

***Alternative Responses to Child Maltreatment:
Findings from NCANDS***

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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ALTERNATIVE RESPONSES TO CHILD MALTREATMENT: FINDINGS FROM NCANDS

Executive Summary

Child protective services (CPS) agencies face a large volume of reports, increasingly complex cases, and strained resources. Because of their belief that many CPS reports do not require a traditional investigative response, some States have developed practices and policies to differentiate how cases are handled. Generally, investigations are aimed at determining whether the child maltreatment actually occurred, or if the child is at risk for maltreatment, and putting in place an appropriate intervention. In contrast, alternative responses emphasize the assessment of the family's needs and the prevention of future maltreatment, with less attention given to making a formal determination of maltreatment.

Alternative response has been defined as “a formal response of the agency that assesses the needs of the child or family without requiring a determination that maltreatment has occurred or that the child is at risk of maltreatment.” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003a). State policies on alternative response vary, although typically families are approached as a unit, and given options about services and assistance, with a focus on the well-being of the entire family. Although not universally true for all States, the service philosophy is to build on the family's strengths, while ensuring that needs for children's safety are being met.

This research examined case-level data reported to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) by six States—Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and Wyoming—that offered both alternative response and traditional investigation. Case characteristics, circumstances of reports, and outcomes were examined for 313,838 children of whom 140,072 received an alternative response during 2002.

Some similarities across States were also found, in that alternative response was more likely to be used in certain situations, such as:

- When reports were from nonprofessionals and school sources, rather than from social workers, medical personnel, or legal or criminal justice sources;
- For cases with less pressing safety concerns; and
- For reports that did not include allegations of sexual abuse.

However, in some ways, States differed widely in their use of alternative response, such as:

- The proportion of reports that were referred to alternative response;
- The extent to which the existence of an alternative response option has resulted in fewer investigations; and
- The types of maltreatment for which alternative response was used.

Overall, the findings from the included States indicate that the use of alternative response was either increasing or stable over time, possibly reflecting States at different stages of implementation. It also appears that though children who had been previously referred to alternative response do experience subsequent reports and responses by CPS, they are not generally at any greater risk for subsequent reports than those who received an investigation. Furthermore, they are not at greater risk for subsequent victimization. While alternative response systems differ across States, they all seem to reflect their intention—to serve children and families who present less immediate safety concerns.

INTRODUCTION

Many child protective services (CPS) agencies face a large volume of CPS reports, increasingly complex cases, and strained resources. Moreover, there is a growing recognition that many CPS cases do not require a traditional investigative response. Thus, many States have developed practices and policies to differentiate how particular types of cases are handled (U.S. Government Accounting Office, 1997). Referred to as alternative response, differential response, dual track, or family assessment, these efforts at system reform promote new practices that affect how certain reports of maltreatment are handled. Generally, investigation responses involve a more forensic approach and include processes for determining if a child is at risk of child maltreatment or if child maltreatment occurred. Alternative responses are characterized by an emphasis on an assessment of the needs of families and children with less emphasis on determining if the maltreatment occurred (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003a).

The intent of the analyses presented below is to examine case-level data reported in 2002 to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) by six States that offered both alternative response and traditional investigation as part of their child welfare services. After reviewing previous research on alternative response, this report describes the methodology of, and findings from, this analysis. Case characteristics, circumstances of reports, and outcomes for children who received an alternative response are presented. Finally, emerging trends, similarities, and differences across States that are implementing alternative response systems are discussed.

Previous Research

A review of the literature suggests that most studies conducted to date have focused on single States and did not systematically report on all the factors considered in this study regarding the provision of alternative response services.

System Structure and Functions

According to the *National Study of Child Protective Services Systems and Reform Efforts (CPS Reform Study)*—a survey conducted of a nationally representative sample of 300 county child protective services agencies—a majority (64%) of local agencies employed alternative response practices in addition to the traditional investigative response (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003a). Still, a separate review of policies as part of the same study noted that while 20 States had identifiable alternative response policies, only 11 had implemented the approach statewide (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003b). Further, the implementation of alternative response systems was neither uniform across all States (Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004; Loman & Siegel, 2004a; Loman & Siegel, 2004b) nor necessarily dependent on the existence of State-level policies defining the practice (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003a; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003b).

The *CPS Reform Study* and other State-specific studies suggested that investigation responses were employed when more serious types of maltreatment were alleged, and that alternative response was utilized when children were at risk of maltreatment, or when

it was believed that the presenting issues could be addressed without needing an investigation (Siegel & Loman, 2000; Loman & Siegel, 2004a; Virginia Department of Social Services 2004; Center for Child and Family Policy, 2004; Chipley, Sheets, Baumann, Robinson, & Graham, 1999; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003a; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003b). Generally, cases were assigned to the alternative response track when factors suggested that the child was at lower risk of harm or that the family would benefit from community-based services. If a case was assigned to the alternative response track but circumstances arose that suggested investigation was warranted, it could then be redirected for an investigation response. Severe physical abuse and sexual abuse cases were typically handled using the investigation approach (see U.S. General Accounting Office, 1997; Loman & Siegel, 2004a; Loman & Siegel, 2004b; Center for Child and Family Policy, 2004).

The *CPS Reform Study* found many similarities across the States in the activities performed by each track. Most commonly, both approaches involved a review of CPS records and interviews or formal observations of the child and family. The study also found that the same professional resources or service providers were available to investigation or alternative response cases. However, reports handled by the alternative response were less likely to include an assessment of a family's safety needs, a determination of child maltreatment, a recommendation for court action, or the removal of a child from the home. Moreover, most agencies (81%) closed alternative response reports with no further action if the time frame for response elapsed, but 84 percent would not close an investigation if the response timeframe for completion had been exceeded (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003a). An increased emphasis on use of community-based services to augment CPS agency efforts—during investigations but more often with alternative response assessments—was consistent with an enhanced recognition that CPS agencies alone do not have the resources or the local support network to mediate the impact or prevent all child abuse or neglect effectively (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1997; Farrow, 1997; Waldfogel, 1998).

Still, purposes for alternative response systems vary. From the 20 States identified as having alternative response systems in the *CPS Reform Study*, three key purposes for the system were identified. States identified child safety (55%), family preservation or strengthening (45%), or prevention of child abuse and neglect (20%) as the reason for the alternative response approach. Most of these States (70%) explicitly noted that community agencies were responsible for conducting the assessments (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003b).

Alternative response systems differ not only in approach but also in the possible action outcomes following an assessment. In the *CPS Reform Study*'s review of State policies, the majority of those States with alternative response policies allowed the options of no further action, referral to voluntary services, or returning a case to an investigation unit. Nearly one-half (40%) of the alternative response States allowed petitioning the court for mandatory services. The same percentage of States (40%) also allowed the response to be closed without completion of all activities.

While these findings represent considerable variation in implementation, as the study noted, the formalization of the alternative response approach is still relatively new. As time progresses, State policies may either converge or diverge, in part due to local needs and resources (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003b).

Outcomes of Alternative Response Evaluations

To date, few studies have examined outcomes of alternative response systems, and those few have focused on an individual State's system. Since most systems are relatively new, much of the data reflect evaluations of outcomes early in the implementation phase of the systems (Center for Child and Family Policy, 2004; Loman & Siegel, 2004b; Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004). Nevertheless, some systems have been implemented long enough to produce more comprehensive outcome evaluations (English, Wingard, Marshall, Orme & Orme, 2000; Loman & Siegel, 2004a).

Most States identify which types of cases must be investigated instead of assessed; however, varying degrees of discretion are granted to workers who must decide which cases are assigned to the assessment track across the States (Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004; Loman & Siegel, 2004a; Loman & Siegel, 2004b). Despite this, a review of the findings from studies of pilots and fully implemented alternative response systems suggests that certain trends in characteristics and outcomes of children and families referred to alternative response are emerging.

Impact on the System

Studies suggest that the percentage of reports diverted to alternative response systems ranged from 42 percent to 71 percent (Siegel & Loman, 2000; Loman & Siegel, 2004a; Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004; Center for Child and Family Policy, 2004; Chipley et al., 1999), but these rates may vary among local offices in a State (Loman & Siegel, 2004a; Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004). With the introduction of alternative response, many States or pilot areas have noted an increase in the proportion of investigations that are substantiated (Loman & Siegel, 2004a; Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004). For example, in Virginia the number of investigations and founded investigations decreased with the introduction of the assessment track; however, founded investigations increased from 23 percent (during 2 baseline years) to 36 percent in State Fiscal Year 2004 (Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004). The reasons for increased substantiations appear to reflect the policy intention for alternative response that more serious cases comprise a larger portion of those investigated or that in some States a case must be opened to receive services.

Child and Family Characteristics

Surprisingly little has been published regarding the demographics of the children assigned to alternative response, other than their age. Some emerging trends suggest that younger children are more likely to receive traditional investigations rather than alternative response. An early evaluation of the Missouri system during its pilot phase revealed that children under 6-years old who experienced physical abuse were more likely to be referred for investigation (Siegel & Loman, 2000). An evaluation of the alternative response system in Texas found that families with older children were more likely to be referred for alternative response and that hotline staff reported a greater

propensity to assign cases with younger children to an investigation track (Chipley et al., 2004). Similarly, English et al. (2000) noted that children age 5 years old or younger were less likely to be referred to Washington State's alternative response system as opposed to the investigative response system. English et al., (2000) also noted that the gender and ethnic composition of the alternative response families was comparable to the traditional response families.

The Missouri evaluation (Siegel & Loman, 2000) noted little difference in the case characteristics and demographics of those children and families who experienced traditional investigations versus those who received family assessments. Specifically, no significant differences were found between cases with respect to factors such as a prior contact with CPS, the type of maltreatment, the report source, race, a history of foster care placement, the identity of the perpetrator (most often a parent), family structure (single female parents predominated), parental unemployment, or the size of family.

Report Source

To date, few published studies have examined the relationship between identity of the maltreatment reporter and the track to which a report is assigned (see Siegel & Loman, 2000; Loman & Siegel, 2004a; Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004; Center for Child and Family Policy, 2004; Chipley et al., 1999). A study of the Texas alternative response system identified a mandate to investigate reports from law enforcement (Chipley et al., 1999). English et al. (2000) found that although professional and community referents referred cases equally to CPS, none of the alternative response cases had been referred by law enforcement or medical personnel. The children and families served by alternative response were most likely to have been reported by social service professionals and educators.

Type of Maltreatment

Studies of individual States suggest that assignment to the alternative response track varies according to the type of maltreatment alleged. In Virginia, 72 percent of emotional abuse reports, 67 percent of neglect reports, 62 percent of medical neglect reports, and 61 percent of physical abuse reports were assigned to the assessment track. Investigations were mandated for sexual abuse reports, thus 98 percent of sexual abuse reports were investigated. Researchers also found that reports alleging multiple types of maltreatment were more likely to be investigated than assessed and the likelihood of investigation increased as the number of types of maltreatments increased (Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004).

In comparison, according to a pilot study of the Texas alternative response system, 40 percent of emotional abuse, 53 percent of medical neglect, 72 percent of neglectful supervision, 50 percent of physical abuse, 79 percent of physical neglect, and 54 percent of sexual abuse reports were assigned to the alternative response (Chipley et al., 1999). In Missouri, cases involving failure to supply basic needs, parent-child conflict, or less severe sexual abuse were more likely to be served by alternative response (Loman & Siegel, 2004a). Although English et al., (2000) did not report differences in the likelihood of being assigned to alternative response based on the type of maltreatment alleged, they analyzed maltreatment types by severity levels and identified that a notable portion of

referrals with moderate severity ratings were assigned to alternative response, as were a small number of sexual abuse referrals.

Services

Some studies have demonstrated that families in the assessment track are more likely to receive services in addition to case management than are families in the investigation track (Loman & Siegel, 2004a; Loman & Siegel, 2004b). For example, 54 percent of assessment track families in Minnesota received services other than case management, compared with 36 percent of investigation track families. Moreover, the number of services received by assessment track families exceeded that of investigation track families (Loman & Siegel, 2004b). Similarly, assessment cases in Missouri received more services compared to investigation track cases and the service recipients from the assessment track represented a broader array of families, including a larger proportion of low-risk families with no immediate threats to child safety (Loman & Siegel, 2004a).

The types of services may differ between assessment and investigation track children and families. For example, the Minnesota study noted that assessment track families who received services were poorer and received more assistance meeting basic needs (food, clothing, home repairs, utilities payments, and employment assistance) than the investigation families who received services. Similarly, in Missouri, a large proportion of the services offered to the assessment track families were targeted at meeting basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, or medical care assistance (Loman & Siegel, 2004a).

However, a Virginia study suggests that the likelihood of receiving services may depend on the type of maltreatment alleged (Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004). Although the study identified 32 percent of cases that were assigned to the assessment track as needing services, this figure varied according to the maltreatment alleged. Information regarding the percent of investigation cases needing services was not provided. Still, researchers reported that assessment track families with identified needs were equally or more likely to receive services than were families involved in investigations.

With respect to the type of maltreatment alleged, family assessments of emotional abuse in Virginia were most likely to be identified as in need of services (44%), followed by physical abuse (39%), medical neglect (35%), and physical neglect (28%). Services most frequently identified as needed were counseling, parent education, and substance abuse evaluation or treatment. However, authors of the study cautioned that this list may better reflect available services than needed services. The authors hypothesized that this was possibly the result of the improved ability to engage families through use of the assessment track's less adversarial approach. That said, the Virginia study noted that workers may be less likely to identify needed services if they know the services are not available in the area, even though they are able to note the problem when they record the service needs (Virginia Department of Social Services, 1999; Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004).

In addition, the timing of the service delivery may differ according to the track to which a case is assigned and may impact outcomes. Family assessment cases in Missouri received services earlier than those cases handled with traditional investigations (Loman & Siegel, 2004a). The Minnesota study found that early provision of services in these cases was shown to be effective in improving children's safety and preventing further maltreatment (Loman & Siegel, 2004b).

Placement

In assessing foster care placement rates, studies varied regarding the length of time children were followed, thus making a comparison of rates difficult. For example, the Virginia study found that 12 percent of substantiated investigations resulted in foster care placement compared to only 2 percent of assessment cases over a 90-day followup period (Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004). The Texas study found 2.8 percent of investigations and 0.1 percent of assessments resulted in substitute care placement at the time of the assessment or investigation (Chipley et al., 1999). The Minnesota evaluation also showed that families assigned to the alternative response track were less likely to have a child subsequently placed than comparable families assigned to the traditional investigation track (Loman & Siegel, 2004b).

In contrast, the Missouri study found that during 5 years of followup, children who experienced the family assessment track were subsequently placed in out-of-home care more frequently than were children whose families experienced the investigation track (28% vs. 25%, respectively). The difference was more pronounced for those families originally identified as exhibiting fewer risk factors. Further analysis revealed that the demonstration families—who were more likely to experience an out-of-home placement—were those with no prior history of placement and whose families were composed only of teenage children at the time of the original report (Loman & Siegel, 2004a).

Rereports and Recurrence

A salient concern with the advent and expansion of alternative response systems is whether or not they might compromise child safety. Comparisons of relative rates of rereporting and recurrence of alternative response to investigation have been done to assess this concern. While in some studies the differences are marginal, overall findings from studies to date suggest that child safety is not compromised by alternative response and that children involved in alternative response systems are less likely to experience a subsequent report or investigation (Chipley et al., 1999; English et al., 2000; Loman & Siegel, 2004a; Loman & Siegel, 2004b; Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004; Center for Child and Family Policy, 2004). In part it may be that these children have already been identified as being at lower risk of maltreatment (Chipley et al., 1999; Loman & Siegel, 2004a; Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004; Center for Child and Family Policy, 2004). However, a recent report of an experimental study conducted in Minnesota suggests that when comparable families were randomly assigned to receive assessment or investigation, the assessment cases were still less likely (27%) than were the investigation cases (30%) to be rereported to the child welfare system (Loman & Siegel, 2004b).

In addition, one study found that alternative response families were less likely to be rereported for lack of supervision and proper parenting, severe physical abuse, and educational neglect (Loman & Siegel, 2004a), than were the comparison group of families who were investigated. This finding suggests that the opportunity to provide services during the alternative response facilitated more successful amelioration of these specific problems. Another study found that families with no prior history of CPS contact were less likely to be rereported if they had experienced the alternative response (Loman & Siegel, 2004b). Finally, the Texas study noted that of those children who were rereported, a larger proportion of assessment track children were reported for neglect and a smaller proportion for abuse than children who received a traditional investigation (Chipley et al., 1999).

The Objective of this Study

The objective of this study was to compare the children in each State who were referred to alternative response systems with those referred to traditional investigations. Comparisons were made in terms of response characteristics, the circumstances of their reported maltreatment, and their subsequent reports and dispositions.

The key research questions for this study were the following:

1. What are the characteristics of children who received an alternative response?

Reported children were compared on whether they received an alternative response or an investigation response, based on the following demographic characteristics:

- Age of child;
- Sex of child;
- Race of child; and
- Whether the child had been previously victimized.¹

2. How are the circumstances of the reported maltreatment related to the chances that a child receives an alternative response or an investigation response?

Reported children were compared on whether they received an alternative response or an investigation response, based on different circumstances of the reported maltreatment. Circumstances of the reported maltreatment that were considered included:

- The source of report;
- The number of children;
- The living arrangement of children;
- The type of maltreatment;
- Domestic violence in the home; and
- Caretaker drug and alcohol abuse.

¹ The NCANDS data includes a field that indicates whether a child has previously been a victim of child maltreatment. There is no indication, however, whether a child has previously been included in a report of maltreatment, though not found to be a victim. When working with a single year of data it is not possible to identify children who may have been reported during previous years, but not victimized.

3. How do outcomes differ between children who receive an alternative response and children who receive an investigation response?

Children who received an alternative response and those who received an investigation response were compared on the variables below related to the outcomes following the reported maltreatment:

- The services provided;
- Placement in foster care; and
- Any subsequent reports and dispositions within a fixed 6-month followup period (for reports between January and June, only).

Methodology

Case-level data from the 2002 NCANDS Child File were used as the basis for the analysis. These case-level data are submitted on a voluntary basis in a common record format to the Federal Government by State CPS agencies. The submissions are a rich source of information about children who are the subjects of child maltreatment investigations, including data about the investigations, child demographics, types of maltreatment, and services. Each year the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services prepares an annual report that analyzes the NCANDS data. For calendar year 2002, Child File data submissions from 42 States—containing case-specific information on nearly 3 million reported children—were submitted to NCANDS.

