

## CRISIS INTERVENTION IN THE WORK OF SOCIAL AND LEGAL PROTECTION AND CURATION IN SLOVAKIA. AN ANALYSIS OF TARGET GROUPS AND METHODS

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**Abstract:** The terms crisis and crisis intervention are a very large issue in this paper, we focused on social curators and field social workers working at the Department of Social and Legal Protection of Children and Social Guard in the Slovak Republic, their perception and use of crisis intervention methods in practice. As amended by Act no. 305/2005 Coll. on Social and Legal Protection of Children, a Social Curator is from the Central Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family and the Offices of Labor, Social Affairs and Family, Center for International Legal Protection of Children and Youth, Municipality, Higher Territorial Unit, Legal Entity or Individual. These implements measures of social and legal protection of children and social guardianship and are obliged to ensure that rights are not endangered or violated. The right of this intervention is precisely the position of crisis intervention in this legislative system.

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### Introduction

The Social Curator is a set of measures to eliminate, mitigate and prevent the child from deepening or repeating the mental development, physical development and social development, and then providing assistance depending on the severity of the disorder and the situation in which it is located. According to Act no. 305/2005 Coll. on Socio-legal Protection of Children and on Social Curators, measures of social and legal protection of children and social guardianship are provided for the child, adult natural person, family, group and community through social work. A Children's social courier According to Act no. 305/2005 Coll. on the social and legal protection of children and on social curators, the social curator carries out a measure for a minor who has committed otherwise criminal activity, a juvenile criminal or juvenile suspect of a crime, a child who is a member of the group who by its negative impact, it endangers a child abusing a drug or a child dependent on a child, a child dependent on gambling, the Internet, computer games and other games, a child with behavioral problems at school, in groups, in relationships with other children, parents or other persons, a child experiencing behavioral malpractice neglect, home flight or facility, a child whose one-off behavior or short-term behavior requires assistance for their seriousness or inadequacy.

The roles of the social curator are governed by Act 305/2005 Coll. on the social and legal protection of children and on social curators. The social curator has the following tasks:

- perform tasks in criminal proceedings,
- identify and report to the law enforcement and judicial authorities important facts about the development of the juvenile, life events affecting his behavior, family, school relations, family relations, family and social environment;
- maintains written and personal contact with the juvenile while serving a custodial sentence, exercising protective education and cooperates in his / her re-education and resolution of his / her personal family and social problems
- participates in the preparation of a juvenile for release from prison, custody, and custody,
- prepares the family for the return of the juvenile to the family,
- assisting the juvenile in custody, custody and custody, in particular in facilitating his or her return to the family, seeking opportunities to continue to prepare for vocation, seeking employment, addressing personal and relationship problems,
- provide assistance and protection to the juvenile and perform tasks in offense proceedings;
- cooperate with the facility in which the child carries out institutional care, protective education or educational measures,
- Encourages the treatment of drug addiction and other addictions, maintains contact with the child during treatment and resocialization, and helps the child return from a dependency treatment facility or resocialization center. It also provides synergies in the conduct of probation and mediation.

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The social curator also participates in criminal proceedings against juveniles, in the interrogation of minors. They process decisions in the area of social guardianship, decisions on educational measures, assessing their effectiveness, submits proposals to the court for issuing a preliminary measure, processes a plan of work with family and child, provides advice on solving family and social problems, records in the register of minors who they have already been solved in the department of social and legal protection of children and social guardianship, they carry out savings in the families of a juvenile or a minor and, last but not least, they visit clients in facilities they have been placed in (Bendl et al., 2016). Part of the social work with the child and his / her family is also the involvement of the child in educational group programs, social group programs or educational-recreational group programs, which can be performed in an outpatient form, all-day form or in a residential form. Their purpose is to act to eliminate or alleviate problems in the child's behavior or behavioral disorders, to develop social skills, to acquire the necessary social habits and to ensure the proper use of the child's free time. If the interaction of other entities is needed, the social curator performs the role of coordinator.

