

Differential Response in Oregon Child Welfare



Department of Human Services

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Differential Response Defined

- An approach that allows child protective services to respond differently to **accepted** reports of child abuse and neglect, based on such factors as the type and severity of the alleged maltreatment... (*American Humane Association*)
- In Oregon, the system will consist of two distinct response pathways. Traditional and Alternative Responses.

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Common Principles of Traditional CPS and Alternative Response

- Focus on safety and well-being of the child using Oregon Safety Model to guide decisions.
- Promotion of permanency within the family.
- Recognition of the authority of child protective services to make decisions about removal, out of home placement, and court involvement, when necessary.
- Acknowledgement that other community services may be more appropriate than CPS intervention in some cases.
- Assessment of child safety and a comprehensive assessment conducted by the department.
- Allows families to receive agency funded services without formal determination of abuse/neglect.
- Families may decline services if children are safe.

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What is Alternative Response?

- 1 of 2 CPS Response Types: Alternative to traditional child protection investigative response
- Sets aside fault finding and 'substantiation' decision and Central Registry entries
- Typically applied to reports that do not allege serious and imminent harm
- Focus is more on assessing and ensuring child safety, less on forensic interviewing
- CPS and community partner with family to achieve Safe Children – Strong, Supported Families

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Findings from other states

- Safety was NOT reduced
- Families reported more involvement in decision-making
- More use of concrete services
- Families reported services “really helped”
- Higher family satisfaction with worker
- More worker visits and contact with families and providers
- Higher job satisfaction for workers
- Fewer subsequent child maltreatment reports
- Removal and Placement decreased
- Family Satisfaction
- approach led consistently to increased services to families

Source:
Institute of Applied Research St. Louis, Missouri
Gary L. Siegel PhD and Tony Loman PhD

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Oregon’s DR Vision Statement

As a result of Oregon’s implementation of DR, the following results will occur:

- Children will be kept safely at home and in their communities; using the Oregon Safety Model and its core concepts and tools to guide decision making.
- The community and Oregon DHS will work in partnership with a shared responsibility for keeping children safely at home and in their communities.
- Families will partner with Oregon DHS to realize their full potential and develop solutions for their challenges.
- Fewer children will re-enter the child welfare system through improved preventative and reunification services for families.
- Disproportionality will be reduced among children of color.
- Private agencies and community organizations will experience stronger partnerships with Oregon DHS on behalf of children and families.

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Oregon's Plan for Implementation

Three vital components of successful implementation are:

1. Oregon Safety Model fidelity work – ensuring the right children and families are served in the right track and at the right level of intervention
2. Statewide Implementation of SB 964/Strengthening, Preserving, and Reunifying Families program – enhances the foundational service array for DR
3. Staged implementation of Differential response

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Oregon Safety Model

- Represents an overarching practice that requires safety assessment and safety management at all stages of the case. From screening through case closure.
- Emphasizes child safety by focusing on the overall family condition as opposed to simply focusing on whether an incident of abuse happened or not.
- Includes a comprehensive assessment of the parent's ability to act in a protective capacity. More clearly identifies conditions for safety within the family, conditions for return and the provision of needed services.
- Focuses on safety threats using a safety threshold criteria that must be applied in order for a safety threat to exist.

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Six Domains of Comprehensive Assessment

- Extent of Maltreatment
- Circumstances Surrounding Maltreatment
- Child Functioning
- Adult Functioning
- Parenting Practices
- Disciplinary Practices

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Effectiveness of Safety Assessments

Is totally dependent on:

- 1. Whether information collected is pertinent to understanding threats to child safety.
- 2. The information collected must be sufficient to make informed decisions about child safety.

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Safety Threshold Criteria

Safety Threat =
ALL 5

- Imminence
- Out of Control
- Vulnerable child
- Observable
- Severity

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OSM: Three Plans To Control Safety Threats

- Protective Action
- Initial Safety Plan
- Ongoing Safety Plan
- Controls Present Danger
- Controls Impending Danger identified during CPS assessment
- To manage and control Impending Danger during Ongoing Case Management

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Criteria for an In-Home Safety Plan

- There is a home like setting where the parent(s) and child(ren) live?
- The home is calm enough to allow safety service providers and activities to occur?
- At least one parent is willing to cooperate with the safety plan?
- The necessary safety activities and resources are available to implement the plan?

OSM: Can you answer YES to all of these questions?

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What is a sufficient safety plan?

- Clearly controls or manages impending danger threat
- Has an immediate effect
- Uses actions that are immediately accessible and available
- Contains *safety services and actions* only (Not change based or case plan services)
- Safety Service Providers were assessed to be suitable and reliable through a due diligence approach
- It is not based on promissory commitments from parent/caregivers
- Includes detail on oversight processes by DHS

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Conditions for Return

- A written statement that identifies what must happen for a child to return home.
 - This information **MUST** be provided to the parents.
 - The conditions should become part of the court order to assure that all parties to the case are well informed about the basis for the reunification decision.
 - Should be documented in the record.

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Meeting Expected Outcomes

The behaviors, conditions, or circumstances necessary to keep a child safe at home (conditions for return) should not be confused with services or activities that will lead to sustained change of parental protective capacity (the expected outcomes).

