

# THE IMPACT OF OREGON'S STEWARDS OF CHILDREN ON PROVIDER PROGRAMS, COMMUNITY PARTNERS, AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE: A BRIEF REPORT

## Protect Our Children - Stewards of Children Systems-Level Focus Group Report December, 2017

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*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?*

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This report summarizes 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). The interviews, in particular, were designed to learn the ways in which SOC may be impacting the organizations that provide Stewards, the relationships between service organizations, and the community at large. Thirty-two participants, interviewed in three separate groups by Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect (CPAN) researchers, included site administrators, trainers, facilitators, and development personnel. At least one individual from each of the 11 POC sites participated in the interview. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using ethnographic qualitative methods (Spradley, 1979)<sup>2</sup>.

At the time of the interviews, most participating organizations had been providing SOC trainings for 24-30 months; one organization had a nearly 10 year history of Stewards delivery.

Participants were asked the following questions – 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?

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<sup>1</sup> Please use the following citation format for this report: *Stewards of Children Systems-Level Focus Group Report* (CPAN, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed description of ethnographic analysis procedures used in this study, please contact Jeff Todahl ([jtodahl@uoregon.edu](mailto:jtodahl@uoregon.edu); 541-346-0919).



- 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?
- What do you most need in order to have the desired impact in your community?
- What are the most important next steps?
- We all thought that we would be able to train a higher number of participants from a broader spectrum of the community than has proven to be true. What have been the barriers? What can we do to overcome those barriers?
- What has been the most encouraging or most hopeful outcomes of SOC to date?

The interviews were designed to investigate participants’ beliefs about Stewards-related systemic changes. What impact, for instance, is Stewards having in communities at large, what difference is it making within the organizations that are providing Stewards trainings, and how has Stewards shaped relationships between local organizations?

Four themes and 11 sub-themes emerged from the analysis of transcribed interviews (Figure 1). Participants emphasized 1) change within their organizations, 2) change between organizations, 3) change in the community, and 4) challenges associated with SOC delivery. Each theme and subtheme is described below. With only minor grammatical edits, quotes in the findings section are presented verbatim. They were selected based on the following criteria: a) clarity, b) an opinion/perspective shared by many, and c) relevance to the questions. The findings in this report – including the themes, subthemes, and verbatim statements – are an integration of the three focus group interviews and are a distilled, representative overview of comments and ideas presented by the participants.

## **THEME I: WITHIN ORGANIZATION CHANGES**

Participants believe that Stewards of Children prompted numerous changes within their organization. These changes fall across two subthemes: 1) changes among personnel and board of directors, and 2) organizational identity.

### **A. Personnel and Board of Directors**

There was broad consensus among participants that SOC has influenced their organizations’ identity and practices. This included increased awareness among staff and board members about the scope and nature of child sexual abuse, excitement that their organization is providing new or expanded abuse prevention trainings, and a new or renewed review of organizational mission. Board members of several organizations, for example, grappled with whether SOC aligns with their organization’s base mission. Some worried about “mission drift” and a too-narrow focus on child sexual abuse:

Some of our board members, who see us specifically as an intervention center, have struggled with the difference between intervention and prevention — and kind of wondering if that’s mission creep. There’s also been some internal hesitancy with this curriculum because it only focuses on sexual abuse prevention versus abuse and neglect in general. Some of us internally have had some reservations



about why we are only talking about sexual abuse prevention when we could be talking about abuse in general.

Another participant noted that initial concern about mission drift has shifted to viewing SOC as complementary to organizational aims:

I think there's a greater understanding that prevention isn't antithetical to intervention. Originally, the perception (among board members) was that prevention is mission creep. We've moved, though, from mission creep to mission complement.

Participants also indicated that there is broad and growing excitement within their organization about SOC among board members and staff, i.e., "they're excited that we're taking the reins and we're moving forward with this." Another participant stated: "It fits and everybody is super excited. I'll come in the office and people will ask, 'How many did you train this week?' Yes, it's very well accepted by our board, staff, and our volunteers." A hospital representative stated:

We have over a thousand employees and so I think it has impacted us, and it has gotten more employee involvement in something within the hospital, in terms of just employee engagement.

Others mentioned that their enthusiasm and hopefulness is bolstered by emerging local research data that suggests SOC is effective in changing knowledge and behavior:

The research behind this is helping us go out and introduce it to communities. So it's brought a lot of excitement internally in our agency because it's like this is something that could probably, I hate to use the word, sell, but it's easy to get out there and explain to people quickly.

