GOOD PRACTICES

IN
THE AREA OF CHILD ABUSE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION AT RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTIONS IN GREECE

2010
Until today there have not been organised any special programmes by public services, non- governmental organisations or research institutions in Greece in order to prevent child sexual harassment- abuse during their stay in child care centers (residential institutions) yet, neither do the regulations or the institutional framework of the residential institutions themselves include ways to protect, prevent and treat the possibility of child sexual abuse on the premises of the residential institution.

Far from the relationship between the children and the adults, staff, volunteers and maybe other people, who are involved in the residential institution life, special cases come up, when adolescents and under ten year old children co-exist.

Even if such a programme has been organised, their practices, results or suggestions have not been published in order to be widely known. Most of them have a limited character and have to do with the individual needs of each organisation, which conducts the programme. However the exchange of ideas and attempts would be utterly useful in order to manage common and accomplished approach and supervision guidelines for each child care center, where minors are hosted.

In order to tackle this phenomenon effectively, an institutional framework is crucial, as well as continuous specialized control by the supervising public services in co-operation with research institutions for the psychic health of minors and adolescents. It is also crucial that the special regulations of the social services are complied with in the institutions.

The following viable practices are mainly based on certain experiences of the administrative staff of the institutions and could be put into practice in the way child care centers work as first second or third prevention mechanisms. The use, supervision and organisation of volunteers in order to render them a standard group of reference persons for the protected children, who live outside of the residential institutions' premises and support the functions of the institute.

In most of the institutions volunteering is growing both in groups and individually. The volunteers are sensitive citizens who want to offer their services in an institution either after personal initiative, or as members of an act of a non governmental organisation.

The volunteers, especially those who are included at children activities, like the utilization of free time inside and outside of the institution (artistic or sport activities, outings, participation in events, educational improvement etc.), are considered to be vital reference persons for the children. In cases though, where they are permanent for many years and if they are for a long time connected with one or some specific children, their presence at the institution grows in importance. Between the children and them interpersonal relationships grow, which, although they differ in duration and quality, they always create chances and create the possibility of a more direct, natural and personal communication with the child. The children open their heart to the
volunteers about their problems or give important information and facts about their lives at an unexpected moment during an activity and of course after there has been created an atmosphere of trust between them. The child feels naturally in an interpersonal relationship and unveils some aspects of him, with which he doesn't feel comfortable and wants to share them with the staff of the institution in the full scope of team life. The volunteers often get information by the child, of which even the specialised staff of the institution is not aware, as this relationship is shouldered by this unpleasant label: "I live in the institution, these are the services of the institution" or by perceptions like: "I don't need a psychologist, anything I say will not be kept in secrecy" or "I don't want the others to speak about me or "the psychologist is coming here because he is paid". The volunteer does not belong to the institution, so a kind of an independent and not necessarily institutional social relationship is growing. Furthermore, if the volunteer is very close to a child or a group of children in dribs and drabs, this relationship encourages the child to develop its social skills and its socialisation process in general. This fact is of utmost importance, namely when through this normal standard relationship with volunteers the child, who lives in the institution and has been kept far from abuse or neglect, starts to set the foundations of creating and experiencing contact with other people. Even if the volunteers are often substituted annually or in some periods, it is enough for this agreed period to be punctual and right with their obligations and to explain to the children the reasons of leaving. It has been observed that in a limited relationship framework – of whose limits the child is aware- , healthy feelings are observed and the sense of neglect is scarce. The chosen and supervised volunteers are in a position to create the appropriate conditions of expression and interpersonal relationship, as a kind of unofficial education. The child conveys on impulse, inside or outside of the institution, (school, friendships) its positive experiences from its relationships with the volunteers. The sense of inferiority, introversion and aggression recedes replacing them with self-respect and creativity. Since all the children, who live in the institution are related to responsible volunteers, they are educated on their social skills, whose results are becoming obvious in their relationships in the institution. Instead of recreating the pathogenic, that they carry from the place the came from, they gradually use other communication methods: conversation, claiming of what they want by means of speech, not of violence, preference to friendships and not to group influence, solidarity and support to the younger children instead of repression or neglect, search of creative activities and not self-destructive habits.

