



Problem Statements: Focusing the Problem and Research Questions in Social Work Research

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Identifying the Real Problem

- **Carefully identify and specify the problem from careful review of the literature**
- **Develop questions related to the broad problem identified through the literature review process**

Let the review guide the process

- What does the literature tell you?
- Example:

In 2003, an estimated number of 906,000 children were victims of abuse or neglect in the United States, of whom 63.2% were neglected, 18.9% were physically abused, 9.9% were sexually abused, and an approximate 4.9% were emotionally or psychologically abused. Of the children reported abused and neglected, 1,500 died as a direct result of the abuse or neglect they experienced. The State of Idaho received 975 substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect from a total record of 6,264 reports (Gaudiosi, 2005)

- **Many times, when children are abused and neglect, they are placed in kinship and non-kinship foster/adoptive care to provide for their safety, permanence, and well-being. A large portion of the funding for this care through the federal government is for kinship and non-kinship foster and adoptive care. Total federal expenditures for the Title IV-E foster care program was \$4 billion in fiscal year 1999, \$4.3 billion in 2000, \$4.4 billion in 2001, and \$5.1 billion in 2002**

(The Department of Health and Human Services, 2002)

- **Recent federal policy implementation through the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 has mandated and encouraged states to look to kinship foster/adoptive placements for children in foster care as the primary placement preference to maintain family continuity and connectedness. In 2002, approximately 200,000 children were in kinship foster care placements.**

- It is important for agencies to provide much needed resources and support to kinship foster/adoptive parents as research reports that a higher number of kinship caregivers are grandparents over the age of 60, they are in poorer health, are unprepared to care for children, have lower incomes, and many of them lack the time to mentally prepare for the placement of children in their home (Green, 2002).

- **Total federal expenditures for the Title IV-E foster care program was \$4 billion in fiscal year 1999, \$4.3 billion in 2000, \$4.4 billion in 2001, and \$5.1 billion in 2002. States continue to struggle with retaining kinship and non-kinship foster/adoptive parents due to the agency not providing adequate resources, support, effective training programs, and much needed services (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).**

Problem Statement Example

- **A growing number of children are placed in kinship foster care in the United States by public child welfare agencies. Recent reports indicate that kinship foster and adoptive families lack the resources and support needed to provide adequate care, nurturing, and safety for the children placed in their care that may result in kinship placement disruption.**

Question Examples

- 1. What are the available resources provided to kinship foster care providers in the state of Idaho?
- 2. What do kinship foster care providers need to successfully adopt and care for the children in their care?
- 3. What do the child welfare agencies say that kinship foster care providers need to successfully adopt and care for the children in their care?
- 4. What innovative and emerging models of kinship foster/adoptive care support programs exist in the United States?

References

- Gaudiosi, J. A.. (2005). *Child Maltreatment 2003. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services; Administration for Children & Families; Administration on Children Youth & Families; Children's Bureau.*
- Green, R. (2002). The evolution of kinship care policy and practice. *The Future of Children, 14 (1), 131-149.*
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2003). *The Idaho child and family services review: Final report.*