

## **CHILD WELFARE WORKERS' ASSESSMENTS OF SUSPECTED VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF FAMILY LAW DISPUTES**

Gabriella Knutsson Alner och Åsa Källström

*Institutionen för beteende-, social- och rättsvetenskap, Örebro Universitet*

When child welfare services (CW) deal with information about violence against a child while the child's parents are simultaneously involved in a family law dispute, it can be challenging for CW workers to assess the violence. The aim of this study is to analyze how assessments of suspected violence are described in CW investigations in Sweden when the child's parents are involved in a family law dispute. Text analysis of 32 CW investigations from six different municipalities in Sweden was conducted using a version of a multiple case study. Our analysis revealed that the CW workers more or less explicitly made individual violence assessments. They assessed either that the child had been exposed to violence, that the presence of violence could not be definitively established, or that the child had not been exposed to violence. However, alongside the analysis of violence, aspects of the family law dispute were also a part of the discussion about the child's situation. Our analysis showed that the inclusion of the family law dispute had an impact on the risk assessment and the final determination of the child's primary needs. In many assessments, the violence may therefore lose its significance in favor of the conflict.

**Nyckelord:** Child welfare, child protection, child abuse, family law, child welfare assessments, child welfare investigations