

OUTREACH SCHOLARS ACADEMY

Faculty Development Program

Project Proposal

Child Advocacy Center Long Distance Training Academy Extending Child Advocacy Training to Allied Professional Communities Justiceworks, Charles T. Putnam, JD

Introduction

Building effective bridges between academic and applied disciplines and between technical and lay audiences is an important element of outreach scholarship. Justiceworks, a research and development institute at the University of New Hampshire, is engaged in an effort to connect members of the law enforcement and child protection communities to newly established child advocacy centers using emerging technologies.

Brief Overview

The report of a sexual or physical assault on a child frequently leads to an investigation by both law enforcement and child protection authorities (Cross Finkelhor and Ormrod 2005). This is due at least in part because a high percentage of such assaults and maltreatment occur in the home, by a caregiver or a person intimate with a caregiver, and frequently involve questions of active perpetration or failure to protect the child from harm. (Wekerly, Wall, Leung & Trocme 2007). The involvement of both child protection and law enforcement personnel in the investigation of child maltreatment has been observed to create challenges for both groups. (Cross Finkelhor and Ormrod 2005). Among these challenges are access to reliable information needed to obtain a criminal conviction against a perpetrator and information needed to establish the grounds for intervention in parents' upbringing of their children. Most often, this information must come in the form of a statement from the affected child. In addition, the statement must be obtained in a way that satisfies legal requirements, standards of proof and norms of reliability.

Many American communities, including New Hampshire, have tried to address the challenges associated with obtaining effective statements from child crime victims by creating multidisciplinary teams that include law enforcement, child protection and medical experts. These teams often work together in interorganizational structures called child advocacy centers (CACs). (Cross Finkelhor and Ormrod 2005).

Normally each of these occupational groups obtains the information that it needs to do its job without reference to the needs of other occupational groups or the legal requirements that attend to obtaining children's statements in each of those contexts. Representatives of the various occupational groups working with child advocacy centers need to adapt their routine procedures to account for these requirements. This can be done with modest amounts of education and training. Unfortunately, professional education and training programs can be costly from both a fiscal and operational standpoint, and these costs can delay or prevent effective dissemination of information to occupational communities. Techniques of distance education are increasingly being used to help overcome these hurdles.

Project Goals

The goal of this project is to assist the law enforcement community and child protection community to work with newly established child advocacy centers by developing a model in-service educational program to deliver relevant information about child advocacy centers to relevant occupational communities.

Project Partners

Justiceworks proposes to involve representatives from the following groups and agencies as partners in the project:

Justiceworks – literature review on child advocacy centers and distance education for occupational groups, build technical capacity, test project concept.

New Hampshire Network of Child Advocacy Centers – evaluate training materials

NH Police Chiefs – evaluate training materials

NH PS&T technical assistance and possible web hosting

NH DCYF: evaluate training materials

Project Personnel

Charles Putnam, JD, Co-Director, Justiceworks

Graduate and Undergraduate Interns: assist with research and development of project materials

Project Activities and Milestones

1. **Research and Literature Review:** this step is largely complete and includes a review of the literature on child advocacy centers and research involving products used to deliver educational content via the Internet.
2. **Draft Text Based Materials:** this step is largely complete and includes explanatory texts for non-lawyers that can be adapted for a variety of formats, including audio and video formats.
3. **Create "Storyboard"** this step is also largely complete and involves the creation of an expanded PowerPoint presentation to be used as the basis for creating webpages and instructional audio and video clips.
4. **Create Short Instructional Videos** with the assistance of project funds from the Outreach Scholar Program Justiceworks will acquire a digital video camera and editing software. The purpose of doing so is to test the feasibility of developing and producing short educational video files that could be distributed across the Internet in manner like YouTube, Google Video and other web-based sites.
5. **Evaluate and Revise Training Materials** with the assistance of project partners we will evaluate the draft materials for accuracy, relevance and ease of use. After the evaluation we will make appropriate revisions.

6. **Test training materials:** with the assistance of project partners we will use a focus group style process to evaluate and test the training materials developed in the project.
7. **Summarize Findings:** we will prepare and disseminate a report to the project partners summarizing what we have learned regarding the use of distance education tools and techniques in delivering the kind of information needed by these occupational groups.

Project Deliverables

We have already drafted short "white papers" as the basis for the information that we hoped to deliver to selected occupational communities. We have also created a PowerPoint presentation to use as a "storyboard" and possible framework for Web-based materials. In addition, we hope to develop the capacity to produce short educational videos that could be disseminated via website or other electronic means.

Anticipated Benefits of this Project

We hope that this will serve the occupational communities that will be working with the newly established child advocacy centers in the state. In addition, the project has already provided an opportunity for graduate and undergraduate interns to observe how technical information may be disseminated from the University to relevant communities. Finally, we hope that the project will demonstrate the feasibility and sustainability of distance education methods in providing some kinds of in-service training.

Selected References

- Cross, T. P., Finkelhor, D., & Ormrod, R. (2005). Police involvement in child protective services investigations: Literature review and secondary data analysis. *Child Maltreatment*, 10, 224-244.
- Wekerle, C., Wall, A.M., Leung, E., & Trocmé, N., Cumulative stress and substantiated maltreatment: The importance of caregiver vulnerability and adult partner violence. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Volume 31, Issue 4, April 2007, Pages 427-443