

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

Authorizing Legislation

- During the 2012 Legislative Session, House Bill 834/Chapter 397 was passed by the General Assembly and signed into law by Governor O'Malley
- Authorized the Secretary of DHR to establish an alternative response system, instead of a traditional investigation, for selected reports of suspected abuse or neglect
- Created an Advisory Council to guide the implementation of Alternative Response
- Requires DHR to contract with an independent agency to conduct an evaluation of the alternative response program

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

Authorizing Legislation

- Requires that DHR submit an interim report to Governor and the General Assembly on its preliminary assessment of alternative response and its recommendations for continuing the alternative response program by October 2014 and a final report by October 1, 2015
- Became effective on July 1, 2012; however, implementation of alternative response in local departments of social services is prohibited before July 1, 2013

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

What is Alternative Response?

- A CPS practice that allows for more than one method of initial Response to reports of child abuse and neglect.

Two types of responses:

- **Investigation Response**– This response involves gathering forensic evidence and require a formal determination regarding whether child maltreatment has occurred or the child is at risk of abuse or neglect.
- **Alternative Response** - This response—applied in low-risk cases—involves assessing the family's strengths and needs and offering services to meet the family's needs and support positive parenting. Although a formal determination of child maltreatment is not required.

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

Investigative (Traditional) vs. Alternative Response

Both:

- Focus on the safety and well-being of the child
- Promote permanency within the family whenever possible
- Recognize the authority of CPS to make decisions about removal, out-of-home placement, and court involvement, when necessary
- Acknowledge that other community services may be more appropriate than CPS in some cases

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

Investigative (Traditional) vs. Alternative Response

Investigative (traditional) Response tends to:

- Be adversarial
- Focus on determining if a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed
- Determine findings related to the allegations and identify perpetrators
- Services are offered to ensure the safety of the child(ren)

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

Investigative (Traditional) vs. Alternative Response

Alternative (assessment) Response tends to:

- Be less adversarial
- Focus more on understanding the conditions that could jeopardize the child's safety and the factors that need to be addressed to strengthen the family
- Tailor approaches and services to fit families' strengths, needs, and resources

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

Investigative (Traditional) vs. Alternative Response

Alternative (assessment) Response tends to:

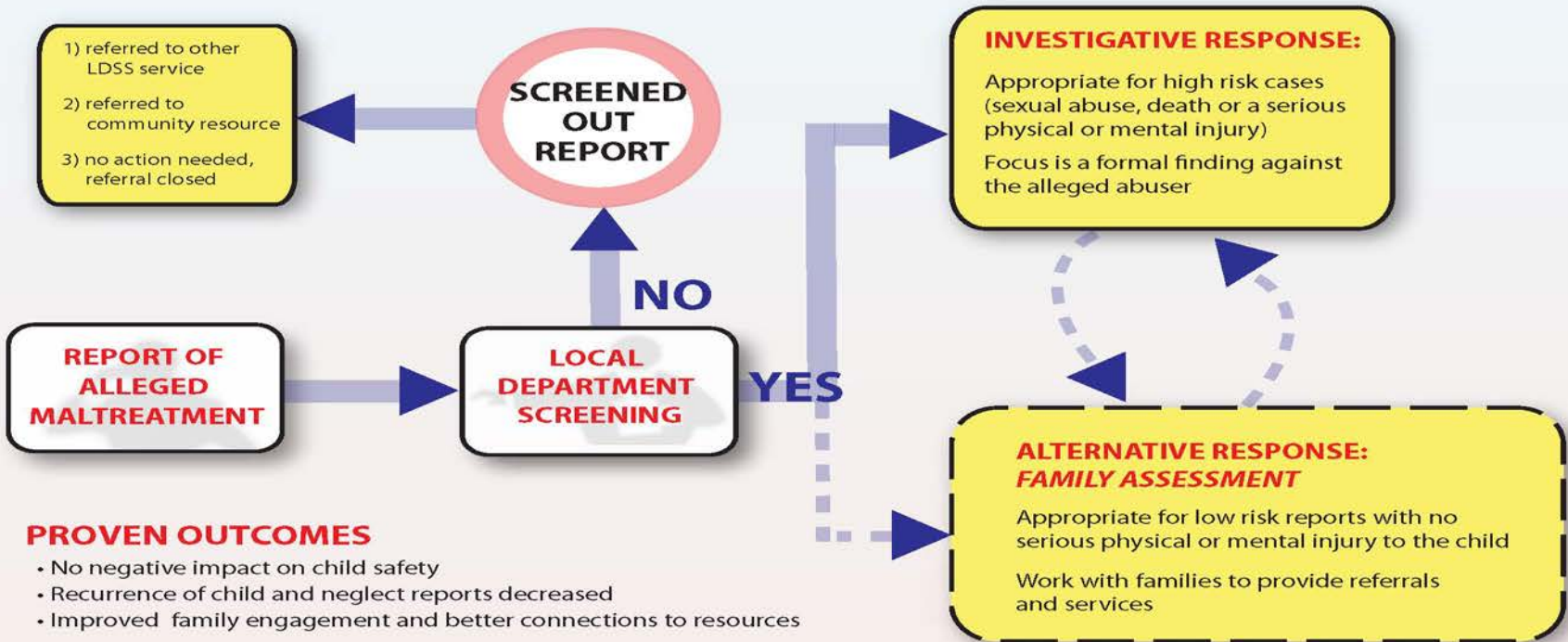
- Place importance on engaging parents to recognize concerns that affect their ability to parent and to participate in services and supports
- Tap into community services and the family's natural support network
- Offer voluntary services



ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

Alternative Response: Keeping children safe by engaging families



- PROVEN OUTCOMES**
- No negative impact on child safety
 - Recurrence of child and neglect reports decreased
 - Improved family engagement and better connections to resources

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

What do we Know about Alternative Response?

