

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Iowa Differential Response Work Group**  
**March 19, 2012**

**Location:** United Way of Central Iowa, 1111 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 100, Rooms B/C, Des Moines, IA 50314

**Members Present:** Julie Allison; Gina Butteris, Kirsten Faisal, Lori Lipscomb, Mike McInroy, Dick Moore, Lori Mozena, Kristie Oliver, Steve Scott, Denise Moore, Dennis Smith, Kathy Thompson, Michele Tilotta, Barb Van Allen

Facilitator – Caren Kaplan

**Members Absent:** Julie Walton

**Pre-Meeting Meeting Handouts:** Agenda; Differential Response to Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect, Child Welfare Information Gateway, February 2008; Child Welfare Policy Briefing: Differential Response, American Humane Association, July 9, 2010; Differential Response in Child Protective Services, A Guide for Judges and Judicial Officers, National Quality Improvement Center on Differential Response in Child Protective Services in Child Welfare, 2010; Another Look at the National Study on Differential Response in Child Welfare, Kaplan, C. & Merkel-Holguin, L. *Protecting Children*, 23 (1 & 2), 5-21.

**Meeting Handouts:** Agenda (attached); Power Point Presentation (attached) disseminated by e-mail immediately after the conclusion of the meeting.

**The meeting began at 9:00a.m.**

Welcome and Introductions

Julie Allison, Bureau Chief of Iowa Child Welfare welcomed Work Group members; she indicated that this group was convened in response to the recommendation of the Work Group on Child Abuse Registry, that “the General Assembly should direct that DHS conduct a comprehensive review to evaluate the possibility of implementing a differential response to child abuse reports.”

Caren Kaplan, consultant and meeting facilitator, introduced herself to the group.

Video: Alternative Response: Through the Eyes of the Family

The Workgroup viewed an informational video about families and workers’ experiences with alternative response in Ohio. The video features the stories of four families and three caseworkers in Ohio who volunteered to share their experience during the pilot of alternative response.

Primer on Differential Response

Caren presented a primer on differential response (power point presentation attached) that detailed the (1) child welfare history and rationale for differential response; (2) system and practice changes; and (3) evaluations, findings, and outcomes. This national overview provided a foundational understanding of differential response and a context for the discussion and the decisions Iowa will have to make.

Issues raised and questions asked by Work Group members included the following:

- Iowa's current child welfare operations and system
- Response to chronic neglect and the services families will receive.
- Use of the word "investigation" and the fact that Iowa practice has gotten away from the more adversarial model a while ago.
- Specialization of Differential Response workforce, and if there are/will be different workers doing investigation and assessment.
- What happens to families who are screened in to the family assessment and the family declines voluntary services and leave the system?
- Option to change tracks at any time in the life of the case when it is necessary to do so.
- Families' reluctance to decline services according to one Work Group member's experiences. Families believe that this is going to "up the ante" with DHS and could lead to juvenile court action. So, families accept the services as it is considered to be a lesser of two evils.
- Information collected at screening. Screening is the function that determines whether the report meets the statutory definition of alleged maltreatment. The review of screening is not part of the purview of the group according to the General Assembly recommendation.
- Iowa's compliance with Federal guidance on the 2010 CAPTA reauthorization given the broad parameters detailed in the Information Memorandum on the new differential response statutory provisions.
- Establishment of a federal National Quality Improvement Center on Differential Response in Child Protective Services (October 2008). It is conducting evaluations, to rigorously study implementation, outcomes and cost impact of differential response in research and demonstration sites (Colorado, Illinois and Ohio). The QIC-DR will gain and replicate knowledge regarding the identification of core elements that support successful implementation of more than one response to alleged reports of child maltreatment and the viability of differential response as an effective practice model in CPS.
- States' statutes that have codified differential response and public access to these documents. Information can be obtained at the National Quality Improvement Center on Differential Response in Child Protective Services (see 'Resources' [www.differentialresponseqic.org](http://www.differentialresponseqic.org))
- States that had implemented a differential response system and then discontinued the approach. What were the reasons for doing so?
- Whether the DR evaluations address those families who declined DR; was information provided on what happened with them?
- Need for additional clarification regarding Caren's statement that over time, costs went down - and fewer kids were going into foster care.
- Costs to those agencies that are providing the other services; interest in information on services that are provided and how they are funded.
- Concern about the appearance of new/additional services available to families who move through a DR track within a two pathway system. Caren responded that the same service array should be available to all families.

#### Iowa's Assessment of Benefits of DR to Iowa's Children and Families

Caren facilitated a large group discussion – a brainstorming session – in order to conduct a comprehensive review of the possibility of DR. Work group members responded to three questions: (1) What do we need to know – positive and negative implications? (2) What steps need to be taken? (3) Who are the champions that must be involved?

The information provided by the membership will be used to inform the workgroup and facilitate decision-making regarding DR feasibility and design, if relevant. Other considerations address presence

of political will, monetary and non-monetary resources, and formal evaluation of the DR effort and its outcomes.

**HOMEWORK:** Members were asked to identify key entities and stakeholders that they are connected to, list them, bring the list to the April 10<sup>th</sup> meeting...with the potential to become a communicator about DR System with these contacts.

Next Meeting: April 10, 2012

Adjourn 12:40pm

Resources:

Institute for Applied Research

[www.iarstl.org](http://www.iarstl.org)

Quality Improvement Center

[www.differentialresponseqic.org](http://www.differentialresponseqic.org)

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by Caren Kaplan, MSW