplessness. Children of neglect often experience health problems, difficult temperaments, and developmental delays, which are exacerbated in the context of parental substance abuse. Child neglect affects the social, emotional, cognitive and behavioral stages of development, creating insecure attachments that may lead to maladaptive behaviors and emotional dysregulation. Children of neglect experience learning difficulties, lower
school performance and evidence shows there is a high correlation between parental substance abuse and child neglect (Boyd-Webb, 2003; Dunn, Tarter, Mezzich, Vanyukov, Kirisci, & Kirillova, 2002). Studies conducted (Dunn, et al.; Haight & Jacobsen, 2005), evaluated the prevalence, origins, and consequences of parental neglect as it relates to substance abuse. These researchers found that children who experience parental neglect are at high risk for substance abuse disorders. This research provides empirical evidence of the risk of multi-generational substance abuse in children who experience neglect.

An evaluation of drug-endangered children’s mental health needs was undertaken with a focus on children raised in rural areas, whose parents abuse Methamphetamine (Ostler, et al., 2007). Children interviewed for the study reported feelings of tension, fear and misery, with some describing feelings of anger, aggression and sadness. Most of the respondents reported difficult family relationships and 78% reported ambivalent or negative relationships with their parents (Ostler, et al.). Children in the study reported social isolation and strategies of avoidance or passivity in addressing family problems. Sixty one percent of the children evaluated by standardized assessments received scores indicating they had significant or borderline posttraumatic or dissociative symptoms (Ostler, et al.). The respondents had difficult family relationships, loss of trust in the parent using Methamphetamine, expressed worry about the parent’s well being, and expressed feelings of abandonment and neglect. The children who used passive or avoidant coping strategies reported that speaking about their parental drug use was “taboo.” This research suggest that providers may require a nontraditional approach in
meeting the mental health needs of rural children raised in a Methamphetamine environment (Ostler, et al.). Children who have experienced abuse or neglect may experience emotional instability, depression and have a tendency toward aggressive or violent behaviors (Stirling & Amaya-Jackson, 2008). Early abuse alters psychological response to stressful stimuli, affecting a child’s subsequent socialization. Children who have been abused experience “flashback” recollections, avoidance of reminders, social withdrawal, hypervigilance or hyperarousal, problems with concentration, sleep disturbances and cognitive abilities (Stirling & Amaya-Jackson). While these behaviors may equate to survival instincts in the home of origin, they can present problems for the child attending school, daycare, or when placed out of home, frequently ostracizing children in social situations. Children may mistake admonitions as a threat to safety. Infants may appear demanding, anxious and difficult to console, reinforcing a neglectful or abusive parent’s pattern of behavior. As children respond with maladaptive behaviors, they often experience negative consequences, further reinforcing the behaviors (Stirling & Amaya-Jackson).

Child maltreatment causes health problems that society must address. With 872,000 cases of substantiated reported maltreatment of children in the United States in 2004 (Lawson, 2009), the implications for Americans are extensive. The effects of maltreatment impact children’s physical, emotional and psychological functioning that can negatively impact children into adulthood. Children who experience maltreatment exhibit symptoms of anxiety, impulsivity, interpersonal problems, hyperarousal and dissociation related to the trauma (Lawson). Children who have been traumatized must be
provided therapeutic services to enhance emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships. Treatment such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and psychoeducational interventions provide children with necessary skills to cope with the effects of maltreatment. The child who has been the victim of maltreatment has a subjective perspective and autonomic response to trauma. Treatment modalities should include client stabilization, processing of traumatic experiences, cognitive processing to derive new meanings of the events, and relationship enhancement. Children have shown greater improvement of symptoms than those receiving nondirective supportive therapy. Children receiving therapeutic treatment achieved greater results than those receiving no treatment (Lawson).

Child maltreatment can negatively affect academic performance in adolescents and teenagers (Slade & Wissow, 2007). These children often achieve lower standardized test achievement, lower grades, are more likely to be retained, and are more likely to exhibit disruptive behaviors in school. Researchers found that a pattern has emerged in these individuals of frequent interpersonal conflict with many children experiencing a heightened sensitivity to perceived threats. Children under the emotional strain of maltreatment are at greater risk of emotional and behavioral problems, impacting their school performance abilities. Eric Slade and Lawrence Wissow (2007) found that child maltreatment was associated with lower grade point averages, difficulties completing homework and were marginally associated with frequent school absences. The study results reveal the adverse effects of maltreatment on children’s cognitive abilities and school performance, which has significant implications for long-term school outcomes.
Child maltreatment is associated with multiple adolescent health risks. Researchers conducted a study to examine the relationship of maltreatment on sociodemographic factors and adolescent health risks finding the likelihood of maltreatment varied over sociodemographic characteristics (Hussey, Chang & Kotch, 2006). Further findings suggested that the type of maltreatment was associated with multiple adolescent health risks. Lack of adequate supervision was the most common type of maltreatment, followed respectively by physical assault, physical neglect and sexual abuse. The researchers found that adolescents who were victims of supervision neglect were more likely to report fair to poor health than those who were victims of physical assault or sexual abuse. Depression was more common among victims of supervision neglect. Maltreatment was associated with increased cigarette, alcohol and other drug use during adolescence. The association with adolescent marijuana use was strong. Child maltreatment was significantly related to violent behaviors in adolescents. With regard to sociodemographics, parental educational levels were associated with the risk of physical neglect but were not associated with parental supervision. An increase in supervision neglect was associated with Native Americans, while physical neglect was associated with black adolescents. Sociodemographics strengthened the association between maltreatment and health, in particular with regard to adolescent drug use. With conservative estimates of child maltreatment annually exceeding 1 million incidents, child maltreatment is prevalent in United States and results in adverse health consequences for children (Hussey, Chang & Kotch).
Childhood abuse and neglect is associated with adult substance abuse and psychological problems (Boyd-Webb, 2003; Hussey, Chang & Kotch). Women entering drug treatment programs who have been experienced childhood abuse are estimated at a rate of 62% to 81% (Min, et al., 2007). Researchers studied the relationship between childhood trauma, educational levels and avoidant coping strategies (Min, et al.). The study found that childhood trauma was related, both directly and indirectly, to psychological stress, substance abuse, educational attainment and coping strategies. These effects have clear implications for adult functioning. The researchers propose that promoting coping skill development to reduce substance abuse and psychological problems associated with trauma, and supportive educational strategies, would be beneficial to women and adolescent females who have experienced childhood abuse or neglect (Min, et al.).

Researchers have also evaluated the impact of childhood abuse and neglect on adult outcomes (Min, et al., 2007). The researchers found that childhood trauma was related to greater incidents of substance abuse and psychological distress in adults. The researchers found that emotional and physical neglect, as well as emotional abuse, was significantly correlated to lower levels of education, (Min, et al.). Childhood trauma has long-term effects on adult functioning.

**Child Welfare Response**

The social worker’s role in addressing the needs of families and the safety of children requires an understanding of the issues surrounding substance abuse. This knowledge enhances the social worker’s ability to assist in the facilitation of recovery
and in collaboration with substance abuse providers, providing improved outcomes for families (Breashears, Yeh, & Young, 2004). Individuals who have experienced abuse and neglect are often traumatized, seeking methods to cope with past experiences. Women who have experienced physical or sexual abuse may seek refuse in the use of substances, self-medicating for the issues of depression, mental health disorders and PTSD. The concept of best practices for social workers includes an assessment of substance use in order to identify drug and alcohol abuse (Breashears, et al.; Smith, 2001). This focus allows social workers to understand that children living in conditions in which parents abuse substances experience chaotic and unpredictable home environments and are likely to develop substance abuse disorders in adulthood. Children living in a home with parents using Methamphetamine may experience emotional turmoil due to the issues of neglect, family violence, criminal activity with associated unsafe associations, and sexual or physical abuse. Inappropriate emotional or behavioral responses such as social withdrawal or violent outbursts may be the child’s outlet as a coping mechanism. Children raised in this type of environment may exhibit parentified behaviors and are likely to develop a lack of trust in adults, may experience low self-esteem, a sense of helplessness, and attachment disorders (Breashears, et al.). The social worker’s comprehensive assessment of these issues can facilitate an understanding and supportive environment for children placed in out of home care. Social workers can provide adequate services to these children to include assisting the children in understanding that the child is not to blame for parental substance abuse and that addiction is a disease. Social workers can also provide greater understanding of the child and family history to
caregivers such as foster parents. In addressing these topics with care providers, social workers can enhance the relationships for children in out of home care.

