



## THE WORK OF THE CREAS SOCIAL WORKER IN DEALING WITH CHILD SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SÃO LUÍS DE MONTES BELOS/GO

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### Summary

This article analyzes the role of social workers at the Specialized Reference Center for Social Assistance (CREAS) in São Luís de Montes Belos/GO in addressing child sexual violence. Using a qualitative approach, the strategies and challenges faced by these professionals in ensuring rights and comprehensive protection for children and adolescents who are victims of this type of violence were examined. Data were collected through a bibliographic review and documentary analysis of public policies and regulations that govern the work of CREAS. The results point to the importance of interdisciplinarity, continuing education, and networking for the effectiveness of interventions. It is concluded that, despite advances in protection policy, there are still structural and institutional challenges that directly impact the work of social workers and the effectiveness of actions to address the problem.

**Keywords:** Social Worker; CREAS; Child Sexual Violence; Comprehensive Protection; Protection Network.

**Abstract** This article analyzes the role of social workers at the Specialized Reference Center for Social Assistance (CREAS) in São Luís de Montes Belos/GO in addressing child sexual violence. Using a qualitative approach, the strategies and challenges faced by these professionals in ensuring rights and comprehensive protection for children and adolescents who are victims of such violence were examined. Data were collected through bibliographic

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review and documentary analysis of public policies and regulations governing CREAS actions. The results highlight the importance of interdisciplinarity, continuous training, and network articulation for the effectiveness of interventions. It is concluded that, despite advances in protection policies, structural and institutional challenges still impact the work of social workers and the effectiveness of response actions.

**Keywords:** Social Worker; CREAS; Child Sexual Violence; Comprehensive Protection; Protection Network.

## INTRODUCTION

Child sexual violence is one of the most serious forms of human rights violations, compromising the physical, emotional and social development of victims. In Brazil, this phenomenon has been the subject of several public policies, including the work of the Specialized Reference Center for Social Assistance (CREAS), which plays a central role in the care and monitoring of children and adolescents who are victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. In São Luís de Montes Belos/GO, CREAS has established itself as a reference space for the protection of these victims, articulating the network of social, health, education and public safety services.

The research problem of this study is centered on the analysis of the effectiveness of the actions developed by the social worker in confronting child sexual violence at CREAS in São Luís de Montes Belos/GO. Considering the complexity of this phenomenon, we seek to understand the challenges faced by professionals, the strategies adopted and the potential of this action in the context of the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents.

The general objective of the study is to analyze the work of social workers at CREAS in São Luís de Montes Belos/GO in confronting child sexual violence, considering their practices, challenges and impacts on guaranteeing victims' rights. The specific objectives are:

- Identify the main public policies and regulations that guide CREAS's actions in this context;
- Analyze the strategies used by social workers in assisting and monitoring victims;
- Assess the structural, institutional and intersectoral challenges that impact professional performance;

- Propose recommendations for improving public practices and policies aimed at protecting children and adolescents who are victims of sexual violence.

The relevance of the study is justified by the need to deepen the understanding of the role of the social worker in CREAS and the effectiveness of policies to protect children and adolescents who are victims of sexual violence. In addition, it seeks to contribute to the improvement of professional practices and the formulation of guidelines that strengthen the service network.

The central question that guides this research is: What are the challenges and strategies of the social worker at CREAS in São Luís de Montes Belos/GO in confronting child sexual violence?

It is hypothesized that the work of social workers at CREAS is hampered by challenges such as the lack of adequate structure, limited human resources and difficulties in intersectoral coordination. However, the use of strategies based on qualified listening, interdisciplinary care and strengthening of the protection network can enhance the effectiveness of interventions.

In the next topics, the theoretical framework that underpins the discussion, the methodology adopted for data analysis, the main results and the discussion on professional practice in tackling child sexual violence in São Luís de Montes Belos/GO will be presented.

The analysis is based on the legal and regulatory framework that guides social assistance policy and child protection in Brazil. The Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA) and the National Social Assistance Policy (PNAS) are fundamental to understanding the guidelines for assisting victims of sexual violence.

## **2. VIOLENCE AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN BRAZIL**

Violence is a complex social phenomenon that affects individuals and communities in a variety of ways. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, group or community, that either results in, or is likely to result in, injury, death, psychological harm, impaired development or deprivation" (WHO, 2002). This definition highlights not only acts of physical aggression, but also the psychological and social aspects involved in violence.