- Best Practice in 20 states
- Research shows families are more receptive, see caseworker as someone who can help them
- Independent evaluators: “Child safety was not compromised as a result of families being served through the non-investigation pathway.”
- Families are more likely to accept services

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

Implementation Process

Advisory Council convened in July, 2012

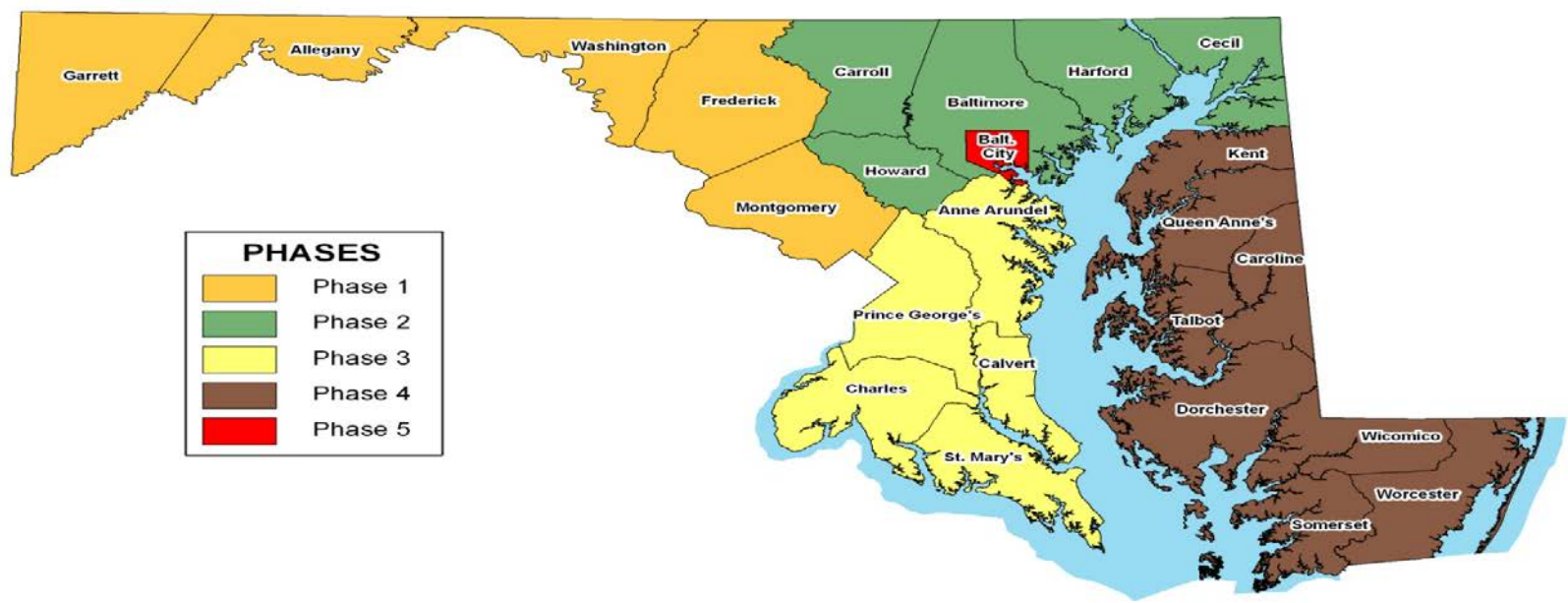
- Four Workgroups:
 - Policy
 - Practice
 - Community Partners
 - Evaluation








ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

MARYLAND WILL PHASE IN ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE BEGINNING JULY 1, 2013



PHASES	
	Phase 1
	Phase 2
	Phase 3
	Phase 4
	Phase 5

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

Local Collaborative Planning

- Alternative Response will be implemented locally within a Statewide framework.
- Jurisdictional Planning Goals
 - Build an implementation Team and Sustain Community Partners
 - Develop a Communication Plan
 - Determine Staffing
 - Strategies to Sustain Practice
 - Resource Development

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

Community Partners' Role

- Assist in the planning for the implementation of AR
- Respond to the needs of families served by AR
- Adapt programs to meet the needs of families
- Identify gaps in service delivery system

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

Role of the Court

- LDSS will continue to utilize court system to ensure safety and address risk issues for children.
- Shelter and CINA petitions will not include information about a CPS finding in cases that were accepted for Alternative Response. Petitions will include information to allow Court to make necessary findings relating to abuse and neglect.
- Court systems are encouraged to get involved in local jurisdictional planning for CPS-AR.

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

Keeping Children Safe by Engaging Families

Deborah Ramelmeier, LCSW-C, JD
debbie.ramelmeier@maryland.gov

410-767-7506

Steve Berry, LCSW-C
sberry@maryland.gov

410-767-7018