Researchers Jody Brook and Tom McDonald (2008) studied parental alcohol and drug use and the subsequent impact on family reunification and reentry into the foster care system. The researchers identified parents whose substance abuse was the primary reason for removal and subsequent out of home placement. In addition, the researchers differentiated between the parents’ drug of choice. The researchers found the parental history of both drug and alcohol use had the highest failure rate of family reunification and reentry. The study also determined that there was no difference between the rate of foster care reentry with respect to parental alcohol or drug use. These findings establish a link between parental substance abuse and permanency outcomes for children in out of home placement (Brook & McDonald). The findings suggest best practices in the differentiation of drug of choice in order to provide specific treatment options to parents with substance abuse issues, thereby enhancing outcomes for families.

Social workers are often called upon to understand the nature of codependency in relationships in addressing the needs of families. Understanding of the nature of the relationship between a parent using substances and a parent or child, who is clean and sober, can assist the social worker in addressing the multi-generational aspect of substance abuse. This will allow the social worker to play a supportive role in providing referrals for services and in safety planning. Social workers can assist non-substance abusing parents in understanding codependent relationships, accepting the nature of the ongoing relationship, and in changing perspectives with regard to future planning. These
efforts will enhance the safety of the co-dependent parent and their children (Breashears, et al.).

In addressing the needs and safety of children, social workers should recognize that mandatory treatment might be an effective method of service. Parental substance abuse treatment, whether voluntary or mandated, should be monitored by social workers to assist in the recovery process. In referring parents to treatment providers, social workers should assess the health and emotional or behavioral conditions that may impact the parents’ recovery process. For individuals to achieve success in treatment, social workers must individualize the treatment plan and provide referrals to providers capable to addressing the parents’ needs. Supportive relationships should also be explored to assist in facilitating recovery. As social workers address these needs without assigning blame, the opportunity for successful interventions is enhanced. Social workers’ direct, empathetic communication, providing timely feedback, defining responsibilities and reinforcing the possibility of change are effective methods of family intervention (Breashears, et al.; Devaney, 2008). In addition, research shows that increased collaboration between child welfare workers, treatment providers, judicial representatives, and communication with parents were key components of collaboration and improved case outcomes with regard to substance abusing parents (Green, et al., 2008; Nicholson, et al., 2000).

The social worker’s role as a motivating factor in parents seeking treatment to address substance abuse should focus on the safety and well being of children. Social workers must be direct in addressing concerns for the safety of children being raised in a
drug environment. Parents may find retaining custody or the return of the custody of their children as a powerful motivating factor to seek treatment and achieve recovery.

Focusing on the safety of children may provide the impetus for the parent’s readiness to change. Breashears, et al., (2004) identifies six stages for change that include: pre-contemplation, contemplation, decision to change, action, maintenance, and lapse or relapse. By using these tools, social workers can increase the parents’ understanding of the issues, assist in identifying reasons for change, identify specific steps as action for change, implement strategies to address these steps, assist the parent in understanding triggers and prevention strategies, and assist the parents in engaging in strategies for change (Breashears, et al.). Continued collaboration with service providers is important in the process of social workers effecting change. This provides a supportive environment in the recovery process for parents (Green, et al., 2008).

Social workers are often required to have regular contact with families who are battling substance abuse. The child welfare social worker’s assessment identifies issues and provides for the coordination of services in families. If children have been removed from the home, social workers can facilitate frequent visitation for parents in recovery as a positive motivating factor. The collaboration with treatment providers is important in this aspect of recovery. Social workers are experts in assessing the needs and safety of children. By communicating with the treatment provider, social workers can enable the provider to gain a greater understanding of the family needs, which may result in a holistic approach to treatment and recovery (Breashears, et al.; Green, et al., 2008; Smith, 2001). Collaboration between social workers and services providers leads to better
communication, understanding of roles and services, increased respect, goal setting, and mutual ownership. Task and role identification are positively impacted by increased collaboration, which can improve treatment outcomes and the safety of children. The social worker’s role is to continue to assess the safety and risk to children for the length of involvement with the child welfare system. This task is enhanced through effective collaboration that includes shared responsibility and resources for families in the community, commonality of goals, and provides diversity in addressing the needs of families.

The practice of social work regarding children in Methamphetamine environments requires a comprehensive approach to the problem. The social worker’s assessment of families affected by Methamphetamine use requires the social worker to recognize symptoms of Methamphetamine or other drug use (DePanfilis & Hayward, 2006; Holoman, et al., 2004). The assessment includes gathering information about Methamphetamine use in order to evaluate parental protective capacities, as well as the risk and safety to children in the home, leading to appropriate interventions for families. The social worker may develop a safety plan that addresses the threats to children’s safety in a drug environment and parental capacity to address the needs of children. The safety plan also includes interventions to address Methamphetamine use, abuse or addiction, and an evaluative process for monitoring compliance with planned interventions. During the evaluation, the social worker may observe physical, cognitive, behavioral or psychological effects of Methamphetamine use (DePanfilis & Hayward). The evaluation of the children’s needs include prenatal exposure to Methamphetamine
that may result in developmental or cognitive delays, household exposure to toxins, level of parental supervision, the potential for physical or sexual abuse, and available support systems (Asanbe, Hall, & Bolden, 2008; DePanfilis & Hayward). As the social worker develops a comprehensive assessment and provides interventions, the services should be parent-focused, child-focused and family-focused.

Positive parent and family focused interventions provided to families in Methamphetamine environments include strengthening social support systems and enhancing parenting skills (DePanfilis & Hayward; Green, et al., 2008; White, 2008). Interventions should also include addressing concrete needs such as employment, childcare, housing, and medical care. Child-focused interventions include addressing the physical and developmental needs of children, who may be experiencing the effects of exposure to toxins or developmental delays. Additionally child-focused services should include mental health services as children in Methamphetamine environments may experience psychosocial or anti-social behavior. The child welfare social worker’s role in addressing the needs of Methamphetamine affected families is to increase safety, address the effects this environment has on families, and implement strategies for change (Altshuler, 2005; DePanfilis & Hayward). This approach increases parental protective capacities while reducing the risk of child maltreatment. The authors, Diane DePanfilis and Anna Hayward (2006) discuss the need for interdisciplinary collaboration of interventions that are comprehensive and long term as a preventative measure against relapse and in strengthening the family functioning.
In accordance with best practices, social workers involved in multi-jurisdictional task forces must assess the safety and risks to children in the home, which includes evaluating access to drugs and weapons (Holoman, Oliver, & Wright, 2004). These social workers may be the first to identify children living in home with Methamphetamine production. Drug endangered children found in Methamphetamine manufacturing homes requires that social workers notify medical professionals and transport children for medical evaluation. Medical interventions for children include an initial baseline assessment and follow up for long term care (Otero, Boles, Young, & Dennis, 2006). In discussions with parents, the social worker enhances parental awareness of the dangers to children in a drug environment. The social worker also acts as a liaison between agencies, collects evidence regarding child endangerment and provides appropriate treatment to children and families (Green, et al, 2008; Holoman, et al., 2004).

The multi-disciplinary approach allows the social worker to conduct investigations and meet child welfare responsibilities in a coordinated effort to secure the protection of drug-endangered children. Joint response by drug endangered children task forces allows social workers to take necessary precautions to remain safe, which includes the presence of law enforcement. Social work in child welfare has increased the need for knowledge regarding Methamphetamine use and production and the subsequent effects on parents and children (Holoman, et al., 2004). Holoman, et al. found that the most effective approach to the Methamphetamine problem is a comprehensive, integrated service strategy.
Collaboration and Drug Endangered Children

The Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003 requires that health care providers notify child protective services of infants effected by substance abuse or experiencing withdrawal symptoms from prenatal drug exposure (Christian, 2004). Reporting responsibilities vary by state. In California, the law requires notification to child protective services based on the risk to a child and the inability of the parent to provide regular care due to parental substance abuse (California Penal Code §11165.13). Maltreated infants are more likely to be placed in foster care and experience more health needs than non-drug exposed infants (Christian). As child protective services becomes involved with a family after the birth of a drug-exposed infant, community-based preventative initiatives become an important issue for state legislatures (Christian).

The Methamphetamine epidemic requires a comprehensive approach by multiple service providers including law enforcement, medical and social service professionals. Sandra Altshuler (2005) researched the unique dangers that Methamphetamine poses on children, finding that interprofessional collaboration is the best practice in servicing the needs of drug endangered (DEC) children and affected communities. Altshuler evaluated to what extent drug endangered children projects identified the needs of children and achievement in the level of interdisciplinary collaboration in Spokane County, Washington. Using data collected from the Child Welfare system, Altshuler found that 80% of the cases of alleged child abuse or neglect identified substance abuse as the contributing factor. Those agencies participating in the drug-endangered children project believed the level of collaboration and shared leadership were successful with improved
communication in coordinated services. Altshuler found that the emphasis in addressing the needs of children in drug environments focused on the children’s needs and did not address the parents’ needs for substance abuse treatment, housing or employment. The focus of this and other DEC projects is often focused on punitive measures, rather than providing family interventions. Altshuler identifies the need to engage parents as partners in the collaborative efforts.

