

**PROJECT TITLE: UPGRADING INTERVIEWING FACILITIES TO PROVIDE A
SAFE, SUPPORTIVE AND COMFORTABLE WAITING AND INTERVIEW ROOM
FOR CHILD SERVICE USERS (2-8 YEARS)**

Goal

- To enhance interpersonal relationship between social workers and child service users (children)
- To facilitate rapport building for social workers, police and other professionals needing to interact with children in distress

Objectives

- Refurbish and equip the waiting room and the interview rooms with aesthetically relaxing materials and comfortable furniture
- Optimize (or make effective use of) the rooms for relationship building
- Provide a safe environment for social workers and children in sessions
- Create an environment that encourages open and voluntary dialogue (disclosure)
- Relieve the pressure on children and the feeling of intimidation

Background and Rationale:

Presently social workers conduct sessions with children in bare, block walls settings. Such setting does not provide conducive, child friendly atmosphere that would enhance the positive and relaxed interaction as well as outcomes. The first impression of a room, especially from the perspective of very young children is very important. A nicely decorated room with characters and other accessories will no doubt motivate a child to open up and participate in interactive sessions. Moreover, aesthetic decors has a soothing effect on the client, provides a sense of being in a safe space and of being protected. Also, the overall atmosphere of the environment is significant in helping practitioner and client to feel more at ease. Contemporary research findings confirm that there is a correlation between the aesthetically pleasant environment and the social and emotional bond (“affiliative” behaviors) between the practitioner and client.

The Social Services Team recommends that the interview rooms used by very young children should be congenial by having aesthetically pleasing surroundings and furnishings, such as soft cushioned furniture, colorful rugs, plants, pictures on the wall, and natural or soft lighting. Space also needs to be taken into consideration. Studies have proven that small room size has a negative impact on practitioner and client communication. In the same way, clients prefer intermediate distances (127cm away from the practitioner). Such distance actually maximizes practitioner communication and client self-disclosure. An interesting finding indicated that if clients have some

control over the furniture in consulting rooms, for example, movable chairs, they experience a high degree of comfort and autonomy (Pressley & Heesacker, 2001).

Through this project it is anticipated that there will be an improvement in service delivery. Refurbishment of the waiting area and interview rooms will provide a comfortable and conducive environment for children. It will have a positive effect on staff performances and job satisfaction and it will help to increase client motivation and positive responses.

Description:

The Social Services Division will oversee the renovation of the waiting area and interview rooms. Some of the main processes of the project are:

- Consulting all practitioners concerned on the appropriateness of the rooms
- Designing the layout of the rooms
- Drawing up a list of appropriate resources, (furniture and other materials)
- Renovating and equipping the rooms with all necessary resources
- Evaluating the outcome and effective use of the rooms

Budget Narrative:

The estimated cost of refurbishing both the waiting area and interview rooms is SCR 250 000. All funding will be sourced from ECCE Trust Fund.

Expected Outcomes:

- Well-equipped and user friendly waiting area and interview rooms
- Positive interactive sessions between social workers, other professional users and young clients

Performance Indicators:

- Perceptions of social workers and other professional users on the effectiveness of the rooms
- Level of satisfaction/appreciation on use of the facilities by service users (clients)