In his activities, the curator maintains file documentation, provides professional social and legal, educational counseling in solving social and personal problems and in solving crisis situations. He is in personal contact with the child, his parents (or those responsible for his upbringing), solves problems with the child, makes various proposals for initiating proceedings on educational measures, submits complaints to the court, visits children in centers of educational measures, participates in educational commissions, cooperates with school facilities and performs other tasks within the meaning of the law and often beyond its scope. An important part of the work of a social curator is social prevention, which consists of a coherent system of interconnections of all ministries, municipalities, state and non-state entities and non-governmental organizations. At this level, this is only possible if the youth is successfully prevented by reducing the harmful environment and then integrating it into a healthy society. This priority focus of social prevention is justified because it is the most vulnerable group of the population that is prone to seek solutions to its problems in an inadequate manner that is not in line with the law or company standards (Karkošková, 2017).

The justification for claiming that a family as a specific institution is in danger and distress and is not in a position to fulfill its functions and mission is that it is affected by multiple crisis phenomena. E.g. basic human rights are violated in families (abuse of wives or children). The family is affected by conflicts, disruption, disintegration, divorce, which is the suffering of each of its members, alcoholism in the family, family crime. Such a family leaves consequences especially for children. These are deviations, failure of personal growth, crime, crime, addiction, and so on (Kovacic, 2002). In general, we can say that social work with the family is one of the basic fields of social work. A crisis is most likely to occur if: it is an intense critical event or long-lasting stress, if this event is experienced as a sudden, unexpected, threatening or hurting, if the situation is experienced as loss, threat or challenge, if experiencing negative emotions and experiences, if there is a sense of uncertainty about the future, or if there is a loss of self-control, if the usual behaviors and functioning (daily rhythm and habits) are disturbed. The emotional tension state lasts for some time (usually two to six weeks, sometimes months) if there is a need for change and adaptation to the new situation. Whether a person can handle the situation productively or unproductively depends mainly on how they admit it. The crisis can create the feeling that people are always able to try different ways, new ways of managing and solving. The crisis is an opportunity, but also a threat (Špatenková, 2017).

Assessing the situation of the child and his family and an individual child protection plan, every SPODaSK social worker is obliged to evaluate the situation of the child and his family. It's a tool that helps plan. The social worker should regularly evaluate the situation of the child and his family. A social worker has a duty to organize a case conference before filing a court petition, where the court deals with the family's reasons for filing a petition and imposes measures. In this way it is possible to coordinate activities in accordance with the interests of the child and his family. It is possible to react quickly to the situation, to create an open and gradual system of support and assistance and to evaluate the situation of the child and his family. The aim of the case conference is to find the optimal solution. It helps the family to create personal contacts and support networks (Matoušek, Pazlarová et al., 2014). Thus, according to Bachync (2012), the multidisciplinary cooperation, which is a basic feature of family redevelopment, can be strengthened by a case conference. Educational measures of the body of social and legal protection of children and social guardianship. The tools for the performance of SPOD are

also educational measures of the authority for the social and legal protection of children and social guardianship, but these tools are a greater expression of the authority's power towards the family. These measures are used by the social worker when assistance to parents or children has not led to redress, including in cooperation with the institutions. These are cases where parents do not respect the suggested recommendations. In this way, SPODaSK authorities can impose a warning, supervision, restriction that prevents harmful influences on the upbringing of the child and the obligation to use expert advice. (Matousek and Pazlarova, 2016). According to Barvíková and Šťastný (2014), it was found that in practice, educational measures are used only minimally. Social workers believe that the effect of these measures will increase when imposed by the court.