Data Construction

Data from six States—Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey,² Oklahoma, and Wyoming—including 313,838 reported children, were used to create the data set for this research. These States were chosen because case-level data, including alternative response dispositions, were provided in sufficient numbers.³

The NCANDS Child Files from each State were used to create the data set. These files contain a record for each child in a report alleging child maltreatment. This is referred to as a report-child pair, indicating that a child is counted each time he or she is the subject of a maltreatment report that is investigated or assessed.

Several new variables were derived, and some were recoded into categorical variables, including:

- *Response Type*—The report disposition was used to create a new variable, called response type. Reports with dispositions of substantiated, indicated,

² In New Jersey all alternative response-nonvictim reports were concerned with family problems such as homelessness, domestic violence, child or parent substance abuse, or parenting issues that pose a risk to the child. The majority of these cases only received a child welfare assessment. In instances where there was a family problem and an alleged maltreatment, an investigation was conducted, but if the allegations were not substantiated, these cases were considered to be family problem cases and were reported to NCANDS with an alternative response—nonvictim disposition.

³ Louisiana and Ohio were excluded because less than 1 percent of dispositions in 2002 were alternative response.

unsubstantiated, or closed with no finding were coded as investigation response. Dispositions of alternative response—victim and alternative response—nonvictim were coded as alternative response. All other dispositions were coded as other response; these cases were later excluded from analyses.⁴

- *Maltreatment Type*—For each report-child pair, up to four maltreatment types can be reported in the Child File. These were recoded to mutually exclusive categories: physical abuse only, neglect or medical neglect only, sexual abuse only, emotional or other abuse only, and multiple maltreatment.
- *Age of Victims*—The age of victims was recoded into categories. The categories for age were: younger than age 1, age 1–3, age 4–7, age 8–11, age 12–15, and age 16 or older.
- *Services*—The Child File includes data on what services were provided.⁵ All of these services were combined into in-home services. Foster care was considered and analyzed separately.

The final data set was composed of 313,838 children in 6 States.⁶ Because of the major differences as noted above in the literature review in State policy and implementation, and the level of use of alternative response as reported to NCANDS, data from each State were each analyzed separately.

Data Analyses

For each of the variables pertaining to characteristics of the reported children, reports, and maltreatments, children in each category were compared on how many received alternative response and how many received traditional investigations. For example, the percentage of boys who received an alternative response was compared with the percentage of girls who received an alternative response.

For analyses of outcome variables such as service provision and placement in foster care, comparisons were made between children who received an alternative response and children who received investigations. For example, the percentage of children who received an alternative response whose families received in-home services was compared with the percentage of children who received an investigation whose families received in-home services.

⁴ These other dispositions included unsubstantiated due to intentionally false reporting, other, and unknown or missing.

⁵ These services include: post investigation services; family support services; family preservation services; adoption services; case management; counseling services; child daycare services; educational and training services; employment services; family planning services; health-related and home health services; home-based services; housing services; independent and transitional living services; information and referral services; legal services; mental health services; pregnancy and parenting services for young parents; respite care services; special services—disabled; special services—juvenile delinquent; substance abuse services; transportation services; and other services.

⁶ Nine children with unknown dispositions were excluded.

For analyses of subsequent CPS responses, comparisons were made among children who received an alternative response and those who received an investigation as their first response during the reporting period. For these analyses, only children whose first response from the CPS system of the reporting year was during the first 6 months of the year were included.⁷ Additionally, children who received an investigation and were found to be victims were analyzed separately from children who received an investigation and found not to be victims. These analyses included only children who received a response of some kind from CPS; those who were reported but screened out at intake, were considered not to have received a response.

For analyses of trends in CPS response in each State, the overall number of children in maltreatment reports was compared for each year between 1998 and 2002. These analyses examined the percentage of children who were found to be victims following an investigation, the percentage who were investigated but found not to be victims, the percentage with an alternative response, and the percentage with any other dispositions. Data from 1998 through 2000 were obtained from State submissions using the Summary Data Component, in which data were provided in aggregate form.

Interpretation of NCANDS Data on CPS Response

The designation of a reported child as having received an alternative response occurs within the disposition field in the NCANDS. Alternative response, however, is not a disposition; it is a response. When a report comes in, a case worker or supervisor determines whether the case will be handled in the traditional investigation track (called investigation in most States) or if it will be given an alternative response. Thus, alternative responses are most often separated out at an early stage. The only field in the NCANDS that captures the referral to alternative response is in the “disposition” field.

Occasionally, children and families are transferred back from the alternative response track to the investigation track and receive a disposition from within that track. This is unlikely to be indicated anywhere in the administrative record of the response process and would not be captured by NCANDS (in this instance the disposition would just reflect the results of the investigation and would be substantiated, indicated, or unsubstantiated). The original referral of such a case to the alternative response track would not be captured by these data.

Key Findings

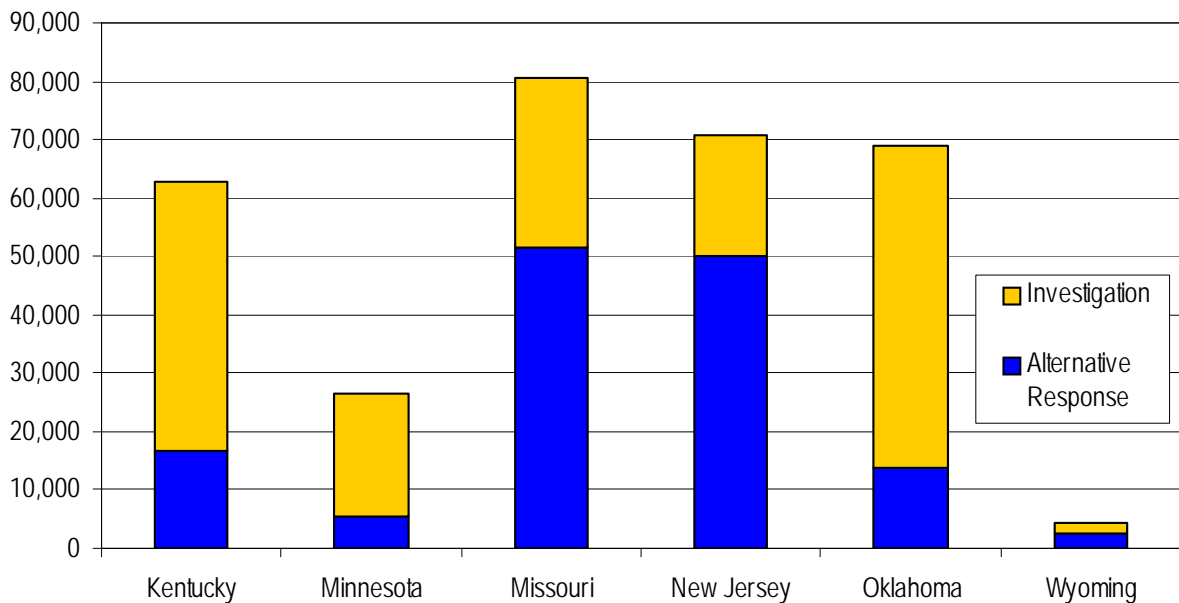
Even though some States have been implementing alternative response systems for several years, no large-scale, multistate, data-based research has been undertaken on the children who have received alternative response as compared with children who have received investigations. Findings from this research show that in some ways these groups are quite similar; however, some differences can be identified. The implications of these findings are discussed below.

⁷ It is not known whether these children experienced previous reports, investigations, or alternative response in previous years, because these data were not linked to data from previous years. The prior victimization field was not considered.

This study compared children who were referred to alternative response systems with those referred to traditional investigations in terms of their own characteristics, the circumstances of their reported maltreatment, and their subsequent reports and dispositions.

Figure 1 shows children who were the subject of a report by the type of response that their report received in each of the six States represented in the data set. The number of children who were included in a maltreatment report, as well as the proportion of children who received an alternative response, varied across these States. Kentucky, Missouri, New Jersey, and Oklahoma all had large number of children who were subjects of a maltreatment report (between 60,000 and 80,000), but in Kentucky and Oklahoma, only 27 and 20 percent, respectively, were referred to alternative response, while in Missouri and New Jersey, 64 and 71 percent, respectively were referred to alternative response. Minnesota (26,344) and Wyoming (4,355) had much smaller number of children who were subjects of a report. In Minnesota, 20 percent were referred to alternative response, while in Wyoming, 58 percent were.

Figure 1. Children in Maltreatment Reports by State, 2002
(n = 318,838)



Variation was noteworthy between States and reinforces the need to examine the States separately. Separate case studies for each State, along with data tables, are presented in Appendices A–F.

State Policies on Alternative Response

Based on a review of policy documents that were available as of April 1, 2005, table 1 shows the circumstances under which States will or will not provide alternative response. In New Jersey, where child welfare assessments are provided to families with a wide range of problems such as homelessness, domestic violence, child or parent substance abuse, their policies did not explicitly identify circumstances under which alternative

response could not be provided. Other States take a more restrictive approach by aggressively extracting reports for which alternative response cannot be considered before identifying those for which it can. Alternatively, these differences may result from the style adopted by the State for describing its alternative response system. For example, in Wyoming—where 58 percent of reported children were referred to alternative response—the policy described only the circumstances precluding alternative response, not those that allow it.

Table 1. State Policies for Alternative Response

Per State Policy, Alternative Response Can Be Provided if:		KY	MN	MO	NJ	OK	WY
Physical Abuse	Any alleged inflicted physical injury to a child age five and under	No	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	No	Not Stated
	Any alleged inflicted physical injury to a child age 6 or 7	No	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	Yes	Not Stated
	Minor physical injury in non-critical areas resulting from discipline of a child age 8 and older	Yes	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	Yes	Not Stated
	Child fatality	No	No	No	Not Stated	No	No
Neglect	Food, clothing, shelter, supervision, or hygiene needs are not adequately met	Yes	Not Stated	Not Stated	Yes	Yes	Not Stated
	Educational neglect	Yes	Not Stated	Yes	Not Stated	Yes	Not Stated
	Child is suicidal, and parents or caregiver not providing appropriate intervention	No	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	Yes	Not Stated
	Abandonment	No	No	Not Stated	Not Stated	No	Not Stated
	Child displaying self destructive behaviors such as eating disorders or self-mutilation, as a result of emotional abuse or neglect	No	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	No	Not Stated
Emotional Abuse	Emotional abuse or neglect that does not indicate risk of serious physical harm to the child	Yes	Not Stated	Yes	Not Stated	Yes	Not Stated
Sexual Abuse	Child sexual abuse (including solicitation or promotion of prostitution)	No	No	No	Not Stated	No	No
Unfit Parenting	Allegations that parent is violent or psychotic	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	No	Not Stated
	Homelessness	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	Yes	Not Stated	Not Stated
	Child's disability, or medical, emotional, or substance abuse problems	Not Stated	No	Not Stated	Yes	Not Stated	Not Stated
	Risk of physical or sexual abuse	Yes	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated
	Baby born exposed to drugs/alcohol	Yes	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	No	Not Stated
	Baby born dependent on drugs/alcohol	No	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated
	Domestic violence	Yes	Not Stated	Not Stated	Yes	Not Stated	Not Stated
History of Maltreatment	History of prior reports of abuse or neglect that were not serious, or with no indication of escalating seriousness of reports	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	Yes	Not Stated
	History of serious allegations of abuse or neglect whether the investigation was confirmed or not	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	No	Not Stated

Per State Policy, Alternative Response Can Be Provided if:		KY	MN	MO	NJ	OK	WY
Ongoing CPS Involvement	Abuse or neglect in a child care facility.	No	No	No	Not Stated	No	No
	Concerns in a foster family or trial adoptive home including abuse or neglect, physical discipline of a child under age 3, or risk of sexual behavior.	No	No	No	Not Stated	No	No
	Concerns in a foster family or trial adoptive home including corporal punishment of a child 3–5 years of age, or supervision concerns regarding an older school-aged child.	Not Stated	No	No	Not Stated	Yes	Not Stated
	Children are in imminent danger and need to be removed from the home	No	Not Stated	No	Not Stated	No	No
	Allegations of abuse or neglect, or a new baby born in an open permanency planning or prevention case	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated	No	Not Stated
Severity of Maltreatment	Mild, moderate, or first-time, non-criminal reports of physical abuse or neglect	Not Stated	Not Stated	Yes	Not Stated	Not Stated	Not Stated
	Abuse, neglect, or malicious punishment resulting in serious injury, near death, risk for significant harm or injury or requiring medical treatment	No	No	No	Not Stated	No	No
	Criminal charges are likely	Not Stated	Not Stated	No	Not Stated	No	Not Stated

Overall Referral Trends

States' use of alternative response varied considerably. During 2002, referrals to alternative response ranged from 20 and 71 percent across these six States. Viewing these trends over 5 years, it appears that States were generally increasing—or maintaining—steady levels of alternative response referrals. The differences between States most likely reflect several factors, including whether the program was in the process of being implemented; whether the program is statewide or a pilot; the criteria is specified for determining to which track a case may be referred; the number of alternative tracks to which a case may be assigned; and the degree to which a State documents the outcomes of these alternative track assignments in their NCANDS data. In general, a review of multiyear trends suggests that States using alternative response have been either experiencing growth or steady use of the optional approach to responding to child maltreatment reports.

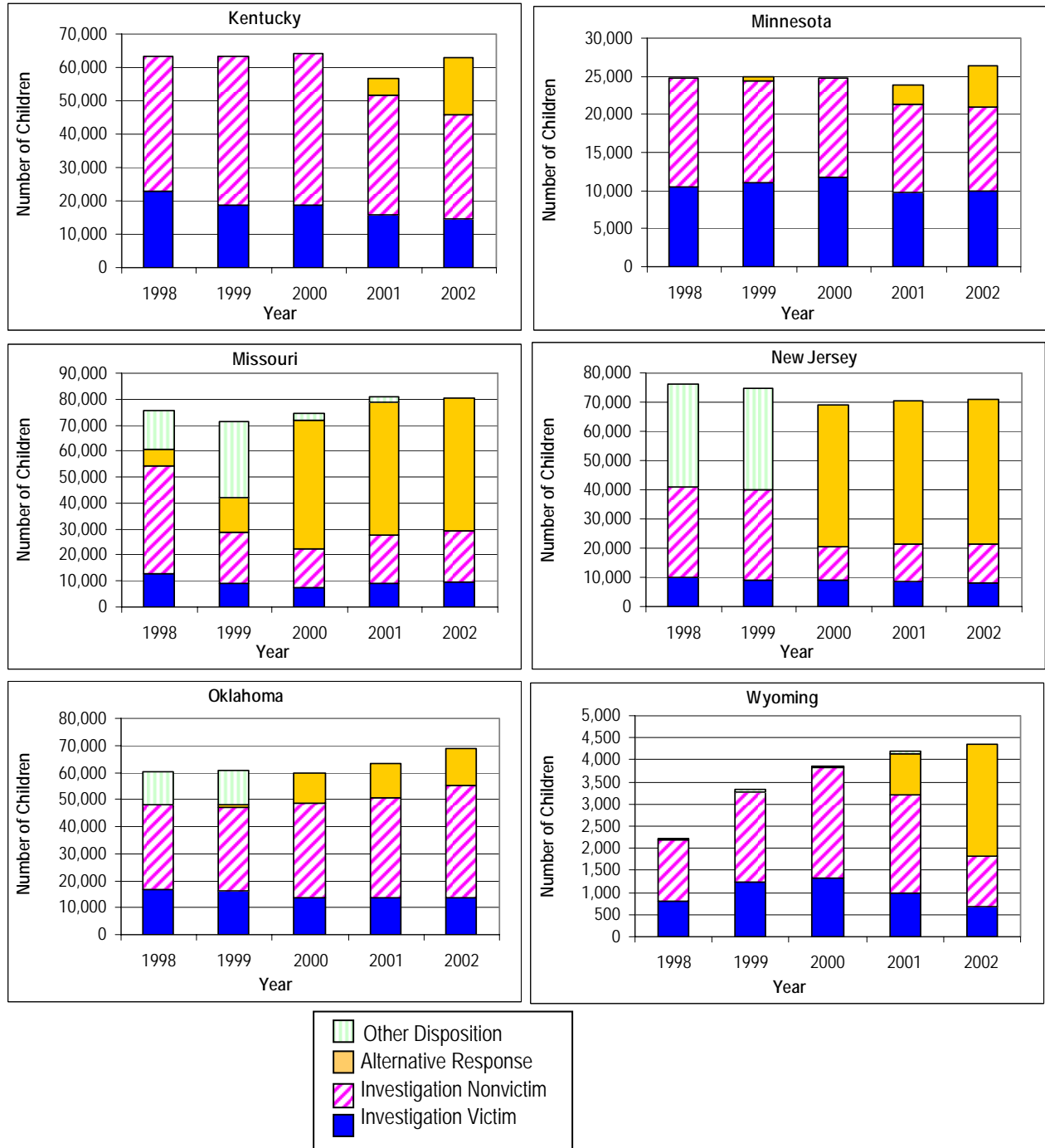
States differed in how frequently alternative responses were used and in whether investigations were reduced.

Still, the use of alternative response appears to have an impact on the numbers of both victims and nonvictims identified by these States when comparing 1998–2002 disposition data. In general, the use of alternative response resulted in a decrease in the numbers of victims and nonvictims identified by States using alternative response. The impact of the alternative response system on States' victim identification ranged from a 6 percent decrease (in a State in which the program is being piloted) to a 36 percent decrease. The

Alternative response drew clients primarily from cases that formerly would have been investigated but unsubstantiated, or given "other" dispositions.

impact of alternative response systems on the number of nonvictims identified generally was reflected by a decrease of nonvictims (ranging from 18% to 57%); however, the rate of nonvictims in Oklahoma rose by 30 percent.

