

**ACTIVITIES OF THE  
TURKISH  
ASSOCIATION OF  
SOCIAL WORKERS  
DURING THE  
PANDEMIC**

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*March-September 2020*

**ACTIVITIES OF THE TURKISH ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS DURING  
THE PANDEMIC: MARCH-SEPTEMBER 2020**



Turkish Association of Social Workers Publication  
Ankara, 2020

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**Citation:** Turkish Association of Social Workers (SHUDER). (2020). Activities Of  
The Turkish Association of Social Workers During The Pandemic: March-September  
2020. Turkish Association of Social Workers Publication: Ankara.

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# INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus infection spreading across the world, the first case detected in Turkey is described by the Ministry of Health on March 11 2020. The first death linked to the virus in Turkey took place on March 17 2020. Turkish Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said in a statement on April 1 2020- that cases of Coronavirus spread all over Turkey. With the emergence of the first case, data for the Coronavirus by the Ministry of Health "Turkey Daily Coronavirus Statement" under the name began to be shared with the public. In the remaining 6 months as of September 2020; the number of cases of Coronavirus originated in Turkey, 285.000 in total, the total number of death 6.850, and the total number of healed patients reached 255.000.<sup>1</sup>



The Coronavirus pandemic was affected public services in parallel with the increase of cases across the country. Education has been one of the most important areas where the impact of social isolation was felt due to the COVID-19 outbreak. In order not to interrupt education as much as possible to the best of state's ability as of March 16 2020, 'distance education' decision has been taken for millions of students from primary schools to universities.

The Coronavirus spread throughout Turkey, most of the companies other than industrial/production facilities and public institutions and organizations were switched to the remote working systems as of March 22 2020.

<sup>1</sup> <https://covid19.saglik.gov.tr/>

In the circular of the Ministry of Interior dated March 16 2020; in center and venues where a wide variety of artistic, sports, social and cultural activities (theatres, cinemas, show centers, concert halls, restaurants, cafeterias, swimming pools, sports centers, etc.) are carried out these activities were temporarily stopped. On March 19 2020; the Ministry of Youth and Sports announced that the leagues of football, basketball, volleyball, and handball were postponed due to the Coronavirus outbreak. Within the under the extent measures regarding social mobility; a curfew has been imposed on those aged 65 and over as of March 21, 2020, and for those under the age of 20 as of April 3 2020. As of April 3 2020; all entries/exits from 31 provincial borders by land, air, and sea were suspended. As of April 10 2020; a partial curfew has been imposed in the relevant 31 cities on weekends (including official holidays and national holidays). In the process, "normalization" plans were brought to the agenda as of May 2020, in line with the statements by the Government officials, indicating that the COVID-19 started to be brought under control based on official data. Effective from June 1 2020; it has been announced to the public that the restrictions will be lifted gradually, and the transition to a "new normal" life has been initiated in this direction.

Social workers in Turkey work in various institutions and organizations that:

- Hospitals, healthy life centers, health directorates, etc. affiliated to the Ministry of Health; health institutions such as Alcohol and Drug Addicts Treatment and Research Centre and community mental health centers
- Women's shelters, nursing homes, disabled care centers, children's homes, social service centers, etc. affiliated to the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services
- Family courts, juvenile courts, criminal execution institutions, probation directorates, victim support services directorates etc. affiliated to the Ministry of Justice
- In addition to these, social workers work in dormitories, local administrations, and non-governmental organizations, that is, institutions and organizations.

Most of the groups that receive service in institutions, where social workers work are vulnerable groups that may be most effected in the pandemic. Social workers have been active in the public sector, local governments, and non-governmental organizations to serve people effected by COVID-19. For example, an important work carried out in the public sector is “filiation”. Within the scope of combating COVID-19; social workers took part in the groups that carried out field investigations in order to determine the disease agent, source, transmission route, and take protection and control measures after the notification of the cases. In this process, the risk of social workers to get the infection has increased, and many social workers were infected with Coronavirus.