In a four county study conducted in California in 2008, researchers found that 60% of the cases identified Methamphetamine as the contributing factor for Child Welfare involvement (California State University, Fresno, 2008). The Child Welfare Services/Case Management Services database was used to research the issue of Methamphetamine in the specified communities of Tulare, Kings, Madera and Fresno counties. The study showed the percentage of mothers as primary caregivers using Methamphetamine in the state of California is reported at 64% to 94%. The Juvenile Court ruled that allegations of neglect were substantiated in 98% to 100% of the Methamphetamine cases. The research shows the significant impact of Methamphetamine use in the Central Valley and has implications for Child Welfare Services in areas of practice and policy.

The effect of Methamphetamine abuse on mothers and children in Central California was researched in 2008 (Rondero Hernandez & Noriega, 2008). The researchers found that the estimated the number of child welfare cases involving Methamphetamine to be between 33% and 49%. These numbers indicate the difficulty in mothers obtaining treatment in a timely manner, impacting Family Reunification
requirements. The researchers discussed conflicting policies between child welfare, treatment providers and court systems that emphasizes the need for increased collaboration to provide effective interventions (Ronero Hernandez & Noriega).

An evaluation of the Multi-Jurisdictional Drug Task Forces in California completed by the California State University, Sacramento in 2003, defined elements of the program that were successful, including the use of coordinated probation searches and social service personnel to work with drug endangered children (OCJP, 2003). The report indicated that the enhanced agency collaboration allows for funding of narcotics enforcement activities that otherwise would not have been performed. The findings also indicated that establishing a working relationship with Child Protective Services, or developing a Drug Endangered Children program, enhanced the abilities of multi-jurisdictional task forces to address the drug problem in a more holistic approach in recognizing the risk posed to children by illegal activities.

The Federal Advisory Committee (2000) found that cross-disciplinary training could enhance prevention, education and treatment, allowing for shared knowledge and stronger programs to address the Methamphetamine problem in communities. The report also recognizes that an increase in law enforcement activity to address Methamphetamine creates an increase in the demand for child welfare services. This confirms the need for greater collaborative and multi-disciplinary approaches to the Methamphetamine problem. The formation of multi-jurisdictional Methamphetamine task forces requires innovative and community specific programs. This recommendation is consistent with the findings of a report on Methamphetamine conducted by the Governor’s Prevention
Advisory Council Ad Hoc Committee in 2005. The report indicates that prevention activities throughout the State of California are community specific. The funding provided in the State of California to address Methamphetamine has been focused on intervention and interdiction, rather than prevention. However, the Committee recommended interagency collaboration to leverage resources and support action plans. In addition, recommendations included pursuing sustainable funding to address the Methamphetamine epidemic.

The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development in Washington State evaluated multi-disciplinary narcotics task forces in 2006. The agency found that multi-disciplinary task forces require that participating members establish objectives, goals, and performance measures. Written interagency agreements are recommended for clear definition of duties and goals. Best practices include prosecutor involvement to improve the ability of the task force to process evidence, plan and pursue cases, and to link law enforcement to other components of the criminal justice system. Access to adequate computer database system is an important feature in such projects. Specific duties regarding investigations and shared sense of purpose with stakeholders was identified as an important aspect of multi-disciplinary task forces. Communication among task force members, both with each other and with the members’ agencies of origin is an important element in a narcotics task force. Coordination of activities allow for leveraging of resources. Implementing a monitoring and evaluation process, as well as recruiting experienced leadership are critical components of the success of a task force.
Joint response with social services and law enforcement can minimize the trauma children face when parents are arrested (Puddefoot & Foster, 2007). Co-location of both entities increases child welfare response and allows for cross training of roles and responsibilities. Joint response allows for reduction in the number of children taken into protective custody, and the trauma to children associated with parental arrest. This approach results in a reduction in the time law enforcement officials spend at the arrest scene. The child welfare social worker presence at these incidents allows for the implementation of immediate interventions for children and families. The social worker becomes a partner in serving the needs and in the safety planning for children (Puddefoot & Foster). The researchers share guidelines for collaboration including common goals, shared information, frequent communication and cross-training that will allow partners to recognize and respond to the trauma these children face. This collaboration allows for relationship enhancement between law enforcement and child welfare personnel, leverages resources, and enhances local collaborative strategies to address the needs of children affected by parental arrest.

Gaps in Literature

An investigation on the relevant literature regarding the Methamphetamine problem, the effects of the issue on children and families, and a collaborative approach in addressing the problem was conducted. The literature regarding the effects of abuse and neglect on children raised in substance abuse environments is well documented. However, longitudinal studies regarding the outcomes for these children were limited. Further studies in this area would provide greater understanding of successful
interventions and best practices in addressing the issue. The hazards of Methamphetamine have only been identified within the last ten years. Longitudinal studies regarding the effects this drug has on the physical, developmental educational, and emotional status of children would be beneficial in developing unique and relevant approaches in meeting the needs of children raised in a Methamphetamine environment.

The researcher discovered limited studies regarding multi-disciplinary approaches to address Methamphetamine problem. The literature does not adequately address evidence-based practices of the social worker’s role as a member of a co-located multi-jurisdictional team. Further studies would elicit best practices for social workers in leveraging resources, providing successful interventions and offering preventative services to families struggling with substance abuse. These types of studies could provide successful strategies for change at the local level that will allow social services to build stronger systems in an effort to achieve greater safety, permanency and well-being for children and families. In rural Calaveras County, social services has seen a reduction in the number of children in foster care since the implementation of a multi-jurisdictional task force addressing Methamphetamine. However, there is no research or literature that evaluates if the multi-disciplinary approach was directly related this positive outcome.

Summary

This chapter explored the effects of substance abuse and treatment outcomes on children and families. A review of the literature regarding the effects of abuse and neglect of children living in a substance abuse environment was conducted. A review of Child Welfare’s response and the social worker’s role in addressing the Methamphetamine
problem was examined. The literature regarding collaboration and multi-jurisdictional response was reviewed. Finally, the gaps in literature and identification of further research needs were discussed. In the following chapter, the methods used to conduct the study are described.
Chapter 3

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter provides the methodology and research design used for the purpose of this study. Included in this chapter are sections on the research question, research design, research participants, instrumentation, data gathering methods, and the protection of human subjects.

Research Question

This study investigates the following question: What are the benefits and negative aspects of joint response and collaborative efforts to address the Methamphetamine problem in Calaveras County?

Research Design

For this study, the researcher will use a qualitative, exploratory design, using content analysis to determine themes and categories. A qualitative study allows a researcher to learn more about how participants experienced an event, their perceptions during the event and provides a method of evaluating the current meaning to the participants (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2009). The interview questionnaire designed for the study allows for data collection with interpersonal interactions. The collaboration of a multi-jurisdictional team establishes a collective of shared culture, lending itself to the qualitative research approach. In using the qualitative study, the researcher hoped to learn how participants felt about their experiences while assigned to the narcotics task force, and to gain knowledge as to the meaning the individuals held in this regard. While the
data obtained is subjective in nature, the researcher can use the qualitative study and content analysis to interpret the depth and intensity of the experience of the participants.

The advantage of using a qualitative study in the form of a person-to-person interview is that the researcher is able to initiate clarification during the interview, gaining additional insight into the participant’s responses (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2009). In addition, this method historically has a high rate of completion and is a natural compliment to the skills used by the social worker conducting the research. The disadvantages of this method is that the participants may respond in a matter that they believe is expected of the interviewer, creating a distortion known as the expectancy effect (Yegidis & Weinbach). The accuracy of the data collection may also be negatively affected without proper recording of the interviews.

Qualitative research provides a method of understanding the perspective of individuals regarding their experiences (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2009). The method emphasizes words such as subjective, relative or contextual within a specific connotation. The use of qualitative research allows the researcher to become the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. The hypothesis then becomes the final product of the research process. During and following the data collection, professional literature is used to verify the data the research is suggesting and conceptualizes what has been observed.

Upon collection of the data and transcription of the interviews, the researcher will use content analysis to organize the data into categories and themes. Yegidis & Weinbach (2009) identify content analysis as a means of analyzing data obtained through human communication, including in-person interviews. Content analysis is cross-sectional,
examining data at a specific point in time. The data obtained is informative, allowing for categorization of the information acquired. In this study, content analysis will be used to obtain understanding of the collaborative efforts used by the participants and their perceptions of the impacts these efforts have had on the lives of individuals and families within the community.

Content analysis provides two methods of extracting and categorizing raw data. Manifest content analysis is an evaluation of sentence structure that allows researchers to analyze obvious meanings from responses (Neuman, 1997). This method provides the researcher with a systematic method of coding responses into a quantitative description of the content. Latent content analysis allows the researcher to search for underlying implicit meaning of the content obtained in a qualitative study (Neuman). This method offers interpretive value to the deeper meaning within the context of the interviews of a qualitative study. The researcher will analyze the data with manifest and latent analysis. The use of manifest content analysis will enable the researcher to identify obvious themes expressed by the research participants. The use of latent content analysis will provide the researcher with a method of identifying deeper meanings and intents expressed within the interviews.

