

Survey on Parental Discipline Perceptions

What do SOCIAL WORKERS say?



A provincial online survey was conducted between April and November 2017, among 1,824 professionals and practitioners working at least 20% of their time with minor children or their parents. Among them were 328 social workers, all members of the Ordre des travailleurs sociaux et des thérapeutes conjugaux et familiaux du Québec (OTSTCFQ). This fact sheet presents the results from these 328 respondents.

Who were the respondent social workers?



91%



9%

Total number of respondents = 328

Birth place

95% Canada • 5% elsewhere in the world

Age

Between 22 and 68 years old (40 years on average)

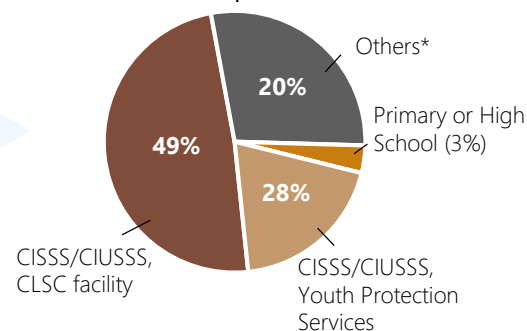
Work experience

- Between 1 and 48 years (13 years on average)
- 50% of the respondents had already worked in the youth protection field

Highest degree obtained

- 1% College degree
- 81% Undergraduate degree
- 18% Graduate degree

Workplace



*Rehabilitation centre, private practice, hospital or community organization

Social workers' attitudes towards parental disciplinary practices



Almost all the respondents (99%) believed that corporal punishment is not an effective method of disciplining children and that it may have physical or emotional consequences for children.

The majority of them considered that it was in their mandate to address corporal punishment with parents in such situations as:

- Slapping a teenager's face (96%)
- Hitting a child's hand (91%)
- Hitting a child with an object (84%)

89%

said they were confident that they could recognize the signs of child physical abuse

but...



The difference between reasonable and unreasonable corporal punishment was not clear for 45% of the respondents

Legal context surrounding corporal punishment as a disciplinary practices



Section 43 of the *Criminal Code* says:

"Every schoolteacher, parent or person standing in the place of a parent is justified in using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child, as the case may be, who is under his care, if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances."

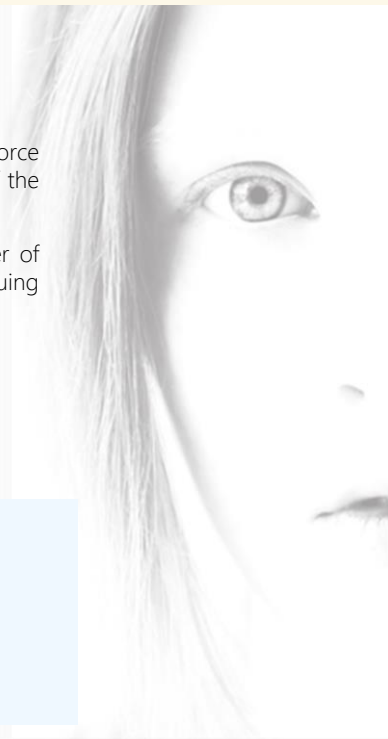
Although the Supreme Court of Canada has recently ruled on the constitutional character of section 43, it has also adopted a narrower definition of corporal punishment by issuing guidelines (<http://www.justice.gc.ca>).



More than a third of the respondents (39%) did not know if at least one of the following guidelines govern the use of reasonable force to correct a child:

The force is considered reasonable when:

- the child is between two years old and twelve years old
- the child can learn from it
- it does not involve objects
- it does not involve slaps or hits to the child's head
- it is minor and its impact is only transitory and trifling
- it does not result from the person's anger, outburst or violent temper



According to the Youth Protection Act

Physical abuse refers to a situation where a child is a victim of bodily injury or is subjected to unreasonable educational methods (section 38e). • According to section 39, "every professional who...in the practice of his profession, has reasonable grounds to believe that the security or development of a child is or may be considered to be in danger within the meaning of section 38 ..., must bring the situation to the attention of the director [of youth protection (DYP)] **without delay.**" (<http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca>).




96% of the respondent social workers knew they had the obligation to report any suspicion of physical abuse to the DYP. Almost all them (98%) would have known how to report a child to the DYP.

However...

23% did not believe that it is safe to report a situation to the DYP at the slightest doubt and **14%** believed that they could intervene successfully in situations of physical abuse **without** having to report them.

31% believed (or did not know if this was possible) that their responsibility to report to the DYP could be delegated to another person in their workplace.

 However, the responsibility to report to the DYP does not lie with organizations (i.e. schools, community organizations or other organizations) or institutions of the health and social services network, but rather with their staff. These people must be informed of their obligations and be supported when they fulfill them (*Manuel de référence sur la protection de la jeunesse; www.msss.gouv.qc.ca*)

Many social workers anticipated **negative consequences following a report**



More than a third (37%) were concerned about losing their **alliance** with the family

22%

were concerned that the child's situation would worsen



The Multi-Sectoral Agreement concerning children who are victims of sexual abuse or physical ill-treatment or whose physical health is threatened by the lack of appropriate care...

...aims to ensure better protection and to provide the necessary aid to children by ensuring effective collaboration between the DYP, the attorney general prosecutor, police services, educational institutions and relevant bodies, including the institutions of the health and social services network and community organizations (<https://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca>).

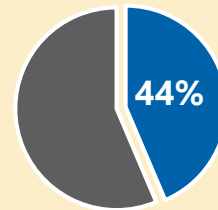
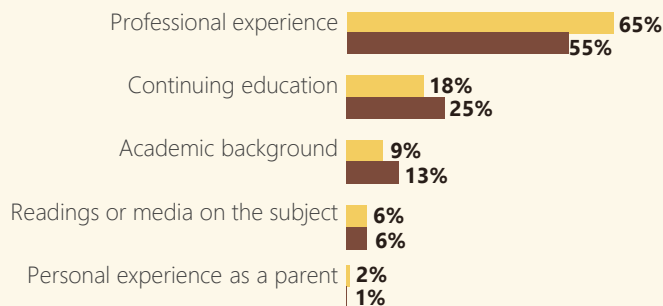


However, **33%** did not know if the Multi-Sectoral Agreement applied in their **workplace**. The majority of these respondents worked in a CLSC facility (63%)



More than half of the social workers (54%) did not consider themselves **sufficiently trained** in the functioning of the Multi-Sectoral Agreement

Primary sources of knowledge about parental disciplinary practices and child maltreatment



Nearly half of the respondents did not consider themselves **sufficiently trained** to answer questions from parents from cultural minority groups about their disciplinary practices

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SURVEY



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