Adolescents need special support at their first relationships with the other sex (friendship or love relationship). When they have the ability to discuss about the details of this aspect of their life, -their thoughts, fears, expectations events, failures, small pleasures and achievements etc.- with people, with which they have chosen to develop a more intimate relationship among the volunteers, they can process their experiences better. As a result they understand better
themselves, their needs, they make more realistic choices, they debunk several kinds of prejudice, which are related to their previous stage of life before their stay at the residential institution and the abuse or neglect trauma.

In order to bring this group of volunteers a positive effect to the child, it is crucial to be followed some supervision and organization guidelines. At first, the institution is expected to see to it, that the criteria concerning the right choice of volunteers, their basic training about the basic characteristics, the needs of the children and the psychology of the neglected child, which was forced to end up at the institution, are implemented through exercises based on experience. Furthermore, it is essential that it organises its programme and requires that the agreed action framework is followed (punctuality at the meeting hours with the children or their supervisor, abide by the code if conduct, collaboration at any initiative). Moreover, the kind of supervision upon them must instill into them a sense of trust, that their piece of information and observations are important and will be utilized for the most effective care of the children. Supervision should by all means include often meetings, where issues about the children are mentioned and common guidelines are discussed. The volunteers are used in almost every child protection institution, however they are not equally used without supervision. They could just be assistants without evaluating or without their evaluations being evaluated. Some could also give negative impetus or treat the children with pity or become victims of manipulative behaviour by the children. In all those cases the pathogeny that the child carries from its past lingers while non-healthy behaviour and feelings are strengthened. Their relation to the volunteers are characterised by confusion, flux and confirm the insecurity, that the child feels. Nevertheless, the institute would not definitely oust them in order not to lose their help at the basic activities of escort and occupation or because it is not in a position of supervising them or that they don't accept being judged by them and take the responsibility of handling their piece of information. The institute is also likely not to encourage volunteering condemning the children in institutionism, while their problems are are not solved in the close framework of institutional life. A special aspect of supervision has also a great importance concerning the way, that children behave themselves, in order not to express any type of harassment, especially sexual. The scientists- collaborators of the institution, who are in charge of organising the group of volunteers, need to be specially trained, educated, work with specialised services or organisations, which occupy and train standard volunteers. Extra attention should be given to the way incidents are handled as well as to the observation of the relation between volunteers and children. It is also imperative that some rules and restrictions are followed, like the prohibition of remoting themselves or that physical contact is not encouraged especially without the presence of other people too.

As the target group of the volunteer network is the total of children, who reside in the
institution, it would be more functional and effective that the volunteers were divided in smaller groups depending the age or the children or their special participation e.g. the academics who help the adolescents at their homework. In the same way there could function smaller and more flexible supervision groups, which aim at better relay and processing of information, their constant education through the tackling of incidents and at a coordinated initiative taking in the interests of the enhancement of the structure, in which they participate. For example, the academics, who help the adolescents could process written resources, guides of handling the development learning skills, search for specialised technical know-how about their field of study. As a result, the volunteers are actively included in the support of the normal psychosocial development of the children. At the same time, in the institution prevail the healthier types of relationships and factual interest to every child and its needs with the result of the possibilities of any kind of abuse being diminished.

The child protection carriers, including many supervised volunteers, offer more and more substantial attention to the children. We also get more information regarding function problems, which could escape from the experts' attention as they linger and form pathogenic situations of institutionalism. When a problem regarding a child is discussed not only by the staff, but also by the participating volunteers, who are directly linked with it, a broad spectrum of factors, reasons and parameters comes to the surface, which justifies the behaviour of the child and offer new solutions. Consequently, all the people, who are close to the child, make a concerted effort to help it overcome this problem under the best circumstances.

Every institution separately is responsible for the occupational expenses of the scientific staff for the recruitment, training and supervision of the volunteers, as part of the responsibilities of their social service.

The economic difficulties they might face at times, because of which the occupational hours of collaborating scientists might be reduced, contributes to the supervision of the volunteer network being undermined. This could also lead to an insufficient number of volunteers or to their faulty supervision with respective negative effects.

The success of this practice is highly depended on the economic efficiency of the carrier, the will of the administrative members or even a special support by the non governmental organisations or research institutions, which support the institution with volunteers, whom they train and supervise.