## **Publications**

Spreading all over the country after the first case of the COVID-19 outbreak in Turkey, social work, as a profession that concerns public health as well as occupational groups serving in the field of healthcare, has made it necessary to undertake the responsibility of information. In this process, various publications have been prepared with the contributions of Turkish Association of Social Workers (SHUDER), social workers, academicians, students. A brief summary of these contents is below:

### **What We Will Learn as Social Workers from the Global Outbreak**

The Coronavirus pandemic, which started in China and spread all over the world, firsthand showed its face with the health dimension and affected humanity in an unprepared and widespread manner. As the world had to fight the unforeseen and uncertainty, social workers faced a situation previously unexpected. The theme determined by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) for "World Social Work Day 2020" was 'Promoting the Importance of Human Relationships'.

Initially using a handshake image, IFSW also changed its posters in parallel with the situation that arose due to the coronavirus epidemic, using two human figures that did not touch each other but bowed respectfully. The concept of "social distancing", which is frequently used nowadays, has also found a response with these visuals, and human relations have evolved with the pandemic, reminding the importance of understanding that social workers requires thinking both oneself and the other. Social workers are concerned about the effects of Coronavirus on individuals, families, other people in the community, and their own well-being, just like other healthcare professionals.

Social workers recognize their responsibility to encourage outbreak prevention efforts (including dissemination of accurate information from reliable sources) and to help address the anxiety and other concerns that arise as a result of this public health crisis. Turkish Association of Social Workers (SHUDER) is ready to work on multiple fronts in the total fight, especially to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to provide access to needed social services, including advocacy for risk groups.

### **COVID-19 Brochure**

A Brochure for social workers was prepared by the Turkish Association of Social Workers.<sup>2</sup> The brochure briefly included:

"What Can You Do?"

→ Learn About COVID-19 (References from major global and local sources of information are given, emphasizing the importance of accessing reliable sources on Coronavirus)

"Micro and Mezzo Suggestions"

→ Simple Recommendations for Our Health (Reduce contact; do not rely on every information; learn to deal with stress; change focus; keep yourself busy)

→ Preventive Measures

"Macro Suggestions"

→ Possible problems that may be encountered by population groups that fall into the area of interest and intervention of social work and suggestions regarding the services they may need are included)

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<sup>2</sup> <http://shuder.org/Resimler/bd9c444e-17c0-4cba-a8bf-43ce79afd8c5shuder-covid-19-brosurpdf.pdf>

## **Is COVID-19 a Social Issue?**

In the article, which draws attention to the social aspect and social effects of COVID-19, the "role of the social worker in the pandemic process" as a professional who takes care of public health and public interest is discussed. The importance of acting as an 'intellectual social worker' who takes mind and science as a guide is stated. The article also emphasizes the need for a welfare state for the implementation of social protection and social policies require to combat Coronavirus.

## **"Social Work in Pandemic" Information Letter**

In the article, it was emphasizes that the "crisis intervention and psychosocial support approach" is one of the priority intervention approaches that can be used for social work in the pandemic. The main objectives and principles of psychosocial support services in disaster and emergency situations are included. Intervention tools that can be used in psychosocial studies to be applied in the field after disasters and emergencies are briefly described. The groups in which social workers will work in the pandemic are also specified in the article.

## **SHUDER Journal of Social Work: "Pandemic and Social Work Special Issue"**

The volume of July-December 2020 the Journal of Social Work, published periodically by the Turkish Association of Social Workers (SHUDER), is devoted to the pandemic based on the COVID-19 agenda.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://shuder.org/Resimler/959f9722-72d9-45f0-b560-a6ae6ce3779fsh-dergisi-temmuz-aralik-2020pdf.pdf>

## Organizational Activities

Turkish Association of Social Workers has carried out various studies on the organization of colleagues during the pandemic process with its 23 branches. These studies can be summarized as follows:

### World Social Work Day Celebration



World Social Work Day events, which are celebrated annually on the 3rd Tuesday of March, have been postponed within the scope of COVID-19 measures. Within the scope of these measures, Turkish Association of Social Workers shared a letter containing measures to protect colleagues from infection.