Figure 2. Trends in Alternative Response and Investigation, 1998–2002

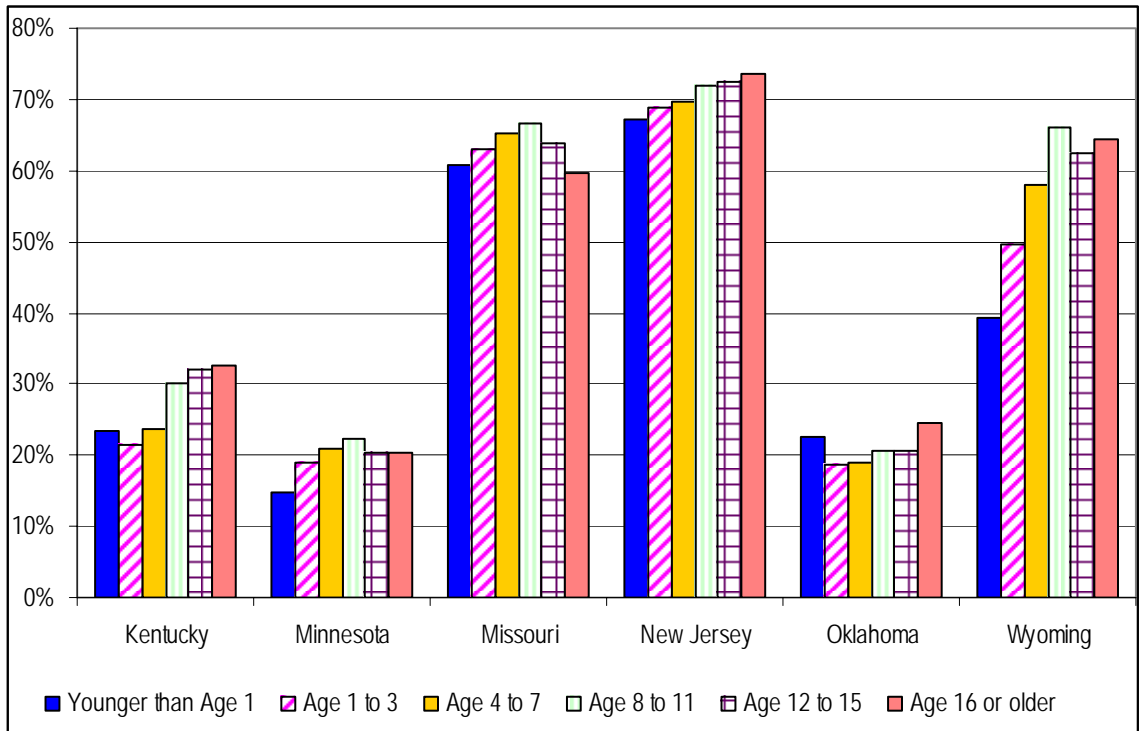


What are the characteristics of children who received an alternative response?

This research examined whether demographic characteristics—such as age, sex, race, and ethnicity—distinguished children who were referred to alternative response from those who received traditional investigations. As shown in figure 3, older children were more

likely to receive an alternative response than were younger children, similar to findings in earlier studies in Missouri (Loman & Siegel, 2004a), Texas (Chiple et al., 1999), and Washington (English et al., 2000). These findings suggest that the criteria that lead to the assignment of a report for an alternative response or investigation may take into account the age of the child as a vulnerability factor. This assessment may be guided by policy directives, a formalized risk or safety assessment, or it may reflect the decisionmakers' proclivity to opt for a more formalized response in reports involving younger children. Other studies have found that the use of formal risk or safety assessment directives guide decisions regarding track assignment (English et al., 2000; Loman & Siegel, 2004b; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003a).

Figure 3. Percentage of Children Referred to Alternative Response, by Age, 2002



Similar to findings by Loman & Siegel (2004b), race and ethnicity did not strongly distinguish between children who received an alternative response and those who received an investigation. Some differences were evident in the likelihood of alternative response for children of different races; however, the variation in the number of children of different races within the CPS population—and the population as a whole—render these differences difficult to interpret. In general, the sex of the child was not a major factor in determining whether a child received alternative response or investigation, although in Missouri and Wyoming, boys were more likely to be referred to alternative response than were girls.

In most of the States, prior victimization was related to a decreased likelihood of alternative response. In Minnesota and Missouri, this difference was quite dramatic—none of the children with prior victimization received alternative response. In Oklahoma

and Kentucky, only 7 percent and 16 percent (respectively) of the children with prior victimization received alternative response. In New Jersey only, children with prior victimization were equally likely to receive alternative response. It is plausible that concerns about a family's responsiveness to system interventions, or about the chronic nature of problems, may factor into the assignment.

How are the circumstances of the reported maltreatment related to the chances that a child receives an alternative response or an investigation response?

As described above, State policy regarding criteria for the use of alternative response is based on the circumstances of the report, particularly on the type or severity of the alleged maltreatment. Previous research has shown that some circumstances of alleged maltreatment are related to whether a child receives an investigation or an alternative response, while others are not. Research has focused mainly on the source of the report and type of maltreatment (Siegel & Loman, 2000; Loman & Siegel, 2004a; Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004; Chipley et al., 1999, English et al., 2000). Earlier studies have not reported on whether the other characteristics of the maltreatment report—such as number of children reported, living arrangement, or the presence of risk factors such as family violence or caretaker substance abuse—were associated in any way with a referral to alternative response. Findings from this study confirm that most of these variables are relevant in distinguishing which track is chosen.

Source of Report

The connection between a referral to alternative response and the source of the report was confirmed by the present study. Alternative response more often resulted from referrals from parents, relatives, friends, schools, or the children themselves. (See figure 4.)

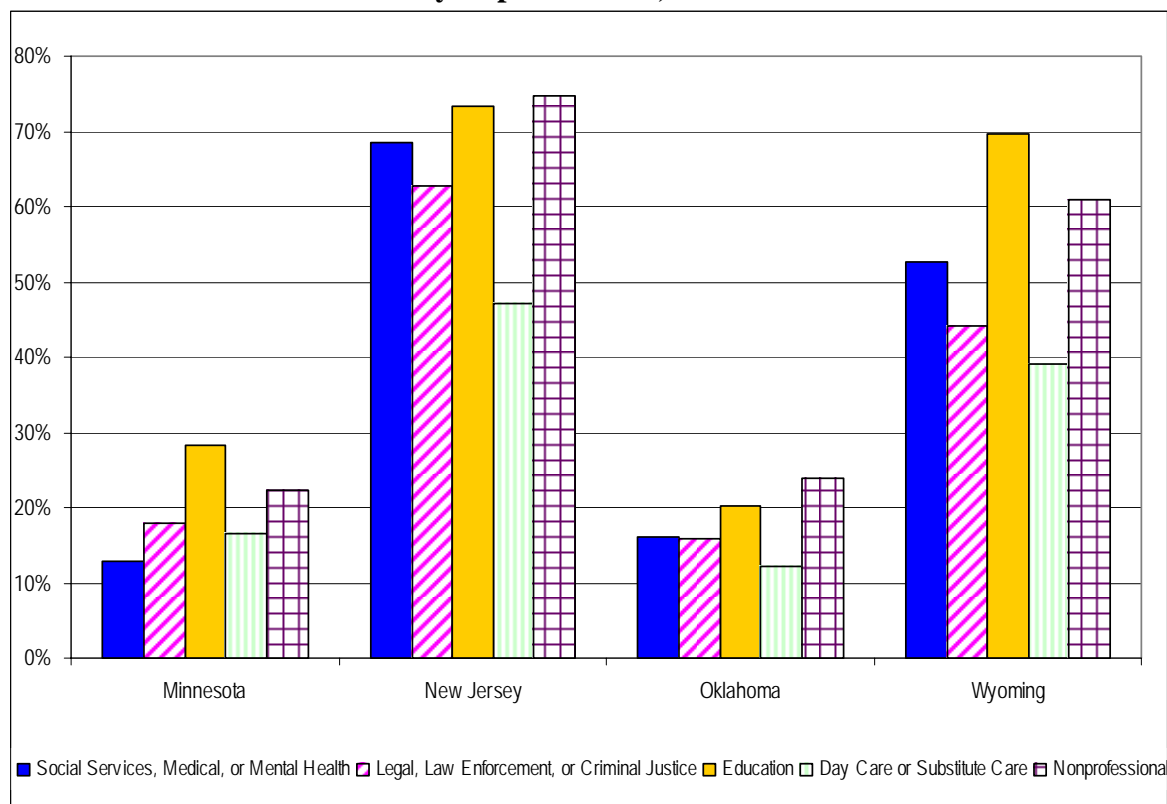
Referrals from social workers, medical personnel, legal, or criminal justice sources were less likely to be referred to alternative response. These findings

coincide in part with earlier research. English et al., (2000) found that the children and families served by alternative response in Washington were most likely to have been reported by social service professionals and educators and never by law enforcement or medical personnel. In Texas, reports from law enforcement were mandated to receive investigations (Chipley et al., 1999).

Reports from nonprofessionals and school sources were more likely to be referred to alternative response than those from social workers, medical personnel, legal, or criminal justice sources.

Presumably, the specific policies at the State level regarding referral to alternative response are responsible in part for establishing the relationship between report source and alternative response referral. However, it may also be that reports received from professional sources present a more thorough and formalized assessment of the problems that prompted the report, as well as greater knowledge about the types of reports to which the traditional CPS system may respond, thus assignment to the investigation track may be more likely. Another study has suggested that professional reporters are more inclined to report more serious allegations of child maltreatment. Thus, the greater use of the investigation track in such cases may also be explained by severity considerations (Zellman, 1990).

Figure 4. Percentage of Children Referred to Alternative Response, by Report Source, 2002



Maltreatment Type

The connection between maltreatment type and referral to alternative response in each State was strong, but varied across States, reflecting different reporting strategies for alternative response. For two States in this study—Missouri and Wyoming—all children referred to alternative response had the same maltreatment characteristics; in Missouri, all were children with no reported maltreatment, and in Wyoming all had been reported for other abuse. In the other States—Kentucky, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Oklahoma—a portion of children with all different maltreatment types were referred to alternative response. (See figure 5.)

However, neglect/medical neglect and emotional/other/unknown maltreatment types were more highly represented among children who were referred to alternative response.⁸ In these four States, children for whom sexual abuse was the only maltreatment type had the lowest rate of referral to alternative response. With the exception of New Jersey, virtually none of the children who were reported to be sexually abused were referred to alternative response. These findings suggest that an alternative response system generally reflects the

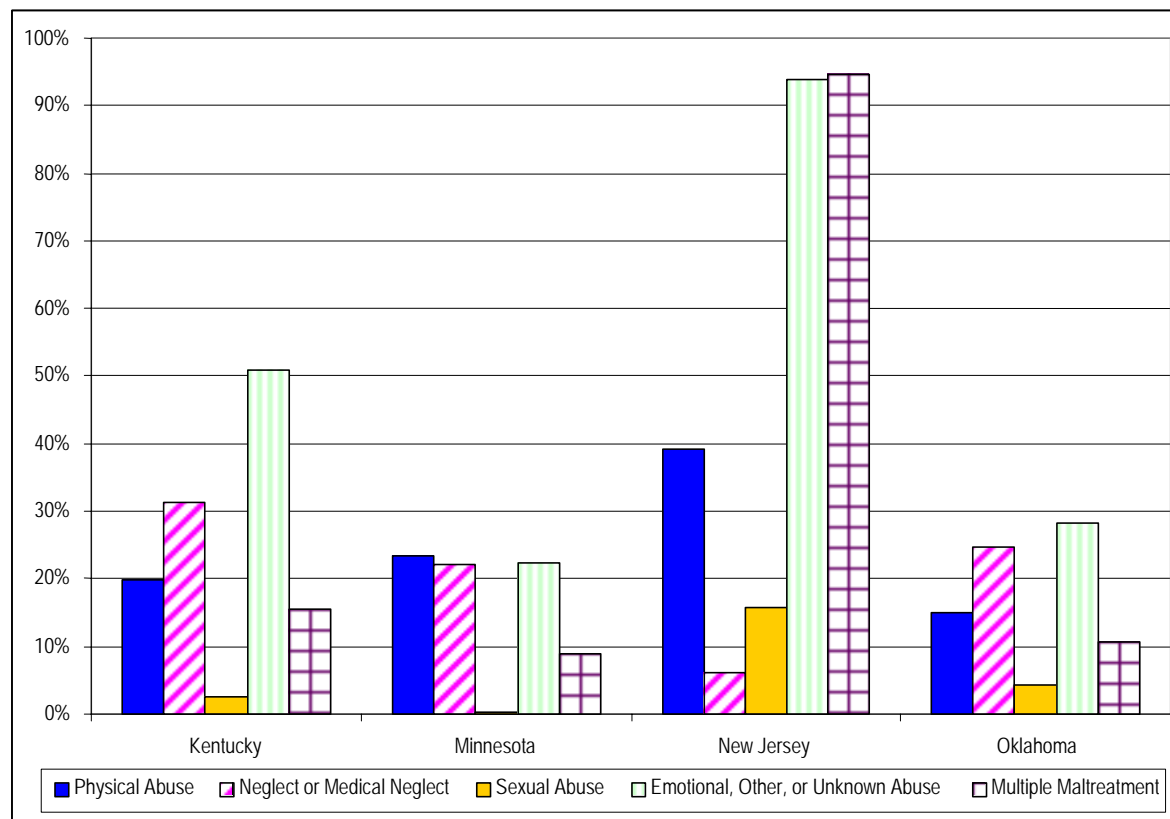
Alternative response was more likely to be used for cases with less immediate safety concerns and was much less likely in cases in which sexual abuse was the only maltreatment type.

However, neglect/medical neglect and emotional/other/unknown maltreatment types were more highly represented among children who were referred to alternative response.⁸ In these four States, children for whom sexual abuse was the only maltreatment type had the lowest rate of referral to alternative response. With the exception of New Jersey, virtually none of the children who were reported to be sexually abused were referred to alternative response. These findings suggest that an alternative response system generally reflects the

⁸ In New Jersey, families that were reported for parenting issues that pose a risk for the child were given a family assessment (alternative response) and reported to NCANDS as having an “unknown” maltreatment type rather than neglect.

purpose of the system—to serve families with less immediate safety concerns and therefore may not warrant a traditional CPS response.

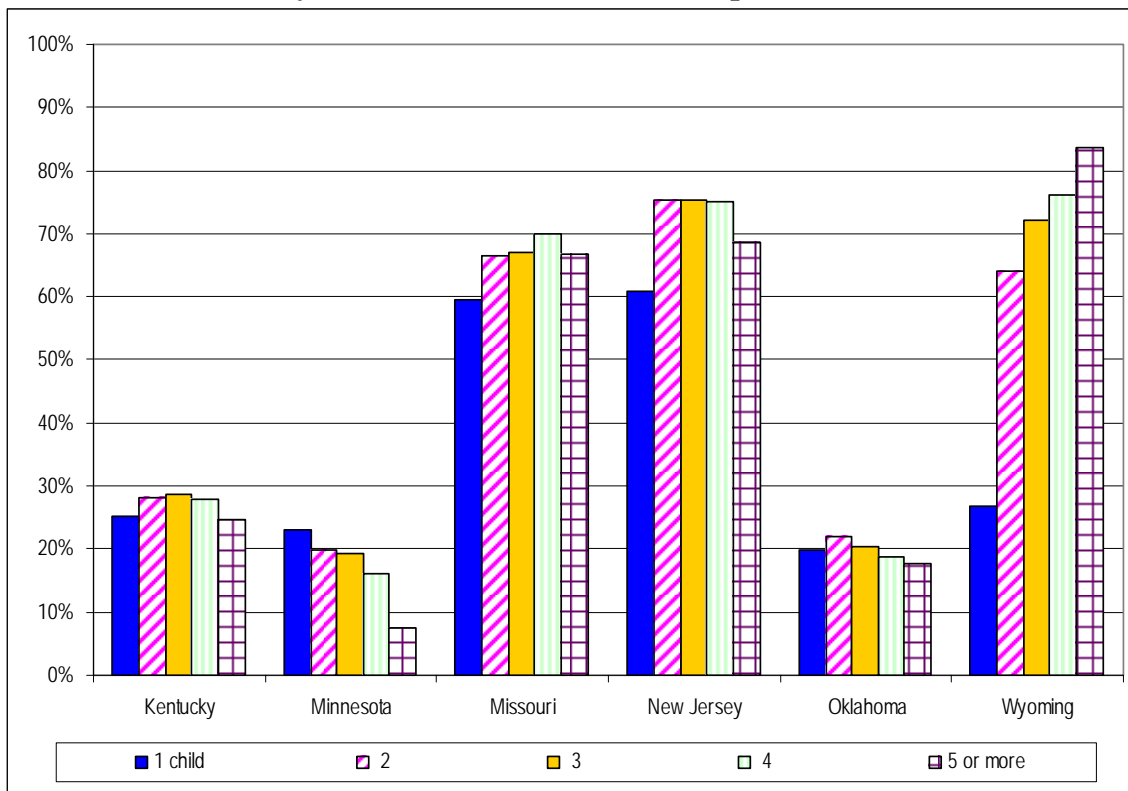
Figure 5. Percentage of Children Referred to Alternative Response, by Maltreatment Type, 2002



Other Circumstances of the Reported Maltreatment

In the States that provided data on the reported child’s living arrangement, children living at home with their families were more likely to be referred to alternative response than were children in foster care or institutional settings. In all States but Minnesota, a higher percentage of children were referred to alternative response when other children were included in the same maltreatment report than when only one child was included in the report. (See figure 6.) In Wyoming, children were more likely to be referred to alternative response when there were more children in the report. It may be that cases involving neglect are more likely to include more children who are in need of intervention than those cases in which physical or sexual abuse is alleged. In Minnesota children who were alone in the maltreatment report were more likely to be referred to alternative response. In the family risk assessment of abuse and neglect that is used in Minnesota, families with more children are given a higher-risk score, resulting in a lower likelihood that they would be referred to alternative response. Further research is needed to identify what underlies the association between number of children in the report and the referral to alternative response or investigation.

Figure 6. Percentage of Children Referred to Alternative Response, by Number of Children in the Report, 2002



In New Jersey only the presence of family violence and caretaker substance abuse were associated with an increase in the proportion of children referred to alternative response, which is consistent with the focus of New Jersey’s alternative response system on families with these issues. In all other States, the presence of family violence was not associated with an increase in the likelihood that a child would be referred to a response or a particular type. Also, children whose caretakers had a history of drug abuse had a lower rate of referral to alternative response than those children with no history of caretaker drug abuse. When only caretaker alcohol abuse was present, children were referred to alternative response at approximately the same rate, or slightly lower, than those with no history of caretaker substance abuse. Generally, these findings are in keeping with the alternative response systems’ premise to serve those cases that appear to be at lower risk or presenting less severe allegations regarding child maltreatment.

