

## **ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE FAQ**

When a local Child Protective Service (CPS) agency implements Alternative Response (AR), frequently asked questions regarding program, pathway, and practice, include:

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#### **Program:**

##### **Q1: Do case load sizes increase when an agency implements AR?**

**A:** *The implementation of AR, in and of itself, should not increase the number of primary CPS reports an agency screens in for an initial assessment. The reason: the criteria for screening in a report of suspected child maltreatment has not changed.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the number of cases assigned for an initial assessment should not increase simply because of the expansion from one pathway to two. That being said, agencies receive training and support throughout the implementation that clarifies knowledge about safety and decision making. This includes screening decisions. It is possible such training and support will affect an*

agency's understanding and decision making about which reports require a CPS response. As a result, it might impact screening practices and numbers.

**Q2: If a case is assigned to the AR pathway is law enforcement still involved?**

**A:** *If a case is assigned to the AR pathway, it does not need to be referred to law enforcement. Cases eligible for AR pathway assignment include allegations that do not allege substantial abuse/neglect, or indicate an investigation is necessary to ensure child safety. Instead, these cases include allegations that are less severe and not likely to be criminal.*<sup>2</sup>

**Pathway:**

**Q3: Can an initial assessment worker 'flip,' or reassign both types of pathway assignments?**

**A:** *Yes. A case originally assigned to AR may be reassigned to the Traditional Response (TR) pathway. Likewise, a case initially assigned to the TR pathway may be reassigned to the AR pathway.*<sup>3</sup>

**Q4: Does 'flipping' a case change timelines?**

**A:** *No. Regardless of pathway assignment, an initial assessment must be completed and approved within 60 days from the receipt of the CPS report.*<sup>4</sup>

**Practice:**

**Q5: Does the initial phone contact count as the required Initial Face-to-Face contact?**

**A:** *No. The phone contact does not count as the Initial Face-to-Face contact. Initial Face-to-Face contact is face-to-face between the initial assessment worker and the child/parent. The phone call is the initial assessment worker's opportunity to schedule the Initial Face-to-Face contact with the parent as opposed to first meeting the child/parent unannounced. This contact must still occur within the assigned response time and be face to face with a parent and/ or child.*<sup>5</sup> *For example, if a case is assigned to a worker with a response time of 'Within 5 Business Days,' the worker attempts telephone contact right away so the Initial-Face-to-Face contact can be scheduled within the assigned response time.*

**Q6: If a parent is unable to meet with the initial assessment worker within the required response time, OR the worker is unable to connect with a parent to schedule the Initial Face-to-Face contact, what does the initial assessment worker do next?**

**A:** *Response times are assigned based on the information in the CPS report. If a parent cannot meet with the initial assessment worker within the required response time or the worker is unable to connect with the parent, the worker is still required to make initial face-to-face contact with the child (ren), within the assigned response time, to assess safety.*<sup>6</sup> *This may mean the worker ends up going to a child's school to interview the child before meeting with the parent. In this circumstance, it is important the parent knows the interview will/did occur, and the reasons it will/did occur outside of the parent's presence. Transparency helps the worker support partnership with the family even when the interview with the child happens separate from the parent.*

*Two examples of worker contact with a parent when the child must be interviewed first in order to meet assigned response times:*

*Parent is unavailable to meet: “You mentioned your work schedule doesn’t make it possible for us to meet in the assigned response time. I still need to make contact with your family in that time, so I’ll need to talk to [child’s name] before I meet with you. I’m happy to go to [child’s name] school/daycare and meet with him/her there. When this happens, parents sometimes call the school/daycare ahead of time to let them know they can expect to see me. Is that something you’d like to do? Also, once I’m done with the interview, how would you like for me to connect with you about it? We can schedule a phone call or a face-to-face visit as soon as you are available.”*

*Worker is unable to connect with the parent to schedule the Initial Face-to-Face: “I wanted to meet with you prior to talking to your child. Since we weren’t able to connect in the time I’m required to make my first contact, I will/did interview your child at school today so I can/could meet the requirement for a timely response. I’d like to connect with you as soon as possible to talk about it and answer any questions you might have, please call back with your availability...”*

**Q7: In order to have timely Initial Face-to-Face contact, the initial assessment worker might have to interview a child before s/he meets with the parent? If that happens does it immediately ‘flip’ it from an AR to a Traditional Response (TR) track?**

**A:** *No. It is possible the parent is unable to meet with the initial assessment worker prior to the time when s/he needs to make Initial Face-to-Face contact. This is different than a parent who is refusing to meet with the initial assessment worker. The latter might be reason for case reassignment and such a decision should be made in consultation with the CPS supervisor. Case reassignment refers to pathway assignment, not the assignment of the initial assessment worker. Regardless of pathway, the case may remain with the same initial assessment worker since safety is assessed the same for both pathways.*

**Q8: What does the case finding of ‘Services Needed’ mean?**

**A:** *A determination of “Services Needed” means that at the conclusion of the initial assessment, continued agency involvement with the family is warranted and it will be opened with the agency for On-going Services.*

**Q9: If an initial assessment worker files a CHIPS petition must the case ‘flip’ from AR to TR?**

**A:** *No. Pathway assignment does not affect whether or not there is legal jurisdiction to file a petition. Agencies should refer to their legal counsel in order to determine whether or not there is legal jurisdiction to file a CHIPS petition. In order to file a CHIPS petition, there is information to support the case that a child is in need of protection or services and these are things that a parent cannot or will not provide. This requirement may be met on a case assigned to the AR or TR pathway.<sup>7</sup>*

**Q10: What kind of feedback does a reporter receive?**

**A:** *Since a case assigned to the AR pathway is a CPS case, the same notification letters are sent to mandated reporters and relative reporters (when requested). The information only includes what action if any was taken to protect the health and welfare of the child or unborn child who is the subject of the report.<sup>8</sup>*

***For more information:***

<sup>1</sup> Child Protective Services Access and Initial Assessment Standards, Ch. 6: The Screening Decision, p. 21-25

<sup>2</sup> Wisconsin Children's Code and Juvenile Justice Code (2015), 48.981 (3m) (c) 2b

<sup>3</sup> Child Protective Services Alternative Response Pilot Program, Addendum to the Child Protective Services Access and Initial Assessment Standards: Program Requirements and Guidelines, *Reassignment of Cases*, p. 8

<sup>4</sup> Child Protective Services Access and Initial Assessment Standards, Ch. 12: Requirements Applicable to All Cases, *XII.L. Supervisory Approval and Documentation*, p. 41

<sup>5</sup> Child Protective Services Access and Initial Assessment Standards, Ch. 7: The Timeframe for Response, *VII.A. Determining the Timeframe for Response*, p. 25

<sup>6</sup> Child Protective Services Access and Initial Assessment Standards, Ch. 12: Requirements Applicable to All Cases, *XII.A. Safety Intervention*, p. 37

<sup>7</sup> Wisconsin Children's Code and Juvenile Justice Code (2015), 48.13

<sup>8</sup> Child Protective Services Access and Initial Assessment Standards, Ch. 11: Notifications, *XI.B. Feedback to a Mandated Reporter When the Access Report is Screened Out and XI.C. Feedback to a Relative Reporter When the Access Report is Screened Out*, p. 33