### Volunteering Organization

As a result of the measures taken against the COVID-19, people in all parts of our society have had to make some changes in the normal course of life. Some occupational groups such as health and social workers had to continue their jobs during this period due to compelling reasons. These days, we are going through an extraordinary process, so the measures taken or not taken and the changes we have to make in our lives can cause physical and mental strains that we cannot handle alone. Based on the global definition of our profession (IFSW, 2014):

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels.”

Turkish Association of Social Workers cleared in its statement that: “We will endeavor to fulfil the responsibilities brought by the definition of the profession, so that people can continue their lives with the least loss possible and by overcoming this difficult process we are going through.”

### **Press Release on May 1 Labor Day**

By healthcare professional organizations, including Turkish Association of Social Workers (SHUDER), a Press Release was shared with the public, emphasizing the role of healthcare workers in combating the COVID-19 and the importance of upholding their self-sacrificing work. The statement briefly includes the following points:



“May 1 is celebrated as the day of ‘unity - struggle and solidarity’ of workers all over the world and in our country. We know that during the COVID-19 pandemic days, we, the healthcare workers / laborer / workers, need unity, struggle and solidarity the most. Because we are obliged to protect ourselves and our families personally against the deadly COVID-19, as well as to heal our people who got sick in the epidemic, who were transferred to intensive care units, and even to provide preventive health services neglected by our country's healthcare system and to stop the pandemic. We protect our effort as healthcare service producers, long live May 1!”

### **Request to Join the COVID-19 Social Sciences Board**

With the first case of COVID-19 and the spread of the pandemic, the establishment of a scientific board was came to the fore. In this direction, the "Coronavirus Scientific Board" consisting of physicians was established under the coordination of the Ministry of Health. In the following process, considering the social and psychosocial effects of the pandemic, the establishment of a 'social sciences board' was brought to the agenda, but it was observed that social workers were not included in the relevant board. A statement was shared with the public by Turkish Association of Social Workers (SHUDER) with the call of "Open Letter to the Minister of Health". In the statement, the necessity and importance of social workers to take part in the relevant board was briefly expressed as follows:

“Social work is an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary profession. Taking place in the ‘Social Sciences Board’ of the social work profession, which deals with person in environment, benefits from economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology and human sciences as well as its own theory and research knowledge. In this respect, our colleagues, who contribute to the process by providing psychosocial support within your Ministry, work devotedly in other ministries, local administrations and NGO’s. Our expectation is that the representatives of our profession will take part in the newly

formed Scientific Committee and reflect their social work perspective to the board.”<sup>4</sup>

### **How COVID-19 Affected Us: TV Interview**

Ahmet Cemil Ölçer, Member of the Board of SHUDER, shared the psychosocial effects of Coronavirus on individuals, families and society as a whole in a television program.

### **Organizing Call for Social Workers Working in the Field against Coronavirus**

Turkish Association of Social Workers made a call to support social workers working in the field against COVID-19. In this call, it was stated that good coordination and communication is necessary to meet the needs and solve the problems that may be encountered. In this respect, it was stated that there is a need to take a series of measures in cooperation with the branches. These measures are:

1. Determining contact persons to cover all provinces that fall under the responsibility of the branches in order to ensure that the needs, problems and news regarding the COVID-19 can be followed from a single source,
2. In provinces that fall under the responsibility of the branches, determining the colleagues who are primarily assigned to the filiation teams, monitoring their situation and reporting the colleagues diagnosed with COVID-19 to SHUDER administration,
3. With the identification of COVID + colleagues, providing all kinds of support within the framework of respect and confidentiality to patients' rights, in cases where health, accommodation and logistics social needs cannot be met by them and their environment (childcare,

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<sup>4</sup> <http://shuder.org/Sayfa/saglik-bakani-sayin-dr-fahrettin-koca-ya-acik-mektup1748>

other people who are responsible for their care, meeting the needs of those living alone, such as shopping, etc.),

4. Getting support from the volunteers in the lists previously shared with branches and updating the lists on a local basis,
5. Establishing an effective communication network with volunteers through applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram,
6. Identifying problems by communicating with colleagues working in closed systems in residential care institutions and penal execution institutions.