How do outcomes differ between children who receive an alternative response and children who receive an investigation response?

This research compares children who received alternative response with those who received investigations on two variables pertaining to the course of action following a report—whether children or their family members received services, if children were placed, and whether they experienced an additional report of maltreatment within 6 months and, if so, how the CPS system responded. Findings illustrate that these two groups differed on these outcome variables.

Services

Similar to previous findings in Missouri (Loman & Siegel, 2004a), and Virginia (Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004), in-home services were provided more often to children and families in the alternative response track. These findings may support the notion that families who are engaged using a less adversarial approach may be more inclined to utilize services that are offered. Moreover, if cases assigned to alternative response are those that present less pressing needs, this trend may also reflect that more services are available to address the needs of these families compared with what is available for families presenting more serious needs. Children were more likely to be placed in foster care if they received investigations, similar to earlier findings in Virginia (Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004), Texas (Chipley et al., 1999), and Minnesota (Loman & Siegel, 2004b). This study’s finding reinforces the idea that more serious cases, with more pressing safety concerns are likely to be referred for investigation.

Reentry or Reresponse

Overall findings from earlier studies suggest that child safety is not compromised when alternative response is provided rather than a traditional investigation, and that children involved in alternative response systems are less likely to experience a subsequent report or investigation (Chipley et al., 1999; English et al., 2000; Loman & Siegel, 2004a; Loman & Siegel, 2004b; Virginia Department of Social Services, 2004; Center For Child And Family Policy, 2004). The findings from this research demonstrate that the rate of recurrence within 6 months was comparable for children who received an alternative response and those who received an investigation, or, in the case of Oklahoma, the rate of reentry was lower.

Rereporting did not seem to be influenced substantially by the existence of an alternative response.

If children received an investigation as their initial response from CPS, the likelihood of their receiving an alternative response was lower for a second report, but not at all out of the question. Among children who were found to be victims, fewer than 5 percent were referred to alternative response for a subsequent report in most States; although in Missouri and New Jersey—with their high overall rate of alternative response—9 and 11 percent of victims were subsequently referred to alternative response. Similarly, among nonvictims in New Jersey, 13 percent were subsequently referred to alternative response while in other States this rate was less than 10 percent.

Implications

In general, these findings demonstrate that implementation of an alternative response system reflects its intention—to serve children and families who appear to be at lower risk or who present less immediate safety concerns. The findings are consistent with the expectation that these families’ circumstances may not warrant a traditional CPS response, but can benefit from some intervention to prevent potential or future maltreatment.

These analyses of child, report, and maltreatment characteristics suggest that States are implementing their alternative response systems somewhat differently. Some of this may be due to the stage and scope of implementation in each State. Other explanations may include the degree to which policies clearly specify how the response assignment is made. It is also unknown if the profile of cases referred for alternative response changes as a system matures and workers become more comfortable with employing a less adversarial approach for intervention. Still, some discretion by individual caseworkers is likely responsible for much of the variation between alternative response and investigations, as much as client and report characteristics. Further, State population demographics and availability of resources may also factor in the decisions made and outcomes observed. A closer examination of the types of services utilized by families assigned to alternative response, compared with families assigned for investigation, may reveal more distinctive characteristics.

Presumably, the specific State-level policies regarding referral to alternative response are responsible in part for the differences evident in these findings. The guidelines for determining whether cases should be referred to alternative response are typically based on the severity and type of maltreatment, but may vary considerably by State. These variations may reflect not only differences in policies, but also decisionmaking processes for assessing cases for response assignment, system capacity, and organizational philosophy.

It appears that services are being provided to a greater proportion of families who receive an alternative response. It also appears from this data that even though children who had been previously referred to alternative response do experience subsequent reports and responses by CPS, in general they are not at any greater risk for subsequent reports than those who received an investigation. Furthermore, they are not at any greater risk for subsequent victimization. With this knowledge, at the system level, agencies that refer children and families to the alternative response or investigation track may be confident that, if specified guidelines guide the decision, the child's future safety is no more likely to be compromised.

Clearly, many factors influence the processes and outcomes of alternative response systems, and it may be helpful to more closely examine the interaction between these factors. Generally, the findings from this study demonstrate that alternative response has been provided in situations in which the severity of the problems is less extreme. The results are also broadly consistent with those found in evaluations of individual States alternative response systems. This study provides a more textured understanding of alternative response systems across States and the outcomes associated with families and children who benefit from such systems.

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APPENDIX A

CASE STUDY OF ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE SYSTEM: KENTUCKY

During 2002, 62,738 children received dispositions from the CPS system in Kentucky. Seventy-three percent of the reported children with dispositions during 2002 were referred to the investigation track and 27 percent received an alternative response.

Background

In Kentucky, cases referred to the CPS agency are referred to one of four tracks. The investigation track is used for all moderate or high-risk referrals as determined by the level of risk matrix. All sexual abuse and nonfamilial referrals meet the criteria for the investigation track. The emphasis during investigations is on obtaining and documenting evidentiary information that supports a finding of substantiated or unsubstantiated abuse and neglect. In the investigation track, the social service worker collaborates with the family and community partners to obtain the necessary information and comprehensively address the safety needs of all family members. Reports that are referred to the investigation track are given dispositions of substantiated, unsubstantiated, or closed with no finding.

The family in need of services assessment (FINSA) track is used for dependency, status, and referrals determined to be at low-risk for physical abuse or neglect. The emphasis is on partnering with the family and community in order to establish a family support system to meet the needs of the family in a comprehensive manner and prevent future abuse or neglect incidents. All cases in the FINSA track are given the disposition of alternative response–nonvictim in the NCANDS data submission.

The resource linkage track is used for any referrals that do not meet certain criteria defined in legislation. The caller is linked to appropriate community resources in order to meet the needs of the family. The law enforcement track is used for cases involving noncaretakers. For families in this track, the social service worker can also provide assistance, such as interviews of children and referrals to community resources. Children referred to these tracks were reported as other dispositions, and did not count as either investigation or alternative response.

Trends

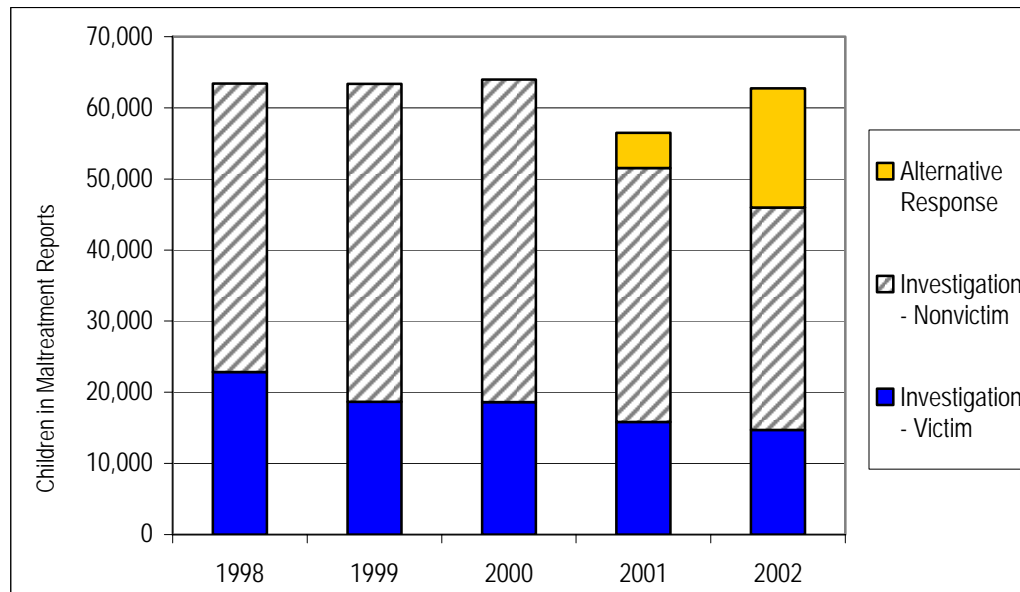
The number of children who received a response from the CPS system in Kentucky remained fairly constant from 1998 to 2002, with a drop during 2001. With the introduction of alternative response, the number of children found to be victims decreased by 36 percent between 1998 and 2002, and the number of nonvictims was reduced by 23 percent. (See figure A–1.)

Characteristics of the Children

While overall in Kentucky, 27 percent of reported children received an alternative response, older children were more likely to be referred to alternative response. Among

reported children older than age 8, 31 percent were referred to alternative response, while 23 percent of children younger than age 8 were referred to alternative response. The race of the child did not strongly distinguish those children who were referred to alternative response from those who received investigations, although the rate of referral to alternative response was higher for African-Americans (29%) and Asian children (29%), than for American Indian (24%), White (25%), and Hispanic (22%) children. Reported children with prior histories of victimization were less likely (16%) than those without prior victimization (28%) to receive alternative response.

Figure A–1. Children in Maltreatment Reports by Response, 1998–2002, Kentucky



Characteristics of the Reported Maltreatment

Children in reports of all types of maltreatment were referred to alternative response, although a higher percentage of children in reports in which the only maltreatment was emotional maltreatment (51%) or neglect (31%) was referred to alternative response, while only 20 percent of reports of physical abuse, 16 percent of multiple maltreatment reports, and 2 percent of sexual abuse reports were referred to alternative response.

Children in reports that included a large number of children were less likely to be referred to alternative response than those with fewer children in the report. Among children with whom 6 or more other children were included in the same report, 12 percent were referred to alternative response, compared with at least 25 percent of children who had fewer additional children in the same report. Reported children were referred to alternative response less frequently when their families had a history of family violence (22%) than when there was no history of family violence (27%).⁹

⁹ The number of children whose families had a reported history of family violence was very small (7% of children), so the percentage of children without such a history who received an alternative response mirrors the percentage in the full dataset.

Service Provision

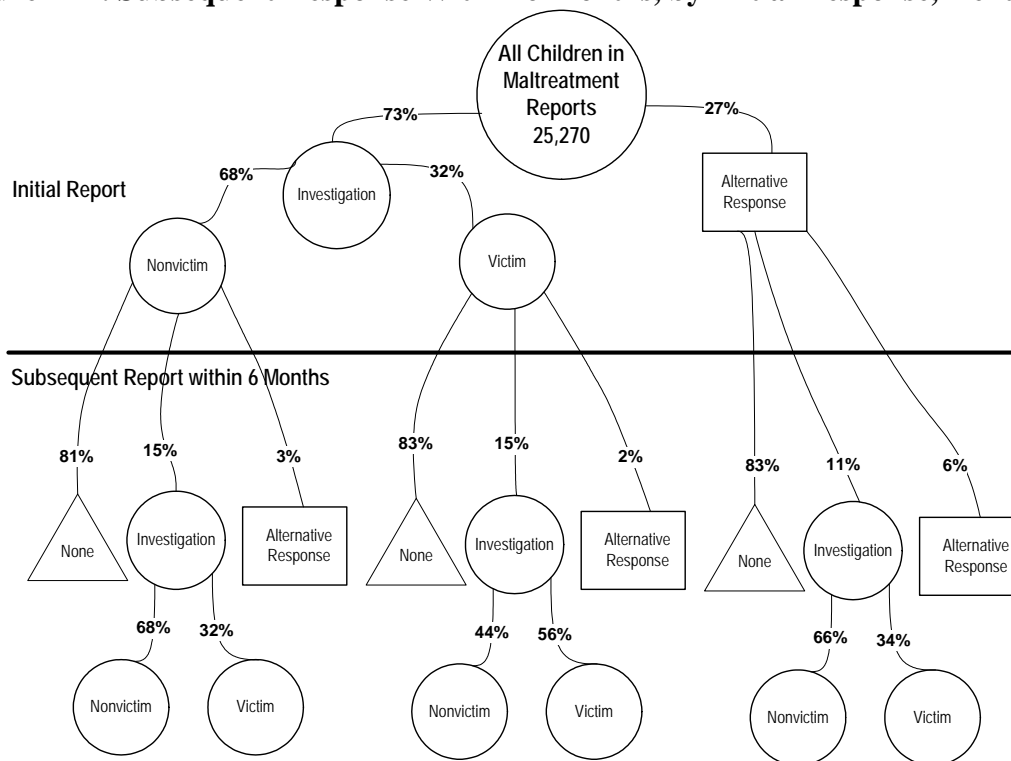
In Kentucky, provision of in-home services was equally likely in families of children who received an alternative response as among those whose children received an investigation. However, children were placed in foster care less often after receiving an alternative response (4%) than after an investigation (10%).

Subsequent Responses by CPS

Figure A–2 shows the trajectory of the 25,270 children who received dispositions from the CPS system during the first 6 months of 2002¹⁰.

In Kentucky, the likelihood of receiving a second response within 6 months was comparable among children whose first response was alternative response (17%), those who received an investigation and had been found to be victims (17%), and those who received an investigation and had not been found to be victims (18%).

Figure A–2. Subsequent Response Within 6 Months, by Initial Response, Kentucky



While 27 percent of children received an alternative response for their initial report, 6 percent of these children received an alternative response after a second report within 6 months. Among those children found to be victims following an investigation, 6 percent

¹⁰ The decision points in the figure indicate whether the child received an alternative response or an investigation in response to his or her first report of maltreatment within the reporting period. Among those in each group, as well as those investigated children who were found to be either victims or nonvictims, the figure separates those who experienced a second response from the CPS system within 6 months of the first report with those who did not. Next, groups split into those for whom this second response was alternative, and those who received an investigation, and finally those who received an investigation were separated into victims and nonvictims.

were referred to alternative response. Among those children found not to be victims following an investigation, 2 percent were referred to alternative response following a second report.

Among children with an initial investigation, 32 percent were found to be victims. Among these victims, 56 percent who experienced a subsequent investigation were found, again, to be victims. The percentage of children who were found to be victims in a subsequent investigation was comparable among children with an initial alternative response (34%) and investigated children who were initially found to be nonvictims (32%).

**Table A–1. Age of Child by Response, Kentucky
(n = 62,738)**

Age of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age 1 or Younger	1,040	23%	3,388	77%	4,428	100%
Age 1 to 3	2,734	21%	10,080	79%	12,814	100%
Age 4 to 7	3,911	24%	12,608	76%	16,519	100%
Age 8 to 11	4,156	30%	9,608	70%	13,764	100%
Age 12 to 15	3,712	32%	7,825	68%	11,537	100%
Age 16 or older	1,198	33%	2,478	67%	3,676	100%
Total	16,751	27%	45,987	73%	62,738	100%

**Table A–2. Race of Child by Response, Kentucky
(n = 62,738)**

Race of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
American Indian	10	24%	32	76%	42	100%
African-American	1,916	29%	4,708	71%	6,624	100%
Asian	19	29%	46	71%	65	100%
White	11,446	25%	34,642	75%	46,088	100%
Hispanic	20	22%	70	78%	90	100%
Multiracial	193	25%	574	75%	767	100%
Unknown Race	3,147	35%	5,915	65%	9,062	100%
Total	16,751	27%	45,987	73%	62,738	100%

**Table A–3. Sex of Child by Response, Kentucky
(n = 62,738)**

Sex of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Boys	8,177	27%	22,457	73%	30,634	100%
Girls	8,492	27%	23,171	73%	31,663	100%
Unknown Sex	82	19%	359	81%	441	100%
Total	16,751	27%	45,987	73%	62,738	100%

**Table A–4. Prior Victimization of Child by Response, Kentucky
(n = 62,738)**

Prior Victimization of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Prior Victimization	1,089	16%	5,737	84%	6,826	100%
No Prior Victimization	15,662	28%	40,250	72%	55,912	100%
Total	16,751	27%	45,987	73%	62,738	100%

**Table A–5. Report Source by Response, Kentucky
(n = 62,738)**

Report Source	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Social Services, Medical, or Mental Health Personnel	638	21%	2381	79%	3,019	100%
Legal, Law Enforcement, or Criminal Justice Personnel	942	24%	3023	76%	3,965	100%
Education Personnel	924	30%	2181	70%	3,105	100%
Day Care	0		0		0	
Substitute Care	92	20%	372	80%	464	100%
Alleged Victim	120	24%	372	76%	492	100%
Parent, Other Relative, Friends/Neighbor	2,918	27%	7,743	73%	10,661	100%
Alleged Perpetrator	0		0		0	
Anonymous Reporter	1,867	26%	5,358	74%	7,225	100%
Other, Unknown, or Missing	9,250	27%	24,557	73%	33,807	100%
Total	16,751	27%	45,987	73%	62,738	100%

**Table A–6. Number of Children in Report by Response, Kentucky
(n = 62,738)**

Number of Children in Report	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	6,928	25%	20,699	75%	27,627	100%
2	4,680	28%	11,908	72%	16,588	100%
3	3,048	29%	7,614	71%	10,662	100%
4	1,356	28%	3,512	72%	4,868	100%
5	470	27%	1,245	73%	1,715	100%
6	192	29%	462	71%	654	100%
7	42	15%	245	85%	287	100%
8	16	12%	120	88%	136	100%
9 or more	19	9%	182	91%	201	100%
Total	16,751	27%	45,987	73%	62,738	100%

**Table A–7. Maltreatment Type by Response, Kentucky
(n = 62,738)**

Maltreatment Type	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Physical Abuse	2,430	20%	9,847	80%	12,277	100%
Neglect	13,142	31%	28,870	69%	42,012	100%
Sexual Abuse	85	2%	3,322	98%	3,407	100%
Other/Emotional Maltreatment	449	51%	432	49%	881	100%
Multiple Maltreatment	645	16%	3,516	84%	4,161	100%
Total	16,751	27%	45,987	73%	62,738	100%

**Table A–8. Drug and Alcohol Use by Caretaker by Response, Kentucky
(n = 62,738)**

Caretaker Substance Abuse	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Alcohol Abuse	24	27%	66	73%	90	100%
Drug Abuse	5	6%	83	94%	88	100%
Both Drug Abuse and Alcohol Abuse	8	12%	60	88%	68	100%
None or Unknown	16,714	27%	45,778	73%	62,492	100%
Total	16,751	27%	45,987	73%	62,738	100%

**Table A–9. Family Violence by Response, Kentucky
(n = 62,738)**

Family Violence	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Record of Family Violence	927	22%	3,260	78%	4,187	100%
No Record of Family Violence	15,824	27%	42,727	73%	58,551	100%
Total	16,751	27%	45,987	73%	62,738	100%

**Table A–10. Services Provided by Response, Kentucky
(n = 62,738)**

Services Provided	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
In-Home Services	5,170	31%	14,651	32%	19,821	32%
Foster Care	148	1%	1,034	2%	1,182	2%
Both In-Home Services and Foster Care	472	3%	3,762	8%	4,234	7%
No Services Provided	10,961	65%	26,540	58%	37,501	60%
Total	16,751	100%	45,987	100%	62,738	100%

APPENDIX B

CASE STUDY OF ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE SYSTEM: MINNESOTA

In Minnesota, 26,344 children received dispositions from the CPS system during 2002. Eighty percent of reports with dispositions during 2002 received an investigation and 20 percent received an alternative response.