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Case Closure



- Work is done when safety threats are gone or protective capacity is enhanced.
- Change-based case plans move us away from compliance or incident based decision making.
- Monitor for 3-4 months to ensure change is sustained, then it's time to close the case.

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SB 964/Strengthening, Preserving and Reunifying Families

- Strengthening, Preserving and Reunifying Families Programs were funded for statewide implementation this biennium. These programs are identified through community collaborations looking at a gap analysis of the services in that community.
- These programs are currently implemented in 16 counties with a schedule to complete implementation in 2014 to coincide with Differential Response implementation.

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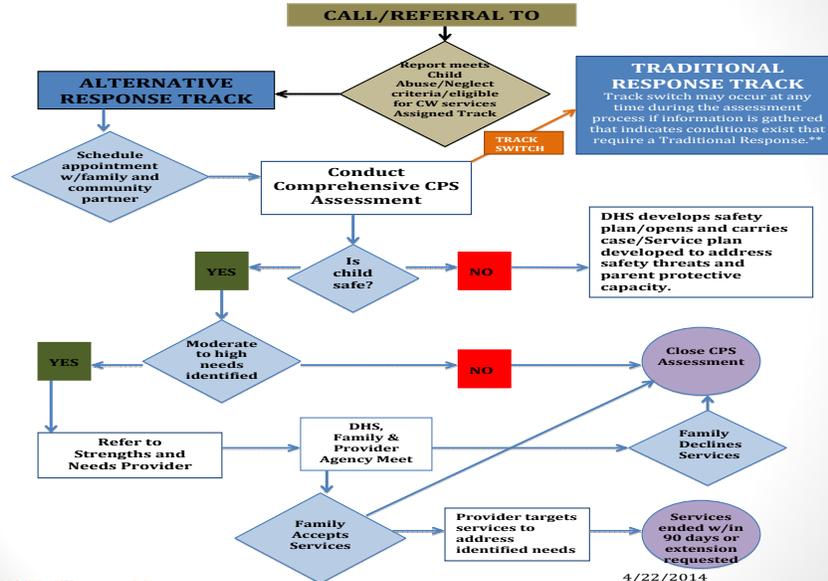
SB 964/Strengthening, Preserving and Reunifying Families

Counties have identified a wide range of services to fill the gaps in service delivery in their communities. Examples of the services being funded include:

- Relief Nurseries
- Parent Coaching and Navigation
- Housing access assistance
- Parenting training
- Drug free housing support
- Intercept services
- Family find services
- Front end intervention and support services
- Youth transition and mentoring services

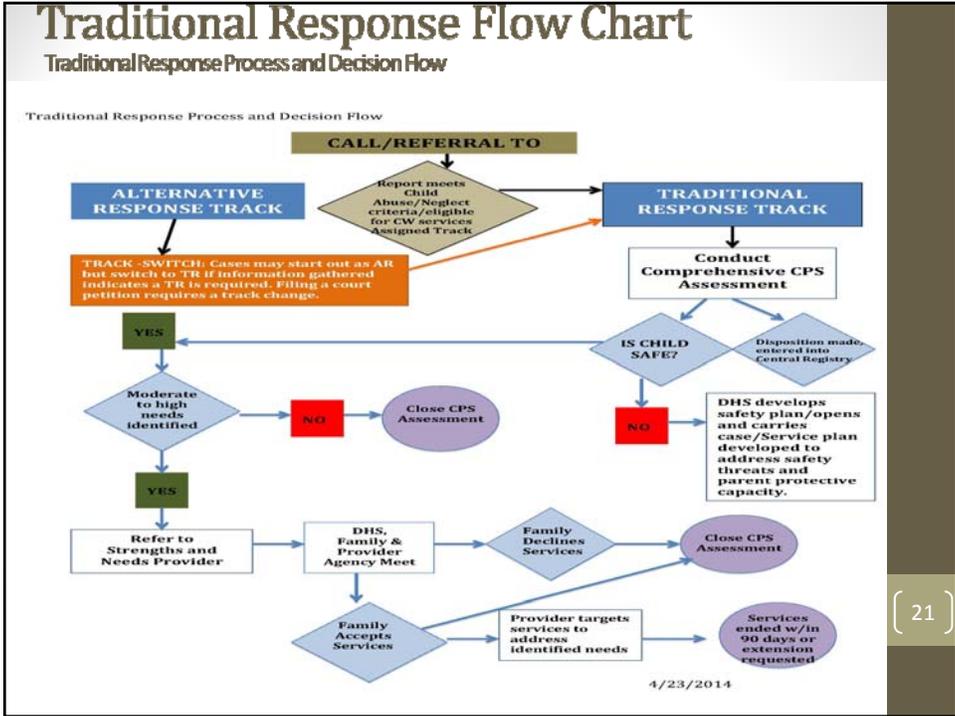
Alternative Response Flow Chart

Alternative Response Process and Decision Flow



**** NOTE:** Filing a petition, on any case, also requires a track change.

4/22/2014



Additional Resources

- Child Safety Guide for Judges and Attorneys
 - http://nrccps.org/documents/2009/pdf/The_Guide.pdf
- Differential Response Website
 - <http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/children/beyondfc/differential-response/Pages/default.aspx>



We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee.

**~ Marian Wright Edelman ~
Founder of the Children's Defense Fund**

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