This specific practice introduces the institution into a more open way of functioning, puts its everyday life into question and thus runs more possibilities of preventing institutionalism and the on-going failed practices. Finally, it encourages children's socialisation process through a normal psychosocial development and the restoration of a social fabric around them after being
dragged off from the intimate, delinquent though, environment, ensuring in this way their social integration for one more time.

**Caregiver training**

It has been shown by relevant applications that training and constant supervision of the caregivers has brought highly positive results, regarding the prevention and early diagnosis of several cases and types of abuse. The staff members, who are in charge of taking cares of the children's daily needs, replacing the mother model, vary in title, the number of responsibilities, the occupation relationship (e.g. the "mothers" at the children's villages live with them on a daily basis, which in other types of child care centers they work on shifts 5 days per week, 8 hours per day), in any case, however, they are considered to be main reference persons for a child, who resides in an institution. From now on they will be called "educators". The educators are most of the times women.

The "educator" lives with the child to the fullest daily on the institutional premises, while it also escorts it in extra curriculum activities educating it in terms of participation and conduct in the broader spectrum of society. As a result, the educator observes it, discusses with it, participates in all of its activities and thus, in its respective behaviour in and out of the institution. So, she has turned directly and constantly into a submitter of multiple facts, which, nevertheless, vary as for the way they are expressed. Of course, special knowledge is required that the "educator" can be in a position to detect them, evaluate them and choose about which ones she is going to inform to her supervisors and diagnose abuse problems, wherever they stem from.

Spare time hours need also a lot of attention, when the children meet together and express themselves on impulse outside of an organised activity, so it is easier to behave in an offensive way towards the other children or even in a self-destructive way. In such a case, the educator should intervene in a smart way and give a discreet reprimand. In this way, she does both the job of the social worker and the psychologist during the individual or group therapies with the children.

Night hours need even more attention, one or more children could abuse one or a group of children with the tolerance of the others. As the number of adults among staff, collaborators and volunteers is less during the night, the possibility of faulty behaviour by the children or even staff members is becoming bigger. Although they have not been kept in record, children have often reported cases of aggression between the children during night hours and according to them, the staff did nothing more than punish them or even turn a blind eye. Most of the cases of physical or mostly verbal violence and threat during the night are not even perceived by the staff, a great effort is required to make the children talk about that.
In the interests of detecting unusual kind of behaviour, discreet supervision by the volunteers of the institution is highly important. This doesn't mean that when the volunteers are with the children, the educator can rest, but she participates discreetly, observes and informs the social worker. Finally, the time of departure and arrival of the child from the house either of biological relatives or volunteers or godparents is crucial to get important information about the security of the child and its real disposition towards those people.

Far from the educator and her neuralgic role at children's care, every staff member is duty-bound to participate in the life of the institution and is a reference person to the children, since they have built a relationship of communication, even if they are not included a lot in their life, they should also be trained to diagnose behaviour, that shows some abuse problem. However far from the diagnosis they should coordinate with the instructions of the psychologist and the social worker about the technics of effective and direct intervention to handle with isolated incidents, behaviours and tendencies of the children.

Training and constant scientific supervision upgrade and specialise the work of the educator – and every staff member inside the institution, reaching a new scientific approach of child care, so that observation can turn into diagnosis. It also helps the educator to prevent abuse cases, to tackle them in collaboration with a psychologist and a social worker, while through her behaviour encourages the children to conduct themselves more creatively.

As far as the children are concerned, such an attitude of the educator influences them indirectly positively, as they feel that their messages are heard and not neglected. They feel secure and they ask more and more for direct expression or stand up for their rights. They ask easier for help to the educators, if they become victims of abuse, when are scared of something or someone or when they observe misbehaviour, as they know that they will find protection and not neglect.

At this time every institution that feels the need of training and specialisation of educators, they hold the scientific collaborators responsible- social worker and psychologist or extracurriculum experts. It also sees to it that the educators take part in special seminars organised by other child protection carriers and have to do with specialised issues about children and especially children of the residential institutions. As this act requires special expenses, as well as many workers have to work less, it is avoided by most of the educators.

