

## What is Differential Response?

Differential Response is a systemic change in child welfare services.

Prior to 2010, Colorado practiced Child Protection in the very traditional manner with one approach to all allegations of abuse and neglect whether low or high risk, whether substantiated or not, whether the families were responsive or not. The Colorado Consortium, a partnership between the Colorado Department of Human Services, Colorado State University, Westat and five Colorado counties, (Arapahoe, Fremont, Garfield, Jefferson and Larimer) launched as a site for the National Quality Improvement Center the development, implementation and study of Differential Response (DR).

This consortium became the first in Colorado history to introduce an alternative practice implemented at the front door of the child protection system authorizing two or more separate and distinct responses to child maltreatment reports as a result of the differences in risk among the types of cases seen in the child welfare arena allowing low to moderate risk allegations a different approach (FAR) than merited by high risk allegations (HRA). With a great deal of study and consultation and evaluation, Colorado designed a dynamite model of practice and as a result the changes affected go far beyond just the front door of response in Colorado positively impacting practice in multiple ways throughout the entire system.

**The non-negotiable set for Colorado's Model of Differential Response and evidenced via rigorous evaluation is that children are as safe in a dual track system as in the traditional one response system and the degree of family response and engagement and sustained safety is impressive.**

In 2012, legislation passed allowing the practice to be expanded slowly, thoughtfully and with integrity across the entire state. More than three years later, 15 of our 64 Colorado Counties have fully implemented this practice with 14 additional counties in development reflecting how methodical the state's expansion of this practice has been and how committed Colorado is to assuring that we continue to do this right on behalf of families and their children.

**DR Counties with 1 to over 5 years of practice are consistently demonstrating,**  
Improved timeliness of response to allegations of abuse and neglect

Decreased number of families coming back to the attention of the Child Protection System meeting the threshold for re-assessment

Decreased placement into out of home care and therefore an increased number of families being served at home and together safely

And decreased rates of re-abuse and neglect rates

## KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

WITH FAMILY  
ASSESSMENT RESPONSE,  
CASEWORKERS PARTNER  
WITH PARENTS TO MAKE  
SURE CHILDREN RESOLVE  
SAFETY CONCERNS AND  
REMAIN SAFE.

## KEEPING FAMILIES STRONG

JOINING WITH OUR  
COMMUNITIES TO  
STRENGTHEN FAMILIES  
THROUGH INCREASED  
CONNECTIONS WITH  
SUPPORTS AND SERVICES.

## **What is Family Assessment Response?**

Family Assessment Response is a program that addresses concerns about child abuse and neglect by:

- Ensuring children are safe
- Building on parents' and communities' strengths and resources
- Working in partnership with parents
- Avoiding negative labels for parents
- Setting aside the issue of fault
- Identifying families' needs
- Providing services and resources matched to families' needs in an efficient manner.

## **What families get a Family Assessment Response?**

Families are referred to FAR following an accepted report of concern about children received by the county. FAR is assigned in low and moderate risk situations.

With FAR, the caseworker will not conduct an investigation of the report. A determination or "finding" of whether abuse or neglect occurred will not be made. Instead, the caseworker will engage with the family to discuss safety and risk concerns, identify events or actions that may have caused the situation, and work directly with the family to create a solution-based plan so that parents can keep their children safe with the help of community supports and services. FAR service planning is voluntary for families, unless safety factors apply. If, in relatively infrequent situations, parents are unable to attain and maintain safety for their children with Family Assessment Response, or if court involvement is needed, traditional services can be employed.