Session 1:
Social service workforce practice in and beyond the pandemic

The social service workforce in and beyond the pandemic
A global conversation on adaptation, innovation and the fight for social justice

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Risks and Opportunities

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The Social Service Workforce

- Social Workers
- Social Pedagogues
- Child and Youth Care Workers
- Community Development Workers
- Other governmental and nongovernmental professionals and para-professionals who work with individuals, families and communities to ensure healthy development and well-being
## Risks & Challenges

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Risks to personal safety</th>
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<tr>
<td>No outlet – constant “work-home-work” scenario (Murphy, 2020)</td>
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<td>Essential workers losing all support staff (e.g. in alternate care) (Swanzen &amp; Jonker, 2020)</td>
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<td>Social service workforce supporting individuals, families and communities while simultaneously dealing with the same fears and challenges – shared trauma</td>
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<td>Increased strain on the child welfare system resulting in more pressure on already overburdened child welfare workers (Williams, 2021)</td>
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<td>Increased workload and work demands (University of Strathclyde, 2021)</td>
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Positive Adaptations

- Opportunity for a “shared experience” and innovative, purposeful use of activities in substitute care (Hamilton & Miller, 2020)
- Creative ways of engaging clients (e.g., dropping off food packages, doorstep visits, outdoor activities)
- Increased focus on wellness strategies for workers
- Increased opportunities for virtual connections
- Increased recognition of the essential role of the social service workforce
References


Discussion Questions

• What are the biggest risks and challenges you have experienced in your work during the Covid-19 pandemic?

• How have you and your organization dealt with these challenges and adapted your practice during Covid-19?

• What opportunities for innovative practice in the social service workforce have emerged from the pandemic?