Several participants indicated that SOC is "gaining momentum," that this is supported by emerging research data – and that this is encouraging for staff:

The data reported about behavior change, it really moved me. I'm encouraged and hopeful. You have in the training a sense that, "Oh, there's a fair number of people who are really going to do something with this." But then the statistics were bearing that out, so that was very encouraging, that intuitively what we thought was going to happen is happening.

Several participants also noted that SOC has increased staff awareness, i.e., "I think that is true of our agency as well and the people that work for us – an increased knowledge of child abuse." Another person stated: "Not only in the public perception, but I think more so internally. We're probably more aware; I think the staff is. Certainly, admittedly, we would not have not gotten there without this initiative." Others also reported that increased awareness, expansion to prevention services, and enthusiasm within the organization about SOC is impacting donor relations:

Stewards allows us to considerably increase our capacity. As a nonprofit, we rely on the generosity of many donors to keep us in business. We have to build community. We have to build a bowl of support in which we're contained. Our Stewards facilitators are our most passionate advocates – they're helping us to extend our reach into the community that we rely upon to keep our doors open. So it's an extraordinary benefit in that regard.



And I also think with donors, it's (prevention) really compelling, it's hopeful. ... It's not just a sad story about the kid coming in, and they've already been abused and we're helping them heal.

As a development person, having a stream of people coming in (to the trainings) and engaging with us, that shows that they might be interested in this as a cause. We can invite those people to come to an event, we can invite those people to volunteer. They become donors, and they become advocates.

Finally, several participants indicated that SOC has influenced on-boarding policies and training. Several organizations, for instance, now require SOC among all employees and many encourage the training for all agency volunteers:

Our (employed) CASAs are doing Stewards as part of their (training) requirement. Also, when I coordinate the volunteers, we encourage them to attend the training, and most of the time they say yes. I try to get them trained within the first two months of their volunteer service.

We've made it (Stewards) part of our onboarding process for new employees.

## **B. Organizational Identity**

Participants indicated that SOC created agency-wide introspection, i.e., "You know, we were kind of struggling with this whole 'who are we' question. Are we serving kids once they've been abused or are we trying to prevent it? How does that all fit together?" Many similar comments were shared among participants, centered in a within-organization shift in identity. Several participants indicated that providing prevention-oriented services is at the heart of their changing identity:

We were not considering ourselves as a prevention-oriented organization, and only had just begun doing outreach – other than just letting people know that we exist for our clinical services. And so it's definitely changed the dynamic internally, because now we have this new initiative, and it's gone from being an initiative to being a question about who we are as an organization. Are we a prevention-oriented organization? So it's started a lot of conversations internally that are sometimes tough, but really important ones for us to have.

We really hadn't done much prevention education, and we're a relatively small team, so it's empowered us to do something more than just put out fires constantly – giving us some legs to stand on in terms of doing something that might help prevent it from happening, even though we're seeing it daily.

For others, the shift to prevention work also marked a move to adult prevention education services:

This gave us an opportunity to reorganize our approach to prevention education. Everything was heavily weighted towards providing education to kids in schools. And our philosophy as an organization is, while there are tools that we need to give kids, it's actually adults' responsibility to keep children safe. But our education, our prevention education, offerings weren't in line with that philosophy. This gave us an opportunity to really grow our adult training offerings. We've been able to grow exponentially; just realigning what we say we're going to do with what we're actually doing.



Participants also mentioned that they now see their organizations as providing more comprehensive services in their communities:

This initiative, it builds the idea that child abuse intervention centers are comprehensive and that all of these multi-disciplinary partners can kind of inform each other and provide information about how we can best meet needs in our community. We're seen as a first point of contact for providing information about child sexual abuse and prevention. And, we're getting a lot of referrals... and (able to) refocus our outreach efforts.

Several other participants agreed that although SOC is focused on child sexual abuse, it has sparked broader abuse-related conversations within their organizations:

Stewards has allowed us, you know internally with our volunteers, to have a bigger conversation around other forms of abuse, because our advocacy center started around sexual abuse and that's what people know us for. But all of the tips and tricks in Stewards apply to reporting any form of abuse, so I think internally our volunteers feel more prepared about all the forms they may encounter – and we train our staff, too. So it has raised a bigger kind of conversation around, "Let's reach out for all of the forms abuse and what are we missing?"