In addition to these measures, Turkish Association Social Workers has advocated for the provision of necessary protective equipment to social workers working in the field during the pandemic process. (For example, an official letter was sent to the relevant unit for the provision of protective equipment for social workers working in Batman.)

## Social Work with Vulnerable Groups



Social workers in the "Vefa Social Support Group", a public study, carried out studies in all provinces and districts across the country to meet the needs of people aged 65 and over and with chronic diseases, such as shopping, cleaning and healthcare control, within the scope of Coronavirus measures.



The fight against coronavirus has created various psychosocially challenging conditions. "Coronavirus Infection Online Mental Support Platform" (KORDEP) has been established to combat these conditions. KORDEP, under the leadership of Istanbul Governorship Provincial Health Directorate; Bakirkoy Prof. Dr. Mazhar Osman Mental Health and Neurological Diseases Hospital with Erenköy Mental and Nervous Diseases Hospital experts, the Association of Psychiatric Nurses, Association of Social Workers, Turkish Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Association, Turkish Psychiatric Association, the Turkish Psychological Association, the Turkish Community Mental and Psychological Counseling and Guidance Association.

It is a program conducted by the Health Promotion Association, Trauma and Disaster Mental Health Studies Association, Istanbul Bilgi University Trauma and Disaster Studies Applied Mental Health Program. Society It is a program carried out under the leadership of the Mental Health Development Association, the Trauma and Disaster Mental Health Studies Association, Istanbul Bilgi University Trauma and Disaster Studies Applied Mental Health Program. The organizations that the program works in coordination are Istanbul Provincial Health Directorate, Provincial Directorate of Social Services, Public Health Directorate, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, and The Refugees Association. This program is a "Psychological Support" line structured for the elderly, disabled, immigrants and healthcare professionals who were treated for the COVID-19, who lost their relatives, who were struggled by staying at home, who have to work, who live alone.

Another study conducted by the Turkish Association of Social Workers is for the elderly people. As part of the quarantine measures taken against COVID-19, the elderly people had to stay in their homes or care centers for a long time. This situation has created serious risks in terms of both physical and psychosocial health. Turkish Association of Social Workers called for the establishment and implementation of a psychosocial support mechanism with an understanding of positive discrimination in order to encourage elderly healthcare, not to feel loneliness and exclusion, not to be abused, and to contribute to their basic needs and to ensure their full well-being.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://shuder.org/Sayfa/koronavirus-pandemisi-ve-65-yas-uzeri-bireyler172>

# Trainings and Talks

During the pandemic, the Turkish Association of Social Workers has given importance to the training of social workers such as both fighting Coronavirus and meeting the requirements of the client system. Hence, the Turkish Association of Social Workers have organized various trainings online:

## Training in Pandemic Social Work

Organized by the Headquarters of the Turkish Association of Social Workers with the contribution of both social workers and social work academicians on the SHUDER Youtube Channel between 2-3 May 2020. The content of this program includes that social workers in pandemic should pay attention to; psychosocial approach principles, self-care, domestic violence, working with vulnerable groups, child abuse, death, grieving and reporting of studies.<sup>6</sup>