Study Population

The participants of the study, consisting of nine men and one woman, are individuals who have been assigned to the narcotics task force in Calaveras County. The participants had professional expertise in working with individuals in the community who have been involved in substance abuse. The focus of the interviews was the collaborative
approach in addressing the needs of these individuals and the community as a whole. Participants ranged in age from 23 to 60 years. The occupations of the participants were either law enforcement or probation officers. The participants’ years in their respective professions ranged from 2 years to 29 years. The study population’s time on the multi-jurisdictional task force range from 6 months to 2 years. Each of the participants was assigned to the narcotics task force within the past two years.

Sample Population

This study was conducted in Calaveras County with 10 participants who had been assigned to the multi-jurisdictional narcotics task force within the past two years. The sample used for this study was purposive sampling. According to Yegidis & Weinbach (2009), purposive sampling provides the researcher with access to insights into a problem that we wish to understand. The researcher utilized a variation of purposive sampling with expert sampling (Yegidis & Weinbach), by soliciting participants in the research who have specialized education and training in drug abuse recognition, probation searches and child endangerment.

The qualitative research gathered in form of in-depth interviews offers unique perspectives into the professional experiences of the participants (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2009). The ten participants were contacted by email, with subsequent in person or telephone contact, and were asked to participate in the study. Participation in the study was voluntary and no compensation for participation was offered. The interviews were scheduled at a time of mutual convenience.
Instrumentation

Face-to-face, standardized, open-ended question interviews were conducted with ten narcotics enforcements practitioners, lasting between fifteen and twenty-five minutes in length. The interviews were conducted at the convenience of the interviewee and were held in private offices and were conducted in several locations in Calaveras County. In preparation for the interviews, the researcher designed a questionnaire consisting of ten questions (See Appendix A). The questionnaire was designed to explore the themes regarding the goals, benefits and challenges of assignment to a multi-jurisdictional narcotics task force. In addition, the perspectives of the participants were sought regarding role identification of the varying professionals assigned to the task force. The participants’ perspectives regarding the impact the efforts of the task force has had on families, children and the community, as well as their perceptions regarding client engagement in services since the establishment of the multi-jurisdictional task force were also elicited. The participants were asked their observations and perceptions as to the progress the task force has made in meeting its goals. Finally, the participants were asked for suggestions for improving the collaboration efforts within the multi-jurisdictional narcotics task force.

The purpose of using a questionnaire was to ensure that the interviews were conducted in a consistent and thorough manner. This method is important in collecting data from each participant to ensure the integrity of the qualitative study. The questionnaire assisted the researcher in organizing and analyzing the data. The structured interview reduced the risk of bias on the part of the researcher. The researcher used a
digital recorder to capture the interviews for precise record keeping and interpretation of data. Following the completion of each interview, the responses were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy of data recording and interpretation.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher identified potential participants from those individuals who had been assigned to the narcotics task force within the past two years. The researcher initially contacted the participants by email, and completed subsequent conversations with each participant regarding the research study either in person or by telephone, providing the participants with a description of the research project. Each individual was asked if they would be willing to participate in the research. Upon receiving the responding agreement to participate in the research, the researcher scheduled an appointment time of mutual convenience. The participants were advised the interviews would be digitally recorded, and each interview would last approximately thirty minutes.

All interviews were conducted in private office settings at various locations within Calaveras County. Prior to the interview, each participant was given a description of the research project and he or she was informed that the interview would be digitally recorded. The participants were then asked to read and sign a consent form (See Attachment B), and were asked if they had any questions. The researcher also provided the participants with a verbal explanation of the purpose of the qualitative study. A total of ten questions were asked of each participant with the interview lasting between fifteen and twenty-five minutes in length. With the permission of the participants, the researcher took notes related to the content of the responses throughout each interview. At the
conclusion of the interview, the participants were thanked for their participation in the research study.

Data Analysis

After the interviews were complete, the digital recordings of each interview were transcribed verbatim and the raw data analyzed for content. During the content analysis, the researcher determined the similarities and differences in the material and identified relevant ideas, themes and/or concepts from the responses. The researcher used both manifest and latent content analysis to identify the common themes and deeper meanings ascertained by the interview responses. The use of manifest content analysis allowed the researcher to identify four common themes presented by the respondents. The use of latent content analysis provided a method of identifying and describing deeper meanings within the participants’ responses. The common themes were then created and described within the context of the literature and theoretical framework reviewed for the study.

Protection of Human Subjects

In accordance with the thesis requirements at California State University, Sacramento, a human subjects application was submitted to the Committee of Human Subjects from the Division of Social Work. The committee approved the proposed study and determined the project as “no risk” to the clients or the participants, as the human subjects answered questions related to their professional work and daily professional activities for which they have received education, professional training, and professional support or supervision. The application included the consent form used for the study. The researcher received the approval prior to initiating the collection of data.
Participation in the research by law enforcement and probation officers was strictly voluntary. At the onset of the meeting, the participants were asked to review and sign the informed consent form (See Appendix B). In addition, the researcher provided the participants with a verbal description and purpose of the qualitative study. The participants read and signed the consent form and were asked if they had any questions. The participants were informed they had the right to withdraw from the interview, decline to answer any question, or to stop the interview at any time. This information was described in the participant’s consent form, which was signed prior to the interview (See Appendix B). The information obtained from the interviews was held strictly confidential. The digital recordings and transcribed materials from the interviews were stored in a secure location at the researcher’s home during the research process. Upon completion and approval of the study, all data, including digital recordings, will be destroyed.

Summary

This chapter addressed the qualitative and content analysis research design used in the study. Through the use of manifest and latent content analysis, this research study revealed common concepts and themes shared by the study participants on the subject of the collaboration of a multi-jurisdictional task force. A description of the study population and sampling techniques were included in this chapter. This chapter also explained the methods used in collecting and reporting data, and reviewed the procedure for the protection of human subjects. In the next chapter, the results of the data are analyzed and presented.
Chapter 4
DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

Interviews were conducted with ten participants from law enforcement and probation who have been assigned to the multi-jurisdictional narcotics task force in Calaveras County. The main purpose of the study was to investigate the following research question: What are the benefits and negative aspects of joint response and collaborative efforts to address the Methamphetamine problem in Calaveras County? The purpose of exploring this question was to determine the professional perspectives on the multi-jurisdictional effort to address substance abuse in a rural community. In addition, the researcher sought to identify commonalities among the responses, role identification and emerging themes. The participants were asked a series of ten questions (See Appendix A) regarding the positive and negative aspects of collaboration on a multi-jurisdictional narcotics force. Following the interviews, the researcher transcribed the digital recordings. A content analysis was then conducted on the written version of the responses. The researcher identified common themes among the participants’ responses in order to summarize concepts from the responses.

The themes that emerged from the study are: 1) Multi-jurisdictional task force and the protection of drug endangered children, which includes challenges and benefits, goal obtainment and suggestions for improvement; 2) Joint collaboration, which allows families to engage in services and obtain resources; 3) Formation of narcotics task force, which includes increased communication among agencies and service to the community;
4) Joint response with law enforcement, probation and child welfare, which sends a message as to the seriousness of drug abuse and the need to address the problem. This chapter will focus on the identified themes and highlight quotes from the interviews when discussing the themes. To protect the identity of the respondents, fictitious names were assigned to all study participants.

*Muti-Jurisdictional Task Force and the Protection of Drug Endangered Children*

The participants were asked to identify the goals of the multi-jurisdictional narcotics task force. Every respondent discussed in depth the goal of eradicating narcotic use, sales, and manufacturing. The respondents referred to the theme of the protection of children, child abuse and endangerment a total of 39 times. Seven of the ten participants expressed the goal of protecting or “rescuing” children who are raised in a drug environment. These responses reveal the importance of the social worker’s role in assessing the safety and risks to children being raised in a drug environment (Holoman, Oliver, & Wright, 2004). Each of the participants discussed sharing information among task force members to the benefit of children. This included determining whether children were present in a residence where narcotics were sold. Several participants described the importance of identifying the presence of children in the home as critical to the tactical planning of an operation, such as serving a search warrant. These efforts serve to minimize the trauma children experience when faced with parental arrest (Puddefoot & Foster, 2007). Henry stated, “CPS has information that assists us in our investigation.” He spoke of previous search warrant operations prior to CPS involvement when law enforcement was unaware of children in the home. Henry stated with CPS involvement,
“Instead of us hitting the house at 7 in the morning when all the children are there, we can wait until 8 o’clock or 9 o’clock when the children go to school, so that we can lesson the impact of us being there, forceful, kicking the door in and arresting mommy and daddy.” This was further discussed as minimizing the negative impact on the children in the home, as the operation may be planned when the children are away at school, minimizing the risk of harm to a child. In addition, the presence of children in the home may require alterations in tactical planning, such as eliminating the use of percussion grenades that are typically used in serving a search warrant. Sean stated, “The information that the social workers can find and give is invaluable for things like tactical planning as well. Because I don’t know how many times we’ve done search warrants executed on houses and a huge aspect of that is, is there is a kid in the house before we go in and break the door down? So with the social workers able to get that information, it certainly has been helpful.” These perspectives incorporate the idea of systems theory, as each individual within a family is affected by events encountered by other family members.