In Brazil, violence has become a critical challenge for public policies, especially when it affects vulnerable groups, such as children and adolescents. According to data from the Ministry of Health (BRAZIL, 2022), interpersonal violence is one of the main causes of death among young people, and its expression ranges from physical aggression to more subtle forms of psychological violence and neglect.

Violence can be classified into several categories, including physical, psychological, sexual, patrimonial and institutional (MINAYO, 2006). Physical violence is manifested through aggressions that cause bodily harm, such as beatings and torture. Psychological violence occurs through emotional manipulation, intimidation, humiliation and threats. Sexual violence, the focus of this study, includes all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation against individuals, especially minors.

Child sexual violence is one of the most serious crimes committed against children and adolescents, constituting a serious violation of human rights. According to the Statute of Children and Adolescents (ECA), all forms of neglect, exploitation, violence, cruelty and oppression against children and adolescents must be prevented and punished (BRAZIL, 1990). Sexual violence against minors can occur in different contexts and take different forms, such as sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation.

Child sexual abuse is characterized by any involvement of a child or adolescent in sexual activities that they do not fully understand, for which they cannot give informed consent, or that violate social and legal norms (FERRARI et al., 2018). This type of violence can include acts of physical contact, such as rape and forced fondling, to non-contact forms, such as exposure to pornography and cyberbullying.

Child sexual exploitation, in turn, involves the use of children and adolescents for sexual purposes in exchange for money, material goods or favors. This modality includes child prostitution, child pornography and sex tourism. According to data from Disque 100, a reporting service of the Ministry of Human Rights, thousands of cases of child sexual exploitation are registered annually in Brazil, indicating a structural problem that demands effective prevention and confrontation actions (BRASIL, 2023).

Studies show that child sexual violence can have serious consequences for victims, affecting their emotional, cognitive and social development. Children and adolescents subjected to this type of violence often present psychological disorders, such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress and difficulties in socialization (AZEVEDO & GUERRA, 2011). In addition,

There is a direct impact on schooling, as many victims have learning difficulties and drop out of school.

Confronting child sexual violence in Brazil involves intersectoral actions, with the participation of the sectors of Social Welfare, Health, Education, Public Security and Justice. CREAS (Specialized Reference Center for Social Welfare) plays an essential role in assisting children and adolescents who are victims of sexual violence, offering psychosocial support, family monitoring and referral to the protection network (BRASIL, 2012).

Public policies such as the National Plan to Combat Sexual Violence against Children and Adolescents have been fundamental in preventing and combating this phenomenon. However, challenges persist, such as underreporting of cases, weak coordination of the protection network, and insufficient resources allocated to victim support programs (VIANA, 2020).

In short, violence, and especially child sexual violence, represent urgent issues for Brazil. Despite legislative advances and the creation of specialized services, there are still structural challenges to be overcome to ensure the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents. Strengthening public policies, training professionals and encouraging community participation are essential measures to eradicate this type of violence and ensure the fundamental rights of children.

### **3. SÃO LUÍS DE MONTES BELOS: HISTORY, DEMOGRAPHY AND CHALLENGES IN CHILD PROTECTION**

São Luís de Montes Belos is a municipality located in the state of Goiás, Brazil, located approximately 120 km from the capital, Goiânia, and 326 km from Brasília. According to estimates from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 2021, the city has a population of 34,488 inhabitants.

The origins of São Luís de Montes Belos date back to 1857, with the founding of the São Luiz Farm. This farm was established during the construction of a road that would connect the provincial capital to the southwest of Goiás and the state of Mato Grosso. The name of the city is associated with the mountains with thin peaks at the entrance to the municipality and the farm that gave rise to it.

Regarding cases of child sexual violence in the municipality, no specific statistics were found for São Luís de Montes Belos in the sources

available. However, national data provide a worrying panorama: between 2015 and 2021, 202,948 cases of sexual violence against children and adolescents were reported in Brazil, 83,571 (41.2%) of which were in children and 119,377 (58.8%) in adolescents. In 2021, the number of notifications was the highest recorded throughout the period analyzed, with 35,196 cases.

The data shows that most victims are teenagers, which may be related to factors such as greater social exposure, less family supervision and difficulties in early identification of violence in this age group.

