

DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE



WHAT IS DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE?

Differential Response (DR) responds more flexibly to child abuse and neglect reports to better meet individual family needs. Families with screened-in child maltreatment reports may receive either a traditional investigation or DR, depending on the type of allegation and other considerations. Key elements of DR include:

- Low-risk and moderate-risk safety concerns or requests for assistance.
- Parents willing and able to work on safety concerns.
- Continued focus on the safety and well-being of the child.
- Ongoing engagement with parents .
- Can intervene if child safety is threatened and family is unwilling or unable to address the safety concerns.
- Generally, a voluntary agreement.

A determination that DR is the right path for a client or family is not a final decision. The workers should maintain a focus on the child's safety and well-being while working with the family and remaining engaged with parents to resolve safety concerns. If a child's safety is threatened and the family is unwilling or unable to address safety concerns, the worker should be prepared to intervene and move to a child protection focus.

STEPS OF ASSESSMENT AND DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE

1. Assess safety and risks.
2. Engage parents and family in identifying needs.
3. Provide follow-up on voluntary involvement.
4. Take another path if child safety concerns increase.
5. Collaborate with other professionals to identify needs and gaps in services (e.g. Child Protection Team).

ASSESSING STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES FOR DR

- **Family:** What are the attitudes and values of the family?
- **Social:** How does the client or family relate to others?
- **Emotional:** How does the client manage feelings?
- **Spiritual:** What spiritual significance, if any, does the client bring to the situation?
- **Intellectual:** What is the client's ability to understand and process information?
- **Economic:** What is the client or family's economic situation?
- **Self-help:** How does the client manage daily life?
- **Physical:** What is the status of the client's physical health?

ASSESSING NEED FOR PROTECTION INSTEAD OF DR

Protective services are provided when adults or children:

- Are deprived temporarily or permanently of appropriate supervision.
- Are neglected, abused, or exploited.
- Need services when they are mentally or physically handicapped, or otherwise disabled.
- Are under the supervision of the Bureau with the use and disbursement of funds in the adult's or child's Individual Indian Money (IIM) account.