Internal conversations about mission and prevention, according to several participants, has helped several organizations gain clarity about their purpose and their outreach. This internal clarity has shaped outreach efforts:

I would say that we are now intentionally reaching out to organizations with much more focus and purpose. It's given us a purpose to do that. And we get feedback now from people saying, "Well oh, I didn't know you did that, too." You know, so it's expanding their understanding of who we are and what we do.

Finally, participants mentioned that the outreach that is naturally a part of SOC trainings has created a secondary benefit – increased within-organization understanding of population-level work and the use of social media toward advancing organizational aims:

People in our organization are becoming savvy about social media and they're taking pictures and sending them to me. They know what kind of stories I want (to promote prevention), and so they're sending those to me and interacting more on social to support what I'm posting. So I think it's taken a long time for that to happen, but I think they have an idea of what I need to do the job.

## **THEME II: CHANGE BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS**

Participants spoke at length about changes between their organization and other partnering and new-partner organizations. These between-institution changes included three subthemes: 1) identity change among partnering organizations, 2) expanded and deeper collaboration, and 3) a generative or 'blooming' effect.

### **A. Identity Change among Partnering Organizations**

Several participants indicated that, as a result of providing SOC trainings, their organizations' reputation and brand have changed among partner organizations. Several indicated that their organization has a broader



community profile, including groups who previously did not know about them or their services – and some of whom now assist with SOC marketing:

Lots of people have not known about us either and have said, “Oh my goodness, you know, I didn’t know you did that, didn’t know what you did at all.” So, you know, it has introduced us.

Now, we’re recognized. Now we can collaborate – “Oh you’re the people that do those trainings.” Before, we were non-existent to them.

Everybody keeps calling us the best kept secret. So now we’re turning that around and saying, “That’s not what we want, help us get the word out.” They’re becoming some of our best publicity agents, these other agencies. They (several organizations/partners) did all the marketing for some of the trainings that we’ve done recently, so that’s kind of cool.

Participants also indicated that partner organizations see them as having a broader community footprint, including: 1) as a provider of comprehensive services, 2) as a first point of contact, 3) as a leader, and 4) as a convener of partnering organizations:

This initiative builds on the idea that child abuse intervention centers are comprehensive and that our multi-disciplinary partners can inform each other about best meeting needs in our community. So that’s been really valuable, our partners increasing confidence in our organization as the first point of contact for information about child sexual abuse, prevention... referral and outreach.

We became a convener in our community and we were able to engage some desired partners in a conversation... it’s extending that dialogue, using this as a platform for a broader dialogue – from I don’t want to talk about this to I want to get involved.

According to participants, SOC has fostered a sense of increased trust and credibility for their organizations – this made possible by their association with a state-wide effort, a research evaluation of SOC, and their affiliation with The Ford Family Foundation, a highly regarded Oregon-based foundation:

We’re just seen as more of a trusted partner – that we’re not just on the intervention side and performing evaluations, but I think we’ve been able to bring this prevention component, and the trust that staff have been able to build. And so, while trust started with prevention, I think it’s bleeding into trust for the evaluation as well.

We’ve benefitted from this, having all the partnerships involved – and knowing it is a statewide effort that we’re a part of; multiple agencies working together with us for the same goal. I think that’s really served our organization well, and more importantly, I hope that serves our community well.

I think for us, having the relationship with the Ford Family Foundation has given us additional credibility.

## **B. Collaboration – Expanded, Deepened**



Participants gave considerable attention to the role SOC has played in expanding and deepening their relationships with existing partners and the creation of many new partners. This included an expansion of roles with partner organizations, including policy support and consultation:

It is sort of this realization that there's a resource that they can go to. I think that's the main thing, after providing Stewards we follow up and ask what other ways can we assist your organization in developing policies and procedures to sort of forward this work, via your organization as well as via the individuals. And so I think that's a need that we didn't really even know existed.

We're getting a pulse on how can we can put ourselves out there; our executive director is saying, for example, "I will personally look at your policies and give you advice on how you may change some of the ways you operate your organization."

I did two afterschool programs... and they subsequently changed their whole code of conduct and their staff meetings to make sure that it met criteria that we discussed. It was really important to them

Several participants described new partnerships that have formed. One individual represented the sentiment of many when saying "It's allowed us to create many more partnerships with other agencies in our county that we didn't have before, which is really very helpful." Another participant indicated that SOC has acted like a bridge and another described new networks that have taken shape:

Stewards allows us to build bridges to other players in the community who are working in the prevention areas. Primarily the schools and other county and nonprofit organizations... This allows us to be a player. It's helped us to build bridges with organizations we would not have natural alliances with if we were simply limited to intervention.

