



VIRGINIA KIDS COUNT ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT STATISTICS

Child abuse and neglect statistics

As a result of the implementation of the new Differential Response System by the Virginia Department of Social Services, Virginia KIDS COUNT plans to change the way it reports child abuse and neglect.

In the past, Virginia KIDS COUNT reported the number of Founded Cases of child abuse and neglect. No determination of abuse or neglect is made in the new Family Assessment Response Track of the Differential Response System.

However, it will be helpful to show the number of children and families receiving services through the Family Assessment Response Track.

Virginia KIDS COUNT plans to report the number of child abuse and neglect Unfounded Investigations, Founded Investigations, Family Assessments, and totals. This data will not provide us with a flawless comparison to previous data, but some observations can be made. Virginia KIDS COUNT will also publish the number of children who are reported abused or neglected to the Department of Social Services hotline.

Background of the Differential Response System

The enactment of Virginia's child abuse and neglect statutes in 1975, required that all valid reports of suspected child abuse and neglect were Investigated by Child Protective Services. This singular response focused resources on investigating the reported incident.

In 2000, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation to establish a Child Protective Services Differential Response System allowing localities more flexibility when responding to reports of suspected child abuse or neglect. The Differential Response System was successfully piloted for three years and was fully implemented in Virginia in 2003.

The alternative response to an Investigation is a Family Assessment that focuses resources on conducting a child safety and family needs assessment, building upon family strengths, and providing needed services.

The goals of a Family Assessment are the same as for the Investigation: the protection of children; preservation of families, when possible; and prevention of maltreatment. However, in an Investigation Child Protective Services must determine whether abuse or neglect occurred, and if so, who did what to whom.

PROTECTIVE SERVICES DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE SYSTEM

| Former Virginia System | Differential Response System |
|---|--|
| All valid reports were investigated. | Respond to valid reports with family assessment or investigation. |
| Major decisions at intake were validity & urgency. | An added intake decision is the track. (Assessment or Investigation) |
| Community involvement and support were recommended. | Community involvement and support are essential for success. |
| A safety assessment is required at the first meaningful contact. | |
| Invalid reports are handled in varied ways statewide, depending on resources. | |
| Response time is immediate. | |
| The time frame for investigation and family assessment response is 45 days with a possible extension to 60. | |
| Certain authorities are granted to the worker under CPS law. The same authorities apply to worker in Family Assessment Response. | |
| Documentation is required to support decisions related to validity, track, safety, family needs, and risk. | |

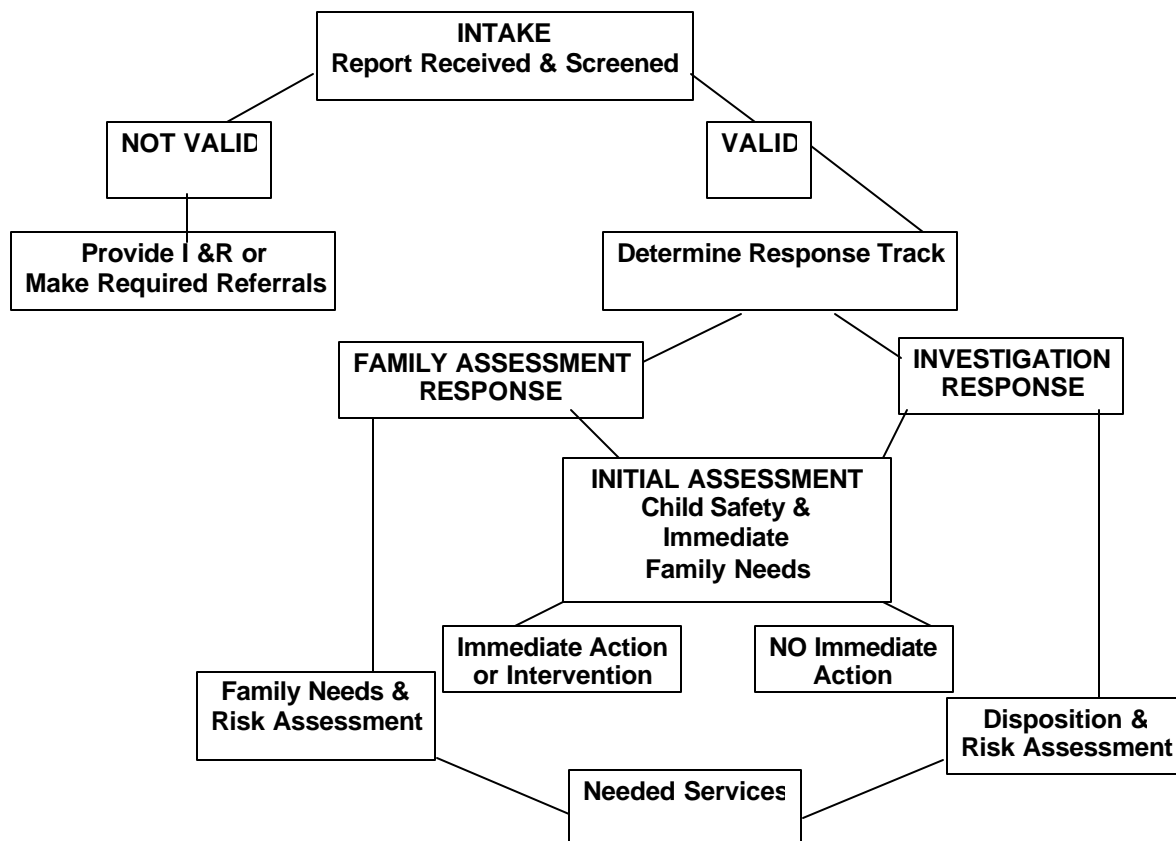
| Investigations | Family Assessments |
|--|---|
| Investigations are child-centered and incident focused. | Family assessments are child-centered, but family focused. |
| CPS and/or law enforcement respond in investigations. | CPS and any community resource response |
| Method of Investigation: gather facts to determine if abuse occurred (make disposition) & determine risk of future abuse - victim/perpetrator/incident focus | Family assessment response requires no disposition, focuses on child safety, risk assessment and addressing family needs to prevent abuse/neglect |
| Certain notifications required to alleged abuser, complainant, etc. | Same parties must receive notification, but the methods may be different. |
| Findings for an investigation are entered in Central Registry if founded, OASIS if unfounded. | Family assessment responses are documented in OASIS only. |

Types of reports that receive a Family Assessment Response

Reports may be considered for a Family Assessment Response when there are no immediate child safety concerns and/or when the report is not required by law to be Investigated. Some examples of reports that are placed in the Family Assessment Response Track include:

- Minor physical injury
- Injuries suggesting inattention to child's safety
- Lack of supervision
- Minimal needs for food, clothing, shelter, hygiene are inconsistently met
- Untreated physical injuries, illnesses, or impairments
- Emotional neglect/abuse
- Substance exposed newborns

VIRGINIA CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE SYSTEM



Procedure for the handling of a child abuse complaint

Once a child abuse complaint is received, a social worker determines whether the complaint is covered as abuse under the law. The complaint must meet 4 criteria: the child must be under 18, the alleged abuser was a caretaker, the allegations meet a definition of abuse/neglect, and the agency has jurisdiction.

Next, the social worker will determine whether the report requires an investigation or family assessment. Each CPS investigation or family assessment must be completed within 45-60 days of the report.