

State of Hawaii
Department of Human Services
Child Welfare Services Branch

Differential Response and the CWS Assessment/Intake Process

Background on Hawaii's
Child and Family Services Review
(CFSR) and mandatory
Program Improvement Plan (PIP)

The CFSR Process

- The CFSR is a federally mandated review of every State's Child Welfare System
- The CFSR reviewed Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being outcomes as well as Systemic Factors for the children and families in our care.
- There is no choice: States must participate and reform their programs to meet the Federal outcome measures
- Federal funds are at stake that affect staffing and services

Hawaii's Results

- The CFSR onsite review found we did not meet the standard in 6 of the 7 outcome areas and 5 out of the 7 systemic factors
- Hawaii must develop and successfully implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP)

Child Welfare Services Branch

PIP Priorities

- Ensure child safety by a timely response to all reports of child abuse and neglect accepted for investigation by CWS
- Conduct ongoing safety, risk and needs assessments on all children and families in cases active with CWS
- Ensure that every family and every child, as appropriate, are actively involved in developing their case plan
- Ensure that every child in our care, every family and every foster family are visited at least once a month by the assigned caseworker and afforded the opportunity of a face-to-face interview in cases active with CWS

Key CWS Strategies to Address PIP Barriers

- Decrease caseloads for CWS workers by development and implementation of a differential response system.
- Fund PIP strategies through the appropriate use of federal block grants and entitlements (SSBG, TANF, Medicaid) to ensure an ongoing and dependable funding stream for services to children and families.
- A stable funding stream avoids the service cut-backs which have occurred in the past when state funds have been reduced.
- Develop and nurture a full service array that provides appropriate alternatives to CWS intervention.
- Increase the level of services to ensure that children and families have timely and appropriate access to services.

Front End Strategies

- Prioritize intake referrals to comply with the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)
- Improve training, procedures, and tools
- Increase sustainable resources

CAPTA Requirements

“...establishment of a triage system that-

- (A) accepts, screens, and assesses reports received to determine which such reports require an intensive intervention and which require voluntary referral to another agency, program, or project;
- (B) provides, either directly or through referral, a variety of community-linked services to assist families in preventing child abuse and neglect; and
- (C) provides further investigation and intensive intervention where the child's safety is in jeopardy. (Section 105(2) amended June 25, 2003)

Differential Response

Differential response is an intake process that assesses each report to Child Welfare Services to determine the most appropriate, most effective, and least intrusive response that can be provided by CWS or our community partners to a report of child abuse or neglect.

Differential Response (cont.)

- Differential Response systems are now being used by 32 of the 50 states.
- This approach has enabled these states to make a more appropriate use of limited resources.
- Research has shown that families are often able to resolve risk issues in their homes without intensive CWS intervention.

Differential Response (cont.)

- States that use differential response are better positioned to take immediate action to protect the safety of children in the most severe cases as well as have early opportunities to engage families in services that could enable them to better parent their children.
- A 2001 study prepared by Walter R. McDonald and Associates, Inc. for the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services examined ten states using some form of “differential response” system.

Differential Response (cont.)

- The number of families investigated with resulting identifications on central registries decreased (MO, VA)
- The duration of family involvement with CPS also decreased (FL, MO)
- The use of community services increased for families in pilot projects (FL, MO)
- Child safety was not compromised in the pilot sites. Positive child safety outcomes were reported (IA, VA, MO)

Differential Response (cont.)

An evaluation of the Missouri model was summarized by one of the Federal National Resource Centers:

- Hotline reports declined
- Reported incidents in which action was taken increased
- Children were made safer sooner
- Recidivism decreased overall
- Children spent less time in out-of-home care though removal rates remained the same

Differential Response (cont.)

- Services were delivered more quickly
- Utilization of community resources was greater
- Cooperation of families improved
- Families were more satisfied and felt more involved in decision making
- Caseworkers judged the system to be more effective
- Investigations were not adversely affected and may have been enhanced

The State of Washington

- 1991 outcome study attempted to determine whether agencies that use risk assessment systems to screen and prioritize referrals at intake jeopardize the health, safety, and welfare of children in families that are reported to child protection services (CPS) agencies but are screened out or provided lower levels of service.

Washington's results

- The proportion of sample cases that received a confirmed re-referral ranged from 3 to 5 percent
- The proportion of confirmed sample cases that received a confirmed re-occurrence ranged from 2 to 4 percent
- The proportion of sample cases having re-referrals with confirmed physical or sexual abuse was 1 to 2 percent

Goals of Hawaii's Differential Response System

- Safer children
- Stronger families
- More relevant and responsive services
- Greater stability for children
- Shared responsibility between the community and CWS
- Assisting families to realize their full potential and become the solution to their own problems

Safety versus Risk

The cornerstone of the Differential Response System is an assessment by CWS whether a report or case situation presents a safety or risk concern. If a case presents a safety concern, CWS will always conduct an investigation and take action to protect the child. If the report presents a risk concern, families will be offered voluntary services with a community provider.