### **Personality of social worker performing SPODaSK measures**

"The personality of a social worker is based on quality education, social outlook, an integrated character set (honesty, fairness, truthfulness, diligence, arousing people's confidence), professional assumptions and abilities, ability to communicate with clients, institutions and social organizations" (Gabura, 2012). In order for a social worker to practice his profession effectively, he should be congruent, empathetic, authentic, and unconditionally accept every client as he really is.

Congruence means creating a relationship with the client. When this relationship is well established, not only the client but also the social worker grows in it. Mátel (2013) understands congruence as a state of personality, when the behavior of the individual is consistent with the perception of oneself. The counselor is aware of the feelings he is experiencing and is able to show them. Within the relationship, the social worker is deeply self-deployed without a professional facade. The social worker is transparent to the client, the client sees him in a relationship as he really is. Congruence makes it easier for a client to trust a social worker.

Brož and Vodáčková (2015) emphasize that great emphasis is placed on the ability of acceptance, i.e. respect for the client, but also respect for oneself in the role of helping. The social worker values the client's humanity, from which no concrete behavior discourages him - whether it is sadness, anger, fear or resistance. The attitude of the social worker is manifested by the fact that he accepts the client continuously and is cordially human to him. It is an open, selfless relationship, without reservations and evaluation. A social worker experiences the acceptance of a client to the extent that he / she can experience a strong acceptance of every aspect of client experience (Matel, 2013). The social worker should accept the client's experiences. The client must feel the freedom to say whatever he wants when talking to a social worker. He should feel that the social worker is open to his experiences, which are not evaluated by the professional. However, this does not mean acceptance of everything the client says or does, but it is a deep respect for the client, towards his being. An important characteristic of unconditional positive acceptance is a non-evaluating attitude, so the client needs to show his or her negative side without feeling that a social worker rejects him as a human being. It is necessary to accept a man as he is at a given moment and the situation is right now. The more a therapist is able to accept himself, the more likely he will accept clients (Gabura, 2012). Empathy allows a deep experience, an accurate understanding of the client's "inner world." Empathy requires a high level of active listening, the social worker not only hears the words but also the feelings behind those words. When the client experiences empathic understanding, he is accompanied by a sense of relief and joy that he has been deeply understood by someone (Gabura, 2012). Tvrdoň (2014) draws attention to ethical issues in the work of a social worker regarding the application of moral concepts and norms that influence the decision-making on what is morally correct and wrong in professional practice.

The work of both a social worker and crisis intervention is challenging and therefore the team and the quality of supervision are important. In addition to the necessary knowledge of crisis intervention, a social worker should excel in empathetic listening, have a well-mapped psychosocial network and be able to work with it, have knowledge of the legal field, be able to make quick decisions and recognize the limits of their possibilities (Mojtová et al., 2013). A good social worker needs to have a solid theoretical education to achieve success in his work and to know how to apply his theoretical knowledge in practice. In his work, he must also communicate with colleagues and relevant experts and institutions. His contribution to the client is also in the precise and comprehensible provision of information necessary for the client's decision-making, its stimulation for therapeutic cooperation and adherence to certain principles that the social worker must follow when working with the client: individualization, expression of feelings, empathy, acceptance, non-evaluating attitude, self-determination, discretion.

Thus, a social worker must meet a variety of personalities that are essential to the pursuit of his profession. Training of social workers at SPODaSK and part of the work of social workers in SPODaSK is their lifelong learning. Despite their workload and a large number of clients, every social worker should be responsible for learning activities and realizing that they are more competent to provide professional care for their clients through their continuing education. It is worth mentioning the ongoing activities that are being implemented through national projects.

It is known that the SPODaSK departments, which implement measures of social and legal protection of children and social guardianship, have been under-staffed for a long time, for this reason they have been reinforced by family assistants and field social workers. There are approximately 229,700 families in the records of SPODaSK, while the number of families providing social and legal protection for children and social guardianship during 2016 was 52,363. For this number, the average number of families per employee of SPODaSK is approximately 104 families.