We've been using Stewards as a kind of push. Individuals who have been trained are from networks throughout the community; the DA's office, law enforcement, you name it – they're either connected or know people. Helping to carry the load, so to speak. So that's where we're coming from in a small county that really focuses on partnership, working together and supporting each other. It's been huge.

Others indicated that the "concrete" nature of the SOC training was useful for starting focused and purposeful conversations with new partners:

We are now intentionally reaching out to organizations beyond our immediate partners, for some for the first time – and with much more clear focus and purpose. It's given us a purpose to do that. So for instance, we get feedback from people saying, "Well, oh, I didn't know you did that, too." It's expanding their understanding of who we are and what we do.

I think the structure and organization of the training enables a catalyst kind of environment, including volunteer facilitators. When you strike a chord with the right person in the community, it has a real potential for that catalytic effect. They're not involved in your normal surroundings as an intervention program. (With the SOC training) they can reach more unaffiliated people. I think that's where the catalytic effect comes in.



Participants also indicated that SOC assisted their organizations in accessing previously “hard to reach” groups, prospective partners and trainees. New trainee groups included, for example, firefighters, an orthodontics office, insurance agencies, a bank, and fathers who are in prison.

It’s started relationships for us. We’ve had places that have been harder to break into, and because we’re offering this now, we’ve had relationships that have started or grown, you know – and now bringing the community together.

It is huge, like propellant for starting conversations. We got people in the room who we’ve been struggling to engage; going after and going after and going after, trying to build the relationship. But once they were in the room and able to talk about how this can help address Erin’s law regulations (school-based sexual abuse prevention), it was huge.

Participants described more robust communication across organizations and more substantive collaboration – reflected, for instance, in shared marketing strategies:

This hadn’t happened prior to this, just the communication across agencies. You know, I’ve had four or five calls with groups that had gone through it (the training). An individual called me, described a situation, and asked “What do you think about this?” It is opening up communication with these other groups. That’s been a definite shift in our community. Never seen that before, at least around this topic.

The collaboration with the other organizations and the community shows up in marketing, too. When I’m making a post, I’m also tagging it with some other organizations and that’s kind of new for us, as a result of the Stewards of Children, working together. I will post other organization’s things on our page, and when we’re doing a training, I will mention them. So, it’s definitely been a good thing for everybody, the whole community.

### **C. A Generative, “Blooming” Effect in Partnerships**

Participants seemed to widely agree that SOC has amplified and expanded their efforts in several ways – including playing a role in the expansion of their organizations’ volunteer base, by creating enthusiasm due to practical solutions and next steps, and by inspiring a more across-community collective effort to reduce child sexual abuse. One participant reflected a conversation she indicated she has heard and had many times: “Hey, we’ve taken this training. What are you doing to protect our kids? It’s definitely created this blooming effect.”

Many participants indicated that Steward’s concrete approach to the prevention of child sexual abuse is an important factor in generating prevention-related conversations and community-wide and between-organization collaboration:

I really like that it is so concrete; we need an entrée for starting that conversation, and it’s wonderful to talk about who we are and what we do and share that information. Stewards gives you a reason to sit down and have that conversation and then have some action items.

It’s created its own effect where people are then teaching these new agencies about what we do and they reach out to us, and so it’s definitely a really interesting kind of, we reach out, we reach out, and now we’re seeing groups reaching in to receive the training.



It's a different dynamic than when I started, and I think a lot of that has to do with Stewards being more out in the community, it changes that culture. It changes the ability to talk about it. It creates a community conversation.

Because every time I did a training, "okay, what's the next step? What are we doing next?" And this gives us something to say, "Okay, well here's the next component, and we're going to bring more to you." But this one is a really important step, and the way it's packaged, especially for educators, for ESD, for behavioral health. I mean they're going, "We love the way it's packaged." And so it's been huge for me across all of our networks.

Participants also indicated that SOC has sparked and expanded local and state-wide networks, inspired in part by a belief that a collective effort is underway. One participant stated: "They're actually opening up, it (SOC) has helped to open up new networks, new places for us... this is going to be one of our goals and this is something that we're all going to work towards together." Others shared similar ideas:

We've had some success now, and part of it is the peer pressure and just, you know, kind of a snowball effect. When you have one type of organization, or you have one example of a leading institution that's been trained, everybody wants to be a part of that club. Which is really cool, but it's just a matter of getting your foot in the door with that first one.

