



Myers JDC
Brookdale

The Social Worker at the Police Station (the Police Social Worker): Measurement of the Program Organizational Outcomes

Anna Reznikovski-Kuras Hadas Shapira
Tal Arazi

Editor (Hebrew): Revital Aviv Matok

English translation (Abstract): Hanni Manor

Graphic design: Efrat Speaker

The study was commissioned by the Personal and Social Services Administration at the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs and funded with its assistance.

Myers JDC Brookdale Institute

P.O.B. 3886, Jerusalem 9103702, Israel

Tel: 02-6557400

brookdale.jdc.org.il/en | brook@jdc.org

Jerusalem | November 2022

Abstract

Background

The Police Social Worker Program is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs, the Israel Police, and the National Authority for Community Safety. For over a decade now, the program has been implemented in 51 local and regional authorities across Israel. Its goals are: to provide a comprehensive response to domestic violence victims at the time of crisis as well as to the offenders; to strengthen the work interfaces between the police stations and the community-based prevention and care services (provided by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs in cases of domestic violence); to promote care continuity and care availability for service recipients; to increase the rate of service recipients among those involved in domestic violence – offenders and victims, adults as well as minors.

Goals

The goals of this study were: (1) to examine to what extent the Police Social Worker Program achieved the desired outcomes at the organizational level and to what extent organizational practices conducive to the ongoing work of the police social workers were applied – this, by developing a tool for organizational outcomes measurement; (2) to conduct a pilot to examine whether the developed tool served its end, prior to its use as an ongoing outcomes measurement tool.

Method

An online quantitative questionnaire was developed for the measurement of the Police Social Worker Program organizational outcomes, intended for social workers employed at police stations (hereinafter: social workers).

The online questionnaire was sent to 45 social workers by headquarters team members of the National Program to Combat Domestic Violence (26 social workers responded to the questionnaire; a response rate of 58%). In addition, a focus group was held with four social workers who participated in the study to examine to what extent the tool for organizational outcomes measurement was effective as an ongoing measurement tool. The measurement was conducted from March to April 2022.

Findings

The study findings are presented below in three parts, according to the components of the logic model of the Police Social Worker Program:

1. **Characteristics:** background characteristics of the respondents; background details of the police social worker role and work environment.
2. **Outputs:** participation in training and guidance sessions; familiarity with the work policy and procedures; work practices based on inter-organizational coordination; and information collection and documentation.
3. **Outcomes:** a work environment suited to the work needs; increased knowledge and information, and enhanced tools and skills among the social workers; work practices in line with the work policy and procedures; enhanced cooperation with the police investigators; enhanced inter-organizational coordination; and guaranteed care continuity.

Background characteristics of the program social workers

Most of the respondents were Jewish women with a Master's degree, an average seniority of 12 years as social workers, and a three-year seniority on average as police social workers. Most of them were employed on a part-time basis.

Outputs

- 26.9% of the respondents had taken part in dedicated training for police social workers at the central school for training social service workers and 57.7% participated in other training programs in the field of domestic violence. 73.0% of the respondents received on-site professional guidance or support.
- The social workers were informed of the work procedures relevant to their role in various ways: upon assuming position as police social workers, through a booklet detailing the work procedures, as part of their training for the position of a police social worker, or in face-to-face training.
- The social workers regularly held meetings with various relevant entities, specifically with domestic violence investigators (95.7%), family social workers (87.0%), child protection officers (78.3%), and workers in domestic violence prevention and care centers (73.9%).
- In the year preceding the online survey, 95.7% of the respondents were required to report their activities to their superiors while 59.1% of the respondents were informed by their superiors about the service recipients.

Outcomes

- 86.4% of the respondents reported that their work environment was suited to the work needs.
- Social workers who had taken part in training courses or programs reported that the training provided them with tools and skills: to serve as police social workers (85.7%); to increase the rate of service recipients among those involved in domestic violence (71.4%); to deal with acute crisis situations (57.1%); and to provide available and sensitive response to domestic violence victims and offenders in terms of culture, gender, age, and language (57.1%).
- All the respondents reported that they were familiar with the work procedures relevant to their role as police social workers. 84.0% of the respondents reportedly apply the work procedures.
- All the respondents reportedly believe that the police investigators are familiar with their role as police social workers and with their related areas of responsibility.
- All the respondents reported that in most of the localities they served, the various community-based services were working in established and ongoing collaboration and coordination.

The distribution of the measurement questionnaire among the social workers and its adaptation to ongoing use

The low response rate among the social workers was attributed to various factors: the workload, the lack of order and organization regarding the listing of social workers, and challenges related to the division of roles and responsibilities due to the large number of managers, whether directly supervisory or professional, in the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs and in the local and regional authorities.

The role of the police social worker is variously defined by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs and the National Authority for Community Safety and hence, the variance in the perceived tasks of and the supportive framework for the social workers. Given the said variance, reservations were raised about the feasibility of comparative measurement and evaluation of the work done by the police social workers in different localities.

Recommendations

- Hold training sessions and require social workers to attend the training in their first months in office. Also, the topics covered in the training should be updated in light of the issues raised by the social workers who participated in the study.

- Coordinate and set a timetable for the familiarization of the social workers with the work procedures. The adaptation of the work procedures and practices to the ongoing work should be regularly examined and the work procedures and practice should be updated as required.
- Incorporate the measurement questionnaire in the computerized system developed by the Rashi Foundation to measure the organizational outcomes of the Police Social Worker Program and distribute the questionnaire to all social workers for filling out at commonly agreed pre-determined dates.
- Raise awareness of the importance of planned, documented, and evaluated work among the social workers.