Pursuant to the National Project Supporting Deinstitutionalization of Alternative Care, the training of SPODaSK employees is provided, including Advisory-Psychological Services (RPPS). Employees are trained in social diagnostics to improve their skills in this area. This involves assessing the client's social situation (individual, family), assessing capacities, resources and opportunities in the context of his current functioning and social context, including assessing the functionality of interpersonal relationships and adaptive capacity, active needs in relation to social functioning and prognosis.

Another area of education is planning social work with the child's family, teamwork and networking. The priority is to stay children in a natural family environment and return children to a natural family environment if they have been excluded from it. The aim of education is to improve the skills in planning social work with the child's family for those who perform SPODaSK measures and teamwork of the intervening entities.

The subject of activities of new employees in the SPODaSK departments is to increase the efficiency and support of social work in families in which SPODaSK measures are implemented in order to prevent the emergence of crisis situations in the family, to support the family's resources in the care and upbringing of children and to prevent the exclusion of the child from the family alternative care. For field social workers, education is provided through targeted educational activities aimed at improving skills in the field of social diagnostics, in order to assess the client's social situation in relation to social functioning and its prognosis. It is a specialized education of social workers - for newly accepted employees of SPODaSK, education in the field of social diagnostics is extended and focused on the CAN syndrome. This educational activity equips employees with the specific skills needed to assess the client's social situation.

Another area of education is supervision, the aim of which is to support an integrated approach to work with clients, for social workers of leading employees of the Labor, Social Affairs and Family Offices. From the point of view of increasing professional competencies and capabilities, the availability of educational activities for the highest possible number of social workers is important as they contribute to increasing the quality of social work provided in the area of social and legal protection of children and social guardianship.

Legislative limits of crisis intervention services in Slovakia according to Act no. 448/2008 on social services is a social service professional activity, service activity or other activity or set of these activities, which are focused in case of crisis intervention on its solution to the social crisis situation of a natural person and family. Crisis intervention social services are provided when there is an unfavorable social situation of a natural person. These services may be of a low-threshold nature. Crisis intervention services include: Field Social Service Crisis Intervention, provision of social services in facilities - low threshold day center, integration center, community center, dormitory, shelter, half-home, emergency housing, low-threshold social service for children and family field social service carried out by field social workers in crisis intervention is provided to a natural person who finds himself in an unfavorable situation and whose content is an activity aimed at searching for such natural persons, professional activities, service activities and other activities aimed primarily at performing preventive activity, providing social counseling, social rehabilitation, assisting in the exercise of rights and legitimate interests, and creating conditions for the provision of food. (Kozon, 2013).

### Crisis intervention in social worker practice

The most common and most serious manifestations that characterize a crisis are that the crisis will come unexpectedly out of nothing, has a sinister character, makes people realize and update their values and goals, creates fear, anxiety and helplessness that require quick decision-making.

- Every crisis brings with it destabilization, both within the psychological and the social level.
- The crisis is accompanied by increased controllability, manifested by behavioral changes - it is necessary to stabilize them.
- If the causes are small, the recklessness of words can lead to aggression and may have consequences for the future.

Within the scope of this paper we provide partial results of empirical research, namely perception of crisis intervention by social curators and field social workers of social protection and guardianship. The object was social curators and field social workers of social protection and guardianship.

The main goal was to find out the perception of crisis intervention by social curators and field social workers working at the Department of Socio-Legal Protection and Social Guardianship. The research in our rigorous work was carried out by a quantitative strategy using a customized questionnaire. The results of the questionnaires were statistically processed and evaluated in the SPSS program. We flipped the Likert scale, with respect to the results.

