Concepts for safety and security of children in institutions

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ESCAP, Vienna, 01.07.2019
Structure

• Background of the debate about protection concepts

• Risk analysis

• Complaint Systems

• Summary
Background of the debate about protection concepts
Background

- Every institution holds potential risk factors for violence and sexual (abuse)
- These factors and possibilities of prevention of (sexual) abuse have been discussed since the mid-1990’s
  - (Sexual) abuse and sexual assaults in institutions are always embedded in the structure and system of an institution.
- 2010: "abuse scandal"
  - Round Table Committee demanded that structural measures must be implemented in institutions to protect children and young people from (sexual) abuse
  - In Germany, these measures are summarized by the term "Schutzkonzepte", in English “Protection concepts for prevention and intervention”*
  - Round Table Committee defined in his final report components for such concepts

* Translation by the Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues
Subsections of protection concepts

- Analysis
- Refurbishment
- Intervention
- Prevention

Figure based Rörig, 2013
## Elements of a protection concept

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<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td>• Risk analysis</td>
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| **Prevention** | • Preventive measures for children and adolescents  
• Mission statement  
• Code of conduct  
• Guidelines for the design of the organizational culture  
• Employment contract regulations, f.ex. self-commitment declaration  
• Considering child protection criteria in personnel selection  
• Regular training of employees  
• Forms of participation for children/adolescents, parents and employees  
• Complaint system |
## Elements of a protection concept

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Protection concept

• The defined components must be, however, further developed and adapted specifically by each institution itself to its own context.

• A protection concept is never finished – the development must be designed as an ongoing process.

• In the development of a protection concept both the professionals and the children and adolescents and their parents should be involved.

• The focus of the protection concept should not only be on sexual violence

  ➢ A risk analysis should always be the first step in the development of a protection concept.
Risk analysis
Risk factors in institutions

Two types of risk factors:

• Personnel risk factors

• Institutional risk factors

Personnel risk factors

• Personal problems

• Mental illness

• Knowledge deficits
Institutional risk factors

- Private and professional Area
- Internal and external contact persons
- Dealing with mistakes
- Management structures
- Frameworks, Instructions
- Interaction between professionals
- Workplace structures and equipment
- Interaction with employees

Source: Bange 2018
Institutional risk factors: examples

- No instruction/binding rules
- No systematic complaint management
- Violations of official instructions will not be punished
- No rules on data protection and confidentiality
- Mobbing and/or sexual assaults among the professionals
- Criticism among each other is considered inadmissible; no culture of dispute
- Insufficient separation of professional and personal contacts
- Unclear responsibilities in the institution
- Lack of appreciation by the executives
Risk analysis: Questions

• Are there situations in the institution where the rights of clients are not respected or could be disregarded?

• Are there specific occasions in the everyday life of the institution where interactions can lead to problems with proximity and distance?

• Are there any moments of danger in the institution of abuse of power, sexual abuse or assault?

**IMPORTANT:**

- Risks and uncertainties must be identified and assessed by professionals and clients together
Risk analysis with children and adolescents

Take a picture of your institutions and ask the children and adolescents the following questions:

• Where do you like to be? Where do you feel safe?

• Where don't you like to be? Where do you prefer to take someone with you?

• What places don't you like at all? Where do you prefer not to go at all?

⇒ Green Areas

⇒ Yellow Areas

⇒ Red Areas
Specific risk factors in medical institutions

- Institutions in which emotional and close relationships between adults and children exist are particularly at risk of assault.
- This is the case both in educational and medical institutions.

**But:**
- The “sexual abuse scandal” 2010 in Germany had its origin in the pedagogical field (e.g., Catholic boarding schools).
- Medical institutions were therefore for a long time only little in the focus of the debate.
- Medical institutions hold specific risk factors, these, however, are often not sufficiently perceived by the hospitals themselves.
Evaluation by German Youth Institute

- Hospitals define themselves very strongly as a place where abused children and adolescents find support and help.
- Specific risk factors in hospitals should be focused much more strongly.
Specific risk factors in medical institutions

- Physical examinations (examinations in the genital area, care measures)
- Therapeutic interventions
- Patients are in a particularly vulnerable situation
- Patients receive or received drugs that limit consciousness (e.g., Wake-up phase after operations, psychiatry, intensive care unit)
- Patients usually cannot assess whether an intervention is appropriate and necessary
- Lack of information about medical interventions
Specific risk factors in medical institutions

Suspicious is if:

• unnecessary medical or nursing actions are carried out

or

• actions are carried out
  • by persons who are not responsible for it
  • at unusual times
  • in unusual circumstances or settings
Complaint systems
Complaint Systems

• A complaint system is one of the measures the Round Table Committee defined in his final report as a component for a protection concept.

• In order to integrate a complaints system into an institution, it is necessary to specify a procedure for dealing with errors. That includes:
  • Clarification of how to deal with mistakes and misconduct
  • Establishment of participation opportunities for both clients and professionals
  • Analysis of risk factors
Objectives of complaint systems

• Improving the quality of professional action
• Protection of clients against unprofessional actions
• Identification of institutional and personnel-related errors

➢ Target should be to learning from mistakes
➢ A complaints system requires the willingness to engage in processes of change and to be able to deal offensively and constructively with criticism and complaints.
➢ The victims' perspective should always be at the centre of attention.
Complaint systems: Implementation in practice

A complaint system ...

• should be easily accessible

• should be able to be used anonymously

• should be established at different levels (f.ex. internal and external contact persons)

➤ Complaints should always be documented.

➤ All complaints should be taken seriously.

➤ Important: Inclusion of external expertise (f.ex. specialist counselling centres)

A complaint system is successful if it reaches an everyday level as a low-threshold offer and is not used only in extreme emergencies.
Complaint system at our hospital

Hands-free system as possibility to contact the patient advocate and the youth welfare services in Ulm
Complaint System: Information for the clients

- Information about the complaint options is essential for the use of the system.
- Information materials must be easy to understand and fit the target group.
- The persons complaining must be informed how their complaints will be dealt with.
Summary
Summary

• Every institution holds potential risk factors for violence and sexual (abuse)

• It is therefore necessary to implement measures to protect children and adolescents from (sexual) abuse in institutions.

• These measures can be summarized in a protection concepts

• In the development of such a concept both professionals and children and adolescents should be involved

• A risk analysis and the implementation of complaint systems are important aspects of a protection concept
Thank you for your attention!