As a result of course, the working educators are not supported in their exceptionally demanding role and become institutionalised. As a result the most important relations of the child in the institution are weakened. If the educators neglect the evil behaviour of children, do not pay attention to the third persons, who are related to the institution, feel neglected and scared towards the responsibilities they have to shoulder and don't know how to handle them, the children feel nowhere to turn to in the institution. They become insecure, feel a sense of inferiority, while the
problems of neglect, that they have already experienced before the institution, have not receded.

The training process of the educators is funded by the budget of the institution itself as well as by specialised national or European programmes.

This practice represents a change already in terms of scientific problem handling, that a residential institution for children has to solve and guarantees a high quality of care.

**Specialisation of the psychologist or social worker of the institution and constant co-operation with experts, other institutions and services.**

The specialisation of psychologists and social workers, as well as their co-operation with other services in charge proved to be a matter of great importance.

These two kinds of scientists need to have been specialised in diagnosing, preventing and tackling any kind of harassment – especially sexual, as it its the most traumatic kind. Constant training, co-operation with experts and exchange of experience and technical know-how are also essential. Far from co-operation with children (individual or group therapies), they are also responsible of training and supervising other staff members too concerning their behaviour towards children and this specialised issue (sexual harassment). At the same time they are supervisors of an amount of volunteers and plan the practices of the institution and their constant enhancement through experience utilisation.

A very unique part of their responsibilities, has to do with the relationship between the child and people from its biological environment, from which it has been cut off due to neglect or abuse. It is generally acceptable this contact has be encouraged, even at its minimum, so as to manage slowly but steadily a restoration of this trauma and even make an effort to go back home, if it is decided to be adequate. For this reason the institutional scientists are expected to devote time and attention to those relationships. Needless to say, that for this matter special training and co-operation with experts is needed so that facts and information regarding the behaviour of the child will be conceived and processed in the right way.

This neuralgic role of scientist aims at creating an atmosphere in the institution, where not only cases of sexual abuse or any kind of abuse will be diminished but they will also be easily diagnosed and confronted. This could be managed by organising methods of sex education and self-protection classes, which include meetings with experts, group discussions about institutional life, dramatherapy or other technics for a more aimed orientation to issues like sexual development, identity, sex, relationships with the other sex.

Better quality of supervision and prevention is guaranteed through co-operation with specialised scientists as well as through constant training. The other staff members are supervised and trained in all three levels of sexual abuse prevention. They are in contact with institutions of
psychic health, they are up to date with relevant publications or meetings etc. so that they can utilise this new technical know how in special programmes or research, which will benefit the structure of the institute in the long run.

Staff members are more secure to relay to the experts information about the children, as they trust their work and know that they will contribute to better institute conditions. This feeling of security and connection between the institution and the scientific renders its function more flexible towards anything new leading to the avoidance of institutionalism, which could bring about abusive behaviour.

Thus, not only are the co-operating scientists benefited in a direct way in this sensitive and complicated duty to organise and supervise the services provided to the children that the institution takes care, but also the staff members indirectly because they act, they are supported, upgraded and ready to take initiative regarding its scientific support.

Finally, the protected children are introduced to orthological pedagogic parameters, which condemn harassment either between them or by adults without defending themselves. They are aware of their rights and are educated through their group therapies with scientists to assert them through self-respect, arguments and abiding by the limits of respect to the others.

This collaboration, education and supervision system in order to come to fruition requires its respective expenses. At least part of the expenses for training and supervision by interest groups could be met by public supervision services. When such an integral aspect of institution function is dependent on the disposition of the administrative members of the institution or its economic situation, then there does not exist even the basic organisation structure, which is supposed to be in accord with the recognised rights of the children.

For the time being this system is the case only in institutions, where the administrative members have understood the value and necessity of scientific intervention in the institutional structure. In some institutions it is also mentioned in their charters or the function regulations. In any case it is not imposed or funded by the state leading to many institutions working without serious scientific supervision rendering institutionalism and its consequences unavoidable. The state only offers piecemeal training and supervision programmes without putting any act into effect. However, even those do not have an obligatory character so again it is left to the administrative members' hands and to the mood of scientific collaborators, if they will follow them.

In an organised group life it is observed that all forms of child abuse, who live in institutions, run more possibilities of taking place without being perceived only in order to meet their basic needs.

