

## **(20) Managing domestic violence cases in Family court social services**

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The family courts in Israel provide social services for consultation and treatment. One of the more difficult issues that this service deals with, is domestic violence. The present research evaluated management of referred cases to the Family court social services (FCSS), according to two criteria: reaching agreement and receiving treatment.

The population in the research included married and unmarried couples, who were referred to the FCSS with least one side introducing (in court or during the meetings in the FCSS) a claim of physical violence. Details about the couples were collected by a questionnaire, which was distributed to twenty-five social workers, employed in seven units across Israel during the data collection. Three hundred questionnaires were distributed. Twenty workers responded and 269 usable questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 89.7%.

Of 272 cases reached successful outcomes 53%. In 29.7% of the couples referred to the services in the community, the social workers did not know if they had turned to the target services, and at a rate of 44.7% they did not know if they were under treatment. Additional findings indicate that when the referral to the FCSS is made earlier, and if the marriage duration has been short, then the probability of successful referral increases. Additional factors that contribute to successful outcomes are claims about children's issues, referrals to community or social services, and using the authority of the courts.

In order to improve the probability of the couple completing the mediation or entering treatment, and in view of the finding that the use of the court's authority increases men's cooperation, follow-up on the referrals by the FCSS is strongly recommended, perhaps even involving the judge. The referral of both spouses is supposed to strengthen their ability to reach decision-making, affect the continuation of their lives, and facilitate implementation of their decisions.

Keywords: Domestic violence; Family Court; legal authority; successful outcomes; referrals to services.

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