Safety

- The Intake Safety Assessment reviews 17 safety factors including but not limited to:
 - Family conditions that present substantial and imminent harm to the child
 - The child's safety is currently compromised or is likely to be so in the very near future
 - Concrete evidence of severe negative effects on the child
 - Family situations and behaviors that are out of control and must be prevented or managed to ensure the safety of the child

Examples of Safety Factors

- Child sexual abuse is suspected and the alleged perpetrator resides in the home
- The caregiver is a victim of domestic violence, lacks the capacity to protect the child and has no supports
- The caregiver's impairment due to drug or alcohol abuse is seriously affecting his/her ability to supervise, protect and care for the child

Risk

Risk is the likelihood of future child abuse or neglect.

Risk factors are child, caretaker, and family characteristics which have been determined, through research and practice experience, to increase the likelihood of future maltreatment.

Risk (Continued)

The assessment of risk considers the following factors:

- Likelihood of future maltreatment
- Family functioning
- Child well-being
- Unlimited time frame
- Openness of the family to assistance in resolving the problem
- All aspects of family life which are relevant to future maltreatment

Risk (cont.)

Risk is considered on a continuum and can be present in different degrees, such as low, moderate or high. For example, for the risk factor “Prior History, Severity, Chronicity”:

- Low – Isolated incidents in the past
- Moderate – Intermittent incidents in the past
- High – Repeated and ongoing pattern of abuse or neglect

Assessments

- Intake Assessment:
The Intake Assessment is used to determine the appropriate response to the report.
- Safety assessment:
The Safety Assessment is used to determine immediate or imminent threats of substantial harm and to develop a safety plan to ensure the safety of the child. All reports undergo a safety assessment whether or not they are placed in voluntary services or retained by CWS
- Comprehensive Assessment:
The Comprehensive Assessment is used to do a full assessment of a family's strengths, safety issues and to determine what resources are needed to assist the family.

The Case Flow

The slides that follow illustrate the process that all reports of abuse or neglect will follow, as they progress through the CWS Differential Response System.

Intake

Intake will receive a report and make one of the following decisions, based on the intake assessment:

- If the report does not meet the intake criteria, no action will be taken
- If the report presents a safety concern, CWS will always investigate and take appropriate action.
- If the report presents moderate risk, but no safety concerns, the family will be placed in Voluntary Case Management services
- If the report is assessed as low risk, the family will be offered Family Strengthening Services

Family Strengthening Services (FSS)

- If the family is offered FSS and is willing to participate, they will be provided up to six months of services and assistance in developing resources and supports that will enable them to resolve the issues that resulted in the report to CWS.
- If the family chooses not to participate, that information will be provided to CWS.

Voluntary Case Management (VCM)

- If the family is placed in the VCM program and agrees to participate, it will receive a comprehensive assessment and a case plan that identifies risk concerns and the plan to address those concerns
- Services will be provided at no cost to the family and, if the outcomes identified in the case plan are successfully achieved, the case will not result in a CPS finding
- If the family chooses not to participate or prematurely terminates services, the case will be routed back to CWS for action, which may result in an investigation and a possible petition to the court for jurisdiction and a court ordered service plan.

CWS

- If a case presents a safety concern, the case will be accepted by CWS and an investigation will be conducted.
- If the CWS investigation identifies no safety concerns and determines conditions in the home to be a low or moderate risk, the family will be placed in the FSS or VCM programs for services or other appropriate interventions that do not involve the Court
- If the report is investigated and confirms a safety issue in the home, CWS may file a petition in Family Court for jurisdiction over the family.

Case Planning

- Takes place continuously throughout the family's involvement with the agency (not a one-time event)
- Involves concurrent consideration of both temporary and permanent placements
- Empowers families to develop their own plan and to directly access Ohana conferencing and other services
- Levels the playing field: all are equal at the table
- Ensures access to Ohana conferences at the front end; prior to reunification and case closure; and for youth transitioning from foster care into independent living
- Preserves family connections through regular visits with parents and siblings

Provision of Services to the Family

- Based on comprehensive ongoing assessments of the family's needs
- Individualized
- Strengths-based
- Realistic
- Culturally sensitive
- Outcome focused
- Family needs driven
- Flexible

Training

- The Department will provide training to CWS staff and to our partner agencies in the community that are providing FSS and VCM services.
- We will all be using the same procedures, forms etc.
- We will also provide CORE and ongoing training to all CWS and VCM staff.

Quality Assurance

- QA is a continuous process
 - Adopt outcomes
 - Incorporate QA through policies and procedures
 - Gather and analyze system data & other reliable and verifiable information
 - Use results!



Message from the Director

The tragedy of child abuse is a community problem. CWS alone cannot solve this problem. The real solution must be found within our communities: in the commitment of neighbors, who accept responsibility for the welfare of each and every child, reaching out to one another, building a safety net for families in trouble, and working together to truly make a difference in children's lives.

Where to Find the PIP Documents

- Links to the PIP Overview, the PIP Workplan and other documents relating to the CF SR can be found at the following address:

<http://www.hawaii.gov/dhs/cfsr/>