Background

In Minnesota, alternative response began during 2000 as a 4-year demonstration project in 20 counties and became a statewide option during February 2004 for families reported to the child protection system. The option of alternative response enables counties to offer a nonconfrontational, strengths-based assessment to families involved in all but the most serious reports of child maltreatment. Only high-risk reports that allege substantial child endangerment must receive an investigative response. According to the guidelines in Minnesota, each agency determines whether to provide an alternative response or a traditional investigation; however, certain specific circumstances that constitute substantial endangerment require that an investigation be conducted; State policy includes a list of twelve types of such maltreatment, including specific types of sexual abuse, malicious punishment, and neglect that substantially endangers the child's life.

During 2002, a demonstration project was under way in 20 of the 87 counties in Minnesota, yet many other counties had also chosen to implement this approach. The Minnesota Child File included children who received an alternative response in 55 counties in the State. The demonstration project involved random assignment of families who were screened as appropriate for alternative response to either actually receive an alternative response or to receive a traditional investigation. It is important to note that in these 20 counties, due to the random assignment that took place, the observed differences between the children who received alternative response and those who received investigation may not be representative of characteristics of children who received alternative response after that evaluation was completed.

All reports that received an alternative response were given the disposition of alternative response—nonvictim in the NCANDS data submission. Reports that received traditional investigations were given dispositions of substantiated or unsubstantiated.

Trends

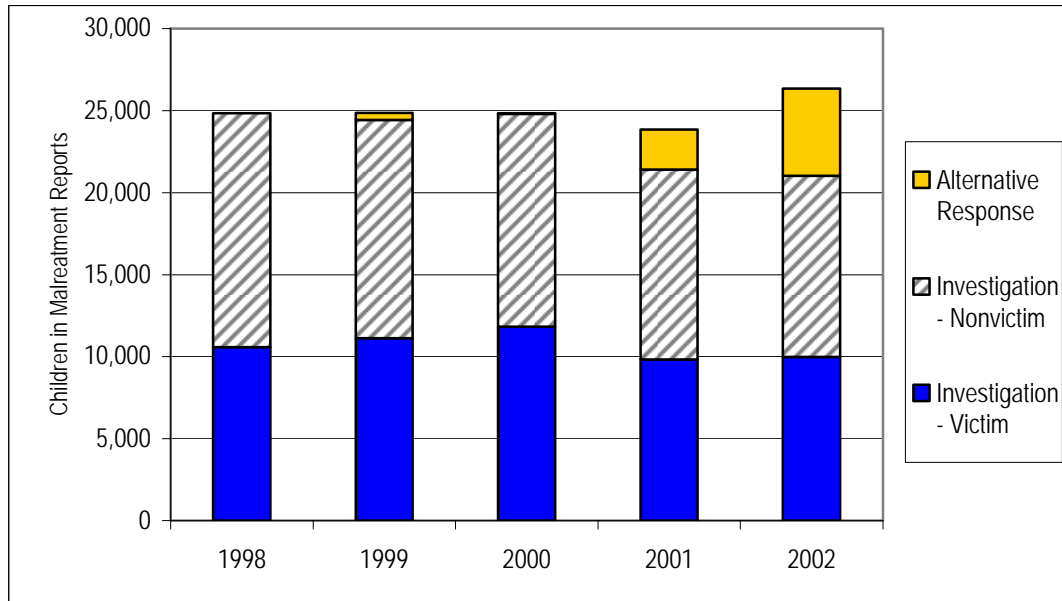
The number of children who received a response from the CPS system in Minnesota remained steady from 1998 to 2000, followed by a slight decrease during 2001 and a slight increase during 2002. (See figure B-1.) The number of victims decreased 6 percent from 1998 to 2002, after an initial increase, and the number of nonvictims decreased 23 percent.

Characteristics of the Children

In Minnesota the proportion of children referred to alternative response increased with each age group, and then decreased slightly for children age 12 and older. Among infants,

15 percent were referred to alternative response; 22 percent for the age 8–11 group were referred to alternative response. Boys and girls were equally likely to be referred to alternative response. While overall 20 percent of reported children were referred to alternative response, the percentage was higher among Asian (23%), Hispanic (23%), and White children (24%), and lower among American Indian (12%), African-American (13%), and multiple-race children (17%). None of the children with histories of prior victimization were referred to alternative response, while 23% of those without prior victimization received alternative response.

Figure B–1 Children in Maltreatment Reports by Response, 1998–2002, Minnesota



Characteristics of the Reported Maltreatment

While overall 20 percent of reported children were referred to alternative response, children were more likely to be referred to alternative response if their maltreatment had been reported by educational personnel (28%), the alleged victim (28%), or the alleged perpetrator (30%). Children were less likely to be referred to alternative response if their reports were from social services, medical or mental health personnel (13%), law enforcement or legal personnel (18%), substitute care providers (14%), or anonymous reporters (15%). Children living with their immediate families at the time of the maltreatment report had the highest chance of being referred to alternative response (22%), while fewer than 10 percent of children living in relative or nonrelative foster care or in institutional settings were referred to alternative response. The likelihood of referral to alternative response declined steadily with the number of children in the report.

In Minnesota, children whose alleged maltreatment included only one type of maltreatment—physical abuse, neglect or medical neglect, or emotional maltreatment—were all referred to alternative response in approximately the same proportions (22%–23%). A much smaller proportion of children whose reports included multiple maltreatments (9%) were referred to alternative response, and no children with reports of sexual abuse were referred to alternative response. While overall 20 percent of reported children in Minnesota received an alternative response, children whose families had a

history of family violence were less likely (17%) to be referred to alternative response than were children with no history of family violence (21%). Reported children whose caretakers had a history of drug abuse were less likely (9%) to be referred to alternative response than children with no history of caretaker drug abuse (21%).

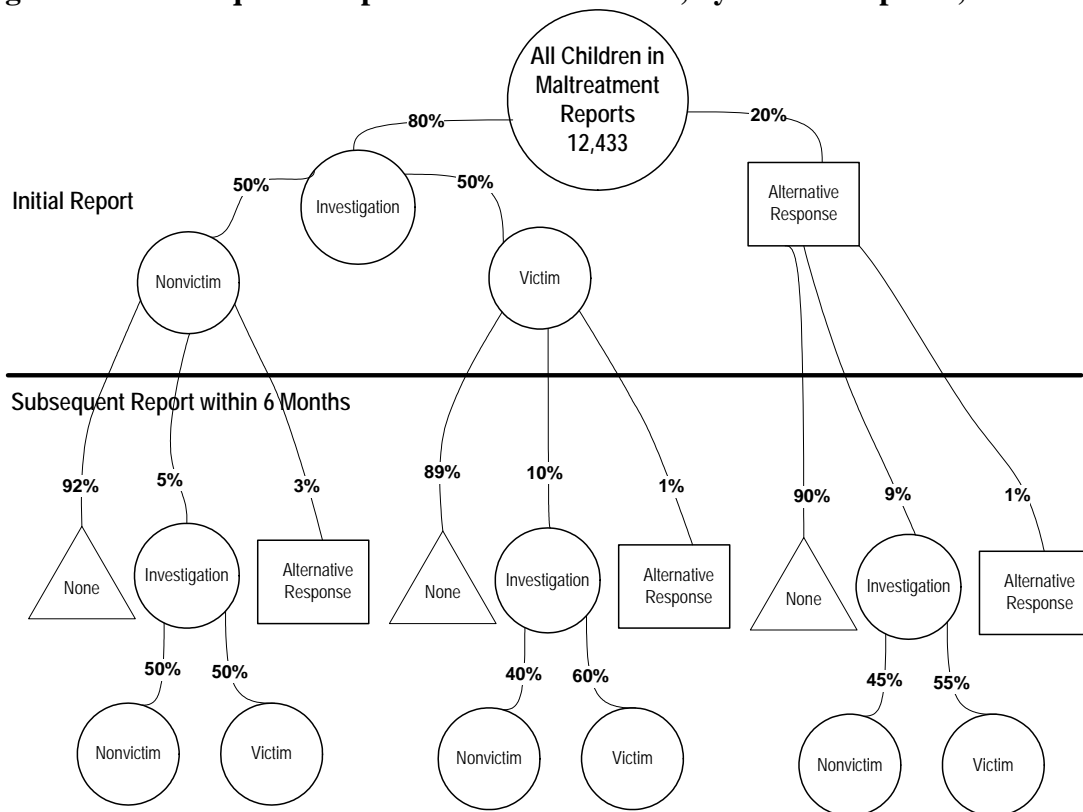
Services

In-home services were provided to the families of nearly all children for whom maltreatment was alleged. The proportion that were referred to foster care was higher among children who received investigations (17%) than among those who received alternative response (6%).

Subsequent Responses by CPS

Figure B-2 shows the track of the 12,433 unique children who received dispositions from the CPS system in Minnesota during the first 6 months of 2002. The likelihood of receiving a second response within 6 months was lower among children who received and investigation and were found not to be victims (8%) than among those who received an investigation and were found to be victims (11%), and those whose first response was alternative response (10%).

Figure B-2. Subsequent Response Within 6 Months, by Initial Response, Minnesota



While 20 percent of children received an alternative response for their initial report, a very small proportion of children received an alternative response following a subsequent report (1% of children who initially received an alternative response, 1% of children who

experienced an initial investigation and were found to be victims, and 3% of children who experienced an initial investigation and were found to be nonvictims).

While 50 percent of children with an investigation were found to be victims, a higher percentage were found to be victims among children with an initial alternative response and subsequent investigation (55%) and victims with a subsequent investigation (60%). Among children who were found not to be victims in an initial investigation, 50 percent who experienced a subsequent investigation were found to be victims.

**Table B-1. Age of Child by Response, Minnesota
(n = 26,344)**

Age of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age 1 or Younger	262	14%	1,581	86%	1,843	100%
Age 1 to 3	953	19%	4,088	81%	5,041	100%
Age 4 to 7	1,467	21%	5,518	79%	6,985	100%
Age 8 to 11	1,355	22%	4,731	78%	6,086	100%
Age 12 to 15	964	20%	3,789	80%	4,753	100%
Age 16 or older	292	20%	1,143	80%	1,435	100%
Missing Age	173	86%	28	14%	201	100%
Total	5,466	21%	20,878	79%	26,344	100%

**Table B-2. Race of Child by Response, Minnesota
(n = 26,344)**

Race of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
American Indian	189	12%	1,361	88%	1,550	100%
African-American	711	13%	4,785	87%	5,496	100%
Asian	192	23%	651	77%	843	100%
White	3,422	24%	10,934	76%	14,356	100%
Hispanic	490	23%	1,646	77%	2,136	100%
Multiracial	230	17%	1,127	83%	1,357	100%
Unknown Race	87	14%	519	86%	606	100%
Total	5,321	20%	21,023	80%	26,344	100%

**Table B–3. Sex of Child by Response, Minnesota
(n = 26,344)**

Sex of Child Victim	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Boys	2,680	21%	10,371	79%	13,051	100%
Girls	2,641	20%	10,652	80%	13,293	100%
Total	5,321	20%	21,023	80%	26,344	100%

**Table B–4. Prior Victimization of Child by Response, Minnesota
(n = 26,344)**

Prior Victimization of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Prior Victimization	0	0%	3,221	100%	3,221	100%
No Prior Victimization	5,321	23%	17,802	77%	23,123	100%
Total	5,321	20%	21,023	80%	26,344	100%

**Table B–5. Report Source by Response, Minnesota
(n = 26,344)**

Report Source	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Social Services, Medical, or Mental Health Personnel	666	13%	4,543	87%	5,209	100%
Legal, Law Enforcement, or Criminal Justice Personnel	1,231	18%	5,619	82%	6,850	100%
Education Personnel	1,538	28%	3,900	72%	5,438	100%
Day Care	80	20%	319	80%	399	100%
Substitute Care	80	14%	484	86%	564	100%
Alleged Victim	55	28%	142	72%	197	100%
Parent, Other Relative, Friends/Neighbor	1,210	22%	4,289	78%	5,499	100%
Alleged Perpetrator	9	30%	21	70%	30	100%
Anonymous Reporter	127	15%	697	85%	824	100%
Other, Unknown, or Missing	325	24%	1,009	76%	1,334	100%
Total	5,321	20%	21,023	80%	26,344	100%

**Table B–6. Living Arrangement of Child by Response, Minnesota
(n = 26,344)**

Living Arrangement	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
With Family	5,138	22%	17,952	78%	23,090	100%
Relative Foster Care	32	5%	577	95%	609	100%
Non Relative Foster Care	40	2%	1,703	98%	1,743	100%
Institution	9	4%	228	96%	237	100%
Other or Unknown	102	15%	563	85%	665	100%
Total	5,321	20%	21,023	80%	26,344	100%

**Table B–7. Number of Children in Report by Response, Minnesota
(n = 26,344)**

Number of Children in Report	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	2,902	23%	9,718	77%	12,620	100%
2	1,222	20%	4,908	80%	6,130	100%
3	747	19%	3,105	81%	3,852	100%
4	320	16%	1,672	84%	1,992	100%
5	90	10%	820	90%	910	100%
6	18	5%	372	95%	390	100%
7	14	7%	182	93%	196	100%
8	8	7%	112	93%	120	100%
9 or more children	0	0%	134	100%	134	100%
Total	5,321	20%	21,023	80%	26,344	100%

**Table B–8. Maltreatment Type by Response, Minnesota
(n = 26,344)**

Maltreatment Type	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Physical Abuse	1,500	23%	4,895	77%	6,395	100%
Neglect	3,631	22%	12,685	78%	16,316	100%
Sexual Abuse	5	0%	1,765	100%	1,770	100%
Other/Emotional maltreatment	29	22%	101	78%	130	100%
Multiple Maltreatment	156	9%	1,577	91%	1,733	100%
No Maltreatment	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	5,321	20%	21,023	80%	26,344	100%

**Table B–9. Drug and Alcohol Use by Caretaker by Response, Minnesota
(n = 26,344)**

Caretaker Substance Abuse	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Alcohol Abuse	277	18%	1,293	82%	1,570	100%
Drug Abuse	55	6%	797	94%	852	100%
Both Drug Abuse and Alcohol Abuse	81	12%	595	88%	676	100%
None or Unknown	4,908	21%	18,338	79%	23,246	100%
Total	5,321	20%	21,023	80%	26,344	100%

**Table B–10. Family Violence by Response, Minnesota
(n = 26,344)**

Family Violence	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Record of Family Violence	829	17%	4,006	83%	4,835	100%
No Record of Family Violence	4,492	21%	17,017	79%	21,509	100%
Total	5,321	20%	21,023	80%	26,344	100%

**Table B–11. Services Provided by Response, Minnesota
(n = 26,344)**

Services Provided	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
In-Home Services	5,002	94%	17,405	83%	22,407	85%
Foster Care	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Both In-Home Services and Foster Care	308	6%	3,612	17%	3,920	15%
No Services Provided	11	0%	6	0%	17	0%
Total	5,321	100%	21,023	100%	26,344	100%

APPENDIX C

CASE STUDY OF ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE SYSTEM: MISSOURI

During 2002, 80,644 children received dispositions from the CPS system in Missouri. Sixty-four percent of these children were referred to the assessment track, and 36 percent were referred to the investigation track.

Background

When a local CPS agency receives a report of child maltreatment, the report is screened to determine the best method of intervention. If the report includes acts of the alleged perpetrator that, if confirmed, constitute criminal violations, the report is subject to an evidentiary, fact-finding investigation. The local agency notifies the appropriate law enforcement agency to assist with the investigation.

If the report contains behaviors that constitute a potential criminal violation, an investigation is conducted. Such reports include child fatality, sexual abuse, and situations in which the alleged perpetrator is not a member of the family/household or in which the maltreatment took place in a foster care or day care facility. Family assessments are conducted for carefully screened reports of suspected maltreatment—reports of mild, moderate, or first-time non-criminal physical abuse, neglect, emotional maltreatment, or educational neglect. The purpose of family assessment is to determine the family's needs for services and to secure child safety. Families coming to the attention of the Division of Family Services have different intervention needs: They require flexible responses from the Division and the community in order to protect their children and meet the needs of the family.

All reports in the family assessment track are given the disposition of alternative response—nonvictim in the NCANDS data submission. Reports in the investigation track are given dispositions of substantiated, unsubstantiated, or closed with no finding.

Trends

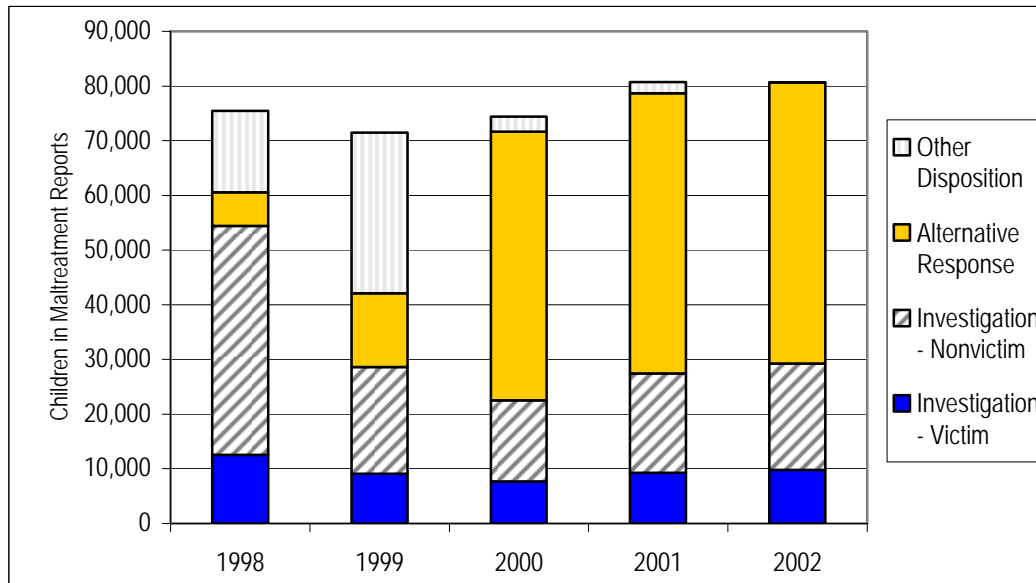
The number of children who received a response from the CPS system in Missouri increased from 1998 to 2002. Alternative response dispositions, as well as other dispositions, were reported in Missouri each year since 1998, although the number of alternative response dispositions increased dramatically during 2000 and, by 2002, the number of other dispositions was negligible. While the number of children found to be victims has been reduced by 22 percent, the number of nonvictims has been reduced by 54 percent. (See figure C-1.)

