

## Book Review

Mathews, B., & Bross, D. C. (Eds.). (2015). *Mandatory reporting laws and the identification of severe child abuse and neglect*. New York: Springer.

Reviewed by Peggy Proudfoot Harman, MSW, Ph.D.  
Marshall University

*Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, Volume 12, Number 2 (2015)  
Copyright 2015, Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB)

This text may be freely shared among individuals, but it may not be republished in any medium without express written consent from the authors and advance notification of ASWB.

With 25 chapters and more than 500 pages of material written by 40 of the most experienced experts in the field of child abuse and neglect, this book is a valuable reference for anyone associated with this field. Issues covered include medical perspectives with regard to bioethical considerations and the use of a public health model to intervene in child abuse and neglect cases; the history and current context of mandatory reporting laws; theoretical and legal debates; economic issues; and international challenges. Six sections are included in this text, and every aspect of child abuse and neglect is covered. Recently, a situation arose where I needed to comment on a pressing event regarding professional training of child welfare workers and mandatory reporters. A strict deadline was imposed for responses, and I found it difficult to find material about outcomes of particular trainings and how other states train child welfare professionals. Although there are many websites devoted to the issue, finding material about training child welfare professionals to include mandated reporters on a nationwide basis is difficult, because the information is diffuse and there is not one particular conduit on the topic. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to review the book and found it to be an invaluable academic resource for this particular situation.

With regard to issues of training child welfare professionals and mandated reporters, the text is overflowing with expert information. As an expert in child maltreatment, research, and curriculum

development, one of the texts many authors, M. C. Kenny, recommends a multilevel training approach to develop the most effective child welfare service workers and mandated reporters. Kenny states that the primary level of training should include pre-service or (university based) education, in-service (on the job) training, and continuing education. Baginsky and Macpherson (2005) discuss the necessity of preservice or “university” training, but maintain that curriculum in many disciplines is too “crowded” to teach child maltreatment assessment and intervention, stating that “too much competes for too little time” (p. 336). Crittendon and Zerk (2012) found in a survey of university department heads in social work-related fields that they “acknowledged the limited opportunities for faculty to teach child maltreatment issues,” recommending that accreditation bodies of social work related fields should address this issue and recommend inclusion of child maltreatment curriculum. These are the elements that the discipline of social work teaches in its entirety. Social work does not have issues with a curriculum that is “too crowded” with other material to include child maltreatment, social issues, social interventions or social policy—it is social work’s sole purpose.

Scarcella et al. (2004) indicated that the idea of child protective services cases placing undue stress on the system is inaccurate and highlighted that most expenditures in child services are allocations for foster care and residential services. A 2007 report from Washington State Department of Health

Services (2007) explained that 20% of child protective services workers' time is spent on investigations, but the percentage of resources allocated to child services to include Child Protective Services is much lower. The report maintains that other states had similar results. Based on a 2007 DHHS study, as reported by Drake and Jonson-Reid, the need for CPS investigative workers nationally is approximately 7000 full time equivalents, but is often different for rural areas based on the need for workers to attend to other responsibilities in rural areas and be counted as part-time (Drake & Jonson-Reid, 2007, p. 42.)

The previous information was extrapolated from *Mandatory Reporting Laws and the Identification of Severe Child Abuse and Neglect*. In a commentary that I was asked to write regarding a state amendment on child welfare services, my response was enhanced by the materials of over eight experts in the field found in one comprehensive text. Another beauty of this comprehensive work is the focus on international issues of child abuse and neglect and recommendations for various countries, as well as the United States. The references are extensive.

As a result of having access to this book, I was able to show the need for formal training of child welfare professionals and mandated reporters, as well as ongoing continuing education and in-house training. The information was researched from experts in the field, well written and organized, which assisted in providing accurate details needed in a very tight time frame.

Because of the massive amount of information contained in the text, I used a personal experience to highlight the book's practical use for a difficult situation that required a quick and thorough response. As an academic, I highly recommend this text for use in social work classes and/or as a reference.