



The social service workforce in and beyond the pandemic

A global conversation on adaptation, innovation and the fight for social justice



Partnerships **PLUS**



Session 1:

Social service workforce practice in and beyond the pandemic

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Risks and Opportunities



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The Social Service Workforce

Social Workers

Social Pedagogues

Child and Youth Care Workers

Community Development Workers

Other governmental and nongovernmental professionals and para-professionals who work with individuals, families and communities to ensure healthy development and well-being

Risks & Challenges

Risks to personal safety

No outlet – constant “work-home-work” scenario (Murphy, 2020)

Essential workers losing all support staff (e.g. in alternate care) (Swanzen & Jonker, 2020)

Social service workforce supporting individuals, families and communities while simultaneously dealing with the same fears and challenges – shared trauma

Increased strain on the child welfare system resulting in more pressure on already overburdened child welfare workers (Williams, 2021)

Increased workload and work demands (University of Strathclyde, 2021)

Positive Adaptations

Opportunity for a “shared experience” and innovative, purposeful use of activities in substitute care (Hamilton & Miller, 2020)

Creative ways of engaging clients (e.g. dropping off food packages, doorstep visits, outdoor activities)

Increased focus on wellness strategies for workers

Increased opportunities for virtual connections

Increased recognition of the essential role of the social service workforce

References

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University of Strathclyde (2021). *Inspiring Children's Futures: Supporting Children's Wellbeing During Covid-19: Staff Supervision, Coping and Wellbeing and the Impact on Service Delivery.*

Williams, D. (2021). Shared traumatic stress and the impact of Covid-19 on public child welfare workers. In C. Tosone (Ed) *Shared Trauma, Shared Resilience During a Pandemic: Social Work in the Time of Covid 19*. New York, NY: Springer.





Discussion Questions

- What are the biggest risks and challenges you have experienced in your work during the Covid-19 pandemic?
- How have you and your organization dealt with these challenges and adapted your practice during Covid-19?
- What opportunities for innovative practice in the social service workforce have emerged from the pandemic?