

# Alternative Response

*Partnering with families to safely care for children  
in their own homes and communities.*

Nebraska Children's Summit  
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# What is Alternative Response?

- A response to allegations of abuse and neglect that do not allege serious or imminent harm
- Safety, risk, and well-being are assessed
- Services provided through non-court involvement
- Services are voluntary but the assessments are not
- No findings

# How does Alternative Response compare to the current practice (Traditional Response)?

## Law Enforcement Involvement

Traditional Response	Alternative Response
All intake reports are shared with law enforcement	All intake reports are shared with law enforcement
When applicable, Children and Family Services Specialists (CFSS) will contact law enforcement to coordinate interviews and assess families jointly.	Law enforcement may use limited resources on more serious cases of abuse and neglect
If law enforcement issues a citation for child abuse or neglect, Child Advocacy Center coordination is required or law enforcement is conducting an ongoing investigation, the family will receive a traditional response	

# How does Alternative Response compare to the current practice (Traditional Response)?

## Interviewing Household Members

Traditional Response	Alternative Response
<p>Interview protocol</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Child victim(s)</li><li>2. Siblings</li><li>3. Non-offending parent/caregiver</li><li>4. Alleged Perpetrator</li><li>5. Collaterals may be interviewed at any point during the investigation</li></ol>	<p>Interview protocol</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Parents/caregivers</li><li>2. Children(ideally done with parental permission)</li><li>3. Collaterals may be interviewed at any point during the assessment</li></ol>

# How does Alternative Response compare to the current practice (Traditional Response)?

## Central Registry

Traditional Response	Alternative Response
Perpetrators and victims are labeled as such	Reports do not label alleged perpetrators and victims
Finding of abuse or neglect	No finding of abuse or neglect
Perpetrators name is entered on the Central Registry if child abuse or neglect is substantiated	No names are entered on Central Registry

# Why Is Nebraska Implementing Alternative Response?

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# What is the goal?

- ▶ Partnering with families to safely care for children in their own homes and communities.
- ▶ Alternative Response (AR) is a strategy to increase safety and lower the likelihood of future abuse/neglect.



# Outcomes

## 1. The Number and Proportion of Accepted Reports of Repeat Maltreatment

- Families served via AR will have the resources and supports to safely parent their children.

(Has the hotline accepted another report of maltreatment on a child/family who has been served by AR within 12 months following the date of the AR accepted intake? As evidenced by N-FOCUS data.)

## 2. The Number and Proportion of Substantiated Maltreatment Allegations

- Children will not be abused or neglected.

(Do families who are or who have been served via AR have an agency or court substantiated finding of child abuse or neglect within 12 months following the date of the AR accepted intake? As evidenced by N-FOCUS data.)

# Outcomes

## 3. The Number and Proportion of Families with a Child Entering Out-of-Home Care

- Families will have the resources and supports they need to safely care for their children in the family home.

(Do families who have been served via AR have a child placed in out of home care within 6 months following the date of the AR accepted intake? As evidenced by N-FOCUS data.)

## 4. Changes in Child and Family Well-being

- Parents will be better equipped to safely parent their children and children will be more resilient.

(Are Protective Factor Questionnaire (PFQ) post-test scores higher than pre-test scores? As evidenced by PFQ scores.)

## 5. The Number and Proportion of Families Assigned to AR who are Re-assigned to TR Due to an Allegation of Maltreatment

- The evaluation will address the differences between the experimental (AR) and the control (TR) groups for outcomes 1-4.
- Only the experimental (AR) group will be evaluated on outcome 5.

# Intermediate Outcomes

1. AR workers have flexibility to tailor services to meet family needs
2. Families feel respected and engaged with AR worker
3. Families and workers share valuable information
4. Collaborative problem solving and learning occurs
5. Families receive services/supports to address their specific needs
6. Protective Factors are enhanced
7. Families can safely care for their children in their home

**How do families  
receive an  
ALTERNATIVE  
RESPONSE?**

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# The Target Population Served

- ❖ Physical neglect allegations driven by stressors related to poverty
- ❖ Physical neglect due to lack of supervision
- ❖ Compromised or limited (healthy) coping skills
- ❖ Conditions with low or moderate future risk of maltreatment, children are safe



# Alternative Response

- Governor Heineman signed LB 853, including Alternative Response implementation, into law on April 2, 2014
- Alternative Response implementation in the 5 pilot counties began October 1, 2014
- Legislation allows for DHHS to expand in 5 additional Alternative Response demonstration project locations on or after January 1, 2016

Partnering with families  
to safely care for  
children in their own  
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# PROTECTIVE FACTORS

1. Nurturing and Attachment
2. Knowledge of Parenting and of Child and Youth Development
3. Parental Resilience
4. Social Connections
5. Concrete Supports for Parents
6. Social and Emotional Competence of Children

# What Families Are Teaching Us:

- Prevalent Diminished Parental Protective Factors of Families Receiving Alternative Response:
  - a. Lack of Concrete Supports for Parents
  - b. Knowledge of Parenting and Child/Youth Development
  - c. Social and Emotional Competence of Children



- Families in Alternative Response Need Assistance With:

- Housing
- Transportation
- Food
- Clothing
- Utilities



# Lessons Learned and Learning

- Underestimated the degree of challenge applying the exclusionary and RED Team Criteria to Intakes Accepted for Assessment
- You must be nimble and flexible, modify practice as you learn what is working and not working or you will keep doing what isn't working
- You must consistently message the “WHY” behind AR; it's easy to drift back
- You can't policy or train your way to a culture shift...Those doing the work and those making decisions about the work must be constantly communicating
- Language is critical...i.e. law enforcement rural practice: 'going out on an intake' versus 'investigating an intake'
- Sustaining momentum is challenging when the volume of AR families is limited
- All Staff want to integrate the new practices of Alternative Response into their work
- Operationalizing and training great concepts/theories takes time i.e. Parental Protective Factors, Engagement
- Training is not an isolated event, and everyone has a different way of learning

**Alternative Response**  
Oversight and Accountability

**DCFS CQI**

**Case Reviews**

**CCFL Evaluation**

**Office of Inspector  
General**

**Citizen Review Panel**

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|---|---|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Performance Accountability</li><li>•CFSR Items</li><li>•Federal Measures</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Engagement</li><li>•Services/Support</li><li>•Family Stability</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Process Evaluation</li><li>•Outcome Evaluation</li><li>•Cost Study</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Recommendations</li><li>•Status of Implementation</li><li>•Improve Operations</li><li>•Issues Discovered</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Systemic and Familial Strengths/Challenges</li><li>•Recommendations</li></ul> |
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Questions??

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# Alternative Response Questions or Feedback

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