The year 2021 stood out negatively, recording the highest number of notifications in the period, with 35,196 cases. This increase may be associated with the intensification of social vulnerability generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the isolation of victims with their aggressors and made it difficult for them to access reporting and protection mechanisms. In addition, the increase in notifications may also reflect greater awareness among the population and improvements in violence reporting systems.

However, underreporting remains a significant challenge. Many cases go unnoticed by authorities due to fear among victims, family pressure to hide the violence, and lack of information about reporting channels. This suggests that the actual numbers may be substantially higher than those reported.

Given this scenario, it is essential to strengthen the protection network, expanding access to specialized services, such as Specialized Social Assistance Reference Centers (CREAS), and promoting awareness campaigns to encourage reporting and breaking the cycle of violence. In addition, more effective public policies, investments in training professionals and greater inter-institutional coordination are essential to guarantee the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents against sexual violence.

The lack of specific data for São Luís de Montes Belos highlights the need to improve local reporting and monitoring systems. Underreporting is a significant challenge in addressing child sexual violence, often due to fear, stigma or lack of knowledge about how to report it.

To address this problem, it is essential to strengthen the child and adolescent protection network in the municipality, ensuring the effective action of agencies such as the Specialized Reference Center for Social Assistance (CREAS). In addition,

Awareness and education campaigns can encourage the community to recognize and report cases of violence, contributing to the protection of children and adolescents in São Luís de Montes Belos.

#### **4. THE ROLE OF THE CREAS SOCIAL WORKER IN COMBATING CHILD SEXUAL VIOLENCE: CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SÃO LUÍS DE MONTES BELOS/GO**

Child sexual violence represents a serious violation of human rights and poses a significant challenge to public policies for the protection of children and adolescents in Brazil. In this context, the Specialized Reference Center for Social Assistance (CREAS) plays a fundamental role in assisting victims and coordinating actions to address this issue. This article aims to analyze the role of social workers at CREAS in addressing child sexual violence, focusing on the barriers and challenges faced in the municipality of São Luís de Montes Belos, Goiás.

CREAS is a public state unit that offers specialized and ongoing services to families and individuals in situations of threat or violation of rights, including cases of physical, psychological and sexual violence. The CREAS team is made up of professionals with diverse backgrounds, such as social workers, psychologists and social educators, coordinated by a technical coordinator with a higher education degree.

Within the scope of CREAS, the social worker works in special social protection of medium complexity, offering support to individuals and families who experience situations of rights violation. Their duties include reception, psychosocial support, guidance and referral to services in the protection network, aiming at the reconstruction of family and community ties and the guarantee of rights.

The role of social workers in combating child sexual violence faces several barriers that compromise the effectiveness of interventions. In the municipality of São Luís de Montes Belos, these difficulties can be attributed to structural, institutional and sociocultural factors.

Underreporting is one of the main obstacles in combating child sexual violence. Many cases do not come to the attention of authorities due to fear, shame or lack of knowledge of victims and their families about the channels of reporting.

complaint. This invisibility makes it difficult for social workers to act, as they depend on notifications to initiate appropriate monitoring.

The lack of specialized professionals at CREAS compromises the quality of care. Expanding the minimum team and continuous training are essential to overcome practices that reproduce inequalities and reinforce stereotypes, ensuring more effective and humanized care.

The precariousness of physical facilities and the lack of adequate material resources limit the actions of social workers. Inadequate working conditions can lead to overload and professional burnout, affecting the quality of the service provided to victims of child sexual violence.

Effective victim care depends on coordination between different sectors, such as health, education, public safety and justice. A lack of integration and communication between these services can result in fragmented and ineffective care, which can harm the process of protecting and recovering victims.

In contexts where conservative and patriarchal values prevail, child sexual violence may be minimized or hidden. Social workers face the challenge of deconstructing these conceptions, promoting community awareness about the rights of children and adolescents and the seriousness of sexual violence.

The lack of specific public policies and the scarcity of investment in the area of social assistance make it difficult to implement effective programs to prevent and address child sexual violence. Strengthening public policies is essential to structuring an efficient protection network.

Addressing child sexual violence requires integrated and multidisciplinary action, in which the social worker plays a central role. In São Luís de Montes Belos, it is imperative to overcome the identified barriers by investing in professional training, improving working conditions, strengthening the protection network and raising awareness in the community. Only with a systemic and committed approach will it be possible to guarantee the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents, ensuring their healthy and safe development.

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