To be able to share that information with other advocacy centers across the state I think has been very helpful, and it just wasn't a line of communication that was as open and clear and as easy as it is now that we're all part of this collective effort.

Members of these different prevention networks, many of them have become volunteer facilitators. As a result of this, we are seeing a lot more of a volunteer base, a lot more community involvement. As a network, this is something concrete that our network can point to; something that is being accomplished. People are saying we actually are moving the needle.

Finally, participants suggested that the growth in their delivery of SOC has created some tension among a few groups – tension primarily related to organizations who have or whom intend to provide similar education and prevention services:

We had a nonprofit organization in our community that was offering some resources that were similar; they felt that maybe we were stepping on their toes a little bit.

We have another nonprofit that is doing something, not really similar, but they're also in the community talking about sexual abuse – that's kind of dampened us doing trainings.

### **THEME III: CHANGES IN THE COMMUNITY**

Participants attributed several changes in the community to SOC. The community, in this sense, is the general public -- non-institution relationships and natural person to person networks. 'Changes in the Community' included two subthemes: 1) changes in perception of the organization in the eyes of the general public, and 2) increased awareness in the general public about child sexual abuse.



## A. Perception and Awareness of Organizations' Services

Participants believe that members of the general public, due to SOC, are more aware of their organization and that those who may have been previously aware may now have a more comprehensive and more accurate understanding of organizational mission and services. In that regard, one participant stated: "I think there has been a shift in the community perception of our organization – we're there before the abuse happens in order to help prevent it."

Many participants indicated that their organization and mission are much more well-known by the general public:

It's really illuminated and drawn out a part of our mission that's always been there, but now it's more visible. Now, adults are actively and vocally engaged in it in our communities, and they see that our organization is really the clearinghouse, the nexus, or whatever you want to call it, for information and content related to child abuse prevention. And, (we're here) for people who want to learn how they can get more involved. That's been really heartening to see.

I've been doing Facebook around the trainings, and it leads to a lot of new awareness about our Center, demonstrated by new Likes. We get a ton of likes when we run the ad for the training. It definitely brings attention to it.

Just speaking from the virtual community, you can see it in numbers. You can see the numbers of followers going up. You can see the numbers of people that are engaged over time, and the engagement leads to reach – posts going out to more people. That has just been going up steadily.

Participants also agreed that SOC has helped their organization to be seen more fully by the general public as providers of skilled prevention education services and as a group with expertise on child sexual abuse:

Just increased awareness of our center – "Oh, you are those experts," and we're seen more as experts by the general population. This awareness piece grows over time in this process.

Now, we're an educator in the community. It's allowed us to play a new role, and, consequently, the community is perceiving us as educators.

I think our organization always has been known as the child abuse intervention center. Although we've always had that education component, it's now much more out there.

The change in perception about education services has also extended to a new level of awareness about child sexual abuse prevention designed for and delivered to adults:

We are shifting towards more adult education. Adults are now more aware of what we do. They've previously known us as an organization that only did child abuse assessments and child trauma counseling, though we've been doing prevention education... for (adults) for more than 10 years.

## B. Raised Awareness about Child Sexual Abuse



Participants suggested that SOC has contributed to an overall increase in public awareness about child sexual abuse. Some believed that increased awareness about child sexual abuse also elevated awareness about other forms of child maltreatment and that more people are recognizing the role for adults in preventing abuse.

So, it really has raised the awareness of child abuse as an issue in our community that I'm not sure would have existed otherwise.

There truly is a larger understanding, or a larger awareness of the topic, at least in our area. We've been able to reach people that had no idea... I really do feel like people are thinking about it – including recognizing that it's the adult's responsibility, not the child, and that's kind of backwards with how we've always done it.

I think the training has changed a lot peoples' perception. This issue has been shrouded – the more you can kind of say this issue isn't in the dark, then neither are we (our organization). We've moved our public trainings from our center to the library for that reason – it opens up the conversation; it's not just for a slice of people who walk in our doors or know where we're located.

Several participants reported that the awareness-raising impact of SOC is bolstered by promising local evaluation data that suggests the training is effective in increasing knowledge and promoting behavioral change, i.e., “that this (the evaluation) is Oregon specific is really promising and really a great step in the right direction.”

So it is bringing more visibility, and there is that respect factor, I think, by having an effective curriculum. You get respect from that. Just that credibility factor of we know what we're talking about and we're willing to practice what we preach.