Raymond discussed in depth the filthy conditions typically found in a home were illegal substances are used that present health and safety hazards to children. He described the social worker’s ability to recognize these dangers and provide documentation that may lead to child endangerment prosecution. Raymond further described the social worker’s expertise as an important aspect of accomplishing the goal of the protection of children. Thomas stated the importance of social workers’ role as being able to communicate and meet the needs of children. He stated that while some
deputies have the ability to work well with children, others are lacking in the skills needed to meet their needs. The social worker’s role in this capacity provides additional resources and perspectives that assist law enforcement in doing their jobs. Michael spoke of the task force efforts as providing the realization to parents that have they placed their children in danger due to their drug use. Michael verbalized parents’ typical response when provided services as, “Oh my gosh, how could I put my family, put myself through that, and my family?” Thomas stated, “I think we have stopped a lot of child abuse that may have not been discovered before because of lack of resources.” The multi-jurisdictional task force provides opportunities to address parental substance abuse that may reduce incidences of child abuse (Boyd-Webb, 2003; Dunn, et al., 2002).

Respondents repeatedly expressed the recognition of the need to protect children and the importance of sharing information among task force members as an important aspect of protecting children. These responses demonstrate a shared sense of purpose among stakeholders of the multi-disciplinary task force (Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, 2006).

Challenges

While the participants in the study identified common goals of, and roles within the task force, their responses to the greatest challenge varied greatly. Interagency and inter-task force communication was identified as a priority and perhaps the greatest challenge. Participants discussed the difficulties encountered in answering to different bosses through respective agencies. The establishment of roles and procedures were identified as challenges, as well as the development of trust among members, which are
consistent with the challenges described in previous studies regarding multi-disciplinary collaboration (White, 2008). Several participants spoke of the need to approach each investigation among jurisdictions with fairness and equity. Several participants also discussed managing resources, the development of teamwork, and the need to develop patience for lengthy, in-depth narcotics investigations as significant challenges. The discussions included the increased workload due to information sharing, which at times can be overwhelming. The challenge in this area is to address each jurisdiction’s investigations concurrently and effectively.

**Benefits**

The respondents focused on sharing information for investigations, the benefits of in-depth narcotics training, and interagency collaboration as the greatest benefits of the narcotics task force. These discussions are consistent with the goals set forth in the establishment of Drug Endangered Children task forces (OCJP, 2003). These benefits can be assessed with the use of systems theory that evaluates relationships and the interactions that occur due to the collaboration in a multi-jurisdictional task force (Nichols, 2006). The majority of the respondents spoke of the benefit of preventing child abuse, rescuing drug-endangered children, and providing services to children as the greatest benefit. Richard spoke of the community being economically challenged and the ability of the task force to provide services to children as beneficial. Richard, John, and Michael spoke of the unique approach this narcotics task force has due to a social worker being assigned to the unit full time. These respondents expanded their answers by
discussing the ability to provide families with resources, providing assistance to individuals in their recovery, and thereby offering them opportunities for change.

Jared shared that sentiment stating, “It’s not the typical narcotics team that you would find in larger agencies.” Henry stated, “It’s always good to have a different department providing information and assistance.” In evaluating the multi-jurisdictional task force, similarities in answers were found as to the unique nature of the narcotics task force in this rural community. Edward responded to the question of the benefits of the task force stating, “Absolutely it would be the children because I think that any narcotics unit could probably go back and talk about seizures or specific persons that went to prison. But our unit, we could go back and say that something new or unique had been done, which was having rescued children.” He further stated, “I can’t think of any negative impacts that the children have with the task force because the children benefit by being protected.” These responses were revealing in that the protection of children and the provision of services to families were viewed as perhaps the greatest benefit of the collaborative efforts.

Additional responses included the benefit of having members available for immediate response, the use of teamwork, interagency training and the opportunity for increased professional experience. Michael discussed the benefits of training and experience as adding to expertise in the law enforcement role. The ability to gain knowledge from other experienced professionals was viewed as an important aspect of teamwork. The subsequent cross training is an interdisciplinary systems approach to provide improved client service (Streeter & Franklin, 2002). Marie discussed the benefit
of completing in-depth narcotics investigations as being beneficial to the community as a whole. This is an important concept in systems theory as organizations exist within community contexts and are affected by change (Lemonides, 2007). As the multidisciplinary task force works to achieve the goal of eradicating narcotics and protecting children being raised in drug environments, the subsequent effect creates positive results within the community the task force serves.

**Goal Obtainment**

Each of the respondents stated they believed the task force has made progress in achieving its goals, with five respondents stating the task force has made good progress. Several respondents discussed their belief that current progress has slowed due to lack of financial resources and changes in personnel, resulting in decreased collaboration and inefficiency. Michael spoke of increased progress as the task force finds its niche in the community and provides greater services. Michael elaborated stating, “I’ve seen how the task force has affected the lives of the community and I’ve seen how it’s benefited them.” Raymond stated, “I think there is still a long way to go, especially in our community where Methamphetamine is so relevant”. Raymond expressed his belief that there has been forward progress in the task force meeting its goals, despite the prevalence of Methamphetamine use in the community.

Marie spoke of the difficulties in combating narcotics and drug endangered children, but stated the program is working and people are not willing to take the chances they used to take. Several respondents offered in-depth discussions on the need to continue the joint collaboration due to the negative impact of Methamphetamine in the
rural community. Sean discussed the changes in personnel on the task force as
challenging, indicating the initial personnel assigned were willing to learn and draw on
available resources. He further described the need for newly assigned personnel to work
with different agencies and use available resources to obtain efficiency. This perspective
offers insight into integration of services among collaborating agencies, a strength found
in systems theory. The sharing of resources and collaborative response can be an
effective means of providing support for families addressing issues of substance abuse
and minimizing trauma to children (Puddefoot & Foster, 2007). Richard described the
county, per capita, as one of the highest in the State in providing services and reaching
out to children as a measure of progress in the task force meetings its goals.

Suggestions for Improvement

Jared and Richard discussed the need for increased communication among inter-
agency supervisors and the need for increased training for potential members. The
majority of the participants discussed continued communication among task force
members in length as a measure of improvement. This was discussed as the single
method of increasing efficiency and improving the performance of the multi-
jurisdictional task force. Henry and Sean discussed the need for more autonomy
following inter-agency training. Cross-disciplinary training provides a means of
enhancing prevention, education and treatment, thereby affecting better outcomes for
families (Federal Advisory Committee, 2000). Five of the respondents suggested the
assignment of a full time probation officer and full time social worker, which have been
cut due to budgetary concerns and lack of resources within the past year. These
respondents discussed the ability to gather intelligence, increase communication and collaboration as the positive aspects of full time assignments of a probation officer and a social worker. Raymond explained, “It definitely works best when there is at least one representative from each agency assigned full time.” Respondents also discussed full time co-location as increasing the effectiveness of communication, planning, and timely response of the task force members. The responses are consistent with methods of creating sustainable change with regard to the Child Welfare response (White, 2008). These concepts can be viewed from a systems theory perspective, in that various agency personnel work together to affect change.

Michael suggested increased community outreach, while Sean suggested reevaluation of the task force goals, finances and resources. Michael stated that reaching out to the community has assisted law enforcement in doing their jobs effectively. This includes the benefit of community oriented policing which is critical in effective law enforcement. Thomas suggested consistency in supervision and guidance for assigned members as a measure of improvement. Marie suggested the inclusion of additional jurisdictions on the task force such as state parole, and closer working relationships with Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and the Drug Enforcement Agency. Richard described the need for “thinking outside the box” to create programs that can be effective in addressing the problem of substance abuse within the community. The discussion incorporates the idea that creative and innovative approaches are necessary to affect systemic change (White, 2008).
Joint collaboration

Participants of the study discussed the ability to provide services to families and children through the efforts of the multi-jurisdictional task force a total of 35 times. The respondents identified the role of the social worker in a multi-jurisdictional task force as providing services to children and families, protecting children, and providing information on additional resources such as financial aid or counseling services to families. Additional discussions included the social worker’s ability to contribute to community awareness of the problem. The study participants discussed additional insights and perspectives the social worker contributed to the team that assisted in the assessment of risk and need for services. Jared described the different perspective social workers offer stating, “You bring the whole toolbox.” This response included a discussion of services that was focused on both prevention and rehabilitative services, effecting a positive change within the lifestyles of those individuals who use or abuse drugs. These strategies are important as a means of addressing parental substance abuse and facilitating change (Altshuler, 2005; DePanfilis & Hayward).