Characteristics of the Children

Among all age groups, between 60 and 70 percent of children were referred to alternative response, with the lowest percentage for infants (64%) and teens older than age 16 (62%), and the highest percentage for children between age 4 and 11 (70%). Among boys, 69 percent were referred to alternative response, while among girls 65 percent were referred to alternative response. In Missouri, reported children with prior victimization

were less likely to receive alternative response. Only 23 percent of children with prior victimization received alternative response, while 69 percent of those without prior victimization received alternative response.

Figure C–1. Children in Maltreatment Reports by Response, 1998–2002, Missouri



Characteristics of the Reported Maltreatment

In Missouri, while overall 64 percent of reported children received an alternative response, the likelihood of referral to alternative response increased with the number of other children in the same report—up to four children—and declines after that. Among children who were the only ones included in the report, 60 percent were referred to alternative response, while 70 percent of children with three or four other children in the same report were referred to alternative response. Among children with seven other children in the report, 58 percent received alternative response.

In Missouri, none of the children who were referred to alternative response cases had any maltreatment type included in their report. Children whose families had a history of family violence were less likely (53%) to be referred to alternative response than were children with no history of family violence (64%). Reported children whose caretakers had a history of drug abuse were less likely (43%) to be referred to alternative response than children with no history of caretaker drug abuse (65%).¹¹

Services

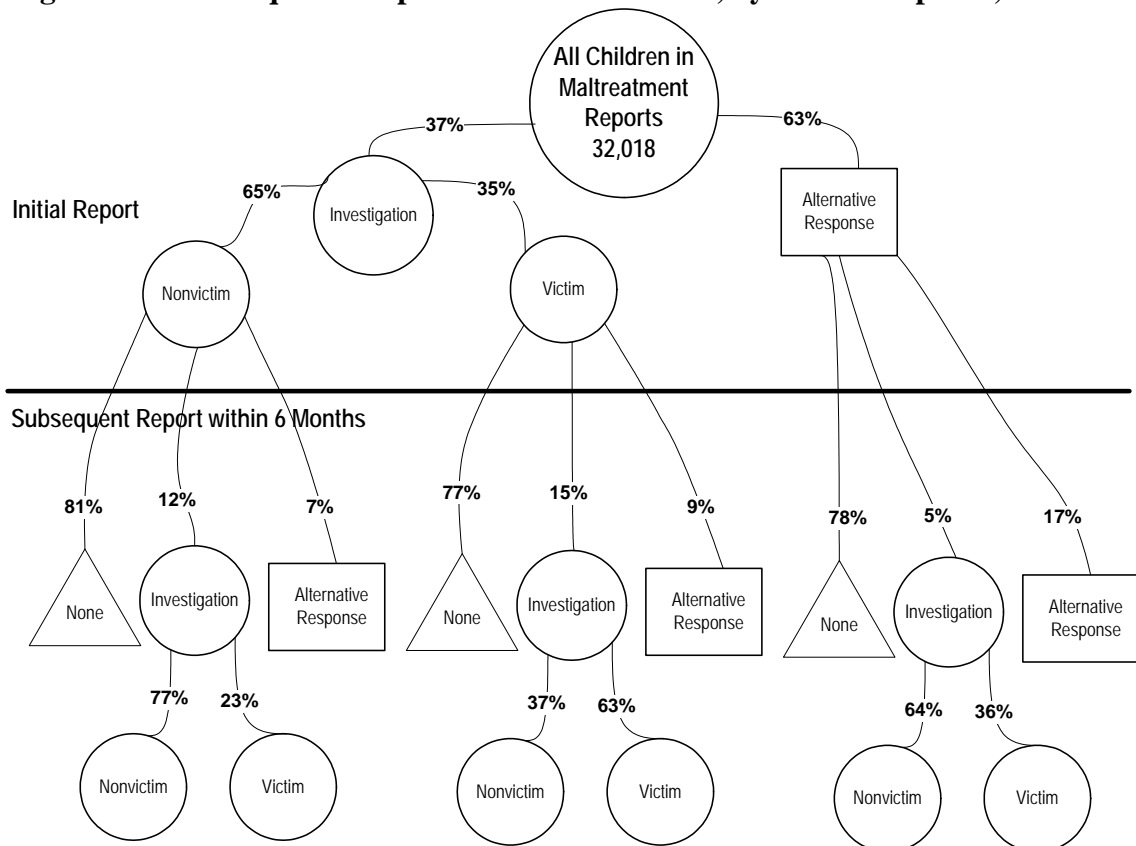
In Missouri, provision of in-home services was more common in families of children who received an alternative response (79%) than among those whose children received an investigation (72%). Children who received alternative response were less likely to be placed in foster care (5%) than were children who received an investigation (13%).

¹¹ Less than 10 percent of children had any of these risk factors, so the percentage of children without such risk factors who received an alternative response mirrors the percentage in the full dataset.

Subsequent Responses by CPS

Figure C–2 shows the trajectory of the 32,018 unique children who received dispositions from the CPS system in Missouri during the first 6 months of 2002. In Missouri, the likelihood of receiving a second response within 6 months was comparable among children whose first response was alternative response (22%) and among those who had received an investigation and had been found to be victims (23%), and lower among those who had received an investigation and were found not to be victims (19%).

Figure C–2. Subsequent Response Within 6 Months, by Initial Response, Missouri



While 63 percent of children received an alternative response for their initial report, 17 percent of these children received an alternative response following a second report within 6 months. Among those children found to be victims following an investigation, 9 percent were referred to alternative response following a subsequent report. Among nonvictims, 7 percent were subsequently referred to alternative response.

Among children with an initial investigation, 35 percent were found to be victims. Among these victims, 63 percent who experienced a subsequent investigation were found, again, to be victims. The percentage of children who were found to be victims in a subsequent investigation was higher among children with an initial alternative response (36%) compared with investigated children who were found to be nonvictims (23%).

**Table C–1. Age of Child by Response, Missouri
(n = 80,644)**

Age of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age 1 or Younger	2,503	61%	1,621	39%	4,124	100%
Age 1 to 3	9,308	63%	5,498	37%	14,806	100%
Age 4 to 7	12,643	65%	6,710	35%	19,353	100%
Age 8 to 11	12,349	67%	6,215	33%	18,564	100%
Age 12 to 15	11,356	64%	6,449	36%	17,805	100%
Age 16 or older	2,622	60%	1,773	40%	4,395	100%
Missing Age	617	39%	980	61%	1,597	100%
Total	51,398	64%	29,246	36%	80,644	100%

**Table C–2. Race of Child by Response, Missouri
(n = 80,644)**

Race of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
American Indian	99	50%	98	50%	197	100%
African-American	11,912	66%	6,244	34%	18,156	100%
Asian	140	70%	61	30%	201	100%
White	37,408	63%	21,671	37%	59,079	100%
Hispanic	1,075	64%	616	36%	1,691	100%
Multiracial	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Unknown Race	764	58%	556	42%	1,320	100%
Total	51,398	64%	29,246	36%	80,644	100%

**Table C–3. Sex of Child by Response, Missouri
(n = 80,644)**

Sex of Child Victim	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Boys	26,483	66%	13,806	34%	40,289	100%
Girls	24,867	62%	15,292	38%	40,159	100%
Unknown Sex	48	24%	148	76%	196	100%
Total	51,398	64%	29,246	36%	80,644	100%

**Table C–4. Prior Victimization of Child by Response, Missouri
(n = 80,644)**

Prior Victimization of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Prior Victimization	0	0%	2,873	100%	2,873	100%
No Prior Victimization	51,398	66%	26,373	34%	77,771	100%
Total	51,398	64%	29,246	36%	80,644	100%

**Table C–5. Report Source by Response, Missouri
(n = 80,644)**

Report Source	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Social Services, Medical, or Mental Health Personnel	9,863	55%	8,202	45%	18,065	100%
Legal, Law Enforcement, or Criminal Justice Personnel	4,818	48%	5,230	52%	10,048	100%
Education Personnel	5,314	70%	2,234	30%	7,548	100%
Day Care	347	49%	368	51%	715	100%
Substitute Care	101	35%	186	65%	287	100%
Other, Unknown, or Missing	30,955	70%	13,026	30%	43,981	100%
Total	51,398	64%	29,246	36%	80,644	100%

**Table C–6. Number of Children in Report by Response, Missouri
(n = 80,644)**

Number of Children in Report	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	21,685	60%	14,725	40%	36,410	100%
2	13,150	66%	6,642	34%	19,792	100%
3	8,550	67%	4,203	33%	12,753	100%
4	4,660	70%	2,008	30%	6,668	100%
5	1,930	70%	835	30%	2,765	100%
6	834	68%	390	32%	1,224	100%
7	301	63%	175	37%	476	100%
8	152	58%	112	42%	264	100%
9 or more children	0	0%	156	100%	156	100%
Total	51,262	64%	29,246	36%	80,508	100%

**Table C–7. Maltreatment Type by Response, Missouri
(n = 80,644)**

Maltreatment Type	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Physical Abuse	0	0%	2,156	100%	2156	100%
Neglect	0	0%	3,843	100%	3843	100%
Sexual Abuse	0	0%	2,435	100%	2435	100%
Other/Emotional Maltreatment	1	0%	508	100%	509	100%
Multiple Maltreatment	0	0%	1,479	100%	1479	100%
No Maltreatment	51,397	73%	18,825	27%	70222	100%
Total	51,398	64%	29,246	36%	80,644	100%

**Table C–8. Drug and Alcohol Use by Caretaker by Response, Missouri
(n = 80,644)**

Caretaker Substance Abuse	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Alcohol Abuse	749	52%	680	48%	1,429	100%
Drug Abuse	1,023	43%	1,363	57%	2,386	100%
Both Drug Abuse and Alcohol Abuse	111	43%	147	57%	258	100%
None or Unknown	49,515	65%	27,056	35%	76,571	100%
Total	51,398	64%	29,246	36%	80,644	100%

**Table C–9. Family Violence by Response, Missouri
(n = 80,644)**

Family Violence	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Record of Family Violence	1,521	53%	1,364	47%	2,885	100%
No Record of Family Violence	49,877	64%	27,882	36%	77,759	100%
Total	51,398	64%	29,246	36%	80,644	100%

**Table C–10. Services Provided by Response, Missouri
(n = 80,644)**

Services Provided	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
In-Home Services	40,830	79%	21,145	72%	61,975	77%
Foster Care	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Both In-Home Services and Foster Care	2,327	5%	3,678	13%	6,005	7%
No Services Provided	8,241	16%	4,423	15%	12,664	16%
Total	51,398	100%	29,246	100%	80,644	100%

APPENDIX D

CASE STUDY OF ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE SYSTEM: NEW JERSEY

During 2002, 70,786 children received dispositions from the CPS system in New Jersey. Twenty-nine percent of these children were referred to the assessment track, and 71 percent were referred to the investigation track.

Background

When a report of child maltreatment is made in New Jersey, the intake screener either screens in the report and refers it for CPS investigation, screens out the report, opens a child welfare services case if the report was made by a professional and the family needs services but the legal criteria for CPS aren't met; or refers the reporter to a community agency without opening a case.¹² Cases that receive child welfare assessments are reported as alternative response disposition—not a victim on the NCANDS report, and are described in this report as having been referred to alternative response. The types of situations that may lead to such a classification include homelessness; domestic violence; unresolved child-related medical, emotional, or substance abuse problems; children with disabilities needing assistance; problems that affect the ability of parents to provide basic care for their children; and cases in which parents lack the skills to parent adequately. When reported to NCANDS, an “unknown” maltreatment type is recorded.

In instances where there was a family problem and an alleged maltreatment, an investigation is conducted, but if the allegations are not substantiated, these cases are considered to be family problem cases and are reported to NCANDS with an alternative response—nonvictim disposition.

Trends

The number of children who received a response from the CPS system in New Jersey dropped between 1998 and 2000, and then remained steady until 2002. While the number of children found to be victims was reduced by 18 percent from 1998 to 2002, the number of nonvictims was reduced by 57 percent. During 1998 and 1999, New Jersey reported 46 percent of cases as other dispositions; after 2000, alternative response accounted for 70 percent of dispositions. (See figure D-1.)

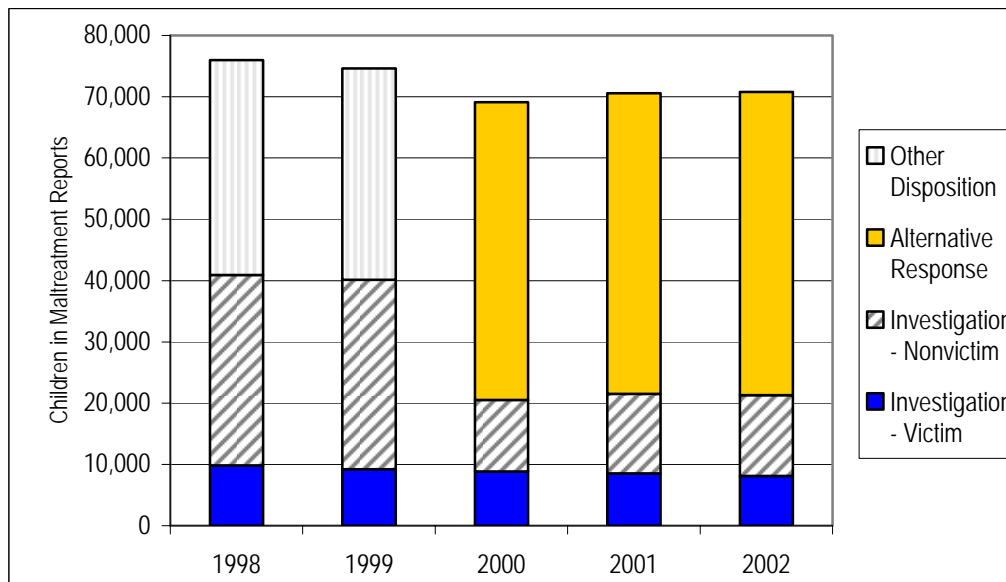
Characteristics of the Children

In New Jersey, the proportion of children referred to alternative response increased with the age of the child. Sixty-seven percent of reported infants younger than age 1 were referred to alternative response, while 73 percent of children age 16 and older were referred to alternative response. Differences among the races in their likelihood of being referred to alternative response were not large. White (73%) and Hispanic (72%) children were more likely to be referred to alternative response, while the likelihood of referral to alternative response was lower for African-American (67%), Asian (69%), and for American Indian children (61%). In New Jersey, children with a history of prior

¹² This is considered an information and referral call.
Alternative Responses to Child Maltreatment
Findings from NCANDS

victimization were equally likely to receive alternative response as children with no prior victimization.

Figure D–1. Children in Maltreatment Reports by Response, 1998–2002, New Jersey



Characteristics of the Reported Maltreatment

In New Jersey, where the overall rate of alternative response was 71 percent, children whose maltreatment was alleged by law enforcement or legal personnel (63%) or substitute care providers (47%) were less likely to be referred to alternative response. Children whose maltreatment was alleged by parents, other relatives, or friends were slightly more likely (75%) than others to be referred to alternative response. Reported children living in either family or relative foster care had the highest chance of being referred to alternative response (both at 71%), while a lower percentage of children living in nonrelative foster care or in institutional settings were referred to alternative response (60% and 53%, respectively). Among children who were the only subject of the report of maltreatment, 61 percent were referred to alternative response, while 75 percent of children who were not alone in the report were referred to alternative response.

More than 90 percent of children whose maltreatment reports included only unknown maltreatment were referred to alternative response. Thirty-nine percent of children whose reports included only physical abuse were referred to alternative response. New Jersey’s rate of alternative response referral for sexual abuse cases was 16 percent. Only 6 percent of children who were reported for neglect or medical neglect were referred to alternative response. In New Jersey, families that are reported for parenting issues that pose a risk for the child are given a family assessment (alternative response) and reported to NCANDS as having an “unknown” maltreatment type rather than neglect.

