



ANNALIZA MACABABBAD, RSW

Social Worker, Philippines



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Overview

Annaliza is a social worker at the Philippine General Hospital Child Protection Unit in Manila. Annaliza manages child abuse cases in collaboration with an interdisciplinary team. The team’s work starts when suspected child abuse is reported to the local social welfare and development office. They continue with referrals for further intervention—sometimes numerous, depending on the needs of the child and family. Team members engage in ongoing coordination and evaluation until the child is prepared for family and community reintegration. All the minutiae involved in these steps can spell the difference between success and failure for the child.

Typical tasks and responsibilities

Annaliza and her team:

- Assess potential and ongoing child abuse
- Help identify and select appropriate placement options for abused children
- Evaluate risks to determine the possibility of further abuse
- Actively coordinate with agencies providing services to abused children and their families
- Discuss and resolve critical concerns in case management
- Convene and facilitate case conferences

Other aspects of Annaliza’s job include doing group work with children; offering parenting classes, family meetings, and family therapy; and providing individual therapy referrals. All of these can bring about better outcomes. Sometimes Annaliza conducts home visits, which can be challenging when families live in hard-to-find slum areas.

Annaliza and other social workers also facilitate the “Kids in Court” program. When children testify at “Kids in Court,” they learn about their rights, receive support during their testimony if needed, understand that it is normal to feel nervous and anxious while testifying, and receive reassurance that no one can hurt them in court. They receive certificates of bravery after the court session for their willingness to testify.

Training and skills

Annaliza has attended many skills enhancement seminars, workshops, and trainings, but most importantly she has completed a Certificate in Child Protection Specialty Training for Social Workers through Philippine General

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Hospital, University of the Philippines Manila, Child Protection Unit. Such learning opportunities are a “plus,” contributing to Annaliza’s successful management of cases. Annaliza also works with a great team that not only manages child abuse cases but also trains other professionals—including doctors, police officers, and social workers—in a nationwide attempt to standardize case management protocols.

Story

Maria, 13 years old, was brought in for evaluation after disclosing to her teacher that her father had been sexually abusing her since age 9. Maria had reported the abuse to her mother, who did not believe her. The case management team decided to place Maria in protective custody because no relatives were available. Maria was very upset with the decision, because she did not want to be taken away from her younger sibling, who was also possibly being molested by their father. Annaliza comments, “Taking children for protective custody has always been a challenge for me, especially when a child starts to cry because of the impending separation from her family. In my experience, no matter what, children want to stay with their families most of the time. When this conflicts with their safety, case management becomes very challenging.”

After Maria moved to the shelter, Annaliza conducted a home visit to identify supportive adults and also worked with Maria’s teachers so that Maria’s studies would not be disrupted. Because Maria was hesitant to file a complaint against her father, Annaliza’s team convinced the local social welfare office to assist her in filing charges. Maria remained in the shelter and worked with the “Kids in Court” program to prepare her testimony.

Why she loves her job

Handling child abuse cases such as Maria’s entails skills, training, and the less quantifiable but supremely important qualities of patience and understanding. For Annaliza, her work is more than just a job. She states, “It is my passion to help vulnerable children and their families, and I will continue to be a social worker because I consider even just helping one or two children become successful in their lives as a great achievement and a[s] priceless [a] trophy [as] one can ever get.” Annaliza finds it rewarding when children become empowered and choose to develop their talents to the fullest even after going through a devastating life event. Although she notes the “heartbreak” when cases do not turn out successfully—sometimes simply because of resource limitations—she gives credit to the vital role that caregivers and supportive adults play in the recovery process.

The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance would like to thank the Child Protection Unit Network, Inc. for contributing this profile to the “I am a Social Service Worker” series.

“Improving the workforce. Improving lives.”

Who is the social service workforce?

While capturing any one definition of the social service workforce is challenging, it can be broadly defined to describe a variety of workers – paid and unpaid, governmental and nongovernmental – who staff the social service system and contribute to the care of vulnerable populations. The social service system is comprised of a set of interventions, programs and benefits that are provided by governmental, civil society and community actors to ensure the welfare and protection of socially or economically disadvantaged individuals and families.

What is Social Service Workforce Week?

During this week, advocates will bring attention to and build support for the social service workforce as well as raise awareness about promising workforce strengthening efforts supported by stakeholders around the world. Organized around daily themes focused on areas of practice, the week will allow Alliance members and the public to engage in a dynamic platform of information exchange and advocacy through various forms of social media.

What is the Child Protection Unit Network, Inc.?

Established in 2002, the Child Protection Unit Network, Inc. responds to the critical shortage of human resources necessary to make the child protection system in the Philippines work through training and building relationships among child protection units, specialists, and other hospital-based child protection practitioners operating in isolation from each other yet each facing the challenges of child abuse and neglect single-handedly every day. Though just one of its many mission-oriented activities, the network’s 15-module Certificate in Child Protection Specialty through Blended Learning is able to reach physicians and social workers in the Philippines and other countries around the world who are committed to becoming experts in the field of child abuse but whose duties in their institutions prevent them from taking up courses that would require them to leave work for several weeks. Law enforcement is also engaged in the network through its Women and Child Protection Specialty Training for Police Officers.

Learn More

Learn more about Annaliza and other social service workers! Join the conversation on Twitter using the hashtag #SSWeek and online at www.socialserviceworkforce.org/SSWeek.