To have this collection of data that shows true outcomes in behavior that we can share with others gives us a great deal of integrity... and encouragement for people to take the training and to continue to fund the training. Because people always say, “How do you know it works?” Well, this is how we know it works (outcome data), so that's been very encouraging for us.

## **THEME IV: CHALLENGES**

Participants identified four primary challenges with SOC delivery and their implications for next steps in program delivery. They included: 1) time, 2) broad discomfort with the topic of child sexual abuse, 3) attendance and marketing, and 4) sustainability.

### **A. Time**

Participants were in wide agreement that the time length of the training itself is a barrier, as is the energy and time required to successfully schedule the training. With regard to scheduling the training, one participant reflected the sentiment of many: “It is a long, long process, and it's frustrating.” Other participants stated:

I mean it's all about time, because you take the time to talk to them and arrange the training, right? So that's more time on top of it. Let's get it on the calendar. Let's exchange 20 emails. Let's now meet in person. So there is a lot of time.



After doing all that (time taken for training invitations), then they still have to meet with their committee to approve it. So, you know, to get on a calendar for October, for me, is a big deal because it's going to take from the time I come back from this conference until October to get it all set, and that's just one school district. If you want to do more, it takes time because of all the hoops you have to jump through.

You're constantly having to battle. There's all this stuff that has to be done to make these trainings happen... This is not a sort of just add water program.

Participants indicated that the challenge to schedule trainings is compounded by the length of the training:

For youth serving organizations, and especially for schools, as far as training goes and as far as staying on top of advances in their fields and new policies in the curriculum and assessment, they're spinning a lot of plates at the same time. Fitting this in, especially since the structure of Stewards is fairly inflexible as far as time goes and as far as how it's set up, has been a challenge.

I think it's overcoming the time commitment, that it's two and half and really more likely three hours. Everyone comes out with, "I've got kids, I've got a job, I've got all these things and time is an obstacle." And yet, I don't know that there is a way around it. I don't think we can expect anybody to just learn what they need to know in 15 minutes, you don't retain the presentation.

It is common for groups, for example, to request that the training be delivered in smaller time segments across two or three sittings:

I do know that sort of that first conversation when you say, "This is what we're asking," and they say, "Well, can you break it up and do one hour for, you know, three months in a row or something?" Well, no. That's always the question, "Well, can we do an hour one day and an hour..." No, that's not how it works.

Participants also indicated that the time it takes to promote the training, in effect marketing efforts, is also significantly time consuming:

I think we just totally underestimated the amount of time and effort that it takes to change the negative perception that it's okay to talk about child sexual abuse. It's okay to do this. It's acceptable, you know. And so it was really challenging for us to figure that out. It took us a whole year to figure out marketing... Maybe we need more outreach, but again, there are time constraints on this.

## **B. Discomfort with Topic**

Many participants emphasized that the sensitivity of child sexual abuse, including general discomfort with the topic and social norms that suppress conversation, act as core challenges in program delivery and attendance.

The thing that's really hard is the subject. When you say, "I'm offering a training on the prevention of child sexual abuse," as soon as you use the word sexual, they're cooking dinner. They're done. Yeah, you don't want to talk about that.



People don't want to talk about this stuff. It's that simple. The people who attend are largely mandated to attend.

Participants also suggested, given the traumatic and painful realities associated with child sexual abuse, that ensuring trainers and facilitators are supported and that their experience is validated is also an important challenge. One participant stated that this is a constant need: "It's always going to be difficult, the trauma that you absorb as a facilitator." This persistent need is complicated by the challenge to carve out time to provide support, i.e., "I have all these things to do, but I don't have time to schedule to meet with this person; to sit and meet with them, and then follow up appropriately. So, consistently I think (about the importance of) staffing." Others stated:

Even people who haven't had it affect them, just sitting and listening to survivor stories, for some people who have not been exposed to this topic, it can be traumatizing. It can be difficult to imagine two or three hours of thinking about this topic. Some people don't even want to think about it at all.

The reason that they're (training attendees) disclosing to you is because of the trust you gained with them. I think a challenge is also to protect the facilitators and give them enough training and enough tools to be able to manage and handle that situation, and I have not seen that yet, or at least I haven't been in that field long enough where I feel, "Oh yeah, I'm really ready for this."

I think we throw many resources into training the facilitators, but not with training facilitators with how they handle it emotionally and physically. How are they taking care of themselves?

I think it's fantastic and we have such a great team of facilitators, and I'm often wondering, not only is it about how to keep the project going, but I feel very personally responsible for their (facilitators) well-being and for their continued engagement and their continued growth, and I think that's a really big ask.