In New Jersey, the presence of family violence or caretaker substance abuse was associated with a greater likelihood that a child would be referred to alternative response which is consistent with the focus of New Jersey’s alternative response system on families with these issues. Children whose families had a history of family violence were

more likely (91%) to be referred to alternative response than were children with no history of family violence (70%). Reported children whose caretakers had a history of drug abuse were more likely (81%) to be referred to alternative response than children with no history of caretaker drug abuse (69%).¹³

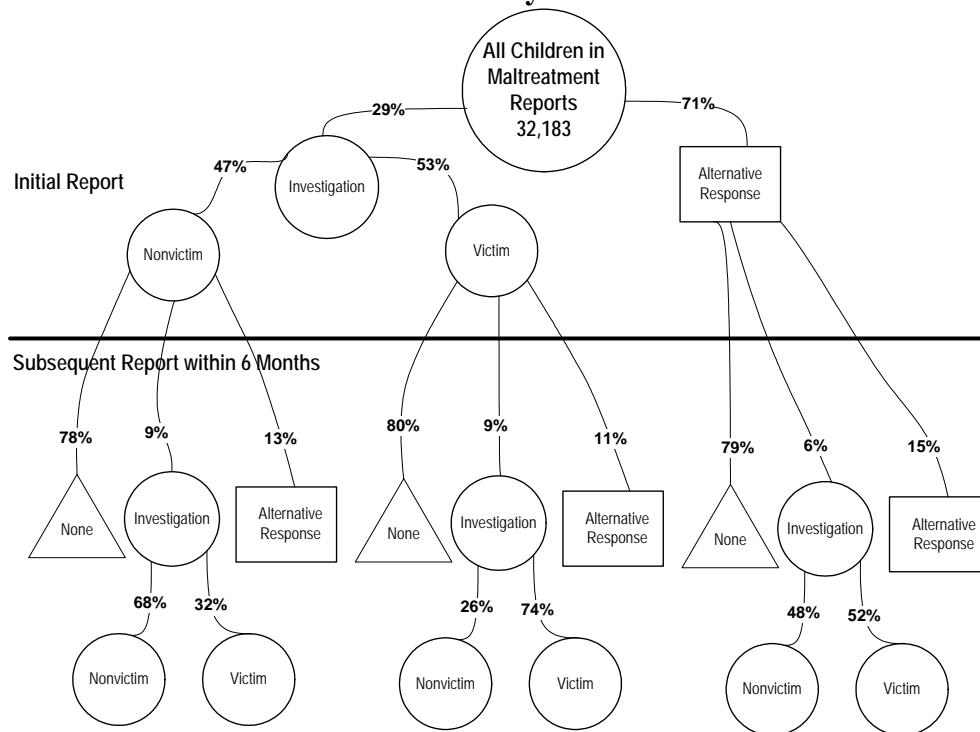
Services

Among children who received alternative response, 73 percent received only in-home services, 5 percent were placed in foster care, and 22 percent had no services provided. In comparison, among children who received investigations, 34 percent received only in-home services, 13 percent were placed in foster care, and 53 percent had no services provided.

Subsequent Responses by CPS

In New Jersey, the likelihood of receiving a second response within 6 months was comparable among children whose first response was alternative response (21%), those who received an investigation and had been found to be victims (20%), and those who received an investigation and had not been found to be victims (22%). (See figure D–2.)

Figure D–2. Subsequent Response Within 6 Months, by Initial Response, New Jersey



While 71 percent of children received an alternative response for their initial report, 15 percent of these children received an alternative response following a second report within 6 months of the first. Among those children found to be victims following an

¹³ Approximately 6 percent of children had a history of family violence and 15 percent had evidence of caretaker substance abuse, so the percentage of children without such risk factors who received an alternative response mirrors the percentage in the full dataset.

investigation, 11 percent were referred to alternative response following a subsequent report. Among those children found not to be victims following an investigation, 13 percent were subsequently referred to alternative response.

While 53 percent of children with an investigation were found to be victims, among these victims, 74 percent of those with a subsequent investigation within 6 months were again found to be victims. Among children with an initial alternative response, 52 percent who experienced a subsequent investigation were found to be victims, while only 32 percent of nonvictims were found to be victims following a subsequent investigation.

**Table D–1. Age of Child by Response, New Jersey
(n = 70,786)**

Age of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age 1 or Younger	3,756	67%	1,816	33%	5,572	100%
Age 1 to 3	7,602	69%	3,461	31%	11,063	100%
Age 4 to 7	11,632	70%	5,041	30%	16,673	100%
Age 8 to 11	12,205	72%	4,771	28%	16,976	100%
Age 12 to 15	11,010	72%	4,185	28%	15,195	100%
Age 16 or older	3,889	73%	1,404	27%	5,293	100%
Missing Age	11	79%	3	21%	14	0%
Total	50,105	71%	20,681	29%	70,786	100%

**Table D–2. Race of Child by Response, New Jersey
(n = 70,786)**

Race of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
American Indian	70	61%	44	39%	114	100%
African-American	16,901	67%	8,226	33%	25,127	100%
Asian	405	69%	186	31%	591	100%
White	21,359	73%	8,067	27%	29,426	100%
Hispanic	2,558	72%	981	28%	3,539	100%
Multiracial	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Unknown Race	8,812	74%	3,177	26%	11,989	100%
Total	50,105	71%	20,681	29%	70,786	100%

**Table D-3. Sex of Child by Response, New Jersey
(n = 70,786)**

Victim Sex of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Boys	25,082	71%	10,337	29%	35,419	100%
Girls	24,842	71%	10,282	29%	35,124	100%
Unknown Sex	181	74%	62	26%	243	100%
Total	50,105	71%	20,681	29%	70,786	100%

**Table D-4. Prior Victimization of Child by Response, New Jersey
(n = 70,786)**

Prior Victimization of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Prior Victimization	25,497	71%	10,508	29%	36,005	100%
No Prior Victimization	24,608	71%	10,173	29%	34,781	100%
Total	50,105	71%	20,681	29%	70,786	100%

**Table D-5. Report Source by Response, New Jersey
(n = 70,786)**

Report Source	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Social Services, Medical, or Mental Health Personnel	7,554	69%	3,472	31%	11,026	100%
Legal, Law Enforcement, or Criminal Justice Personnel	7,261	63%	4,311	37%	11,572	100%
Education Personnel	11,820	73%	4,276	27%	16,096	100%
Day Care	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Substitute Care	457	47%	513	53%	970	100%
Alleged Victim	652	73%	244	27%	896	100%
Parent, Other Relative, Friends/Neighbor	11,018	75%	3,690	25%	14,708	100%
Alleged Perpetrator	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Anonymous Reporter	6,862	72%	2,693	28%	9,555	100%
Other, Unknown, or Missing	4,481	75%	1,482	25%	5,963	100%
Total	50,105	71%	20,681	29%	70,786	100%

**Table D–6. Living Arrangement of Child by Response, New Jersey
(n = 70,786)**

Living Arrangement	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
With Family	45,515	71%	18,363	29%	63,878	100%
Relative Foster Care	2,603	71%	1,038	29%	3,641	100%
Non Relative Foster Care	474	60%	321	40%	795	100%
Institution	585	53%	515	47%	1,100	100%
Other or Unknown	928	68%	444	32%	1,372	100%
Total	50,105	71%	20,681	29%	70,786	100%

**Table D–7. Number of Children in Report by Response, New Jersey
(n = 70,786)**

Number of Children in Report	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	12,308	61%	7,925	39%	20,233	100%
2	15,846	75%	5,152	25%	20,998	100%
3	11,934	75%	3,906	25%	15,840	100%
4	7,212	75%	2,412	25%	9,624	100%
5	1,635	70%	690	30%	2,325	100%
6	690	69%	306	31%	996	100%
7	245	64%	140	36%	385	100%
8	128	62%	80	38%	208	100%
9 or more children	107	60%	70	40%	177	100%
Total	50,105	71%	20,681	29%	70,786	100%

**Table D–8. Maltreatment Type by Response, New Jersey
(n = 70,786)**

Maltreatment Type	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Physical Abuse	1,175	39%	1,831	61%	3,006	100%
Neglect	339	6%	5,134	94%	5,473	100%
Sexual Abuse	132	16%	701	84%	833	100%
Other/Emotional Maltreatment	43,597	94%	2,840	6%	46,437	100%
Multiple Maltreatment	4,862	95%	280	5%	5,142	100%
No Maltreatment	0	0%	9,895	100%	9,895	100%
Total	50,105	71%	20,681	29%	70,786	100%

**Table D–9. Drug and Alcohol Use by Caretaker by Response, New Jersey
(n = 70,786)**

Caretaker Substance Abuse	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Alcohol Abuse	2,679	87%	402	13%	3,081	100%
Drug Abuse	5,690	79%	1,536	21%	7,226	100%
Both Drug Abuse and Alcohol Abuse	480	85%	83	15%	563	100%
None or Unknown	41,256	69%	18,660	31%	59,916	100%
Total	50,105	71%	20,681	29%	70,786	100%

**Table D–10. Family Violence by Response, New Jersey
(n = 70,786)**

Family Violence	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Record of Family Violence	3,842	91%	383	9%	4,225	100%
No Record of Family Violence	46,263	70%	20,298	30%	66,561	100%
Total	50,105	71%	20,681	29%	70,786	100%

**Table D–11. Services Provided by Response, New Jersey
(n = 70,786)**

Services Provided	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
In-Home Services	36,475	73%	6,948	34%	43,423	61%
Foster Care	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Both In-Home Services and Foster Care	2,620	5%	2,703	13%	5,323	8%
No Services Provided	11,010	22%	11,030	53%	22,040	31%
Total	50,105	100%	20,681	100%	70,786	100%

APPENDIX E

CASE STUDY OF ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE SYSTEM: OKLAHOMA

During 2002, 68,971 children received dispositions in Oklahoma. Eighty percent of these children had been referred to the investigation track and 20 percent had received an alternative response.

Background

When a report of child maltreatment is made in Oklahoma, child welfare workers, with supervisor approval, make a decision about whether a report is handled as an assessment or an investigation. If there is doubt whether an assessment or investigation is more appropriate, then an investigation is conducted. Assessments and investigations are given equal priority. An assessment is conducted when the allegations in the report do not indicate a serious and immediate threat to a child's health or safety, but rather suggest inadequate parenting or life management. An assessment is intended to encourage families to participate in addressing safety concerns. An investigation is conducted when the allegations in the report indicate there is serious and immediate risk of harm to the child as indicated by dangerous parenting practices or actions. If a worker begins an assessment and then determines that the family situation falls within the guidelines for an investigation, then that same worker immediately initiates an investigation.

All reports in the assessment track are given the disposition of alternative response—nonvictim in the NCANDS data submission. Reports in the investigation track are given dispositions of substantiated, unsubstantiated, or closed with no finding.

Trends

The annual number of children who experienced reports of maltreatment to the CPS system in Oklahoma increased from 2000 to 2002, after remaining constant between 1998 and 2000. (See figure E-1.) The percentage of children who were found to be victims decreased between 1998 and 2000, and then remained constant in the subsequent 2 years, with an overall decrease of 17 percent. The number of children found not to be victims increased 30 percent during this same period. During 1998 and 1999, Oklahoma reported approximately 12,000 children with other dispositions.¹⁴ Beginning in 2000, when alternative response was introduced on the NCANDS reporting form, Oklahoma reported between 11,000 and 14,000 as receiving alternative response each year.

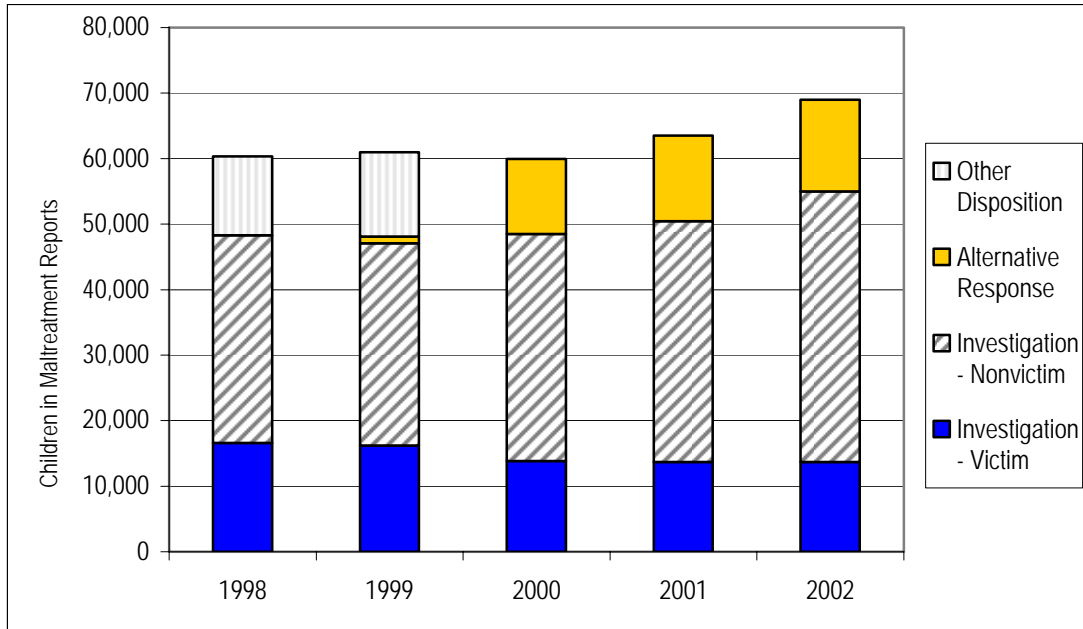
Characteristics of the Children

In general age, sex, and race did not distinguish those Oklahoma children who were referred to alternative response from those who received investigations. While the overall rate of referral alternative response was approximately 20 percent, 22 percent of infants younger than age 1, and 25 percent of children age 16 or older, were referred to

¹⁴ These other dispositions were not alternative response; they included "uncertain," a disposition made when an investigation was completed, but there was still insufficient information to confirm or rule out the maltreatment.

alternative response. Approximately 25 percent of Asian children were referred to alternative response, compared with 18 percent of African-American and 18 percent of Hispanic children.

Figure E–1. Children in Maltreatment Reports by Response, 1998–2002, Oklahoma



Characteristics of the Reported Maltreatment

While overall 20 percent of reported children received an alternative response, children whose maltreatment was alleged by their parents (24%) and anonymous reporters (27%) were more likely than others to be referred to alternative response. Children were less likely to be referred to alternative response if their maltreatment was reported by social services, medical or mental health personnel (16%), law enforcement or legal personnel (16%), day care workers (14%), or alleged victims (15%).

Children with all types of reported maltreatment were referred to alternative response, although a higher percentage of children for whom the only reported maltreatment was emotional maltreatment (28%) or neglect or medical neglect (25%) was referred to alternative response, while 15 percent of children for whom physical abuse was the only reported maltreatment were referred to alternative response. Among children with reports of multiple types of maltreatment, 11 percent were referred to alternative response. Only 4 percent of children with reported sexual abuse were referred to alternative response. Children whose caretakers had a history of drug abuse were less likely to be referred to alternative response (7%) than children with no history of caretaker drug abuse (20%).¹⁵

¹⁵ Less than 1 percent of children had a recorded history of caretaker substance abuse, so the percentage of children without this risk factor who received an alternative response mirrors the percentage in the full dataset.

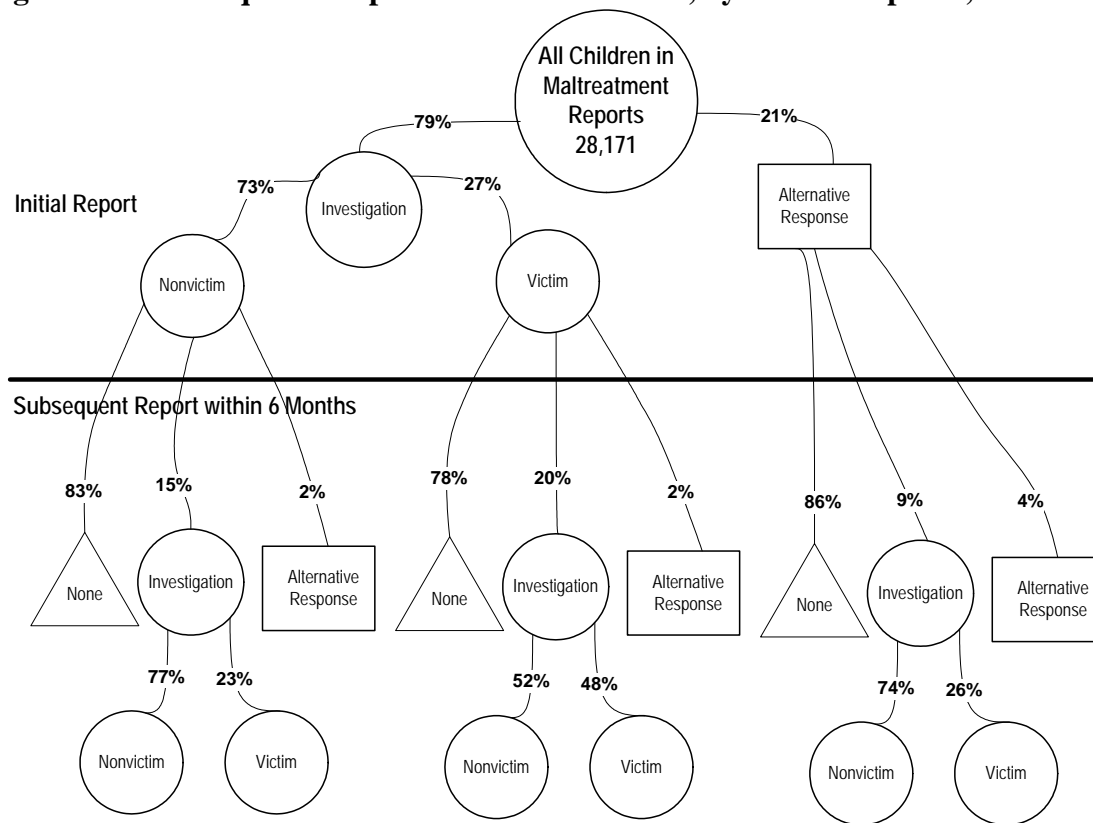
Services

In Oklahoma, provision of in-home services was almost equally likely in families who received an alternative response (56%) and those who received an investigation (57%). Only a small percentage of children were referred to foster care; these were almost all children for whom investigations had been conducted.

Subsequent Responses by CPS

In Oklahoma, the likelihood of receiving a second response within 6 months of the first was lower among children whose first response was alternative (13%) than among those who received an investigation and were found to be victims (22%) and those who received an investigation and were found not to be victims (17%). (See figure E-2.)

Figure E-2. Subsequent Response Within 6 Months, by Initial Response, Oklahoma



While 21 percent of children received an alternative response for their initial report, 4 percent of these children received a second alternative response within 6 months. Among those children found to be either victims or nonvictims following an investigation, 2 percent were referred to alternative response following a subsequent report.

While 27 percent of children with an initial investigation were found to be victims, 48 percent of these victims who experienced a subsequent investigation were again found to be victims. A comparable percentage were found to be victims among children with an

initial alternative response and subsequent investigation (26%) and nonvictims with a subsequent investigation (23%).

