IRB Synopsis of Proposal

**Children’s Hospitals Social Workers’ Perceptions of Child Maltreatment in Spanish-Dominant Families**

1. Potential subjects are social workers employed by hospitals affiliated with the Children’s Hospital Association of Texas who are assigned to assess, evaluate and refer children suspected of being victims of child abuse or neglect. Six hospitals representing geographic diversity will be approached for recruitment; it is anticipated that there is one potential subject per hospital. Potential subjects are estimated to be primarily female, between the ages of 25-50 and in good health.
2. Purposive sampling will be used to recruit subjects of this exploratory study. Selection criteria include professional status as a social worker and work responsibilities for assessment and evaluation of patients for potential child abuse or neglect. Subjects are considered key informants concerning the issues of interest in this study. In most cases, subjects are identified in the hospital’s publicly accessible web pages. Subjects will be recruited via an initial telephone call to the social worker identified via the websites. In cases where an individual may not be identified, the phone call will be directed to the particular hospital’s social services department. The initial telephone contact will explain the purpose and objectives of the study, and inviting participation in the study. The researcher will also inquire any administrative clearances required by the particular hospital for participation in research of this nature, i.e., studies not involving the collection of any patient records or identifying data. The researcher will comply with hospital requirements prior to data collection. Once clearance has been obtained, the researcher will schedule the telephone survey for data collection and email a copy of the consent form to the subjects. At the beginning of the scheduled telephone survey, the researcher will review the consent form with the subjects. Social workers’ continued participation in the telephone survey will constitute their consent
3. The project’s methodology consists of two phases. First, telephone surveys will be conducted with the consenting subjects. Telephone surveys will collect information on the protocols followed by the respective hospitals in assessing and referring children for suspected abuse and neglect, social workers’ perceptions regarding the proportion of families who are Spanish language dominant, perceptions regarding the types and severity of suspected abuse and neglect cases seen at the hospital, and perceptions regarding cultural beliefs and practices encountered in serving Spanish dominant families. The second phase of the study will involve site visits to at least two children’s hospitals from those participating in the telephone survey. The exact locations to be visited will be based on the responses to the telephone survey. Face-to-face qualitative interviews will be conducted with the social workers during the site visits. The particular questions to be included in the interview will be developed on the basis of the telephone survey results but are expected to explore in further depth the social workers’ perceptions of cultural factors involved in cases of abuse and neglect encountered in the hospital setting.
4. The proposed project is expected to pose minimal risk. No identifying information will be collected regarding either the subjects (informants) or the individual children and families about whom data will be provided. The subjects will not be reporting any information about themselves. They will be asked about their perceptions of differences in patterns of child abuse and neglect between Spanish dominant and English dominant families, as well as service needs and barriers to services among these groups. Although it is possible that recalled observations of negative experiences could cause psychological stress or discomfort, the likelihood and seriousness of such an occurrence are low.
5. Potential risks will be minimized by maintaining confidentiality of responses. Respondents’ names or other identifying information will be used only for purposes of tracking status of participation and mailing of consent forms. Identifying information will not be associated with their respective responses. Data reported in the form of perceptions of cultural differences in patterns of child abuse and neglect will not include any patient identifying information.
6. Potential benefits to be gained by the respondents are the knowledge that they are contributing to an exploratory study of cultural patterns in child abuse and neglect among an understudied population, i.e., Spanish-dominant families. Subjects will be informed that their responses will be useful in identifying service needs and barriers for working with the population as well as identifying areas for potential training and future research. Respondents may benefit directly by being able to discuss issues and needs experienced in their day to day practice as well as from the knowledge that they may be contributing to the beginning stages of an effort the goal of which is to enhance services for the target population.
7. No compensation will be provided to participants.
8. The anticipated benefits of the proposed study are believed to outweigh any potential risks; risks are believed to be minimal. Benefits will accrue to respondents through the knowledge that they are contributing to the building of knowledge about an understudied area. Benefits may also accrue to the respondents through the knowledge that the data they provide may help identify needed strategies and resources for working with the target population. The social work profession and society in general will benefit from the identification of ways in which services to the target population may be enhanced, ultimately leading to the strengthening if families.
9. External sites that will be used for the telephone survey in this study include Texas Children’s Hospital (Houston), Children’s Medical Center (Dallas), Dell Children’s Hospital (Austin), Christus Santa Rosa Children’s Hospital (San Antonio), Driscoll Children’s Hospital (Corpus Christi), and Covenant Children’s Hospital (Lubbock). Based on responses to the telephone survey, site visits will be made to at least two of these children’s hospitals during which follow-up face-to-face interviews will be conducted with participating social workers.
10. This is not a student project. The researcher is a faculty member.
11. This is not a student project.
12. The proposed study has not been approved or submitted to any other IRB.
13. Individuals who will have access to the results of this study include the researcher, graduate research assistants and other student assistants. Results submitted for publication in academic journals will include no identifying information.