 Sosyal Hizmet Uzmanları Derneği Pandemide Sosyal Hizmet Eğitim Programı		
<b>Moderatör:</b> SHU Süleyman Kaçmaz (SHUDER Genel Sekreteri)		
<b>1. Gün (2 Mayıs 2020)</b>		
Saat	Konu	Eğitmen
10:00-10:30	Pandemide Sosyal Hizmet Eğitim Programının Tanıtımı Pandemi Sürecinde SHUDER	Dr. Filiz DEMİRÖZ SHU Fatma TOKMAK YÜKSEL (SHUDER Genel Başkan Yardımcısı)
10:30-10:50	Salgınlarda Kişilerle Çalışırken Dikkat Edilmesi Gerekenler ve Etik İlkeler	Prof. Dr. Kasım KARATAŞ
10:50-11:30	Salgınlarda Psikososyal Yaklaşım İlkeleri	Dr. Filiz DEMİRÖZ Doç. Dr. Gonca POLAT
11:30-12:10	Salgınlarda Psiko eğitim ve Psikolojik İlk Yardım Uygulamaları	SHU Serap TOMAS SHU Meriç RAMAZANO
12:10-12:50	Salgınlarda Çalışana Destek ve Çalışanın Öz Bakımı	Dr. Filiz DEMİRÖZ Dr. Hande ALBAYRAK
<b>Ara</b>		
13:20-14:00	Salgınlarda Sağlık Çalışanlarına Psikososyal Destek ve Sağlık Çalışanının Öz Bakımı	Dr. Filiz DEMİRÖZ Doç. Dr. Gonca POLAT
14:00-14:40	Salgında Görüşme İlke ve Teknikleri ile İlk Görüşme	Dr. Ashlan Burcu ÖZTÜRK Dr. Ashlan AYKARA
14:40-15:20	Görüşmelerde Sürdürülebilirlik, Görüşme Teknikleri Havale ve aktör Haritalaması	Dr. Filiz DEMİRÖZ Dr. Ashlan AYKARA
<b>2. Gün (3 Mayıs 2020)</b>		
Saat	Konu	Eğitmen
10:00-10:20	Vaka Yönetimi	Dr. Filiz DEMİRÖZ
10:20-11:00	Sosyal İzolasyonda Aile İçi Şiddet	Prof. Dr. Özlem CANKURTARAN Dr. İlkay Başak ADIGÜZEL
11:00-12:00	İncinebilir Gruplarla Çalışmak: Çocuk, Ergen, Yaşlı, Engelli, Madde Bağımlısı ve Göçmenlere Yardım	Dr. Filiz DEMİRÖZ Dr. Hande ALBAYRAK Dr. Ashlan AYKARA
12:00-12:40	İncinebilir Gruplarla Çalışmak: Çocuk, Ergen, Yaşlı, Engelli, Madde Bağımlısı ve Göçmenlere Yardım	Dr. Burcu ÖZDEMİR Dr. Ashlan Burcu ÖZTÜRK
<b>Ara</b>		
13:10-13:50	Özel Durumlara Yaklaşım: Çocuk İstismarı, Ölüm ve Yas	Dr. Gamze ERÜKÇÜ AKBAŞ SHU Ahmet Cemil ÖLÇER
13:50-14:30	Çalışmaların Raporlandırılması ve Bilgi Havuzunun Oluşturulması	Dr. Filiz DEMİRÖZ Doç. Dr. Gonca POLAT
14:30-15:00	Soru-Cevap Oturumu ve Kapanış	Dr. Filiz DEMİRÖZ SHU Fikri AKBİN (SHUDER Genel Başkanı) SHU Ahmet Cemil ÖLÇER (SHUDER Genel Eğitim Sekreteri)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzDU-v49qUwebHv8wwPocVQ>

## Webinar on Resilience During Pandemic



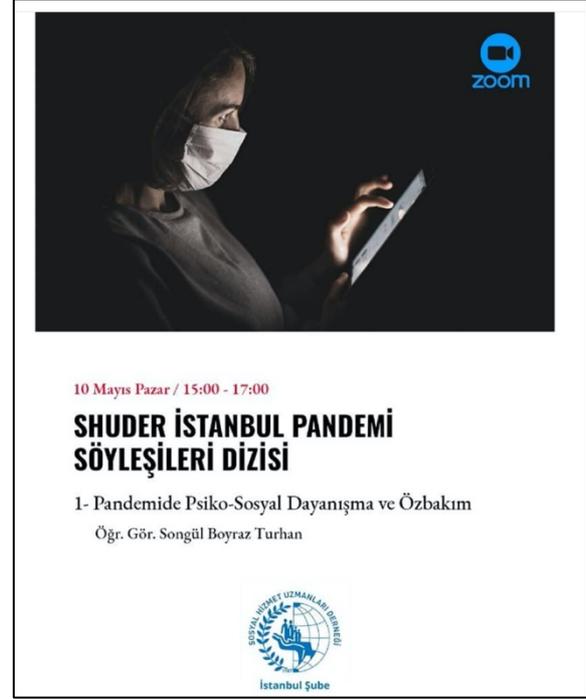
Under the leadership of the Turkish Association of Social Workers, the webinar " Resilience During Pandemic" by Psychiatrist-Psychotherapist Dr. Alişan Burak Yaşar was realized as an online live broadcast online on July 18, 2020. Many social workers and students participated in the webinar. The workshop recording was later posted on SHUDER Youtube channel.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzHHBfoqB8s>