### C. Attendance & Marketing

Participants spoke extensively about the challenge of attendance at trainings – and in particular reaching beyond people who are required to attend, and the need to account for cultural and regional differences in marketing strategies.

It can be so frustrating in those first two years. You just feel like you're spinning your wheels and wasting your time, and you know, people are resistant. But, as more momentum happens, and I think as you sort of see every interaction as a seed, then it's a little bit easier to, I think, to accept rejection, because you think, well, I'll be seeing you again.

You know, it just is constant planting of seeds and realizing those relationships and those interactions you have are more likely going to come to fruition, but not necessarily as quickly as you want them to.

Participants expressed many ideas about the role of marketing in increasing attendance, though many also mentioned the importance of local champions and person to person promotion of the training: "I have a champion. That one person, and it takes going to all those meetings, meeting all those people, and finding that right person, *that* person. It's finding that one person."



Many general marketing recommendations, all for the purpose of increasing attendance and reaching broader audiences, were offered. Participants suggested that marketing training and support is important for their organizations' next steps, i.e., "I think that for us to take some next steps on this, that (marketing) needs to be a portion of the education." Several participants emphasized the need and challenges associated with devoting time and budgets toward marketing:

We didn't realize this quickly enough – the three of us on our leadership team weren't able to devote as much time as we needed to publicize our training. We picked all the low hanging fruit, the school districts that we were very familiar with and health and human services at the county level. And so we realized that we needed to put some money into positions to do that. We did that this year, and now we have a website that's specific just to Stewards of Children in our county and a Facebook page.

But the people we really need to get to are the people who don't know anything (about child sexual abuse). That takes marketing dollars. You can hire all the staff in the world you want, but if somebody in there is not marketing, and you're not providing any marketing budget for it, you're not going to reach the everyday person, and it's going to take a different messaging and emotional appeal.

Because over three years, we have done great work and reached our low hanging fruit, and so what's left is those that we're not getting to. And going door to door, most people are not going to do that. I think it's going to take a different approach and dollars spent in a different way to reach that next group of people, who in some ways really are those who need it the most.

Participants also emphasized the challenges they've encountered with marketing to certain groups – and the importance for tailoring strategies accordingly. This included culturally appropriate marketing strategies and trainings delivered in native languages, male involvement, and rural and urban considerations. Several participants suggested that marketing could also leverage promising SOC research data and information that reveals the prevalence of child sexual abuse in local communities:

It would be really interesting to take some of the (prevalence) data that we've already been collecting and use it in a way that can impact perceptions, such as, "Oh, it does happen here. People say that they've been abused in my city. Wow, we should really talk about this." I think it could be really powerful for people to step up and overcome that. Because there is an assumption that it doesn't happen here. We're not affected by it.

That (child sexual abuse) doesn't apply to us. You know, that means that out of a thousand people in our town, a hundred have been abused. They just don't believe it... It takes ownership of this problem before you really want to create a solution. If you don't believe that there's any kind of issue, then why would you take a three-hour training or why would you let some foreigner come in and tell you what your community needs. It's like, "You don't know what our community needs."

Participants indicated that successfully recruiting men to attend the training is a persistent challenge and urged strategic planning, framing and marketing:

We need a strategic plan to get more male facilitators and more males engaged in the trainings. I mean, every case that's portrayed in the curriculum is male-induced issue – and only 30 percent of the people taking the training are male. I would say this needs to be an out-in-the-front issue.



It's finding that buy-in, finding that male who gets it. It's not just knowing your audience but knowing how to reach and how to communicate with that audience. I think this is big. Or, having the person standing at the front of the room, you know, the fire department chief saying, "They (SOC trainers) know their stuff."

Several participants also urged the importance for tailoring marketing strategies for rural populations. This included accommodations for privacy risks/low anonymity in small communities, a need to emphasize relationship building in marketing strategies, and concerns with poorly developed infrastructure. One participant, who works extensively in both urban and rural communities, emphasized the potential unique impact of SOC trainings in low population areas:

A lot of small communities are really close-knit. You start talking about this (child sexual abuse), and our friends, our families, are the ones that are going to get highlighted. And so, because I'm an urban and rural coordinator, I see those two functioning very differently in how they operate.

We're starting, just starting, to get to our rural population, getting to the point where they're talking, but it started in high population areas and is spreading out. I just think it takes much longer than we ever anticipated to reach those extremely rural areas due to the social contracts that are integrated into the issue.