Interdisciplinary collaboration for the organisation and supervision of institutional life and
issue handling like sexual abuse in the system function clearly have to do with all three prevention levels. Of course it focuses on primary prevention, so that the structure of the institution itself will be weakening the cause of the incidents with their open and supervising acts, as the scientists, who function the way institutions function, will be constantly trained.

It goes without saying that the act of specialised scientists is crucial in the other two prevention levels and that their skills and knowledge need constant upgrading. Not only diagnosis – through information processing brought by the staff, the volunteers at school and every person of the child's environment-, but also coordination of the way isolated incidents, repeated acts and attitude are treated require complicated and sensitive supervision functions.

Also, special care, knowledge and care is required on organising and realisation of integration ways. One of the most basic responsibilities regarding child's rights to have a normal personality development and social integration process is the organisation of individual and group methods, which will help him to be prepared for its independent life. Every institution should organise them at their best, encourage the scientists to look for other supporting carriers and aim at constantly renewing their technical know-how skills. Cases of abuse are also possible to be found in independent co-existing structures, where the children live for a transitional period of time, in the working place or during an internship, even in institutions of tertiary education or while meeting new friends or a lover after becoming an adult.

The social service of the institution should prepare the child in order to diagnose and tackle every abuse case without having to succumb to any manipulative or self-destructive behaviour.

This specific practice is considered to be a set of function rules by the social service of the institutions and is bound with the child care center supporting the development possibilities of provided help to the protected children.

Development of individual and social skills of the children

In the field of team life on the institutional premises, prevention highly encourages individual identity development and self-respect resulting in the children standing up for their personal security and not becoming sexual victims by adults or peers.

First of all, the institution should organise an individual and team programme for the children and its respective space planning and use, which follows a deeper strategy to manage a normal psychosocial development of personality and relationships.

The following parameters are the most important ones:

**The educator should be responsible for small groups of 5 or 7 children.** She is going to be observing them and taking care of them more carefully reducing in that way possibilities of
abuse by a third person. Thus more intimate relationships are expected to be made, which will bring about a normal psychosocial development process of the child, and a more strong sense of self respect and self-protection instilled into it. Thus, the child feels more confident to open its heart, face the traumas of the past, share them with the educator and under the guidance of an expert, solve it. This process will make it stronger, in order not to accept or report any other kind of abuse.

Enhanced space planning inside the institution, which meet different and special needs of every age and sex. Firstly, the rooms and the space for the recreation activities should different for each age group. For example, adolescents have a completely different way of entertaining themselves and managing their time. They are annoyed by the minors and molest them resulting in fights or even worse the formation of group influence, where an older child controls and threatens the younger ones. Personal space, namely bedrooms and spare time space, should be an asylum to every child. Relationships of fear tend to create the abuse phenomenon and do not let the child gain its self-esteem again, which has already been harmed after being transferred into a residential institution and having experienced problematic situations, which brought it here.

Creative time planning aiming at individuality and development of personal skills and talents.

From the moment that the child enters the institution until the last day, a plan should be made about the services, which will be provided to it in order to feel protected, develop its personality, be socialised and integrated in the society again. An important aspect of this planned act are considered to be the following activities inside and outside of the institution like:

a) responsibilities about the function of the space (individual e.g. room care or group e.g. shifts about the care of the shared spaces, sharing the costs of food, co-operation in cooking etc.);

b) supplemented supporting lessons in order to overcome the difficulties that the children face at school both in the lessons and in the social life;

c) artistic and sport activities;

d) outings with a socialisation character e.g. participation in cultural events in the city, participation in creative laboratories etc. By means of those activities the child is creatively occupied, supervised, develops the positive aspects of its character and boosts its self-esteem. Also the possibilities becoming violent or receiving violence by a third person, who, in some cases, is not controlled by the institution, are mindering. Even in such a case, however, the experiences, that are gained from self- organisation and cooperation have boosted the inner feeling of standing up for their rights, their limits as well as the instinct of danger and healthy
reaction.

From this practice the children are directly benefited as these new circumstances are closer to family life, so they develop the sense of security creativity and self-esteem through those mechanisms of self protection. The staff is also indirectly benefited, as their occupation renders them co-operators of the children and not guards of problematic ones, so this does not urge them to abuse them in any way.

