

THE IMPACT OF OREGON'S STEWARDS OF CHILDREN ON PROVIDER PROGRAMS, COMMUNITY PARTNERS, AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGEⁱ

Executive Summary¹ December, 2017

What impact is Stewards having in the community? What difference is it making in the organizations providing the trainings? Has Stewards influenced relationships between local groups? If so, how?

This 2-page Executive Summary briefly reports findings from focus group interviews conducted at The Ford Family Foundation's (TFFF) Protect Our Children (POC) Annual Conference in May, 2017. The interviews explored the 'systems-level' impact of Darkness to Light – Stewards of Children (SOC). Thirty-two participants were interviewed in three separate groups, including site administrators, trainers, facilitators, and development personnel. At least one individual from each of the 11 SOC sites participated in the interview. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using qualitative methods. The full 18-page report is available upon request.²

Participants were asked the following questions, and others – Due to Stewards of Children:

- How has your organization been impacted, if at all?
- How have your *relationships* with others organizations and groups changed, if at all?
- How has the *perception* of your organization changed in the community, if at all?
- Have you noticed *changes in your community* as a result of Stewards of Children trainings? If so, what?

Participants uniformly agreed that SOC has had an impact on their organization, their relationship with partner and new-partner organizations, and that it has contributed to an increased awareness about a) the problem of child sexual abuse overall, b) their organization, and c) the services provided by SOC organizations.

WITHIN SOC PROVIDER ORGANIZATIONS, SOC has fostered introspection, leading to broader views of agency focus and mission, and has changed views of how prevention activities fit within a traditional direct service framework. Participants reported that SOC has enhanced a sense of hopefulness within their organization and in the community at-large, i.e., "You have a sense that there's a fair number of people who are really going to do something with this." Participants also widely indicated that SOC has impacted organizational identity – "It (SOC) has gone from being a new initiative to being a question about who we are as an organization." Several participants suggested that their organization is providing a fuller array of services and that SOC has led to a re-organization of their prevention efforts, e.g., "This gives us an opportunity to really grow our adult training offerings. We've been able to grow exponentially."

¹ Report prepared by The Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect, University of Oregon.

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Participants also uniformly agreed that SOC has productively impacted their relationship **WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**, and has sparked new and deeper collaboration about child sexual abuse and abuse prevention between many community groups. Participants remarked: “It has started relationships for us;” “It is... like propellant for starting conversations;” and “This hadn’t happened prior to this, the (degree of) communication across agencies.” This has included new networks, more community-wide conversation about prevention and practical steps that people can take to protect children, and to a kind of prevention synergy – described by one participant as a “blooming effect.”

Participants also broadly agreed that SOC has led to **CHANGES IN THE COMMUNITY AT-LARGE**. This included an increased profile for their organizations, a broader understanding of the services they provide, and raised awareness about child sexual abuse. Two participants reflected the views of many: “We’re seen more as experts by the general population” and “Now, we’re the educator in the community. It’s allowed us to play a new role and, consequently, the community is perceiving us as educators.” Others highlighted SOC’s role in raising awareness about child sexual abuse: “It has raised awareness of child abuse as an issue in our community that I’m not sure would have existed otherwise.” And, “We’ve been able to reach people that had no idea... I do feel like people are thinking about it – including recognizing that it’s the adult’s responsibility, not the child.” Finally, “This issue has been shrouded. I think the training has changed a lot of people’s perceptions.”

Participants also pointed to **SEVERAL CHALLENGES**. They include time, both a) the barrier that a 3-hour training practically creates for potential participants, and b) the time it takes to recruit, set-up, and carry out a single training. Participants also pointed to the challenge of engaging hard-to-reach-groups and expressed concern about sustainability of the program over time – and particularly once Ford Family Foundation financial support expires.

Participants widely urged the development of specific marketing tools in order to better promote SOC. Participants were hopeful that targeted marketing could bolster recruitment, engage and increase attendance for hard-to-reach groups, and further promote prevention messaging. In regard to sustainability and marketing, one participant framed the challenge as ‘capacity,’ i.e.: “I feel like, on top of running SOC, (outreach) is beyond my capacity. Capacity is my keyword. There’s so much possibility, but capacity and focus – figuring out where you’re going to put your energy – I think we need more help with that.”

Overall, participants were very positive about SOC, about its impact on their organizations both internally and externally and seemed eager, with specific ideas, to continue to promote and implement SOC as part of their services. Participants hope to develop a better plan for post-grant sustainability and to receive assistance in marketing SOC in order to reach not-yet trained members of their communities.

I would say we are now intentionally reaching out to organizations with much more focus. It’s given us a purpose to do that – and we get feedback from people saying, “I didn’t know you do that, too.” It’s expanding understanding of who we are and what we do.

ⁱ Please use the following citation format for this report: *Stewards of Children Systems-Level Focus Group Executive Summary* (CPAN, 2017).