## Examples of Trainings Organized by the Turkish Association of Social Workers Branches

### SHUDER İstanbul:

- A study on Psycho-Social Support in Combating the COVID 19 outbreak was carried out by İkram Doğan.
- A study on Psycho-Social Solidarity and Self-Care in Pandemic was carried out by Songül Boyraz Turhan.
- A study on Social Work Experiences since 1980's was carried out by Nazmiye Atalan and Rebia Dirim.
- A study on Social Work Practices in Penal Institutions was carried out by Ronay Erdinç and Zeynep Çukadar.
- A study on HIV Awareness Raising Workshop was carried out by Yağmur Şenoğuz, Hilal Ünsaldı, and Şeyma Nur Topaloğlu.
- A study on Women and Family Relations in Pandemic was carried out by Nermin Fügen Özer.
- A study on Measure Decisions within the Scope of Law No. 5395 was carried out by Arzu Tanbulut.
- A study on Being a Child in Prison was carried out by Lawyer Cansu Şekerci.



## SHUDER Konya:

- Interview with Ramazan Kocakaya from Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey University Social Work Department on “Disadvantaged groups focusing on Social Justice and Human Rights during the pandemic”.
- Interview with Doğa Başer from Selçuk University Social Work Department on Daily Life in Quarantine (about books and movies).

- An interview was held with Cantekin ELMAS about the structure and functioning of Vefa Social Support Groups.
- An interview was held with Hasan Hüseyin Tekin from Necmettin Erbakan University Social Work Department on "The Importance of Interview in Social Work".
- An interview with Elif Gündoğdu on "Medical Social Work in Coronavirus Days".
- An interview with Münire Akyüz, who is a 3rd year student of Necmettin Erbakan University Social Work Department, about the documentary named Who Killed Gabriel Fernandez?
- The film “System Crasher” and a Multidisciplinary Perspective on Child Protection System activity were held with Psychologist Onur Çalışkan.
- An interview titled “A View from the Field” was held with Ali Şener.
- An interview titled “Social Work Education from Past to Present” was held with Kamil Alptekin, who is a faculty member of Necmettin Erbakan University Social Work Department and the President of SHOD.
- An interview titled “Self-Evaluation System in Child Care Institutions” was held with Ergin Balci.
- An interview titled "Local NGOs: An Evaluation Through SHUDER Branches" was held in cooperation with SHUDER Hatay.

- “Where Should We Occupy Now?” With Deniz Çekin, a 3rd year student of Necmettin Erbakan University Social Work Department. The documentary was evaluated from the perspective of social work students.
- Trainings on Child Institutional Care System and Forensic Social Work were organized.
- Online training on "YEŞİLAY's Services for the Disabled and the Elderly, the functioning of Social Service Centers" was given by Muhammet Kiremitci, Secretary of SHUDER Konya

### SHUDER Kocaeli:



- On March 28, 2020, a live broadcast chat was made with Yeşim Ünal.
- On April 11, 2020, a live broadcast chat was made with Selcen Esenyel who is a child and adolescent psychiatrist.

### SHUDER Denizli:

- On May 15, 2020, a conversation was held with Ömer Yılmaz and Duygu Özdemir about the child as the fantasy of the parents.



### SHUDER Şanlıurfa:



- On 20 May 2020, a conversation was held with Tülay Aslan and Abidin Balkan on trauma and self-protection during the pandemic.
- A conversation was held with the Forensic Interview with children.