This practice is totally dependent on the way each institution works. Firstly, it does not require any special funds. However it is crucial that the staff is constantly trained, there is an exchange of experience and technical know-how, and that there is research and translation of bibliography in order to enhance the quality of organisation, which of course requires a certain budget. Furthermore, the planning of activities is guaranteed by staff members, volunteers and sponsors. Additive expenses are required for supplementary courses or classes to learn a music instrument are, which is the reason that the institutions avoid them.

In order to succeed this programme we need to take into consideration the position that every institution takes towards this services. For their realisation the help of the whole staff is required, who have understood the importance of this type of organisation in the institutional life, follow it, try to improve it with their observations and develop it by taking initiative. Moreover, they have to take advantage of the possibilities of developing limited relationships and avoid any expression institutionalism through superficial, un marginalised group or selected relationships.

This practice functions to a bigger or smaller extent nowadays in institutions in a more modern form. It has to do with primary prevention, as the organisational structure aims at preventing cases of abuse. Nevertheless, if such cases come up, the system of the institution is ready to determine relevant evidence and manage them or eradicate directly dangerous situations for the child's security.

This specific practice restructures the spirit and function of the institution not under the guidelines that they guard the children because of being taken away by force but that they contribute to their normal psychosocial development and healthy socialisation process, so that they can take advantage of their rights and that the trauma of the maltreatment they had to put up with will be healed.

**Foster care as a tool of deinstitutionalization and better supervision of the life and development of children, both during their life in a residential institution and after their placement in a foster care family.**

Different forms of foster care – short-term, long-term, regular hosting on holidays-, moreover all types of outside institutional, steady relationship with adults or a family, which
include constant participation in the child’s life—study, entertainment, school events, spending the day or staying overnight etc—offer a nexus of personal relations, which allow the child a smooth psychosocial development.

The development process and all kind of issues regarding a child are facilitated by the cooperation of foster parents. Their observations, pointing outs and initiatives form a thorough care of the child and enrich the rationale of both the institution and the decision making qualified pedagogue’s team.

The child would easier open and reveal to foster parents incidents of abuse which personally experienced or heard in the residential institution, because they are persons felt closer, non-representative of the institution.

Of course, so as foster care and hosting to function properly, specialized supervision and corresponding training of the staff members, which are going to organize the foster care parents’ network, are needed. From the point of the suitable volunteers selection to the relation course surveillance and problem dealing, qualified staff should be working methodically, not as a parergon to the rest of their responsibilities in the home. Even after the most appropriate and safest foster care parents selection –which anyway cannot always secure the good course of the foster care or hosting relationship–, foster parent training, support, guidance and utilization is a complex and continuous challenge with particular dynamics, that the supervising expert is required to monitor for the child’s best interest.

However, incidents of sexual abuse even by foster parents or their family or friend circle might come up. It is obvious, that special care during the inspection of both foster parents’ and their surroundings is required, detailed instructions on how they should keep the child they host safe, regular meetings and unscheduled home visits during hosting. Furthermore, both the good relationship between the qualified experts and the child and the well organized, scrupulous supervision of his/her relations with the foster parents allow early detection of signs, so incidents would be prevented or even foster care interrupted.

Foster care relations, as long as they work supportingly to the residential institution, hosting the child and developing personal relationships of trust, they help towards the development of the child’s personality. Much information about the everyday life problems the child faces in the residential institution, at school, with friend mates etc. reach the qualified stuff through foster parents. Therefore, indications of sexual abuse or other are detected earlier and faced jointly by the residential institution and the foster parents.

All forms of foster care benefit directly the children under protection of the residential institution, because they substitute partly or totally the family context they are deprived of. The child enjoys thorough care, an explicit interest focused on his/her personal needs. The
child’s self esteem steps up as he/she feels that he/she builds up personal relationships, wins the love of the foster parents, can express him/herself freely and is given the time and space to unfold him/herself. The child receives enriched stimuli and broadens his/her horizons. Even more, foster care could gradually evolve to a permanent status and the child could join the family, which is equivalent to total reintegration. This positive experience heals the wounds of the past and awakes the children’s creative powers, healthy ambitions and desires. Consequently, they avoid to recreate abuse patterns in their relationships or towards themselves.

