



**CHILD WELFARE POLICY UPDATE**  
**Differential Response System**  
**October 2013**

This is the third in a series of Child Welfare Policy Updates intended to introduce Iowa’s **Differential Response System**, an approach used by child protective agencies to have more than one way of responding to allegations of child abuse. Iowa’s Child Protective System will implement a Differential Response approach in January 2014. Iowa’s Differential Response approach will have two pathways- **Child Abuse Assessment** and **Family Assessment** – for accepted abuse referrals.

**This Policy Update will focus primarily on what will happen at the conclusion of Child Abuse Assessments and Family Assessments once Iowa implements Differential Response.**

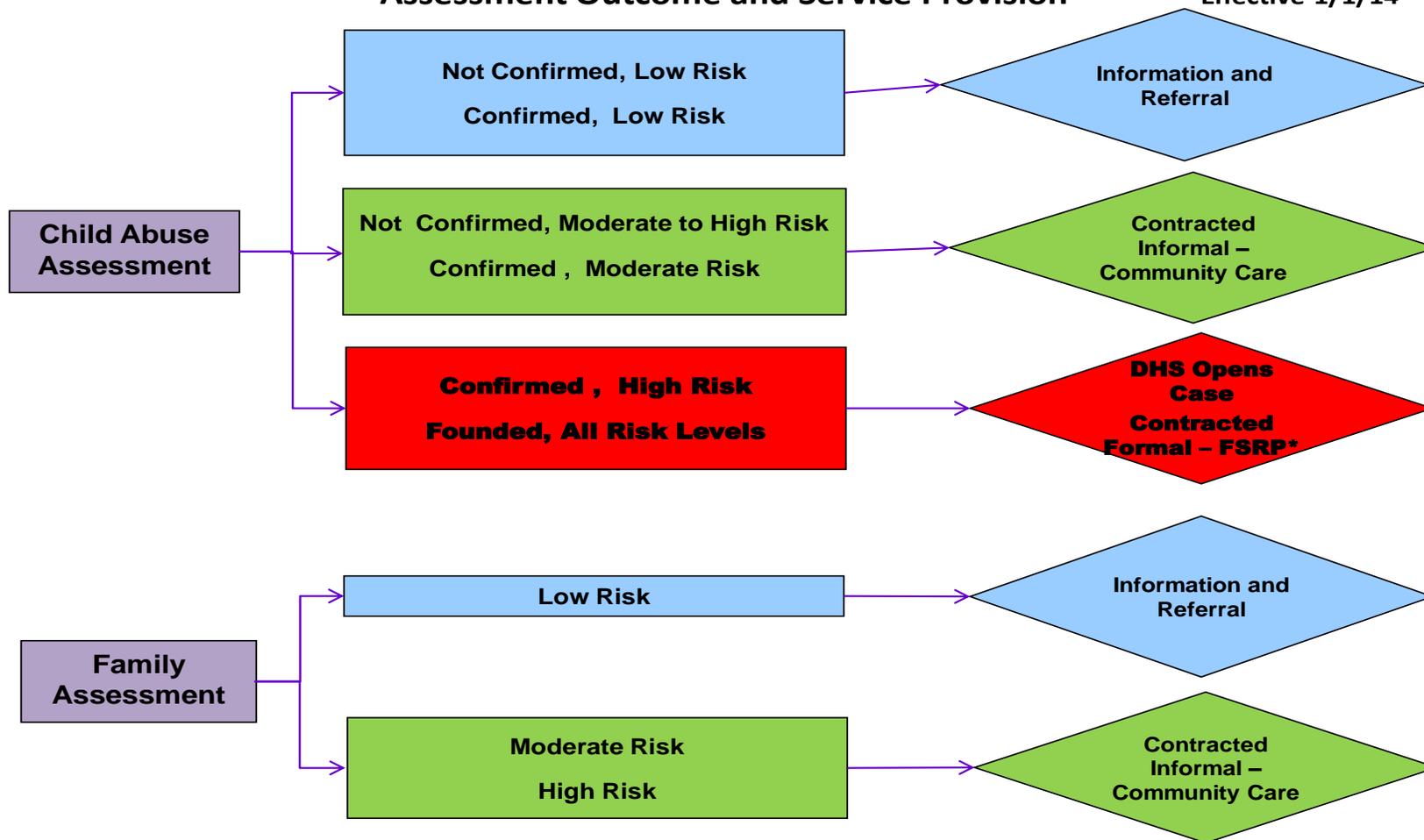
<p><b>How do we identify which families are in need of services at the conclusion of an assessment?</b></p>	<p>As part of the assessment of family functioning, both the Child Abuse Assessment and the Family Assessment processes include completion of a standardized risk assessment. This risk assessment looks at factors known to be associated with the likelihood of abuse or neglect occurring at some point in the future. Identification of risks can also assist us in identifying the need for individualized services.</p>
<p><b>If a family goes through a Child Abuse Assessment, what services can they access at the conclusion of the assessment?</b></p>	<p>DHS will make a determination regarding abuse - not confirmed, confirmed, or founded - and will determine whether the family is at high, moderate, or low risk of future abuse or neglect.</p> <p>DHS will open an ongoing service case on all founded assessments, and all confirmed cases assessed as being at high-risk of future abuse or neglect. These families will be eligible to receive DHS case management and the current array of child welfare services.</p> <p>If an assessment was confirmed and the family is assessed as being at moderate risk of future abuse or neglect <u>or</u> if the assessment was not confirmed but the family is assessed as being at moderate or high risk of future abuse or neglect, the family can be referred to Community Care for further services.</p> <p>If an assessment was confirmed or not confirmed and the family is assessed as being at low risk of future abuse or neglect, information and referral will be provided if needed.</p> <p>If the intervention of the Juvenile Court is needed – regardless of abuse finding or risk level – DHS will request a Child in Need of Assistance petition.</p> <p>See chart on page 3</p>