Five respondents discussed an improvement in client engagement in services for both parents and children since the establishment of the multi-jurisdictional task force. Several respondents expressed their belief that the multi-jurisdictional response impresses upon the client the seriousness of the problem, thereby increasing client engagement in services. Jared discussed individuals being set in their ways and being unwilling to change, but with the presence of law enforcement and child protective services, the message is sent that “these people are serious.” He further described the difference in
client reaction to a multi-jurisdictional response with their willingness to sit down and listen, causing parents to engage in services. Raymond stated, “I would say there is a difference because I think it is a little more of a wake up call when a CPS worker or probation worker just shows up at the house with a deputy and says, “Hey, we’re here to just check on your kids and what services do you need?” Henry described the effect as the public being willing to take help from social services. Thomas stated, “Nobody wants to lose their children, and as bad as they put their children into danger, they definitely usually do whatever they can to get them back.” Sean expressed his belief that there are very few narcotics users, sellers or manufacturers that have complete disregard for their children. He stated, “No matter how big a dirt bag is out there or whatever their involvement with drugs are, they love their children and they want them there.”

John stated that in order for a community to survive, reunification of families and the provision of services should be the number one goal. John discussed that prior to the establishment of the task force, individuals were arrested and prosecuted but were provided no follow up services. This statement is consistent with research conducted by Sandra Altshuler (2005) with the emphasis of drug endangered children task forces focusing on the needs of children while ignoring the need to provide parents with resources for treatment, housing or employment. John credited this ability to provide services to the participation of probation and social services in the narcotics task force. This change in approach can be attributed to systems theory as the task force seeks to achieve the specific task of providing services through collaboration (Kitson, 2008).
Sean stated that the social worker’s interaction on follow up with individuals “is absolutely making a difference.” Discussions included the belief that the multi-jurisdictional response brings individuals awareness as to the seriousness of the drug problem and this improves the amount of services that individuals and families obtain, thereby increasing client engagement in services. Marie shared her thoughts by stating “I think we’ve done a great thing for the community. You know, people on the reviewing end probably don’t think so but as far as that goes, we’ve helped children out that needed help because the families weren’t able to provide for them what they needed. And then we’ve also helped families get the help that they need with drugs and classes, and parenting classes, so they can better provide for their children.” This response was typical among participants in describing the effort to facilitate change in a comprehensive, integrated service strategy (Altshuler, 2005; Holoman, 2004). This is consistent with system theory’s focus of the interactions that occur in relationships that affect organizational change (Nichols, 2006).

While the majority of respondents expressed belief that joint collaboration has increased client engagement of services, four respondents stated they were unsure there has been any difference in client engagement in services since the task force formation. John discussed the goal of the task force as providing services and reunification to families; however, he referred to the elimination of the probation officer from the task force within the past year as resulting in a decrease in client engagement in services. The concern with continued funding revenues was discussed by participants in the study with
Richard stating, “I think if we work together to maybe think outside the box and come up with other programs that we can be effective.”

Formation of Narcotics Task Forces, Communication and Services

Throughout the interviews, the participants identified the ability to increase communication with agencies, team members and the community through the multi-jurisdictional task force 33 times. Several respondents described the importance of offering rehabilitative services to parents so that children removed from a dangerous home environment could be reunited safely with their parents. Richard explained, “It’s not your typical law enforcement that if you are involved in drug activity you are going to get punished. We are looking at ways to provide services and some other things, giving them options where they have a choice that they can work with us and hopefully get off the drugs, and hopefully provide a better environment for their children.” This response shows a focus on prevention and the provision of services, rather than punitive measures typically found in narcotics task forces (Altshuler, 2005). In addition, Henry, Michael, Raymond, Marie, and Richard identified the goals of the task force as providing services to families and children, educating the public as to the dangers of narcotics, and the expansion of resources through interagency collaboration. Richard explained, “We’ve been very productive on the end as far as providing resources for families. If you look throughout the state, for a county of our size, if you take it per capita, we’re one of the highest in providing the service of reaching out to children.”

Michael described the ability to use tools available to the group to provide services to individuals and families, such as probation or children’s services. This is
consistent with an open systems approach to a social issue (Kitson, 2008). Each
jurisdiction begins to act together toward the common goal of providing services and
affecting a change within the community. Seven of the respondents expressed the ability
to provide services to families as having the greatest impact within the community. Five
participants cited the reduction of illegal narcotics and crime reduction as having a
positive community impact. Four respondents discussed increased community awareness
and the ability to build relationships within the community as contributing to the
betterment of the community. Respondents also discussed community awareness of the
narcotics as positively impacting the community. Michael and Edward discussed the
establishment of a presence as a narcotics task force as a positive community impact
through crime reduction.

Raymond discussed in detail the presence of the social worker as beneficial to
individuals in that the social worker could engage in discussions that offer insight to these
individuals in need of services. The effect of these discussions was greater engagement in
services by individuals to address their substance abuse problem. Jared, Henry, Michael,
Raymond and Sean spoke of the impact of the task force as providing realizations to
individuals about their drug use and the impact it has had on their families. These
discussions included the immediate ability to provide families with services such as child
protective services, adult protective services and substance abuse services. Raymond
stated that although these benefits would be difficult to measure, the effort of the task
force has been beneficial to children, families and the community.
Edward stated, “I can’t think of any negative impact that the children have had with the task force because the children benefit by being protected.” Marie stated, “We’ve helped children out that needed help because the families weren’t able to provide for them what they needed.” These discussions were consistent with the participants throughout the interviews. Sean stated that he believed there are very few individuals that have complete disregard for their children. He stated, “No matter how big a dirt bag is out there or whatever their involvement with drugs are, they love their children and they want them there.”

Respondents also discussed the outreach efforts the task force has made in providing drug prevention classes in the community and in the schools as having a positive impact. This included community presentations on drug recognition and awareness. Jared stated, “I think we’ve done a great thing for the community. I think it’s had a huge impact on the community, whether they recognize it or not.” Richard and John described the importance of building relationships with students as a means of building trust within the community. Additional discussions centered on educational outreach that provides children with information about the harmful effects of drugs so that they can make informed decisions.

*Joint Response with Law Enforcement, Probation and Child Welfare*

The study respondents discussed the effect of the presence of a multi-jurisdictional task force in the community as sending a message as to the seriousness of the issue of drug abuse a total of 10 times. Respondents spoke of the formation of the task force and joint response as providing additional resources to law enforcement, probation
and child protective services, to the benefit of the community. This is consistent with best practices described by Sandra Altshuler (2005) in addressing the issue of substance abuse through interdisciplinary collaboration. Also discussed by respondents was the ability of the task force to respond to calls for service with efficiency, handling calls for service in one instance, instead of the previous method that required single jurisdictions to respond separately, resulting in an average of five points of contact.

The role of probation officers on a narcotics task force was identified in relation to conducting compliance checks for individuals on probation, as well as providing resources and services to individuals. Respondents spoke of the relationships probation officers have with other agencies such as mental health and substance abuse providers that enable clients to engage in services that will assist them in obtaining and maintaining sobriety. Probation’s role was described not as punitive, but rather supportive in helping individuals comply with terms of the court and obtaining services. The participants also discussed the importance of sharing intelligence and planning joint response for compliance checks of individuals on probation or parole. The respondents often mentioned the expertise of the probation officer as a large component in the success of the task force. The information provided by probation and/or parole assists in the task force members’ awareness of the issues families currently face.

Thomas spoke about the trust an individual may have in his or her probation officer due to having an established relationship. He discussed in detail the benefit of these relationships during the planning and initiation of compliance checks. In further discussion, Thomas stated that individuals on probation who place their trust in the
probation officer might assist law enforcement in identifying other drug users in the community, thereby providing an additional means of crime reduction.

Every respondent discussed law enforcement’s role as enforcement of governing laws and completing investigations on narcotics activities such as sales, use and distribution within the community. Respondents also discussed the importance of gathering information and completing investigations that lead to search warrants. An additional topic was the importance of referring individuals for prosecution to the district attorney’s office. Jared, Raymond, and Marie discussed the ability to refer an individual for child endangerment charges due to children living in a drug environment as a priority of the task force assignment.