**Table E–1. Age of Child by Response, Oklahoma
(n = 68,971)**

Age of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age 1 or Younger	1,828	22%	6,315	78%	8,143	100%
Age 1 to 3	2,721	19%	11,766	81%	14,487	100%
Age 4 to 7	3,133	19%	13,449	81%	16,582	100%
Age 8 to 11	3,005	21%	11,540	79%	14,545	100%
Age 12 to 15	2,475	21%	9,453	79%	11,928	100%
Age 16 or older	808	25%	2,478	75%	3,286	100%
Missing Age	1,828	22%	6,315	78%	8,143	100%
Total	13,970	20%	55,001	80%	68,971	100%

**Table E–2. Race of Child by Response, Oklahoma
(n = 68,971)**

Race of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
American Indian	1,898	21%	7,346	79%	9,244	100%
African-American	1,456	18%	6,840	82%	8,296	100%
Asian	98	25%	302	76%	400	100%
White	9,082	21%	34,418	79%	43,500	100%
Hispanic	994	18%	4,534	82%	5,528	100%
Multiracial	127	12%	903	88%	1,030	100%
Unknown Race	315	32%	658	68%	973	100%
Total	13,970	20%	55,001	80%	68,971	100%

**Table E–3. Sex of Child by Response, Oklahoma
(n = 68,971)**

Victim Sex of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Boys	7,071	21%	27,009	79%	34,080	100%
Girls	6,815	20%	27,856	80%	34,671	100%
Unknown Sex	84	38%	136	62%	220	100%
Total	13,970	20%	55,001	80%	68,971	100%

**Table E-4. Prior Victimization of Child by Response, Oklahoma
(n = 68,971)**

Prior Victimization of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Prior Victimization	287	7%	3,862	93%	4,149	100%
No Prior Victimization	13,683	21%	51,139	79%	64,822	100%
Total	13,970	20%	55,001	80%	68,971	100%

**Table E-5. Report Source by Response, Oklahoma
(n = 68,971)**

Report Source	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Social Services, Medical, or Mental Health Personnel	3,028	16%	15,679	84%	18,707	100%
Legal, Law Enforcement, or Criminal Justice Personnel	1,270	16%	6,746	84%	8,016	100%
Education Personnel	1,313	20%	5,146	80%	6,459	100%
Day Care	175	14%	1,080	86%	1,255	100%
Substitute Care	12	4%	277	96%	289	100%
Alleged Victim	69	15%	382	85%	451	100%
Parent, Other Relative, Friends/Neighbor	5,195	24%	16,259	76%	21,454	100%
Alleged Perpetrator	6	8%	74	93%	80	100%
Anonymous Reporter	493	27%	1,367	73%	1,860	100%
Other, Unknown, or Missing	2,409	23%	7,991	77%	10,400	100%
Total	13,970	20%	55,001	80%	68,971	100%

**Table E-6. Number of Children in Report by Response, Oklahoma
(n = 68,971)**

Number of Children in Report	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	4,408	20%	17,848	80%	22,256	100%
2	4,236	22%	15,142	78%	19,378	100%
3	2,946	20%	11,427	80%	14,373	100%
4	1,408	19%	6,084	81%	7,492	100%
5	610	19%	2,610	81%	3,220	100%
6	192	14%	1,164	86%	1,356	100%
7	91	16%	462	84%	553	100%
8	40	23%	136	77%	176	100%
9 or more children	39	23%	128	77%	167	100%
Total	13,970	20%	55,001	80%	68,971	100%

**Table E–7. Maltreatment Type by Response, Oklahoma
(n = 68,971)**

Maltreatment Type	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Physical Abuse	828	15%	4,677	85%	5,505	100%
Neglect	11,195	25%	34,221	75%	45,416	100%
Sexual Abuse	76	4%	1,683	96%	1,759	100%
Other/Emotional Maltreatment	225	28%	575	72%	800	100%
Multiple Maltreatment	1,646	11%	13,845	89%	15,491	100%
No Maltreatment	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	13,970	20%	55,001	80%	68,971	100%

**Table E–8. Drug and Alcohol Use by Caretaker by Response, Oklahoma
(n = 68,971)**

Caretaker Substance Abuse	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Alcohol Abuse	27	16%	147	84%	174	100%
Drug Abuse	8	5%	153	95%	161	100%
Both Drug Abuse and Alcohol Abuse	17	9%	163	91%	180	100%
None or Unknown	13,918	20%	54,538	80%	68,456	100%
Total	13,970	20%	55,001	80%	68,971	100%

**Table E–9. Services Provided by Response, Oklahoma
(n = 68,971)**

Services Provided	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
In-Home Services	7,840	56%	27,183	49%	35,023	51%
Foster Care	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Both In-Home Services and Foster Care	38	0%	4,614	8%	4,652	7%
No Services Provided	6,092	44%	23,204	42%	29,296	42%
Total	13,970	100%	55,001	100%	68,971	100%

APPENDIX F

CASE STUDY OF ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE SYSTEM: WYOMING

During 2002, 4,355 children in reports of maltreatment received dispositions in Wyoming. Of these children, 42 percent received investigations and 58 percent received an alternative response.

Background

In Wyoming, cases referred to the CPS agency are referred to one of three tracks. The investigation track is used to determine if abuse or neglect took place and provide interventions designed to stop abuse when it's discovered. The prevention track is used for referrals in which there are no allegations of abuse or neglect, but there are identified risk factors that might indicate the need for services to prevent abuse or neglect. The assessment track is used for cases that do not involve a major injury, fatality, sexual abuse, criminal charges, or situations in which children are in imminent danger and need to be removed from the home. Assessment services are used to evaluate family strengths and needs, determine whether there are safety issues to be resolved, and to provide services to families to increase their ability to resolve foreseeable risks to the child.

All reports in the assessment track were given the disposition of alternative response—nonvictim in the NCANDS data submission. Reports in the investigation track were given dispositions of substantiated or unsubstantiated.

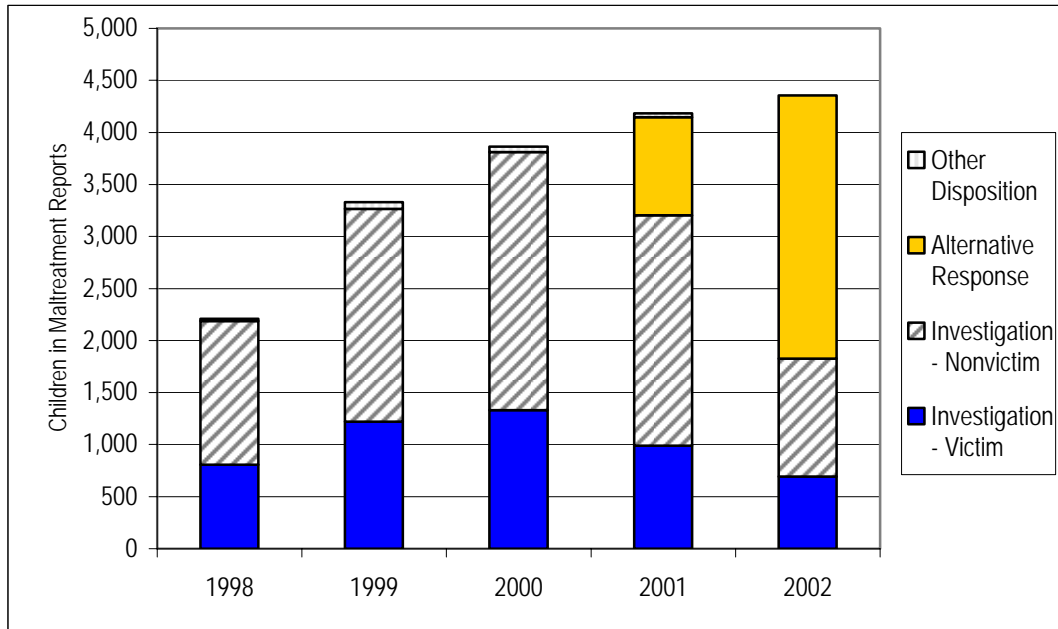
Trends

The number of children who were the subjects of maltreatment reports in Wyoming increased from 1998 to 2002. With the introduction of alternative response in the NCANDS reporting during 2001, the number of victims and nonvictims resulting from investigation—which had increased between 1998 and 2000—decreased in 2002 to a level below the 1998 level; The number of victims decreased by 14 percent and nonvictims by 18 percent. (See figure F-1.)

Characteristics of the Children

In Wyoming, the proportion of children being referred to alternative response increased with each age group from infants (39% referred to alternative response) to age 8–11 years olds (66%), and then leveled off for children age 12 and older. Among boys, 60 percent were referred to alternative response, as were 56 percent of girls. In Wyoming, an overall 58 percent of children were referred to alternative response; the percentage was slightly lower for White (57%), African-American (52%), and Hispanic (54%) children. The likelihood of referral to alternative response was highest for American Indian children (77%) and lowest for Asian children (22%).

Figure F–1. Children in Maltreatment Reports by Response, 1998–2002, Wyoming



Characteristics of the Reported Maltreatment

Children whose maltreatment was alleged by law enforcement or legal personnel (44%), day care workers (38%), or alleged perpetrators (40%) were less likely to be referred to alternative response. Children whose maltreatment was alleged by educational personnel were more likely than others (70%) to be referred to alternative response. Children living with their immediate families had the highest chance of being referred to alternative response (64%), while lesser proportions of children living in relative foster care (47%), nonrelative foster care (35%), or in institutional settings (40%), were referred to alternative response. The likelihood of referral to alternative response increased steadily with the number of children in the report; children who were alone in the report had the lowest likelihood of being referred to alternative response (27%).

Only children for whom the reported maltreatment was “other” were referred to alternative response; all children with other maltreatment were referred to alternative response. All other children were referred to investigation. The small number of children whose reports indicated a history of family violence, or a history of caretaker substance abuse, were all referred to investigation.

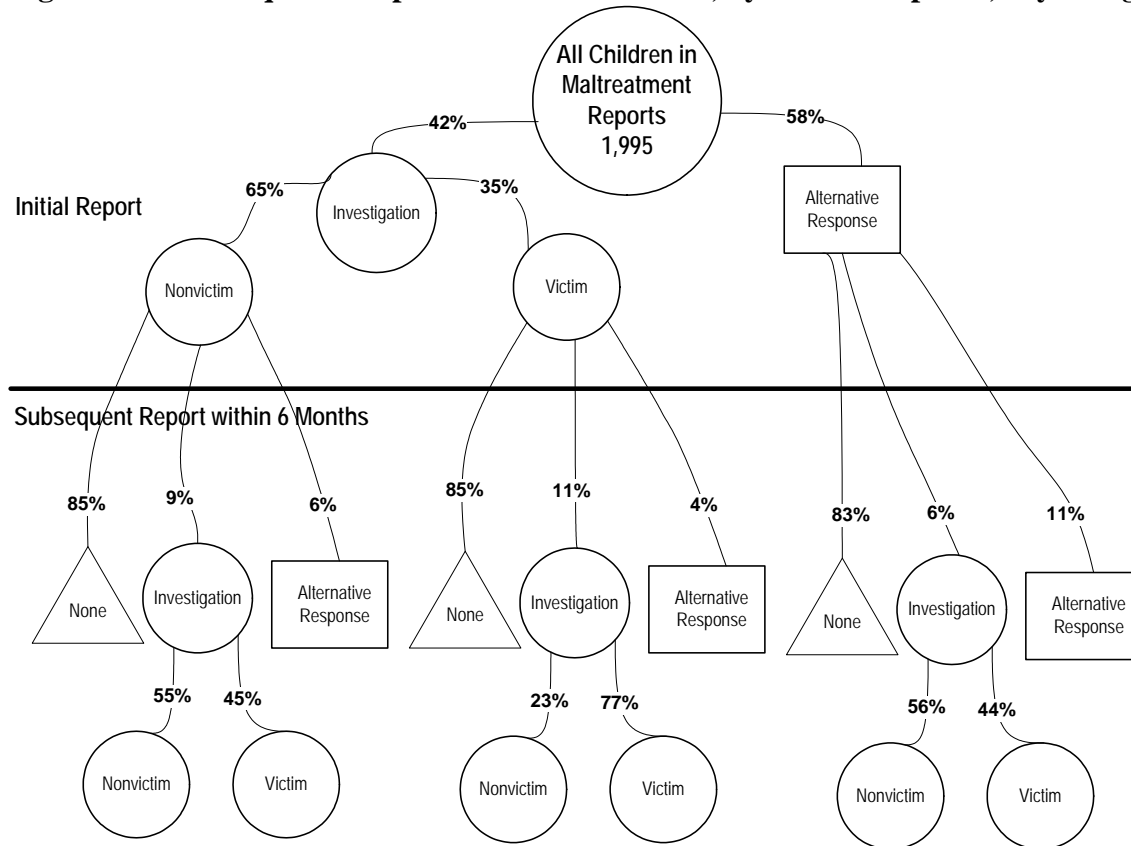
Services

In Wyoming, for the majority of children and all of the children who received alternative response, no provision of services beyond the alternative response itself was reported. In a small percentage of investigation cases, provision of in-home services or foster care services were reported.

Subsequent Responses by CPS

In Wyoming, the likelihood of receiving a second response within 6 months of the first was comparable among children whose first response was alternative response (17%), those who received an investigation and were found to be victims (15%), and those who received an investigation and were found not to be victims (15%). (See figure F-2.)

Figure F-2. Subsequent Response Within 6 Months, by Initial Response, Wyoming



While 58 percent of children received an alternative response for their initial report, 11 percent of these children received a subsequent alternative response within 6 months. Among those children found to be victims following an investigation, 4 percent were subsequently referred to alternative response. Among those children found not to be victims following an investigation, 6 percent were referred to alternative response.

While 35 percent of children with an initial investigation were found to be victims, 77 percent of these victims who experienced a subsequent investigation were again found to be victims. A comparable percentage were found to be victims among children with an initial alternative response and subsequent investigation (44%) and nonvictims with a subsequent investigation (45%).

**Table F–1. Age of Child by Response, Wyoming
(n = 4,355)**

Age of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age 1 or Younger	124	39%	191	61%	315	100%
Age 1 to 3	441	50%	447	50%	888	100%
Age 4 to 7	622	58%	450	42%	1,072	100%
Age 8 to 11	662	66%	340	34%	1,002	100%
Age 12 to 15	514	62%	309	38%	823	100%
Age 16 or older	164	64%	91	36%	255	100%
Missing Age	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	2,527	58%	1,828	42%	4,355	100%

**Table F–2. Race of Child by Response, Wyoming
(n = 4,355)**

Race of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
American Indian	115	77%	34	23%	149	100%
African-American	38	52%	35	48%	73	100%
Asian	2	22%	7	78%	9	100%
White	1,967	57%	1,494	43%	3,461	100%
Hispanic	160	54%	136	46%	296	100%
Multiracial	6	60%	4	40%	10	100%
Unknown Race	239	67%	118	33%	357	100%
Total	2,527	58%	1,828	42%	4,355	100%

**Table F–3. Sex of Child by Response, Wyoming
(n = 4,355)**

Sex of Child	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Boys	1,308	60%	873	40%	2,181	100%
Girls	1,213	56%	951	44%	2,164	100%
Unknown Sex	6	60%	4	40%	10	100%
Total	2,527	58%	1,828	42%	4,355	100%

**Table F–4. Report Source by Response, Wyoming
(n = 4,355)**

Report Source	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Social Services, Medical, or Mental Health Personnel	277	53%	249	47%	526	100%
Legal, Law Enforcement, or Criminal Justice Personnel	321	44%	407	56%	728	100%
Education Personnel	642	70%	281	30%	923	100%
Day Care	34	38%	55	62%	89	100%
Substitute Care	2	67%	1	33%	3	100%
Alleged Victim	21	58%	15	42%	36	100%
Parent, Other Relative, Friends/Neighbor	754	61%	479	39%	1,233	100%
Alleged Perpetrator	2	40%	3	60%	5	100%
Anonymous Reporter	218	66%	111	34%	329	100%
Other, Unknown, or Missing	256	53%	227	47%	483	100%
Total	2,527	58%	1,828	42%	4,355	100%

**Table F–5. Living Arrangement of Child by Response, Wyoming
(n = 4,355)**

Living Arrangement	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
With Family	2,140	64%	1,189	36%	3,329	100%
Relative Foster Care	66	47%	73	53%	139	100%
Non Relative Foster Care	221	35%	411	65%	632	100%
Institution	95	40%	145	60%	240	100%
Other or Unknown	5	33%	10	67%	15	100%
Total	2,527	58%	1,828	42%	4,355	100%

**Table F–6. Number of Children in Report by Response, Wyoming
(n = 4,355)**

Number of Children in Report	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	348	27%	955	73%	1,303	100%
2	720	64%	406	36%	1,126	100%
3	732	72%	282	28%	1,014	100%
4	372	76%	116	24%	488	100%
5	200	80%	50	20%	250	100%
6	96	89%	12	11%	108	100%
7	42	86%	7	14%	49	100%
8	8	100%	0	0%	8	100%
Total	2,527	58%	1,828	42%	4,355	100%

**Table F–7. Maltreatment Type by Response, Wyoming
(n = 4,355)**

Maltreatment Type	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Physical Abuse	0	0%	164	100%	164	100%
Neglect	0	0%	382	100%	382	100%
Sexual Abuse	0	0%	82	100%	82	100%
Other/Emotional Maltreatment	2,527	100%	2	0%	2,529	100%
Multiple Maltreatment	0	0%	62	100%	62	100%
No Maltreatment	0	0%	1,136	100%	1,136	100%
Total	2,527	58%	1,828	42%	4,355	100%

**Table F–8. Drug and Alcohol Use by Caretaker by Response, Wyoming
(n = 4,355)**

Caretaker Substance Abuse	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Alcohol Abuse	0	0%	96	100%	96	100%
Drug Abuse	0	0%	103	100%	103	100%
Both Drug Abuse and Alcohol Abuse	0	0%	102	100%	102	100%
None or Unknown	2,527	62%	1,527	38%	4,054	100%
Total	2,527	58%	1,828	42%	4,355	100%

**Table F–9. Family Violence by Response, Wyoming
(n = 4,355)**

Family Violence	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Record of Family Violence	0	0%	152	100%	152	100%
No Record of Family Violence	2,527	60%	1,676	40%	4,203	100%
Total	2,527	58%	1,828	42%	4,355	100%

**Table F–10. Services Provided by Response, Wyoming
(n = 4,355)**

Services Provided	Alternative Response		Investigation		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
In-Home Services	0	0%	101	6%	101	2%
Foster Care	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Both In-Home Services and Foster Care	0	0%	247	14%	247	6%
No Services Provided	2,527	100%	1,480	81%	4,007	92%
Total	2,527	100%	1,828	100%	4,355	100%