<p><b>If a family goes through a Family Assessment, what services will be available at the conclusion of the assessment?</b></p>	<p>The risk assessment completed during the course of the Family Assessment will determine whether the family is at high, moderate, or low risk of future abuse or neglect.</p> <p>Any family assessed as being at moderate or high risk of future abuse or neglect is eligible for Community Care services. A family assessed as being at low risk of future abuse or neglect will be provided information and referral if needed.</p> <p>If the intervention of the Juvenile Court is needed – regardless of risk level – DHS will request a Child in Need of Assistance petition.</p> <p>See chart on page 3</p>
<p><b>Are the services after a Family Assessment voluntary?</b></p>	<p>Yes, services following completion of a Family Assessment are voluntary. Those families referred to Community Care or other community resources at the conclusion of an assessment would be accepting those services voluntarily.</p> <p>If subsequent concerns of child abuse or neglect are identified, a referral to the DHS hotline should be made.</p> <p>Remember, for any case in which the child is unsafe or at imminent risk during a Family Assessment, reassignment to the Child Abuse Assessment path would have occurred.</p>
<p><b>Once Differential Response is implemented, will fewer families be getting services?</b></p>	<p>We anticipate that the number of families receiving formal or informal services following an assessment will not be significantly different but are expected to increase slightly.</p> <p>Inclusion of all founded cases and those confirmed cases assessed at high risk of future abuse or neglect in the population to be served by DHS may slightly increase the number of cases served by DHS and FSRP providers.</p> <p>Community Care is expected to serve an increased number of families under Differential Response.</p>
<p><b>Will there be a Statewide introduction to Differential Response prior to implementation?</b></p>	<p>Yes, the State is in the process of developing a panel of expert’s presentation that will be recorded and made available statewide on December 16, 2013.</p> <p>An announcement will be sent to stakeholders prior to the release of the recording.</p>

*Prior Policy Updates regarding Differential Response can be found at [http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/Consumers/Child\\_Welfare/CW\\_Menu.html](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/Consumers/Child_Welfare/CW_Menu.html)*

**State of Iowa Differential Response  
Assessment Outcome and Service Provision**

Effective 1/1/14



\*Family Safety Risk and Permanency