Determining the infrastructure when you're in the rural space – is the infrastructure there to effectively handle the reports that come out of our rural areas? Because, often what I find is... the infrastructure is so (underdeveloped) that reports aren't handled well or people get fired from their jobs for speaking up. Is that a place where you want to be doing trainings, where the structure isn't there to handle it? Are you creating more damage than good? It's hard.

#### **D. Sustainability**

Participants described concerns and challenges regarding their organization's capacity to support the long term viability of SOC. In Oregon, given that grantees received short-term contracts, some participants expressed anxiety about their ability to sustain SOC over time. In that regard, one participant remarked:

You know, everybody knew that this was a three-year project, and so the question was, Okay, so after year three, then what? There's nothing else. So why buy into now?

Participants also pointed to challenges associated with leveraging current partnerships in an effort to build broader, shared capacity for long-term sustainability:

We are seeing positive growth at our center as a result of this initiative. So, I want it to be co-branded and co-presented and co-owned, not only by ourselves and the facilitators in Darkness to Light, but also by these community partners who, in some sense, want to start doing their own trainings and their own facilitation.

Participants expressed concern that, given day to day programming demands in the short term, they have inadequate resources to build organizational capacity for long-term growth and sustainability:



I feel like, on top of running Stewards of Children, (outreach) is beyond my capacity. As much as I know that's where I want to go, and I think it's where we want to go as a community. So capacity is my keyword here in terms of challenges. There's so much possibility, but capacity and focus, like figuring out where you're going to put your energy, I think we need more help with that. Problem solving it together and sharing how we're doing those things across our groups would be really helpful.

Participants also pointed to the formidable challenge of 1) identifying the root causes of child sexual abuse, and 2) drawing on that knowledge to develop a plan that widely engages the general public. This was described by one participant in this way:

We have the training to identify the signs and symptoms, but we have not discussed what is driving the behavior... Why is this (child sexual abuse) so prevalent? What is it that is going on that is creating this issue? Knowing that, how do we then strategically think about how we're going to get the community engaged and involved? But, there is really no blueprint.

## SUMMARY

In summary, it appears clear that respondents believe that the grant to support their implementation of SOC in their communities has, overall, been beneficial. By becoming a part of their organizations' offerings, it has changed their organizations from within by broadening their mission statements; changing their own internal view of how prevention activities fit within a traditional service providing framework; and, acting as a catalyst for self-reflection on what it means in the long-term to be providing community-level education on child abuse prevention.

Participants uniformly agreed that SOC has productively impacted their relationship with other organizations, and has sparked new and meaningful conversations about child sexual abuse and abuse prevention among many community groups. For many participating organizations, SOC fostered a kind of organizational introspection, i.e., who are we? What is our mission – and what is the role of prevention in our work? Consequently, participants reported an expanded role for their work, an increased profile and status in their community, a broader understanding of the services they provide, and enhanced cross-collaboration with community partners. 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 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 for SOC training providers. 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.

Finally, there was a fairly universal recommendation for developing specific marketing and marketing expertise to better promote SOC in the communities where the sites operate. Participants were hopeful that targeted marketing could bolster recruitment, engage and increase attendance for hard-to-reach groups, and further promote prevention messaging.

Overall, participants expressed positively about being a SOC site, about the impact on their organization both internally and externally and seem eager, with specific ideas, to continue to promote and implement SOC as



part of the offerings of their organization. They hope to develop a better plan for post-grant sustainability and to receive assistance in marketing SOC to expand the audiences that participate in each community.



**Figure 1**  
**Themes and Subthemes**

**WITHIN ORGANIZATION**

- PERSONNEL AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS
- ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY

**BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS**

- IDENTITY CHANGE AMONG PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS
- COLLABORATION – EXPANDED, DEEPENED
- GENERATIVE

**COMMUNITY**

- PERCEPTION AND AWARENESS OF ORGANIZATIONS’ SERVICES
- RAISED AWARENESS ABOUT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

**CHALLENGES**

- TIME
- DISCOMFORT WITH TOPIC
- ATTENDANCE & MARKETING
- SUSTAINABILITY

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<sup>i</sup> The Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect (CPAN) of the University of Oregon is the research group hired to work with The Ford Family Foundation to determine its efficacy and the short and long-term impact of the Stewards of Children curriculum on participants, grantee organizations, and the communities in which these organizations serve. For additional information about this report, please contact Jeff Todahl ([jtodahl@uoregon.edu](mailto:jtodahl@uoregon.edu); (541) 346-0919).