This also benefits the residential institution, since both children and personnel are relieved of the constant conflict dead ends in the common life. Supported by foster care hosting, the child’s psychosocial development is enhanced, his behavior and cooperation will within the structures of the institute as an active unit taking part in the course planning – education, professional orientation, socialization etc.- improve. The child is not any longer passive to the provided care. This activation creates the necessary emotional background, so the child does not commit or give in to abuse.

Foster care and hosting supervision requires the constant employment of qualified staff and interdisciplinary cooperation of psychologists, social workers and lawyers, as well as experts. Therefore, a particular cost budget must be considered, which is up to residential institution administration at the time, since foster care development is not a mandatory institution. On the other hand, very few foster care and hosting cases have been successful without this constant and specialized surveillance. On the contrary, in most cases, the failure to connect –often multiple failures- burden the child with a repeated sense of abandonment and more self-depreciation that can have a disastrous impact on the course of his/her life.

In Greece, foster care practice barely exists, due to funding difficulties that actually prohibit the sustainment of the necessary surveillance. Moreover, the legal framework that would facilitate the foster care procedures by entrusting them to public services imposing the mandatory cooperation of the residential institutions, does not exist.

Although, it is not possible that such a significant way of deinstitutionalization and social reintegration of the abandoned or abused child be left to the disposal of any protection child agency and not be approached by the public services.

Foster care and hosting forms relate mostly to primary prevention, as they are supportive of an out-institutionalized child care network. But they also contribute to the remaining two prevention levels, due to both the information confided in foster parents by the children, and foster parents remarks on details of children’s behavior.

Residential institutions practicing foster care and hosting programs enhance their
operation through the creative involvement of volunteers in child care. As the child regains her/his confidence, envisions the future and strives for it through the creative influence of personal relationships that foster care bring into his/her life, the residential institutions care provision becomes more effective. The child, not feeling trapped, makes a better use of his/her staying in the residential institutions. On the other hand, volunteers foster care parents network provides solutions to the everyday needs of the residential institutions, of which they become aware through their relation to the children. This way, the residential institutions is open to the community and backed up by it in the whole range of its activities and needs.

Among the good practices that contribute to the prevention of child abuse of children living in residential institutions can also be included:

1. Informing the children about the Child’s Ombudsman institution. This includes the printing and handing out of specially designed information material for children, through which they learn about their rights and the role of the Child’s Ombudsman. The material is placed in conspicuous and approachable by the children points in the residential institutions. The Child’s Ombudsman would previously have visited the home, met and informed the children.

2. The implementation of Health Education Programs.

Prevention Centers operating in municipalities have practiced in residential institutions the program “Standing on my own feet”. This program is carried out by specially trained psychologists and includes group sessions of children living in residential institutions. The program’s aim is to enhance self-esteem and self-awareness, to develop and reinforce personal skills.


This practice is based on the application of experiential exercises of the manuals COMPASS and COMPASSITO published by the Council of Europe. They deal with various aspects of human rights, specially referring, among other things, to child abuse.

4. The role of the Commissioner of Social Welfare is important, as he controls the function of the institutions, identifies the problems and sums up the common needs. He surveys the actions taken to improve the quality of services provided for children. He organizes the further education of the residential institutions staff. In general, he is responsible of the observance of the institutions’ operation rules so they implement the modern child care views. In this framework, he can intervene in all tree levels of abuse prevention within the institution.
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24. Lecture by the Committee to Protect Children in Cyprus on "Issues relating to the Protection of Children" in the Contextual Education for "investigating cases of sexual abuse of children in the School and Police Sergeants, 2010"

25. Presentation by the Commissioner in the event POGO Famagusta on "Sexual Harassment of children "


   - Annual reports by the Children's Ombudsman, 2005-2009
   - Record meetings of the Child Advocate of the Greek Network of NGOs to monitor the implementation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child
   - Proposal for the Children's Ombudsman for the express legislative prohibition of all forms of physical punishment as a means of educating children
   - "Child mental health problems: the right to psychosocial rehabilitation" Workshop 2009
   - Presentation of the Pan-European campaign against physical punishment, 2009

27. Research Institute of Child Health:
   - The physical punishment as a means of educating
   - Training manual for teachers and parents regarding the physical punishment of children
   - Size and dimensions of violence against children in the family: assessment of occupational health, welfare, education and justice
   - Education and health education for the control and prevention of child abuse, neglect


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