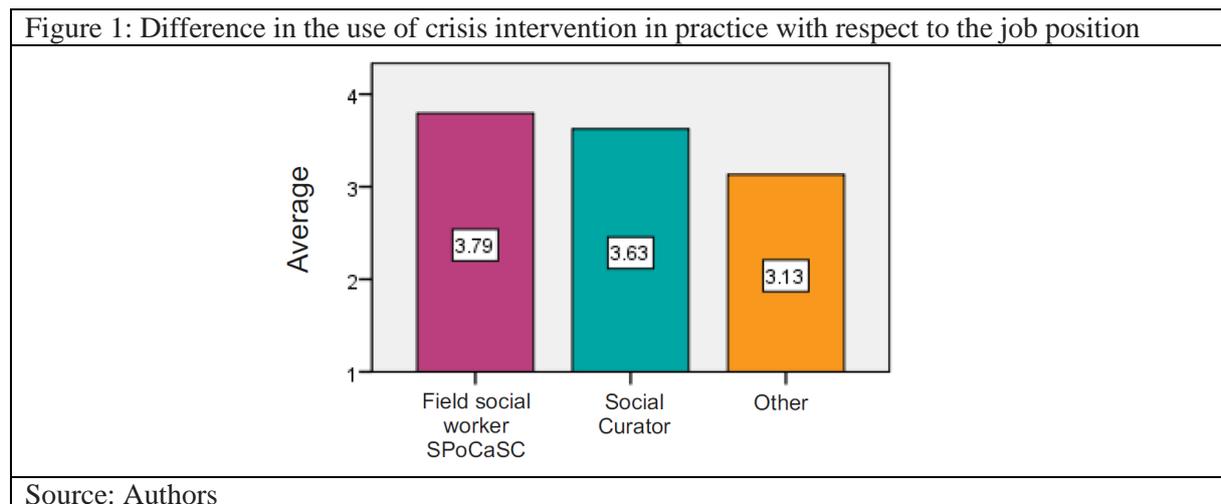
The number of respondents whose questionnaire was applicable to the research objectives was 76.

In the research, we investigated whether there was a significant difference in the use of crisis intervention in practice with respect to the job position. This was verified through the Kruskal Wallis Test for three or more independent selections. The result is shown in Table 2. The significance value is lower than the determined significance level ( $p = 0.005$ ) which means that there is a statistically significant difference between professions in the use of crisis intervention.

	use of crises. interventions in practice
Chi-Square	9.163
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	0.010

Source: Author

The table shows that in practice the most common use of crisis intervention is the social workers of SPODaSK, to a lesser extent the social curators and then lowest were others mentioned by respondents.



As part of our research findings, we investigated whether there is a relationship between individual social problems and the rate of use of crisis intervention in practice, that is, we wanted to find out whether respondents who solve certain social problems are used more often in solving elements of crisis intervention. We have found that mainly respondents who solve problems such as family remediation, crime, delinquency, suicide and addiction use the crisis intervention significantly in practice. In our

opinion, social problems are closely related to practice. Depending on the problems that social workers often address, experience and the need for further education are also based on this (if other social problems are to be tackled within the Slovak Republic).

### Conclusion

By intervening in a natural family environment, planning social work with the child's family, it is possible to help prevent family crises, find and support family resources to ensure child care and education, and help prevent child exclusion and custody. Equally important is the planning of social work with the child's family, which has returned to their family from substitute care and the sustainability of the child's return to the biological family. According to the National Project "Pilot Support for Increasing the Effectiveness of Providing Benefits and Performance of SPODaSK Measures in the Family Environment", new jobs were created at SPODaSK departments for which employees with university education were recruited II. degree in the field of social work. In conclusion, we can agree with Repková (2017), who states that social services of crisis intervention could be at a higher level in terms of professional assistance if the so-called "acute problem extinguishing" is replaced by "systematic help to people in crisis", which would be a significant milestone in the field of social work in crisis intervention, as its professionalization and increasing the level of crisis intervention services provided in Slovakia would be confirmed.

The content of the work of these employees is compatible with the work of the family assistants, which has been developed as part of the activity, which is also a relevant indicator in the research study provided.

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