The participation by child welfare of in multi-jurisdictional task force allows preventative services to be offered to families affected by substance abuse (Breashears, et al.; Devaney, 2008). As social workers respond with law enforcement and probation, social workers use assessment skills in identifying the needs of individuals and families. This allows families to be referred for services prior to emergency calls for services through the Child Welfare hotline. Social workers assigned to a narcotics task force have the opportunity to gain increased knowledge and expertise that will assist them in providing appropriate and effective services (DePanfilis & Hayward; Green, et al., 2008; White, 2008). With the high percentages of Methamphetamine involvement in Child Welfare cases, it is imperative that social workers recognize the drug and the affect it has on individuals using this substance.
With studies showing empirical evidence that children raised in drug environment have a higher incidence of exposure to trauma (Sprang, Staton-Tindall & Clark, 2008), it is important that social workers have the ability to assess children at risk of adverse health and developmental outcomes, including the risk for intergenerational substance abuse. The study participants spoke of the expertise social workers have to offer in assessing the needs of families and children. The social worker’s presence on a multi-jurisdictional task force allows families to access to services in a timely manner and allows for the provision of safety resources. There is a necessity for awareness of the needs and numbers of children living in drug environments. The ability to share information regarding ages of the children in the home and previous Child Welfare history allows for a comprehensive approach to joint response in the case of search warrants, probation and parole searches, and Child Protective Services referrals.

The need for children’s removal from the home or placement with relatives can be evaluated in a comprehensive manner when information is shared. In addition, the medical needs of these children can be met in a timely manner. In the case of parental arrest, children are not placed in the position of returning to an empty home and being left alone for an unspecified amount of time. Children present during the service of search warrants experience chaos and emotional distress. The joint response approach between law enforcement, probation, and social services can also alleviate the stress on children and law enforcement officials, as the assigned social worker is immediately available to assist in caring for the children’s needs.
Prior to the establishment of multi-jurisdictional narcotics task forces, public agencies acted solely within their jurisdictional roles. Confidentiality laws that are associated with Child Welfare previously prevented the sharing of information about allegations of drug use and general neglect, and the right to a reasonable expectation of privacy prevented probation officials from sharing information about their clientele. Law enforcement officials are primarily concerned with upholding the law and are not required to place children in protective custody. History shows there has not been a standardized approach to cross-reporting concerns of child neglect due to exposure to a drug environment. These issues prevented a systematic approach to the Methamphetamine epidemic and its impact on families and are the catalyst for the formation of the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (2007) and the implementation of multi-jurisdictional task forces. The organization promotes the DEC team concept and public awareness for the problems facing children living in drug environments. The implementation of the multi-jurisdictional narcotics task forces addresses the concern for the problems children face while being raised in a drug environment. This approach allows for collaborative efforts to address the problem of drug use, child abuse and neglect at the local and state level. In addition, the joint response allows for varying values of the separate agencies to be addressed in a collaborative manner. These perspectives are consistent with a system approach to a social issue.

In the rural community that is the focus of this research study, successful protocols of task forces include the identification of probationers or parolees engaged in
illegal drug activities. The conditions of probation and parole are identified and the information is shared with child welfare personnel and law enforcement. The child welfare social worker then identifies any child welfare history, ages of children in the home, number of children in the home, and the results of previous contacts and family interventions. This information is used to develop an operational plan in the form of probation and parole searches. The shared information allows law enforcement officials the ability to be cognizant of the children who are vulnerable during search warrants and/or probation or parole searches. The shared knowledge assists the task force personnel in preparing for contact with families involved in illegal drug activities. Each member of the task force is assigned to complete joint assessments and investigations during contact with these families. The child welfare representative can provide valuable information to families regarding community resources, and may refer individuals for services to address drug addiction and substance abuse problems. The joint response approach allows for shared knowledge and open communication between assigned personnel, enabling staff members to provide relevant information to members of the public. As social workers identify the issue of substance abuse, the training provided within the task force will enhance the ability of the social worker to recognize the problem, and will provide educational and research-based practices that identify proven strategies in addressing the issue. Recognition of the problem and the subsequent social impacts will assist social workers in becoming a catalyst for social change.

The social worker’s role in identifying the effects of Methamphetamine use is perhaps the first step in providing support in addressing the issue (DePanfilis & Hayward,
2006; Holoman, et al., 2004). The deeper responsibility lies in the causes behind the drug use and the identification of causalities can lead to the engagement of supports for families. An awareness of issues such as poverty, domestic violence, and codependent behaviors can enable the social worker of contact the ability to begin dialogue regarding lifestyle choices that lead to drug dependency and addiction. Social worker practice calls for a holistic approach to the problem in order to implement effective resolutions. As social services personnel become educated to in the effects of Methamphetamine use, a greater understanding the economic impact can be obtained. Coordinated efforts by social work professionals and professionals in the criminal justice systems will provide a multi-dimensional component in addressing the Methamphetamine problem in the social and economic context. The cooperation of co-located professionals focuses on the presenting problem rather than the individual, and provides a means for adequate referrals to resources in addressing the issue.

The role of the social worker in multi-agency task forces is pivotal in providing preventative services (Puddefoot & Foster, 2007). Many individuals fear reprisal in seeking services such as drug abuse programs. The need for preventative programs is tantamount to the success of addressing the Methamphetamine issue. Individuals may fear involvement by criminal justice and law enforcement, as well as child protective services, in seeking drug treatment programs. The importance of educational outreach cannot be minimized as an effective tool in engaging participation. It is the role of social workers to provide information on educational programs, support groups, and drug treatment programs as an effective means in addressing the problem and a preventative
measure for family unity. Social workers can assist families in engaging in services by critically evaluating the risk to the children and minimizing the trauma associated with removal of children from the home. As adults show a willingness to engage in services, the social worker’s role is to support and monitor the effort as a means of child protection and family support.

**Summary**

In this chapter, the data obtained from the study was analyzed and discussed. Chapter 5 is a description of the conclusions and recommendations. The limitations of the study and implications for social work practice and policy are also discussed.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the data extracted from the study. This chapter will include a discussion of the benefit of collaboration in a multi-jurisdictional setting. This chapter will also discuss future recommendations, explains the limitations of the study, and outlines implications for the practice of social work.

Conclusions

This study was created to explore the impact of establishing a multi-jurisdictional task force to address the problem of Methamphetamine in a rural community. The study included an exploration of the benefits and challenges of such efforts from the perspective of experienced law enforcement and probation professionals. The researcher identified the demographics of the participants including gender, age and years in profession. The results of this study reflect the values expressed by the participants that interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary methods result in increased client engagement in services, provide an effective means of leveraging resources through increased inter-agency collaboration, and provide greater protection for children being raised in a substance abuse environment who at risk of abuse or neglect. These findings are consistent with the goals of the Drug Endangered Children task forces that allow for interagency coordination, the pooling of resources, the establishment of new systems to facilitate information sharing, intelligence gathering, and the improvement of access to
special resources and joint assessment of the needs of children and families in drug
environments (OCJP, 2007).

The study is intended to provide social workers with additional insight into using
collaboration as an effective means of providing a holistic approach in addressing the
social issue of substance abuse (Breashears, et al.; Green, et al., 2008; Smith, 2001). The
shared knowledge by law enforcement, probation and social work professionals can be
beneficial to clients and the community we seek to serve. Social workers provide unique
perspectives to vulnerable families addressing social issues such as substance abuse. The
social service representative can provide timely and valuable information to families
regarding community resources, providing services to address drug addiction and
substance abuse.

The joint response approach and collaboration allows for shared knowledge and
open communication between assigned personnel, enabling staff members to provide
relevant information to members of the public and the ability to achieve timely response
with efficacy. The multi-disciplinary response with law enforcement, probation, and
social services can also alleviate the stress on children and law enforcement officials, as
the assigned social worker is immediately available to assist in caring for the needs of
children. In addition, joint response allows for varying values of the separate agencies to
be addressed in a collaborative manner while each partner receives the benefit of cross
training. Furthermore, assignment to a specialized unit of a task force allows the
members to receive specialized training and experience, in effect enabling them to
become subject matter experts.
Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, recommendations can be made to social work practitioners, researchers and governmental agencies. The researcher’s recommendations in these areas are described below.

Practitioners. Based on the results of the study, the researcher recommends using a systems approach when working with clients with substance abuse issues. Social services providers work in conjunction with other agencies to provide services that will meet the needs of individuals and families. By using collaboration as an important tool to address the needs of families, social workers can provide timely assessments and referrals for services at the initial law enforcement or probation contact, thereby increasing engagement in services. Social workers can be a valuable asset in this regard as part of a larger system of service providers, creating increased opportunities for client engagement in services (Rondero Hernandez & Noriega, 2008). The interconnectedness between individuals, families and communities is relevant in systems theory as well as organizational behavior. As a member of a task force or partner agency, social workers can provide resources and enhance family support systems that allow for greater success of client engagement in services. The training provided to task force members can provide increased recognition of the problem of substance abuse, the subsequent impacts on the individuals and families, and will assist social workers in becoming a catalyst for change (DePanfilis & Hayward, 2006).

Researchers. The researcher has identified the need for future research regarding interagency collaboration and co-location as a method of addressing the social issue of
substance abuse. The use of this strategy provides training associated with drug use and drug abuse recognition and the affect on individuals and families, which can assist social workers in their chosen field of practice. Further research can identify how the coordinated efforts by social work professionals and professionals in the criminal justice system can provide a multi-dimensional component in addressing the issue of substance abuse within a social and economic context. In addition, further studies regarding collaboration may provide educational and research-based practices that identify proven strategies in addressing social issues. Continued research into the impact of the Drug Endangered Children program may enable additional policy development with collaborative approaches to social welfare issues (Altshuler, 2005).

_Governmental Agencies._ The establishment of multi-jurisdictional task forces relies on funding at the local, state and/or federal government. While the drug endangered children task force appears to have a positive impact in the community researched for this study, sustainability of funding is not guaranteed. In times of economic crisis, governmental agencies may choose to discontinue this funding stream. This presents the question of whether local governmental agencies can afford to fund collaborative efforts or commit to funding established interagency task forces. While the cost of operating interagency task forces are considered in regard to sustainability of programs, the ability to leverage resources effectively should also be evaluated as an effective means of response to social issues (White, 2008).
Limitations

The limitations of the study involve the size of the study, the type of sample and the researcher. Ten participants took part in the study, each having been assigned to the narcotics task force in the rural community of Calaveras County. The participants were professionals identified as only law enforcement or probation officers. A convenience, non-probability or purposive sampling method was chosen for the study that cannot be generalized to the larger populations. This qualitative study would be difficult to replicate because of the unique composition of the task force in a rural community. The collection of data through face-to-face interviews may have elicited a biased response from participants who may have anticipated a preferred response. In addition, the bias of the researcher may have affected the design of the study, data collection and analysis (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2009).

Implications for Social Work Policy and Practice

This study provides implications for social work practice and policy. While extensive research has been done on the effects of child abuse and neglect, little research has been completed that evaluates effective, collaborative measures to address the problem of children raised in a substance abuse environment. The ability to address social welfare issues with comprehensive, collaborative approaches may prove to be the greatest measure in reducing social issues such as substance abuse. The researcher hopes that the information obtained in this study will encourage additional research on this topic.

On a micro level of social work practice, practitioners and other professionals can use the information obtained in this study to evaluate successful methods of collaboration
and community outreach. The individuals and families who experience the negative effects of substance abuse may encounter numerous practitioners with varying professional expertise. Social workers can enhance opportunities for training and expertise for themselves and other professionals by participating in a multi-jurisdictional assignment. Social work professionals have a wealth of knowledge and expertise, including cultural competency that would add a critical component to such efforts, enhancing opportunities for change to families attempting to engage in services. In addition, acceptance of such assignments allows the social work practitioner to participate in planned law enforcement operations, thereby minimizing the risk of harm to children.

The role of the social worker in a multi-agency task force is pivotal as a means of providing preventative services. The importance of educational outreach cannot be minimized as an effective tool in engaging client participation in services. It is the role of social workers to provide information on educational programs, support groups, and drug treatment programs as an effective means in addressing the problem, and as preventative measures for family unity. Providing education to the community regarding the issues associated with substance abuse is important aspect of task force community outreach. The ability to provide resources and services to vulnerable children raised in drug environments and to women struggling with substance abuse, or those trapped in codependent relationships, is well worth the expense of the collaborative effort.

On a mezzo level of practice, social work providers can seek to establish policies that would increase collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries. This effort would
enhance training opportunities, increase communication regarding common clientele, and would maximize the effectiveness of a community approach to a social issue. The researcher hopes this study will be used by providers to evaluate successful methods of leveraging resources thereby increasing the capacity for service with efficacy.

On a macro level, social workers, law enforcement and probation professionals can work together to advocate for collaborative methods of addressing social issues. This includes garnering support at the local, state and federal levels of government for sustainable funding streams that would enhance client services. Measures for sustainability of such programs should be the focus of social welfare policies as drug use continues to negatively impact our society. The use of multi-jurisdictional task forces is a prudent course of action, allowing for a collaborative approach in addressing the social issues. The ability to address social issues with comprehensive, collaborative measures may prove to be the greatest asset in reducing societal issues such as substance abuse.

Conclusions

The primary purpose of the study was to evaluate a multi-jurisdictional response to the social issue of substance abuse in a rural community. The secondary purpose was to increase the amount of research that exists on the topic of joint collaboration. While there is limited research available on this topic, it is imperative that social work practitioners develop innovative and effective methods of addressing social issues such as substance abuse.

The findings of this study suggest that additional research on this topic is needed so that effective means of collaboration can be better understood and applied. Future
research to consider may include: 1) the rate of recidivism or re-entry into foster care for families that have encountered multi-disciplinary task forces; 2) the effectiveness of multi-disciplinary task forces in protecting children at risk of abuse or neglect; and 3) the establishment of procedural changes with multi-jurisdictional task forces that provide service with efficacy and timeliness.

This study offers insights into the perspectives of law enforcement, probation, and social worker professionals attempting to address the issue of substance abuse in a rural community through collaborative response. The study evaluates the systems approach in addressing the long-standing challenges that social workers, probation officers and law enforcement face in providing services to families affected by substance abuse. The beneficial components of multi-jurisdictional tasks forces are apparent. The ability to provide resources and services to vulnerable children in drug exposed environments and women struggling with substance abuse, or those trapped in codependent relationships is well worth the expense and collaborative efforts. The ability to address social welfare issues with comprehensive, collaborative measures may prove to be the greatest measure in reducing social issues such as substance abuse.
APPENDIX A

Interview Questions
Questions for the Qualitative Study

Questions for the Qualitative Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender:</th>
<th>Male ____</th>
<th>Female _____</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Profession:</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>6-10 11-15 16-20 21+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. What is the goal of the multi-jurisdictional task force?
2. What do you think is the social worker’s role in a narcotics task force?
3. What do you think is probation’s role in a narcotics task force?
4. What do you think is law enforcement’s role in a narcotics task force?
5. What do you think has been the greatest challenge in participating in a multi-jurisdictional narcotics task force?
6. What do you think has been the greatest benefit of the narcotics task force?
7. How do you think the efforts of the task force have impacted the families, children, and/or community?
8. Describe the difference you have seen in client engagement in services since the formation of the multi-jurisdictional task force.
9. What do you think is the progress of the task force in meeting the goals?
10. What are your suggestions for improvement to improve the collaborative effort?
APPENDIX B

Consent To Participate In Research
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study that will be conducted by Karen Karam, a Master of Social Work student at the Division of Social Work, California State University, Sacramento. This study will explore the collaborative, multi-jurisdictional approach to addressing the Methamphetamine problem in Calaveras County.

Procedures:
After reviewing this form and agreeing to participate, you will be given the opportunity to set up a time at your convenience. The interview should take approximately thirty (30) minutes to complete. The interview is anonymous and no names will be recorded. The interview will be digitally recorded. The voice file digital recording will be quickly transcribed and then destroyed. As a participant in the study you can decide at any time not to answer a specific question or stop the interview.

Risks:
The study is considered to have no risk of harm or discomfort to the study participants, as the questions are not personal in nature. The questions are related professional work and daily activities for the participants have received educational and professional training.

Benefits:
The research gained by completing this survey may help others to understand the benefits or negative aspects to a collaborative, multi-jurisdictional approach to a social issue.

Confidentiality:
All information is confidential and every effort will be made to protect your privacy. Your responses in the interview will be kept confidential. Information you provide on the consent form will be stored separately from the transcribed notes of the interview, and kept in a secure location at the researcher’s home. The researcher’s thesis advisor will have access to the completed interview transcriptions for the duration of the project. The final research report will not include any identifying information. All of the data will be destroyed approximately one month after the project is filed with Graduate Studies at California State University, Sacramento, in June of 2010.

Compensation:
Participates will not receive any kind of fiscal compensation.

Rights to withdraw:
If you decide to participate in this survey, you can withdraw at any point. During the interview you can elect not to answer any specific question.
I have read the descriptive information on the Research Participation cover letter. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary. My signature or initials
indicate that I have received a copy of the Research Participation cover letter and I agree to participate in the study.

I, ___________________________________, agree to be interviewed.

Signature or Initials: ______________________________ Date: _____________

I, ___________________________________, agree to be digitally recorded.

Signature or Initials: ______________________________ Date: _____________

If you have any questions you may contact the researcher,

Karen Karam,

(###) ###-#### – home

(209) 754-6616 – work

email at kkaram@gmail.com.

If you need further information, you may contact the researcher’s thesis advisor:

Maria Dinis, Ph.D., MSW

C/o California State University, Sacramento

(916) 278-7161

dinis@csus.edu
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